

Occupational status and political participation among the young people in Turin*

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Abstract

The paper focuses on how labour status (unemployment, *precarity* and regular-employment) affects political participation among Italian youth. Indeed, while there is a vast literature on work market trends, youth employment and political participation, only a few pieces of research directly assess the relationship between work stability and political participation, using empirical data.

In recent years, after the introduction of new and more flexible contracts and the liberalization of European labour markets, *precarity* has been perceived as disruptive (in Italy) since it involves young people and women in particular. However this dynamic has proved to produce contradictory results in different countries. Moreover, at least in the public discourse *precarity* has been considered as a condition in between unemployment and regular-employment, not only from an economic perspective (income), but also from sociological and political ones (participation, level of exclusion etc.)

Quantitative data gathered on the city of Turin on the three different groups of young people confirm that precarious youth are indeed more politically active than the employed control group, as well as the unemployed one. Moreover the level of their politicization is very high as it is confirmed by the qualitative data gathered on social movement organisations in the same urban context. The article deeply investigates this relationship, analysing quantitative data on the importance of labour status as *explanans*. An important role is played by the specific labour market structure, which has to be taken into consideration in order to fully explain the Italian case. In conclusion the labour status, but above all *precarity*, emerges as the crucial variable to understand not only political participation, but also the range of political activities deployed.

Key words: labour market, political participation, youth, occupational status, unemployment, precarity.

1. Introduction

The current labour market in Italy is a topic of great concern in political and social debate. The recent growth of work related protests and factories being occupied by workers at risk of unemployment underlines the severity of the labour issue in Italy. This paper assesses the role of labour status in different political activities in order to study the impact that labour legislation has on individual political inclusion. The well-known nexus between unemployment and social exclusion, recently widened to the political sphere, is tested using data gathered on the city of Turin (Piedmont region – Italy). However the paper aims at giving an in-depth analysis of this nexus taking into account also the SES – socioeconomic status widened model (Brady, et al., 1995) to explain differential diffusion of forms of participation using not only socioeconomic status but also other resources (civic skills). The dataset is a wide random sample on youth in Turin divided into three major groups: long-term unemployed, precarious and life-time employed youth. Information on political activation ranges from mere interest in politics to direct involvement within political parties, via different forms of participation both conventional and non-conventional, legal and illegal.

The main objective of this article is to present a framework within which to investigate the nexus between different aspects of political activation (trust, satisfaction, latent participation, form of active participation) and labour status, with a particular stress given to the young age of the individual analysed and the crucial role played by socio-demographic variables. The following (second) section provides the broad presentation of the theoretical framework used, giving particular importance to the crucial interplay between different variables as aspects of the person. These include age idiosyncrasies, political placement, role of stigmatization within Italian society, etc. Theoretical information is drawn from the wide literature recently developed in the western hemisphere (Bay and Blekesaune, 2002; Gallie and Paugam, 2000; Giugni, 2008a, 2008b; Maurer, 2007; Raniolo, 2008; Ruedin, 2007; Westholm and Niemi, 1986), with a particular stress on the Italian situation.

The third section gives the reader important background information to understand the Italian labour market at large and more specifically the economic processes influencing the city of Turin. Later on, the fourth analytical section presents the variables used and gives the main descriptive statistics already informing the general trend of this complex phenomenon. In the fifth part (§5.1) major hypotheses on labour status are firstly tested independently against one another, and are later combined (§5.2) in a complex model, tested with a logit analysis. Finally, the sixth and last part outlines the main empirical findings and indicates directions for future research.

2. Employment status and political involvement: a complex relationship

There is a vast literature on the role of occupational status for shaping individual (micro level) and collective (macro level) identity especially in young people. Because this immensity produces major problems, many scholars have approached this topic from distinct perspectives. Indeed, this situation has created diverse approaches: on one hand the first strand gathers those who believe that an individual, detached from social networks built on the workplace, tends to be stigmatized and marginalized alone or with people in the same condition¹ (Gallie and Paugam, 2000; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Pateman, 1970); on the other hand, the other approach gathers those who believe that these peculiar occupational conditions are a new boost for collective action and socio-political interest (Della Porta, 2006; Piven and Cloward, 1977; Demazière and Pignoni, 1998; Maurer, 2001). The latter approach intrinsically needs a deep contextualization in order to fully explain results. As described by Ulrich Beck (1997), for modern forms of social inclusion (in occidental societies) people, even when stigmatized, generally do not have to fight for scarce resources because of family and welfare state protection, therefore traditional forms of civilization (e.g. building a family, improving social class) are overtaken by new and more individualistic ones (e.g. political participation, cultural-social emancipation).

According to the recent comparative studies by Duncan Gallie and Serge Paugam (2000) on unemployment and social inclusion, there are three different concentric areas (or spheres) of socialization: family, friends and organised groups. In all countries they found that the unemployed are much less involved in the third area than employed and precarious workers. Furthermore, unemployed people, in particular when living in “sub-protective” welfare regimes (as Italy is defined), tend to spend more time with family and friends (a sort of informal protection against marginalization) than the unemployed living in other welfare regimes.

“The concept of political participation has been heavily laden with ideological meaning, especially in recent years” (Salisbury, 1975: 325). Moreover, one of the most used definitions issued in 1972 by Sidney Verba and Norman Nie has been proven to be far too restricted to convincingly encompass modern forms of political participation (Verba and Nie, 1972). According to these authors “Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they

¹ The so-called “spillover model” (Pateman, 1970; Schur, 2003; Sobel, 1993) tells us that networks and relations built on the workplace help individuals to develop and learn forms of social and political involvement. In this sense, there is a virtuous spillover mechanism towards political participation deriving from participation in other social fields (workplace, voluntary associations, etc.).

take” (Verba and Nie, 1972: 2). Obviously this definition is well suited only for representative democracy without either protest at or support for political activities². A more large and comprehensive one has been given by Rush (1992) suggesting that political participation encompasses “citizen’s behaviours aimed at influencing political process”. Such a broad definition³ enables us to include latent and invisible modes of participation (Barbagli and Macelli, 1985; Sciolla, 2004), modern forms of participation (non-conventional) or brand new phenomena such as critical consumerism (Tosi, 2005).

Scholars’ debate on political participation is wide, but a consistent part of it focuses on the study of political participation determinants both at individual and group level. Classical studies (Milbrath, 1965; Milbrath and Goel, 1977) consider political participation as a dependent variable and try to outline a portrait of the typical participant individual. The “centrality model” (*ibid*) tells us that the more an individual’s or a group’s social positioning is central⁴ the more she/it will be prone to participate. In this sense, not only being averagely educated, aged and rich could enhance political participation, but also belonging to a secure occupational category (regularly employed rather than precarious or unemployed) could be seen as a boosting element. However this model, still very relevant (Ruedin, 2007) was challenged as early as the sixties by Alessandro Pizzorno (1966). The Italian scholar pointed out that in some countries with strong presence of sub-cultures such as Italy, the centrality model holds only within the given subculture (intellectuals, party members, etc.) not considering the whole nation. Even though some scholars suggest that the role of these sub-cultures is fading, the issue has not been settled so far, and notably in some areas (such as cultural consumption) the political identification is still a strong driver for predicting behaviours (Bassoli and Pincella, 2010).

Among background variables analysed, education and active engagement in voluntary associations or in other social organizations are proved to be highly correlated with political participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; La Due Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998): as individuals’ social and human capital increases the probability of being politically involved also increases, confirming Pateman’s “spillover mechanism” (1970). Looking for potential determinants, literature has also examined more structured variables, both endogenous – such as the sense of political efficacy (Westholm and Niemi, 1986) and psychological elements – and exogenous ones, such as social

² For a wider discussion see Salisbury (1975: 325-326).

³ Political participation displays in different forms. The most fashionable classifications in literature are those distinguishing between latent and manifest forms (Barbagli and Macelli, 1985), and, within manifest forms, between conventional and non-conventional ones (Dalton, 1988).

⁴ Both demographic and socio-demographic background variables (i.e. age, level of education, wage, family’s level of education, employment status etc.) are considered to measure one person’s centrality.

context (Baglioni, 2005) and political opportunity structures (Baglioni, Baumgarten, Lahusen, 2007).

The classical debate over occupational status role in determining political participation turned to new arguments in the Sixties when the diffusion of unemployed collective movements, in particular in France, overturned the vision of employment security and social inclusion as determinants of political participation (Maurer, 2001; Piven and Cloward, 1977). In fact, political participation of stigmatized social classes (unemployed) is interpreted as a way to break social isolation and reinforce their social identity and utility independently of their status in productive and professional organizations (Demazière and Pignoni, 1998). Also in recent years, studies on unemployed and precarious collective movements in Europe (Baglioni et al., 2008; Chabanet, 2004; Della Porta, 2006; Demazière and Pignoni, 1998) have stressed their “counter stigmatization” role.

2.1 A theoretical framework for our research hypothesis: Italy, an outlying case-study

As described in section four, the sample is composed by people between 18 and 34 years old resident in the Italian city of Turin: a segment of the population composed by post-teenagers (18-24) and young adults (25-34). Studying young cohorts’ approach to political involvement is important because it is in those years that people develop attitudes and behaviours later reinforced in adulthood (Searing et al., 1973) and, again, it is through studying young cohorts that social scientists are able to understand the healthiness of a society.

Italians’ attitudes and level of political engagement have been studied in a comparative way in several pieces of research and Italy usually appears as an outlier together with other two southern European countries, Portugal and Spain. Undoubtedly, as Gallie and Paugam (2002) and Esping-Andersen (2000) argue, welfare regimes and cultural characteristics display a determinant impact on forms of social inclusion and participation. In the recent paper by Ann-Helen Bay and Morten Blekesaune (2002)⁵ Italy is the only country in the sample (with Portugal) in which unemployed youth trust politics more than their employed counterparts. At the same time, the overall level of trust is among the lowest in the sample. Furthermore, the authors interpret the high percentage of unemployment in Italy as a ‘counter-stigmatization’ factor among unemployed young people, who do not appear to be politically marginalized. The case of Italy is unique compared to other countries since political distrust and dissatisfaction, in general, are quite common among Italians. According to these authors “the high unemployment in Italy also contributes to a normalising of the situation

⁵ In this paper the authors analyse in a comparative way the impact of unemployment status on political marginalization (analysing three aspects: political confidence, political interest and political positioning) in a sample of young people (15-24 years old).

of being unemployed. One is no longer an outsider in society. The basis for a lack of political confidence is thus less. But perhaps equally important: political distrust is a majority attitude in Italy. [...]. Bluntly stated, it can be maintained that it is those who are satisfied who form the deviant group in Italy". (Bay and Blekesaune, 2002: 138). In the volume by Gallie and Paugam (2000) the Italian case study is examined and compared to other European countries: the involvement in organized (i.e. political) groups was determined to be quite low in southern Europe where social interaction is linked to an informal setting among friends and family and decreases with job security. Another recent research on youth employment in politics (Ogris and Westphal, 2005)⁶ confirms that a higher human capital level increases political involvement and finds a reverse relationship between age and sense of political efficacy: it seems that during adulthood people develop a sense of detachment and disaffection. The overall level of trust, satisfaction and sense of political efficacy among European youth is very low. Furthermore, it seems that new non-conventional forms of involvement are taking place: the relative majority of interviewees (about 47%) decide not to take a positioning on the classical left-right axis considering it as obsolete, but within this category of "non sided" about 40% declare to be quite interested in politics. Italy appears, together with France, the only country in which "ideology" and political positioning (often towards extreme poles) persists among youngsters that are significantly influenced by parents' positioning (especially when concordant).

Italian peculiarities are confirmed also by national research. The well-known yearly survey on the condition of youth in Italy (Buzzi et al., 2007)⁷ highlights that the percentage of young people involved in associations is one of the lowest in Italy, but that within the category of civic organizations there is an impressive trade-off between participation in voluntary associations (increasing) and participation in political and trade union organizations (decreasing). Milbrath's (1965) "centrality model" seems to be confirmed with socio-economic variables playing a key role and an evident polarization in associational participation between employed (in particular students with part time jobs) and unemployed (respectively 45% and 15%). "Passive" forms of political participation (talking about politics, watching political debate on television) are most diffuse, while among "active" forms protests, boycotts and symbolic actions match, and in certain cases surpass, conventional ones (Buzzi et al., 2007).

⁶ EUYOU PART (political participation of young people in Europe- development of indicators for comparative research in the European Union) is a project financed in the context of V^o field programme of European Commission and developed between 2003 and 2005. Internet site: www.sora.at/EUYOUPART

⁷ IARD's institute report on youth conditions is a national report written every four years since 1984. It is considered an accurate snapshot of youngsters' social condition in Italy describing attitudes, behaviours and opinions through quantitative data.

Moreover, an attitude of greater scepticism and subjectivity towards society, authority and top-down imposed values means that youngsters (especially in the under 25 band) are ideally conceived as overlapped political and social issues (Inglehart, 1993) : they tend more to mobilize in auto-organized “single issue” groups declared as independent, apolitical and fluid. Enrico Caniglia (2002), analysing young Italians’ relation with politics, formulates the concept of “individualization of political identity” : “when social conditions in which an individual grows up and is socialized lose their binding power, political identity formation process is individualized, in the sense that it comes mainly from youngster’s choices to define him/herself” (ibid:114). This “me generation” (ibid.) builds its own identity outside classical socio-political-cultural frameworks and conceives political involvement as a personal and individualized experience.

3. Turin’s labor market: historical background

Before illustrating the main results from our analysis, it is important to contextualize the research describing in particular the socio-economic condition of Turin. The city of Turin, following Rome and Milan, is one of the most important economic, industrial and cultural centres in Italy. It has one million inhabitants and is one of the wealthiest cities in Italy (29,400 euro per capita). This is well above the national average for production, and in the service sector it is ranked number one in the region of Piedmont and twenty-fourth in Italy (*Osservatorio lavoro e formazione, 2006*). The Province of Turin hosts 64% of its business in the service sector and 38% in industrial activity. The city has always been a window to foreign markets, but even more so in the last decade, ranking first across categories, from international exchange to the almost complete absorption of FDI by the Region of Piedmont. Over the past decade, however, the areas of specialization and production have greatly changed. Turin’s automotive industry, despite being greatly weakened by the economic crisis in 1993 and at the beginning of 2000, continues to be a main pillar in Italy’s economy and a key player globally. On the other hand, a number of different sectors have come forward offering greater differentiation and, subsequently, play a much more central role in Turin’s economy: ICT, design and strategic aerospace research, audio-visual production and the vast number of companies in the service sector (concentrated in Turin and not in the Province). Thanks to its history and solid economy, Turin has always enjoyed strong traditional political involvement and affiliation, via political parties and unions. In the past few years, however, this trend has changed dramatically, decreasing sharply along with the overall national average. As a result new types of political involvement have become much more commonplace. A clear example of this situation can be given considering the number of precarious groups active in the city of Turin:

seven units representing 20% of all organisations active on labour issues (Baglioni and Bassoli, 2009; Bassoli and Cinalli, 2010).

In scholars' opinion, Turin is changing its development model, leaving behind its long enjoyed industrial past and becoming much more similar to other northern Italian cities, most notably Milan. In a sense, this means that Turin's identity is changing. "It is no longer the capital of Fiat, which is now part of an global group", but rather home to a "vast amount of small new companies" linked to sectors strategic for the country's future (Berta, 2006; 2010). However, these changes have not been free of risks to the service sector, which have become evident during times of elevated crisis when there is a lack of media visibility and support from social entities, above all, from unions. During the current economic crisis, indeed, the industry sectors relied heavily on traditional 'social absorbers' (forms of public intervention to maintain unemployed workers' wage level) such as the CIG (*cassa integrazione guadagni*) while in the service sectors many contracts were not renewed, especially for young people.

The focal point of Turin's labor market in the nineties was a high rate of unemployment among young people in the service sector due to the sector's inability to create new jobs, above all, of low to medium level standing. To understand Turin's labour market, the focus has to be on the main trends (IRES, 2002; Region of Piedmont, 2002): decrease of the young population (greater importance of adults, and especially of adult women in the workforce); change from medium to high level degree required by the industrial sector with an increase in job offerings in the service and clerical sectors; and decrease from low to medium level jobs in industrial sector (because of technological changes – automatization and delocalization).

Workers with low or medium qualifications (high school diploma or less) are actually experiencing great hardship and it appears that Turin's current economic state is unable to absorb these unemployed people into the workforce. The result is the formation of a group of medium- to low-qualified young workers who have difficulties in finding a job, which already represents 50% of the young people in Turin compared with 30-40% in other northern regions as Emilia-Romagna, Veneto and Lombardy. Moreover, it is precisely this workforce category which has been most affected by the decrease in jobs in the manufacturing and industrial sectors since 2000 (-27,9% since 1999 to 2002 among young males aged 15 to 29 years old). Conversely, the figures for adults from the same sectors have remained more or less stable. Therefore, while most qualified workers up to the age of forty-five have been absorbed in the expansion of the service sector, adults over fifty years of age have been employed primarily in industry. These positive trends on the labour market were concentrated at the end of last century (unemployment dropped by one-third from 1999 to 2002), while the beginning of the 2008 crisis struck the city with great force.

Another important phenomenon is the increase of women in the workforce, which has proven to be capable of ‘filling’ the areas characterized by pre-existing unemployment phenomena. The trend and characteristics of the workforce towards 2010 were affected also by an ‘ageing’ phenomenon: decrease in young people, above all, in the 25-35 year old age bracket and increase of adults in the 35-50 year old category.

However these general trends were suddenly interrupted or worsened by the 2008 crisis. Given this macro economic picture, the crisis had a great impact on post-teenager and young adults. The Region of Piedmont ranks among the top in northern Italy with the highest rates of unemployment: 7% (Regione Piemonte, 2009). The industrial manufacturing sector was the worst affected while agriculture and the non-commercial service sectors appear to have withstood the impact. The public job centres data show a 30% drop in hiring in the first semester of 2009 compared to 2008. Temporary contracts and apprenticeships, which are most common among young people entering the work force (largely used by big companies in the industrial sector, construction and transportation) were the most affected contracts. The age brackets most affected are 20-24 and the 25-29, above all among males, marking a reverse in the rates of unemployment, which before the crisis was more prevalent among women. In addition, rates of inactivity (among those that are not looking for work, also known as ‘discouraged’ or “inoccupati”) rose +38,4% in the Province of Turin alone while the average in northern Italy was 35% (Provincia di Torino, 2009). Concluding the survey was undertaken during a specific economic downturn, characterised not only by the specific youth-related issues, but also by a general discouragement and negative attitude towards the future.

4. Targets of analysis

The dataset is composed by 1444 individuals belonging to age bracket 18-34 interviewed with CATI methodology between June and November 2009. This dataset is part of the EU funded research project Younex⁸. The sample is equally divided into three groups of individuals – unemployed for more than 12 months, temporary or precarious workers (holding temporary, seasonal or project-based contracts) – and a control group comprised of workers with permanent contracts (including freelance consultants) who have worked in the last twelve months and for at least 12 months in the same work place. Moreover, employees working in their family business have been excluded from the control group.

⁸ See Acknowledgments.

The average interviewee in the sample is female, born in Italy, 25 years of age⁹, with a high school diploma, engaged, without children, and residing with at least one parent. Overall, she is quite pessimistic about her future, but as concerns work, when unemployed she is very optimistic about finding a job within a year and when employed she is optimistic about finding a better and more remunerative one. First of all there is a lack of equilibrium between genders among the interviewees, above all, in the precarious group women represent about 62% (against 38% of men), while their presence in the long-term unemployed group is less than expected. These figures clearly confirm the labour market trend earlier depicted, as regards the high female rates of inactivity. With regard to place of birth almost all interviewees were born in Italy¹⁰. About 4,6% of the employed with permanent contracts said they were not born in Italy compared with only 1,3% among the unemployed (this being very significantly less than expected). The fact that the majority of foreign born interviewed belong to the employed occupational group probably reflects the fact that there is a potential bias in the sample created by the difficulty to reach certain categories of individuals (i.e. unemployed foreigners) who may refrain from answering questions regarding nationality due to issues related to work documents and residence permit.

It is important to take into account that compared to the other groups, the unemployed (the group scoring the lowest average age) are still able to survive economically maybe thanks to family support or because working in the informal economy. To simplify interpretation and analysis of age and its influence on political involvement two macro-age-groups were formed, 18-24 (called post-teenagers in the following sections) and 25-34 (young adults), consistently with national and international statistics (Buzzi et al., 2007). In order to properly interpret the operationalizations made, it is important to note the differential distribution within age brackets for the status of employment, i.e. there is a higher percentage of post-teenagers among long term unemployed, but this may be biased upwards comprehending probably also those individuals who are unoccupied (Buzzi et al., 2007) or “discouraged” (not actively looking for a job) and very diffuse in Italy among younger cohorts. Notably for unemployed and precarious the younger bracket is over-represented, while for the regularly employed scenario the older one is over-represented.

It is also important to consider the level of education attained since it positively influences political involvement in its various forms (Buzzi et al., 2007). Most of the interviewees in all three occupational categories possess a high school diploma, the highest percentage being among long

⁹ As regards the age variable, the survey encountered specific problems: the data-set was firstly focused on the 18-25 age brackets and later enlarged up to 34. Thus the statistics’ significant difference between post-teenager and young adult as regards labour status would be even greater in a random sample.

¹⁰ Since the Italian law on citizenship is very demanding, most migrants are still foreigners although living in Italy for decades. Therefore it is quite common, in the Italian literature, to use foreigners (as born abroad) as an empirical proxy for migrants.

term unemployed that appear paradoxically stuck in their educational level (too educated for low skill-technical jobs and not educated enough for high-skilled professions where a university degree is the minimum required). However, by focusing on intra-group level it becomes clear that there is an educational polarization phenomenon among those workers with permanent work contracts. Approximately 20% of these workers possess only a junior high school diploma: this may signify that they began working immediately after Secondary education or left high school before completion (drop-outs). On the other hand, approximately 20% of those who obtained a (three-year or Master's equivalent) university degree have been grouped together in order to simplify the results of the analysis. Post diploma education is more diffuse among regularly employed workers. As a matter of fact, in Italy professional courses are spread among young cohorts who want to enter the labour market (quickly or who are not able to finish high school); in this sense there is an effect of substitution between secondary education and professional education, thus confirming that among youth there is a polarization between low skilled and high skilled workers.

Table 4.1 *Data-set composition. Percentage, adjusted residual in parentheses*

	Long term unemployed	Precarious	Regularly Employed	Cramer's V Test
Sex				.081**
men	47.7 (3.0)	38.1 (-2.2)	40.9 (-0.7)	
women	52.3 (-3.0)	61.9 (2.2)	59.1 (0.7)	
N	480	480	484	Tot 1444
Born in Italy?				.089**
Yes	98.7 (2.1)	98.1 (1.2)	95.4 (-3.3)	
No	1.3 (-2.1)	1.9 (-1.2)	4.6 (3.3)	
N	458	474	483	Tot 1415
Age group				.100***
18-24	61.5 (2.0)	61 (1.8)	50.8 (-3.8)	
25-34	38.5 (-2.0)	39 (-1.8)	49.2 (3.8)	
N	480	480	484	Tot 1444
Educational level				.181***
Primary level (elementary and middle school)	10.1 (-2.8)	11.8 (-1.6)	19.5 (4.4)	
Secondary level (high school diploma)	75.5 (5.9)	66.7 (1.2)	52.0 (-7.1)	
Professional education (secondary education)	0.9 (-3.8)	1.3 (-3.3)	8.4 (7.0)	
Tertiary level (university degree or master)	13.6 (-3.0)	20.2 (1.5)	20.1 (1.5)	
N	457	475	477	Tot 1409

Level of significance: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

5. Empirical findings and first discussion

Both post-teenagers and young adults have specific trajectories of life, level of educational attainment and level of political inclusion, however they are both affected by the labour status they have and influenced by the life perspective linked to job security. As already mentioned, the general

assumption is that long-term unemployment leads to a general loss of self-esteem (Gallie and Paugam, 2000; Lazarfield and Jahoda, 1991) and thus to a lack of civic involvement and political inclusion (Westholm and Niemi, 1986). However the ‘theories’ briefly outlined can be converted into specific hypotheses, also taking into account the importance of subculture for Italian societies or the low level of stigmatisation linked to the unemployment status (§ 3):

- Hypothesis 1: trust, (political) satisfaction and interest¹¹ in politics (political attitude) among the sample of young people will be, for the most part, very low and in line with the recent national and European surveys (see §2.1).
- Labour status will have an impact: the level of political interest (as latent form of participation) will be lower among the unemployed in the sample compared to the other two categories (coherent with the hypothesis on social marginalization as the result of lack of contacts and social and environmental networks linked with the workplace) (hp. 2.1), while, according to the specific findings of Bay and Blekesaune¹² (2002), trust in Italian national institutions and overall satisfaction with national politics will be greater among unemployed youth (hp. 2.2)
- Hypothesis 3: the most common types of involvement among young people (at least among post-teenagers) are non-traditional, but rather new forms of political participation. Thus there should be a difference in form of participation preferences between the two cohorts.
- Hypothesis 4: if post-teenagers rely more heavily on non-conventional forms of participation (hp 3), as it seems from past research (Buzzi et al., 2007; Caniglia, 2007) then the actual level of political participation may be higher for this cohort if the effect is that of juxtaposition (hp. 4.1), or it may be analogous if there is a substitution effect (hp. 4.2);
- Hypothesis 5: If labour status is only a matter of security in the workplace, the position of precarious youth in all rankings (interest, trust, participation, etc.) should be in between the marginalised long-term unemployed youth and the employed one.
- Hypothesis 6: Overall in the literature (see Brady, et al. 1995), the classical background variables and the resource ones (Verba and Nie, 1972) continue to play an important explicative role for all categories, however it is not clear so far if they displace labour-

¹¹ As we will introduce later on the indicator is made of different variables able to assess the different aspect of values related to the latent form of political participation.

¹² Italy is the only European country where precarious people have a higher level of trust than those who are regularly employed.

status or if they increase the level of understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, according to Pizzorno (1966) the level of political polarization has to be taken into account to adapt Milbrath's centrality model.

Overall the picture depicted by the literature as regards the link between occupational status and political activation is quite straight-forward. There are not many competing hypotheses or understandings of this phenomenon and there is a total lack of speculation on the role of precarity in modern societies. Recently the increasing literature on flexicurity heavily influences the debate moving the concept of *precarity* from a specific labour-status to a mere position in the continuum between unemployment (insecure) and employment (secure but rigid).

5.1 *Precairity* is something different

As regards the first hypothesis (low level of political interest, satisfaction and trust), some clarifications are needed. Political interest is a latent form of political participation while trust and political satisfaction (close to the concept of political efficacy) are conceptually distinct but deeply intertwined. In the questionnaire latent participation was operationalised in three different elements: political interest, importance of politics and importance of political involvement.

For all the three latent participation variables the 'positive' answers score very low. The importance of being politically active scores the lowest (34,4%), followed by the interest in politics (37,2%) and the importance of politics (50,7%). As for the importance of being politically active¹³ only 34,4% of respondents consider it of some importance (either fairly important – 21,9% or very important – 12,5%) against 65,6% who do not consider it important; analogous findings are those for the interest in politics¹⁴ where 62,8% of respondents are not interested and 37,2% are at least fairly interested (28,7%) if not very interested (8,5%) . This confirms previous findings on the low level of interest in politics among young cohorts (Ogris and Westphal, 2005; Buzzi et al. 2007); gender and age do not play any significant role in this respect, while labour status (hp. 2.1) has an impact (Tab. 5.2). As for the importance of politics¹⁵ the questions were asked so as to give the respondent the possibility of giving a score between zero and ten; this gives a totally different picture compared to the other two variables. In order to make results comparable we recoded the variable into a four-point scale: 'Not important' (score 0-2), 'Not very important' (3-5), 'Fairly

¹³ Question: To be a good citizen, how important would you say it is for a person to...be active in politics. Possible answers: Not important at all, Not very important, Fairly important, Very important.

¹⁴ Question: How interested would you say you are in politics? Possible answers: Not interested at all, Not very interested, Fairly interested, Very interested.

¹⁵ Question: How important is each of these things in your life? Please use a scale from "0" to "10", where 0 means "not important at all" and 10 means "very important".

important (6-8) and 'Very important' (9-10). Scores are quite low but less than in previous questions: only 49,3% of respondents do not consider it important, while while 50,7% have a positive attitude towards the topic. However if we take into account the other values asked about in the same question (family, friends, free time, work, religion and voluntary organisations), politics score the lowest (4,99) and it is the only insufficient¹⁶ value along with religion (5,25).

When considering the other two variables, the situation is quite similar. As regards the level of trust in different political institutions, in a eleven-point scale Italian youth always score very low (tab. 5.3)¹⁷. Average figures are very low: they hardly reach six, and quite often are lower than five. Only a minority trusts the national institutions (government and parliament), while a small majority trust the municipal and the regional institutions; on the other hand the European institutions are those with higher scores (67,4% of respondents trust them). Considering the average political trust, only 51,5% of the sample trust political institutions¹⁸.

Finally, the third and last aspect is the satisfaction in the political system¹⁹ recoded following the procedure used for 'the importance of politics' (from a 0/10 scale to a four-point scale). The satisfaction score is fairly low (the average is below six), thus the percentage of young people satisfied with the way democracy works is only 48,4%.

Table 5.1: *Low values of different political variable in the whole sample. Percentage.*

	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Grade of interest (PD1/1-4)		
Not interested at all	33,5	33,5
Not very interested	29,3	62,8
Fairly interested	28,7	91,5
Very interested	8,5	100,0
Importance of politics (SD8D) - recoded		
Not important at all	25,5	25,5
Not very important	23,8	49,3
Fairly important	32,0	81,3
Very important	18,7	100,0
Importance of being politically active (PD2F)		
Not important at all	30,3	30,3
Not very important	35,3	65,6
Fairly important	21,9	87,5
Very important	12,5	100,0
Trust (PD2F) - aggregated		

¹⁶ Since most people link the 0-10 scale to the one used in school, six has to be considered the value of pass/sufficiency.

¹⁷ Question: In the following, we name some public institutions. Specify to what extent you do, or do not, trust them in general. Please use a scale from "0" to "10", where 0 means that you do not trust at all and 10 that you totally trust.

¹⁸ The index has been created by a rounded average of the seven answers divided according to the same procedure used for 'the importance of politics'. This procedure allows interviewees answering three five and four six to be recoded as a six, thus as 'fairly trustful'.

¹⁹ Question: On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country? Please use a scale from "0" to "10", scale where 0 means "extremely dissatisfied" and 10 means "extremely satisfied".

Not trustful at all	14,0	14,0
Not very trustful	34,5	48,5
Fairly trustful	45,1	93,6
Very trustful	6,4	100,0
Satisfaction (PD5) - recoded		
Not satisfied at all	12,1	12,1
Not very satisfied	39,5	51,6
Fairly satisfied	45,5	97,1
Very satisfied	2,9	100,0

As regards the second hypothesis, in this section we simply control for the presence of any effect of the labour status on the different aspects of political involvement previously presented in tab. 5.1. According to the literature, while latent form of participation should be higher for regularly employed youth (hp. 2.1), trust and satisfaction should be higher for unemployed ones (hp. 2.2). These hypotheses are only partially confirmed. The most politically interested group is that made up of precarious workers (45,0%), followed by unemployed (42,0%) and lastly the regularly employed youths (24,8%). These figures so far do not support the idea that political exclusion is related to job insecurity, above all taking into account that political interest has always been considered as a precondition and the baseline for political inclusion. As regards the importance of politics, long-term unemployed youth which consider politics important outnumber the regularly employed one by 7 points, but precarious youth perform better (see Tab. 5.2). Only the third latent measure of political participation confirms the hypothesis of the marginalisation of long-term unemployed youth (31,1% against 34,8% of regularly employed), however precarious youth perform better with 37,1% of the regularly employed.

Table 5.2: *Latent participation and the labour status. Percentage.*

	Long-term unemployed	Precarious	Regularly employed
Grade of interest (PD1/1-4)***			
Not interested at all	30,8	36,0	33,7
Not very interested	27,3	19,0	41,5
Fairly interested	33,8	35,8	16,5
Very interested	8,2	9,2	8,3
Importance of politics (SD8D)***			
Not important at all	22,2	20,1	22,9
Not very important	26,8	22,8	33,1
Fairly important	44,7	49,2	35,7
Very important	6,3	7,9	8,3
Importance of being politically active (PD2F)***			
Not important at all	23,7	39,0	28,2
Not very important	45,1	24,0	37,1
Fairly important	18,4	20,4	26,7

Very important	12,7	16,7	8,1
<i>N1= 1440 (n1=476 n2=480 n3=484); Cramér's V = 0,170***</i>			
<i>N2= 1436 (n1=474 n2=478 n3=484); Cramér's V = 0,088***</i>			
<i>N3= 1435 (n1=472 n2=480 n3=483); Cramér's V = 0,179***</i>			

As regards the second part of hypothesis two (hp.2.2), trust and satisfaction are more puzzling. More specifically the level of trust does not show any significant difference between groups using the standard procedure of recoding (Tab. 5.3, second row), this has been checked both considering only national institutions (as suggested by Bay and Blekesaune) and the overall political trust towards the seven institutions, as well as the bipartition of the Bay and Blekesaune paper (unemployed / employed). However using another recoding (Tab. 5.2, fourth row), results are coherent with their findings at least at the national level, but only considering the partition between the three groups. However when considering the level of satisfaction the group with the highest score is the regularly employed youth (51,76% are at least fairly satisfied), also controlling for age²⁰ and for the bipartition between employed and unemployed. Notably long-termed unemployed score higher in the top-most three values (13,11% against 12,2% and 10,08), but their performance is very poor among the 'fairly satisfied'.

Table 5.3: *Trust in the national institutions and Satisfaction the labour status. Percentage and adjusted residuals.*

	Long-term unemployed	Precarious	Regularly employed
Trust (PD2F) – national			
Not trustful at all (0-3)	22,6	24,2	24,7
Not very trustful (4-5)	27,3	29,7	35,4
Fairly trustful (6-7)	39,1	35,2	29,3
Very trustful (8-10)	11,0	10,9	10,7
Trust (PD2F) – national			
Not trustful at all (0-2)	16,3 (-1,0)	16,8 (-0,6)	20,1 (1,6)
Not very trustful (3-5)	33,5 (-1,8)	37,1 (0,1)	40,0 (1,7)
Fairly trustful (6-8)	46,7 (2,7)	42,7 (0,7)	35,4 (-3,4)
Very trustful (9-10)	3,4(-0,5)	3,4 (-0,6)	4,6 (1,1)
Satisfaction (PD5) - recoded			
Not satisfied at all (0-3)	18,03 (-0,4)	21,43 (1,9)	16,56 (-1,5)
Not very satisfied (4-5)	36,90 (2,3)	30,25 (-1,5)	31,68 (-0,7)
Fairly satisfied (6-7)	31,87 (-2,6)	38,24 (0,9)	39,54 (1,7)
Very satisfied (8-10)	13,21 (1,1)	10,08 (-1,4)	12,22 (0,3)

N1= 1418 (n1=465 n2=475 n3=478); Cramér's V = 0,066 n.s.

*N1= 1418 (n1=465 n2=475 n3=478); Cramér's V = 0,069**

*N2= 1436 (n1=477 n2=476 n3=483); Cramér's V = 0,068**

²⁰ Since Bay and Blekesaune use a different age group (15-24), we controlled also for an age effect, but there is no significant distinction.

As regards the variable trust, a few more words are needed in order to understand differences in the behaviour in the sample. As already mentioned, scores are very low, but there are differences: the trust level of unemployed youth is slightly higher with respect to City assembly, National Government, National Parliament, while the trust level of precarious youth is relatively higher when considering City Government, Regional Parliament, Regional Government and European Union. Generally, regularly employed individuals are those having the least trust in the system (as predicted), and differences are always significant (using the 0-10 scale). Moreover the scores of legislative branch are always higher than the executive one as is clear from table 5.4.

Table 5.4: *Trust in different political institutions (average based on a scale from zero to ten).*

Public institutions (PD4/average)	Long-term unemployed	Precarious	Regularly employed	Youth answering 6 or above
City government	5,43	5,56	5,34	54,4%
The City assembly	5,40	5,39	5,38	54,0%
Regional government	5,16	5,36	5,30	54,3%
Regional parliament	5,35	5,41	5,40	53,2%
National government	4,80	4,63	4,59	46,6%
National parliament	5,06	4,83	4,75	41,3%
The institutions of the European Union	6,00	6,15	5,98	67,4%

If perceived political exclusion has proved to be a difficult dimension to address, an easier task is the understanding of active participation (voting, conventional forms and unconventional forms). As regard the third hypothesis (Buzzi et al., 2007; Caniglia, 2002), suggesting that non-conventional forms of participation should be more widespread among youngsters, this appears to be almost confirmed: youth prefer new political actions (Dalton, 1988) to traditional ones (Milbrath, 1965). However, the most astonishing exception is voting, which is the most common political action (83,2% at the national level and 82,5% at the local level). On the other hand, considering participation in any other activity the overall rate reaches only 43,6%: among these actions, the most common are the non-conventional ones. The three most important actions are all non-conventional²¹: taking part in a public demonstration scores highest (28,3%), followed by signing a petition (17,8%) and participating in a strike (14,1%). On the other hand the most traditional political actions are least used, along with some non-conventional ones: contacting media (5,2%), contacting a governmental official (4,3%), buying specific products (4,9%), contacting a politician (3,7%), boycotting products (2,4%), participating in an illegal action (1,9%) wearing a badge and contacting a solicitor (1,7%), donating money (1,6%), action group (1,2%), work for a party (0,9%),

²¹ There are different ways of trying to improve things in society or to help prevent things from going wrong. Question: In the following, we name some political activities, for each of them could you please tell me if you have done it during the last 12 months?

participating in a violent action (0,2%). To have a better measure of the striking difference between these two sets of actions, it is possible to build two variables according to the division: contacting vs. protesting (Teorell *et al.*, 2007). Thus the ‘contacting youths’ (i.e. interviewee contacting either a person or the media) are only 10,3%; while protesting ones are 37,2%²² (that means that almost half of the young people signing a petition did not take part in any protest and vice versa).

If we want to check for a distinction between the two cohorts, the post-teenager and the young-adult ones, not all differences are statistically significant. More specifically young adults tend to participate more in a few traditional activities such as “Worn or displayed a badge, sticker or poster” (3% against 0,8% at a level of 99,8 significance), “Signed a petition” (21,1% against 15,4% at a level of 99,5 significance) and “Donated money to a political organisation or group” (2,5% against 1,0% at a level of 97,6 significance). Inversely they participate less in non-traditional ones: “Taken part in a public demonstration” (24,7% against 30,8% at a level of 98,9 significance) and “Participated in an illegal action” (0,8% against 2,8% at a level of 99,2 significance). However in many other activities there are no statistically significant differences (Tab. 5.5) and for some activities the difference is counter-intuitive: older youth vote less at the local level (74,0% against 88,2% at a level of 99,9 significance), they “Deliberately bought certain products for political reasons” more (6,9%) than post-teenagers (3,4%) (at a level of 99,8 significance), they also “Contacted the media” (6,7% against 4,1% at a level of 97,3 significance) and “a solicitor or a judicial body for non-personal reasons” (2,8% against 1,0% at a level of 99,2 significance) more than the younger counterpart.

While controlling for the age effect, we also take into account the possible role of labour-status. The ‘precarious hypothesis’ (i.e. the fact that precarious youth seem to be more active) is statistically confirmed in all cases, with the only exception being ‘taking part in a strike’ which is skewed towards regularly employed youth (for evident good reasons). Hence Italy is confirmed to be the country where precarious workers make up the most politically active group as compared to long-term unemployed and regularly employed youths. On the contrary, the ‘standard’ hypothesis about political exclusion of long-term unemployed is not confirmed at all. Most notably, the long-term unemployed group scores better than regularly employed in most of the cases (Tab. 5.5). There are only two exceptions: displaying a badge and signing a petition. However, on these issues, the age variable plays an important role increasing the chance for older people to be active. Since the older youth are more present in the regularly employed group, it is possible that the ‘relative’ high

²² To take part in a strike cannot always be considered a political protest, since it may be a firm-related issue. Moreover the added value is only a small 1,9%.

score could be due to the age effect. On the other hand, the same age effect (that is often significant) is not strong enough to help regularly employed youth to score better.

Table 5.5: Political activity. Percentage who have taken part in different kinds of political activities (⁺ when age is significant with a 95% level of confidence with higher values for older youth, ⁻ for those with lower level).

Political activities (PD11/1)	Long-term unemployed	Precarious	Regularly employed
The last national election <i>Cramér's V = 0,092**</i>	78,8** (N=452)	87,1** (N=466)	83,6** (N=464)
-The last local election <i>Cramér's V = 0,174***</i>	75,8*** (N=458)	91,5*** (N=449)	80,4*** (N=455)
Contacted a politician <i>Cramér's V = .078**</i>	4,2** (N=480)	5,2** (N=480)	1,7 ** (N=474)
Contacted a national or local government official <i>Cramér's V = .056 n.s.</i>	4,6 (N=476)	5,4 (N=479)	2,7 (N=477)
Worked for a political party <i>Cramér's V = .081**</i>	0,8 ** (N=480)	1,9 ** (N=479)	0,0 ** (N=480)
Worked in a political action group <i>Cramér's V = .066**</i>	1,5 ** (N=480)	1,9 ** (N=480)	0,2 ** (N=480)
+ Worn or displayed a badge, sticker or poster <i>Cramér's V = .020 n.s.</i>	1,5 (N=480)	1,7 (N=480)	2,1 ⁺ (N=480)
+ Signed a petition <i>Cramér's V = .105***</i>	13,1 *** (N=480)	23,0 *** (N=479)	17,4 ⁺ *** (N=477)
- Taken part in a public demonstration <i>Cramér's V = .051 n.s.</i>	28,7 (N=478)	30,8 (N=480)	25,3 ⁻ (N=479)
Boycotted certain products <i>Cramér's V = .045 n.s.</i>	2,5 (N=479)	3,1 (N=480)	1,5 (N=479)
+ Deliberately bought certain products for political reasons <i>Cramér's V = .020 n.s.</i>	4,8 (N=480)	5,4 (N=480)	4,4 ⁺ (N=480)
+ Donated money to a political organisation or group <i>Cramér's V = .051 n.s.</i>	1,3 (N=476)	2,5 (N=480)	1,0 ⁺ (N=480)
Taken part in a strike <i>Cramér's V = .274***</i>	1,0 *** (N=478)	17,6*** (N=478)	23,6 *** (N=479)
+ Contacted the media <i>Cramér's V = .122***</i>	5,2 *** (N=480)	8,5 *** (N=480)	1,9 ⁺ *** (N=480)
+ Contacted a solicitor or a judicial body for non-personal reasons <i>Cramér's V = .066**</i>	1,9 *** (N=476)	2,7 *** (N=480)	0,6 ⁺ *** (N=480)
+ Participated in an illegal action <i>Cramér's V = .100***</i>	2,7 *** (N=480)	3,1 *** (N=480)	0,0 ⁺ *** (N=480)
Participated in a violent action <i>Cramér's V = .037 n.s.</i>	0,2 (N=478)	0,4 (N=480)	0,0 (N=480)

There are different possible variables to control for the presence of specific trends in the form of participation, and as mentioned already there is the distinction between contacting activities and protest activities, but there are also other distinctions, between conventional and non-conventional forms, or between legal and illegal forms. However no distinction is definitive to define behaviour according to age (Tab. 5.6). Indeed young adults are more prone to contacting activities and

conventional forms, but there is no significant distinction in either protest or non-conventional activities. On other hand while there is no distinction between legal forms, illegal forms are quite spread only among post-teenagers. Notably when considering different forms of conventional forms of participation, the role of voting is so strong that the supremacy of young adults in the other conventional forms is overridden by the strong tendency of post-teenagers to vote both at the local and at the national elections.

Table 5.6 *Different forms of political participation. Percentage who have taken part in different kinds of political activities (⁺ when age is significant with a 95% level of confidence with higher values for older youth, ⁻ for those with lower level).*

Political activities, different aggregations	Post-teenagers	Young adults
Contacting political activities <i>Phi= 0,097***</i>	7,8*** <i>(N=834)</i>	13,8*** <i>(N=610)</i>
Protest form <i>Phi= 0,174 n.s.</i>	38,1 <i>(N=834)</i>	40,3 <i>(N=610)</i>
Conventional political activities <i>Phi= 0,109***</i>	8,3*** <i>(N=834)</i>	15,2*** <i>(N=610)</i>
Conventional activities and voting (national) <i>Phi= -0,088***</i>	87,6*** <i>(N=834)</i>	81,3*** <i>(N=610)</i>
Conventional activities and voting (any) <i>Phi= -0,082**</i>	90,2** <i>(N=834)</i>	84,8** <i>(N=610)</i>
Non-conventional activities <i>Phi= 0,009 n.s.</i>	39,9 <i>(N=834)</i>	40,8 <i>(N=610)</i>
Legal form of political activities <i>Phi= 0,029 n.s.</i>	42,2 <i>(N=834)</i>	45,1 <i>(N=610)</i>
Illegal form of political activities <i>Phi=- 0,075**</i>	3,0** <i>(N=834)</i>	0,8** <i>(N=610)</i>

As regards the tendency of post-teenagers to be more prone to non-conventional, protest and illegal forms of action, this has been proven not to be true for the sample. Since only the latter one has a significant effect, it is possible to understand if it has a juxtaposition or a substitution effect with other forms (hp 4.1 and 4.2). Its small magnitude (3,0%) has to be considered mostly as juxtaposition (2,8), whereas the substitution effect is infinitesimal (0,2). The same holds true for the young adults, but the small percentage using illegal forms of action (0,8%) is only a juxtaposition effect since the level of activity from the legal forms to any forms is not different.

Table 5.7 *the impact of illegal forms of participation. Percentage who have taken part in different kinds of political activities.*

Political activities, different aggregations	Post-teenagers	Young adults
Any Political activity	42,4	45,1
Legal form of political activities	42,2	45,1
Illegal form of political activities <i>Phi=- 0,075**</i>	3,0** <i>(N=834)</i>	0,8** <i>(N=610)</i>

As regards the fifth hypothesis, that is to say that *precarity* is something in between long term-unemployment and regularly-employed, this is not confirmed by different variables used so far. Indeed only considering the trust (at the national level) and the overall satisfaction with the Italian democratic systems, precarious youth score in between the long-term unemployed and regularly-employed youth. As regards both the latent variables and the active forms of participation, the situation is completely different. There is a coherent behaviour of the three groups: the precarious youth are the most active, followed by the regularly employed ones. Long-term unemployed people clearly lag behind in most of the items analysed. As regards the Turin sample, an important finding has to be put forward on a ‘precarious related hypothesis’: although precarious youth do not have more trust, they have a higher political involvement. Overall, most of the Turin youth vote both at the national (83,2%) and local elections (82,5%), but the peak is given at the local level by precarious youth (91,5% of cases).

5.2 Beyond the surface, the role of labour-status

While there is a vast literature on the SES impact on political participation and on the role of unemployment in fostering social exclusion, little attention has been devoted to the implication of labour-status on political forms of actions, above all with a specific focus on precarity. Moreover, as shown in the previous section the findings corroborating existing hypotheses are very weak, while an increasing amount of hints has been gathered on the specific role played by precariousness. For this reason in the following analyses we test the relationship between occupational status and political participation taking into consideration four different dependent variables: voting, any form of political participation excluding voting, conventional forms of participation and non-conventional forms of participation. The reason for this specific strategy is related to the strong correlation between precarity and voting behaviour as regards the need to compare the first dependent variable with the second, while the other two dependent variables are important to point out specific factors explaining different modes of action.

Since all these dependent variables are dichotomous (0 for “no participation” and 1 for “participation”), we used a multivariate logistic regression with a stepwise introduction of different sets of explanatory variables: occupational status (model 1), social capital²³ (model 2), political dimension (model 3) and background sociodemographic variables²⁴ (model 4). In tables odds ratios

²³ Measured by familiar (visiting relatives) and social (number of friends) support and societal involvement.

²⁴ The (household) income could not be considered since the response rate of the unemployed group was too low. We control for different variables: gender, age, educational attainment, country of birth, marital status and living with at least one parent. While the former variables are quite common, the latter one is country specific. It tries to test the role

are shown with their specific level of significance. Values above 1 indicate a positive relationship between dependent and independent variables (if statistically significant), while values below 1 indicate a negative relationship. More precisely an odd ratio greater than 1 for an explanatory variable indicates that odds are higher a number of times for each unit change of that explanatory variable net of other variables in the model. A value below 1 indicates a negative effect given by that explanatory variable.

As regard the first dependent variable (voting) the regression (Tab. 5.8) gives us the opportunity to underline a strong difference between voting determinants and those of other forms of political participation (Tab. 5.9)²⁵. Consistently with what we found earlier, the employment status has a statistically significant effect on voting, but only for precarious youth and employed ones (for model 1,2 and 3). More specifically, we can see that young precarious are more likely to be politically active than regularly employed youth (reference category). The effect for the precarious youth holds when social capital and political dimensions are included but disappears in the model including the sociodemographic characteristics. Quite interestingly, social capital plays an important role, not however in the standard form of volunteering but in the more subtle network form: having (a few) friends (that is a persistent effect also when sociodemographic variables are taken into account).

When political dimensions are taken into account only latent participation is significant. As regards this variable we have preliminarily checked for endogenous effect observing only a positive and significant impact on the latent participation by two other political variables (political trust and political extremism) and the gender variable (woman have a more latent participation than men). Finally socio-demographic variables do not play any significant role and they do not override the effect of labour status, as in other studies (Giugni and Lorenzini, 2010), on the contrary a major role is played by living with at least one parent. A clear explanation of these results can be traced back on the one side to what has been already pointed out by Bay and Blekeseune for Italian youth about the relevance of familiar resources for political purposes, on the other to the importance of citizenship (thus being born in Italy) for political activities such as voting where nationality is required.

of familiar support as depicted by Bay and Blekeseune (2002) or the lack of interest typical of the '*mammoni*' stereotype.

²⁵ We took into account only the voting regression, considering voting and conventional forms together: the explicative factors are the same as voting because of its wider diffusion.

Table 5.8 *Logistic regression of voting on selected independent variables (odd ratios)*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Occupational status (ref. employed)				
Unemployed	0,73	0,80	0,75	0,69
Precarious	2,22*	2,31**	1,98*	1,91
Social capital				
Visiting relatives (ref. never)				
Monthly		1,38	1,35	1,31
Often (at least once a week)		1,12	1,22	1,12
Number of friends (ref. less than 2)				
3-7 friends		1,96**	1,91**	2,08**
More than 7 friends		1,87	1,77	1,85
Associative involvement (ref. no membership)				
One association			1,02	1,26
More than one association			2,05E8	2,28E8
Political dimension				
Political trust				1,20
Political satisfaction				0,95
Extreme political positioning				0,98
Latent participation				2,68***
Sociodemographic characteristics				
Gender (ref. men)				0,89
Age group (ref. 18-24)				1,05
Lives at least with one parent				2,77**
Nationality				0,59
Educational level (ref. primary education)				
Secondary education				0,76
Professional education				0,97
Tertiary education				0,92
Marital status (ref. married or lives with partner)				
Partner				0,76
Single				0,78
Constant	9,72***	5395,13	2252,61	2358,94
-2 Log Likelihood	589,36	578,95	558,11	546,44
Nagelkerke R Square	0,036	0,059	0,104	0,128
N	980	980	980	980

*p<.05;**p<.01;***p<.001

Indeed when considering also political participation without voting (Table 5.9) the importance of voting as a ritual dynamic and not as a rational form of political participation (Pizzorno, 1966) is clearly pointed out. As a matter of fact, if we compare Table 5.8 and Table 5.9, occupational status loses significance. The effect of the set of social capital variables confirms previous findings, in particular associational life: it is not significant when considering voting and

becomes very significant when conventional forms are taken into account, thus confirming literature on the importance of social and human capital “spillover effect” (Pateman, 1970; Verba and Nie, 1972) on political involvement, in particular on active and costly forms of participation (Salisbury, 1975). Looking at the political dimension, latent participation has a strong positive effect in both regressions, but when voting is excluded “being satisfied” has a negative significant effect, while having an extreme political positioning has a positive one. Background variables do not show any significant values with the only exception of nationality whose effect is still very strong, undermining what previously mentioned about citizenship.

Table 5.9 *Logistic regression of participation in any political activity (without voting) on selected independent variables (odd ratios)*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Occupational status (ref. employed)				
Unemployed	1	1,09	1,07	1,17
Precarious	1,33	1,41	1,38	1,4
Social capital				
Visiting relatives (ref. never)				
Monthly		1,26	1,23	1,3
Often (at least once a week)		1,39	1,38	1,57
Number of friends (ref. less than 2)				
3-7 friends		1,62	1,63*	1,80***
More than 7 friends		1,25	1,22	1,34
Associative involvement (ref. no membership)				
One association		5,42	5,91***	5,70***
More than one association		2,53E+009	2,01E+009	
Political dimension				
Political trust			0,83	0,81
Political satisfaction			0,55**	0,52***
Extreme political positioning			1,43	1,52*
Latent participation			1,45*	1,53**
Sociodemographic characteristics				
Gender (ref. men)				1,25
Age group (ref. 18-24)				1,06
Lives at least with one parent				1,45
Nationality (ref. not born in Italy)				5,58***
Educational level (ref. primary education)				
Secondary education				0,84
Professional education				0,65
Tertiary education				1,51
Marital status (ref. married or lives with partner)				
Partner				0,91
Single				0,94
Constant	0,84**	1753,06	3929,82	520,82

-2 Log Likelihood	1347,17	1311,76	1274,38	1244,65
Nagelkerke R Square	0,006	0,053	0,101	0,138
N	980	980	980	980

*p<.05;**p<.01;***p<.001

Looking at Table 5.10 (conventional forms of participation) precarity positively influences conventional participation corroborating existing literature on the role of precarity. Also variables “visiting relatives” “and “being member of at least one association” have a positive effect. Among political dimension variables, as in the previous cases, satisfaction has a negative impact, while extreme political positioning holds a positive explicative power. A significant gender effect is present (being a woman has a negative and significant impact on conventional participation) together with a surprisingly positive effect coming from “age group” variable. Quite interestingly the number of friends, the latent form of participation, “living with at least one parent” and the nationality are no more significant.

Table 5.10: *Logistic regression of participation in conventional form of political participation (without voting) on selected independent variables (odd ratios)*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Occupational status (ref. employed)				
Unemployed	1,86*	2,41**	2,41**	3,39***
Precarious	2,35**	2,76***	2,70**	3,77***
Social capital				
Visiting relatives (ref. never)				
Monthly		2,12*	2,06*	2,26*
Often (at least once a week)		3,42**	3,49**	3,84***
Number of friends (ref. less than 2)				
3-7 friends		1,56	1,49	1,39
More than 7 friends		1,38	1,32	1,17
Associative involvement (ref. no membership)				
One association		15,24***	14,96***	11,81***
More than one association		41,31**	39,74**	45,26**
Political dimension				
Political trust			1,36	1,35
Political satisfaction			0,61*	0,54*
Extreme political positioning			1,17	1,39*
Latent participation			0,66	1,24
Sociodemographic characteristics				
Gender (ref. men)				0,49***
Age group (ref. 18-24)				1,68*
Lives at least with one parent				0,66

Nationality (ref. not born in Italy)				2,77
Educational level (ref. primary education)				
Secondary education				0,78
Professional education				0,55
Tertiary education				1,32
Marital status (ref. married or lives with partner)				
Partner				0,59
Single				0,55
Constant	0,108***	0,64	0,66	0,32
-2 Log Likelihood	640,35	573,73	566,64	539,48
Nagelkerke R Square	0,021	0,155	0,169	0,220
N	980	980	980	980

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Non-conventional forms of participation are especially widespread among young cohorts (Buzzi et al, 2007; Caniglia 2002). Social capital and political dimension variables play a crucial role for this form of action (Table 5.11): extreme political positioning and latent participation hold a strong and positive role. Interestingly, gender effect is inverted: being a woman has a positive and significant effect on non conventional participation. Quite interestingly the number of friends are significant while the “closeness to relatives” is not, the latent form of participation is significant again along with nationality.

Table 5.11: *Logistic regression of participation in non conventional form of political participation on selected independent variables (odd ratios)*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Occupational status (ref. employed)				
Unemployed	0,90	0,96	0,94	0,97
Precarious	1,20	1,26	1,17	1,16
Social capital				
Visiting relatives (ref. never)				
Monthly		1,19	1,15	1,22
Often (at least once a week)		1,2	1,21	1,4
Number of friends (ref. less than 2)				
3-7 friends		1,59**	1,58*	1,76***
More than 7 friends		1,18	1,14	1,27
Associative involvement (ref. no membership)				
One association		4,21***	4,51***	4,765***
More than one association		2,77E+009	2,31E+009	2,99E+009
Political dimension				

Political trust			0,85	0,82
Political satisfaction			0,55***	0,54***
Extreme political positioning			1,55*	1,66**
Latent participation			1,68***	1,81***
Sociodemographic characteristics				
Gender (ref. men)				1,39*
Age group (ref. 18-24)				0,98
Lives at least with one parent				1,45
Nationality (not born in Italy)				4,93***
Educational level (ref. primary education)				
Secondary education				0,87
Professional education				0,55
Tertiary education				1,7
Marital status (ref. married or lives with partner)				
Partner				1,13
Single				1,21
Constant	0,75***	1481,76	2817,10	421,09
-2 Log Likelihood	1335,95	1305,69	1261,17	1225,64
Nagelkerke R Square	0,005	0,034	0,103	0,147
N	980	980	980	980

*p<.05;**p<.01;***p<.001

Conclusion

In the paper the effect of employment status has been analysed to fully understand its effects on political participation. The analysis (both the cross-tabulation of part 5.1 and the logit regression of part 5.2) confirms previous findings on the same topic, while shedding new light on the emergent role of *precarity*. As regards the robustness of existing findings only two of them have been fully confirmed: trust, (political) satisfaction and interest in politics (political attitude) among the sample of young people was, for the most part, very low (hp.1); and the most common type of involvement among young people is non-conventional (hp. 3). However for the other hypotheses figures do not support previous interpretation: labour status has an impact on the different political variables, but a specific role is played by *precarity* (hp.2); however, its role is not in between unemployment and regular-employment (hp.5), also the classical background variables and the resource ones (Verba and Nie, 1972) do not play an important explicative role. Most notably marital status and educational attainment are never significant, as rarely are gender, age, active membership and the social capital variable.

On the other hand, *precarity* emerges as a constant pattern. Figures not support the idea that political exclusion is related to job insecurity, findings on both latent forms of political participation

(political interest, importance of politics and importance of being politically active) and manifest ones (conventional, voting and non-conventional) suggesting specific trends for the different groups. As already pointed out for the Swiss youth “a particularly striking result of our analysis is that precarious youth are more active in politics than both unemployed and regularly employed youth. The former are more likely to engage both in general and in more specific forms of participation [...]. The stronger political engagement of precarious youth holds when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and political attitudes in the multivariate analysis” (Giugni and Lorenzini, 2010). This effect in the dataset is very strong, so that we can delineate a “precarious hypothesis”: precarious youth are more active in all political forms (with the only exception of striking), supported by the highest level of political interest and attitude towards the political sphere (importance of politics and importance of being politically active). They do also perform better on political satisfaction and political trust with respect to regularly employed and they score lower than the unemployed youth only with respect to the trust in the national institutions, while they are more trustful as regards both the local and the European level. Notably the importance of the labour-status is not overridden by socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals or by their civic skills. Indeed, activism within the societal sphere (Verba and Nie, 1972) or individual social capital (Giugni and Lorenzini, 2010) do play a significant role in understanding political activism, but only concerning certain forms of actions.

Two aspects are still to be better analysed: the process of individualization and its age-related dynamics and the determinant of specific form of actions. As regards age impact, some more analysis is needed to confirm the individualization trend (Caniglia, 2002) of the form of participation. Indeed there is a general tendency of young adults to have both conventional repertoires, but with specific individualized non-conventional forms of action, such as political consumerism or media contacting. As regards the determinants of political behaviours further research is needed. From the four regressions presented it appears quite clear that explanatory variables' significance varies across forms of participation, implying the need for further analysis on forms of political participation and their determinants. Moreover as is clear from the important role played by the level of polarization in explaining political participation, more attention should be devoted to national or contextual idiosyncrasies, often overridden by comparative design.

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