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GRADUATE SCHOOL IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES

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**HAS ITALY BECOME A TOCQUEVILLIAN  
DEMOCRACY?**

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**A Longitudinal Analysis Of The Determinants Of  
Political Participation**

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*You must have chaos within you  
to give birth to a dancing star*

Friedrich Nietzsche



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. The Importance of Political Party Participation in a Pluralistic Democracy**

Democratic theories agree that political participation is, to different degrees, of core importance for democracy. Participation is interwoven with the very nature of democracy since it is a way for people to voice their needs in a free and autonomous way (Almond and Verba, 1965; Verba *et al.*, 1993). It has positive effects for the functioning of society since democratic competences are likely to promote increasing satisfaction with the system (Milbrath and Goel, 1977) and it entails positive effects for the individual, helping to develop attitudes, skills, and habits as well as a sense of cooperation and ability to deal with difficult issues and people (Finkel, 1985; Clark, 2000). This volume deals with the issue of political participation in democratic societies in general, and focuses particularly on one form of political participation: the decision to join a political party. This form of political participation is particularly important because it should be the main political participatory modality of a pluralistic, liberal and representative democratic mass society.

The problem faced today by contemporary democracies is that there is a widespread consensus among citizens on the legitimacy of democracy and on the fact that political parties are essential to the working of it, but at the same time they are highly dissatisfied and very distrustful of parties' organizations and politicians (Dalton, 2004). This fact is particularly concerning because along with the decline of social and political trust as well as of political efficacy among citizens, in Western countries there is also a progressive decline of political participation in formal institutions (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Patterson, 2002; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997). The issue of joining political parties is, however, crucial for democracy and a good indicator for its quality, since political organizations without any participants are no more able to perform their representative role of society.

### **2. About the Politicization of Societies**

Historically different ideas have existed on what the main goal of politics is and how encompassing political participation should be. Debates still exist today on the degree of

political involvement that is normatively thought to be good for a democracy and differences are based on the different relevance given to politics. Some authors believe that every citizen should participate in politics. Already in the 431-430 BC Pericles was emphasizing to Athens citizens the importance of participating in the political life of the Republic, defining a non-participating citizen as a ‘useless character’:

“An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of policy.”<sup>1</sup>

Also Aristotle (384-322 BC) claimed that man is a “political animal” who can only achieve the good life and maximize his happiness by living as a citizen in a state. More recently, political theorists like Benjamin Barber (1984; 1995) have defended the notion of a ‘participatory’ and ‘strong democracy’, in which an “unmediated self-government by an engaged citizenry” exists (Barber, 1984: 261). In this sense, politics is understood by these authors as an essential part of social life.

On the completely opposite side to Pericle and Aristotele we find authors that believe that people should be free not to participate if they so wish. According to them society should reach the point in which it can work without the necessity for citizens to dedicate a lot of time and resources in their daily life to political issues. John Adams (1780) for instance claimed that politics was necessary if only to free future generations from caring about it:

I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, Navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry, and Porcelaine<sup>2</sup>.

A big contribution to this debate has been made by Benjamin Constant ([1819] 1986) describing the difference between the liberty of the ancients and the liberty of the moderns. He held that the liberty of the ancients was a participatory and republican liberty, in which a restricted circle of citizens had the right but also the moral obligation to directly influence politics. It was, however, a liberty limited to small and

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, 431-430 BC, *Thucydides* in: Sabine & Thorson, 1973:28

<sup>2</sup> Collected papers of the Adams family edited by Butterfield and Friedlaender, 1973: 342



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homogenous societies. He thought that the liberty of moderns is opposed to the liberty of the ancients, because it is a liberal liberty that consists of civil liberties, rule of law and freedom from excessive state interference. The wider size of modern states necessarily limits direct participation in favour of electing representatives, which does not require citizens to be involved in politics on a daily basis.

In general, it can be said that in societies with low levels of political participation, politicians feel less representation bonds toward citizens and less willingness to fulfil their requests. On the contrary, in societies characterized by high levels of political participation, politicians feel more responsibility toward citizens and they are somehow more open to their requests, even though these societies are also characterised generally by high levels of conflict (Sani, 1996). Yet, high levels of political participation are not always and do not necessarily genuinely arise from the will of citizens to be part of the civic life, but might be due to oppression or power of the élite, and in this case they are not a guarantee for democracy (Lipset, 1960).

Although one of the most important principles in democracies is that people should first of all have equal opportunities to express their voice, these opportunities are not necessarily used in equal ways. On the one hand, since not everyone has the necessary abilities (Galston, 2001) or motivation (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002) to participate in politics, disadvantaged groups such as women, lower educated and immigrants might be underrepresented (Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; Franklin, 2004). If people do not participate because they are not motivated, these inequalities are not considered to be a problem for democracy. If, however, they do not participate because of unequal resources, they are. On the other hand, if opportunities of participation are not equally used, extreme, non-democratic voices might be overrepresented (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing, 2005). On a more pragmatic level, however, universal political participation fosters also questions about the manageability of the political system to realistically handle and be accountable for political participation of every citizen. For these reasons in a representative type of democracy, it is not the number of people who participate that is important, but rather *which* people participate. Active and inactive citizens may indeed have different opinions and interests, but, ideally, active citizens should be representative of inactive citizens with respect to their politically relevant characteristics (Verba *et al.*, 1995: 14).

This kind of participation would be able to represent equally each group within the population without overloading the political system and without ‘forcing’ unmotivated people to participate.

One of the greatest contributions of literature in this respect has been made by Alex de Tocqueville in his famous book that became a very important early sociological and political science work: *Democracy in America* (2000 [1835–1840]). In this text he studied the functioning of political society and its relations with various forms of political and civil society associations. Tocqueville developed the distinction made by Benjamin Constant between the liberty of the ancient and of the moderns. He thought that democracy was synonymous with equality, and that the statist tradition such as that of the French state, which had first experienced an absolutist regime and then the Jacobin revolution, was able to create equality among citizens. Yet, he also thought that by abolishing the body of the nobles and aristocracy, citizens were running the risk of being overwhelmed by the power of the state. Moreover, the danger with equality in a democracy was also that people become increasingly individualistic and tend to isolate themselves, becoming weak in their public life and increasing the power of public authority. The antidote that he found to this problem of democracy was the creation of a wide network of social associations such those found in the US in XIX century.

“There are no countries in which associations are more needed to prevent the despotism of faction or the arbitrary power of a prince than those which are democratically constituted. In aristocratic nations the body of the nobles and the wealthy are in themselves natural associations which check the abuses of power. In countries where such associations do not exist, if private individuals cannot create an artificial and temporary substitute for them I can see no permanent protection against the most galling tyranny; and a great people may be oppressed with impunity by a small faction or by a single individual.” (Tocqueville, 2000 [1835–1840], Volume I, Chapter 12)

### **3. The Pluralistic Democracy**

The conception of democracy proposed by Tocqueville does not seem to be one of participatory democracy. Coming from the liberal tradition of Montesquieu, Tocqueville predominantly saw associations as a need for citizens in order to defend themselves from the overwhelming power of the democratic State. Looking at the French state he was convinced that democracy (synonymous with *equality*) and *liberty* could not exist

together in the same society. His discovery, however, was that, although the US democracy was a strongly *egalitarian* society, it was also a *free* society and he thought that what was responsible for this was the network of existing civil society associations. Observing the federal system of the US, he then understood that the co-existence of democracy and liberty was only possible in a non-centralized, pluralistic structure of the State, rather than the traditionally centralized and monistic structure of France, because it allowed for internal differentiations through a plurality of self-governing associations. Political parties in this way do not hold the monopoly of political participation, since, contrary to the liberty of the ancients, citizens 'self-govern' themselves in associations while they self-realize in society in different dimensions than politics.

It is then a new conception of democracy that Tocqueville proposes: one of pluralistic representative democracy. He was first of all offering a view of how the relationship between political parties and civil society could be different from what he knew until that moment. A pluralistic democracy is the creation of different levels and forms of political and social participation, realizing a plurality of self-governments that have limited and restricted competences, but that allows a real participation of citizens in society. He indeed understood democracy as a sort of public forum that, in order to be effective, needs to be politicized in a way that allows for a pluralism of opinions and that make social conflicts explicit in different centres of power. It is in this sense that he thought that a rich associational life guarantees plurality of opinions.

#### **4. Equality and Bottom-Up vs. Top-Down Politicization of Society**

There are mainly three ways in which a society can be politicized, but not all modalities confer citizens the same levels of equality of political opportunities and of pluralism. Within these three types of politicization the importance attributed to politics might affect also how these modalities are seen. One way to politicize society is by increasing citizens' social resources. Better income, higher social status, and more education pull down the obstacles to participation in politics and should lead to increases in politically relevant skills as well as political involvement of individuals, the pre-conditions for the decision to participate in formal politics. The modernization process of Western countries during the 1970s brings, however, different expectations for the importance of politics attached to this type of politicization of society. One of the most known is the theory of *cognitive mobilization* or *individual modernization* of Inglehart (1977; 1990;

1997) and Dalton (1984; 2002). Although at first glance one might expect that the view of these authors is similar to John Adams' view, they have actually a rather opposite view. They indeed claim that increasing resources and education in society contribute to the spread of postmaterialist values among younger generations because of a discontinued need to worry about material aspects of life. Yet, contrary to Adams, they hold that political involvement is a very important aspect of postmaterialist self-fulfilment values and that it therefore increases with modernization. The change that political involvement and post-materialist values brings about is in the way individuals decide to participate in society, rejecting hierarchical and 'church-like' organizations types such as conventional political parties and trade unions, and with a tendency to join more bottom-up types of associations (see Van Deth, 2000). On the opposite shore we find Van Deth (2000) who underlines the importance of 'saliency of politics', instead of political involvement alone. He shows indeed empirically that, along with increasing levels of political involvement, higher resources in modern societies widen also the scope of alternative actions, therefore making politics less salient to its citizens who are free to choose whether or not to participate.

Regardless of whether increasing resources does, in fact, increase political involvement or not, one principle that everybody agrees on is that, in a democracy, the maximum amount of equality of participation should be assured. Although the amount of the acceptable inequality varies in each society, in advanced industrial societies individuals seem more prepared to accept a certain amount of *social*, rather than *political* inequality because political equality constitutes one main moral justification of democracy (Dahl, 1989). Yet, while the decision to participate in political activity happens at the individual level, inequality is an aggregate phenomenon, since it does not exist in a person but in a political community (Verba *et al.*, 1995). We can say that unequal participation exists if political participation is systematically biased towards the better-off citizens in a society because they participate more often than the least socially privileged. Political equality in a democracy is then primarily assured by structural conditions and availability of resources, but since resources are unequally distributed, merely increasing social resources does not assure political equality among citizens.

The dominant way, as detailed in the relevant literature, to create a participatory culture while assuring equality of participation as well as equality of representation is

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by fostering participation through bottom-up civil society associations. This view has been partially inspired by Tocqueville. He was indeed the first to describe decentralized associations of XIX century North America as ‘schools of democracy’, that is pluralistic, bottom-up and democratic organizations that are producing *citizens*. Decentralized organizations such as local government bodies and voluntary associations are more accessible and relevant to individuals than centralized government and make them more likely to become active within them and to learn civic virtues and public spirit through their participation. More recently, several authors started to claim that activities in institutions, also in those that have nothing to do with politics, can foster the development of communicational, as well as organizational, politically relevant skills, and they expose individuals to several points of view teaching them to deal with democratic competition in a pluralistic society. Neo-Tocquevillian literature, which very often gives a republican reading of this author rather than a liberal one, understands then political participation as the result of increasing ‘social capital’ and of participation in these bottom-up organizations (Putnam 1993; 2000). Associations are indeed thought to be able to provide civic skills even to people with low resources, creating equality of political opportunities in society, and in the end ultimately enhancing the quality of a democracy. Also many other authors such as Verba and colleagues (1995) analysed the beneficial effects of associations and their link to political participation. Fung (2003: 515) listed for instance several ways in which associations might operate: “through the intrinsic value of associative life, fostering civic virtues and teaching political skills, offering resistance to power and checking government, improving the quality and equality of representation, facilitating public deliberation, and creating opportunities for citizens and groups to participate directly in governance”. Warren (2001: 94) argues, however, that not all associations are the same and that these contributions cannot be at work in all associations or within the same association, since different associational types have different impacts on democracy according to “the degree to which an association is voluntary or nonvoluntary; the kind of medium – social attachment, money or power – within which an association is embedded or toward which it is oriented; and the goods or purposes of the association”.

Despite the importance that resources and associations as ‘schools of democracy’ might have for citizens and for democracy, historically the decision to participate in

politics have responded also to a third series of causes that comes directly from politics through agencies of citizens integration in the political process. This means that although formally free, individuals do not spontaneously decide to join a political organization or to vote, but they participate because of a top-down mobilization operated by political organizations, made with the goal of reinforcing citizens' political identity that will eventually lead them to the polls. In contrast to bottom-up participation in civil society, this way of politicizing society does not assure a genuine pluralism of citizens' opinions since it is guided by political parties that have historically been structured with a-democratic concentration at the top (Sartori, cit. in Linz, 1966). At the same time, however, researchers have observed that even a-democratic mobilization from above has historically had positive effects in the direction of making opportunities for participation equal. Verba and colleagues (1995) show for instance how this equalizing role was performed by churches in the US by teaching to less educated citizens politically relevant skills such as how to talk in public or how to write a formal letter. Similarly, for a long time political parties in the European continent have played a critical role in organizing and mobilizing voters, giving the possibilities to people to partially overcome their social inequalities (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Matteucci, 1990; Segatti, 1990). The counterintuitive fact is that this has been true for democratic settings, as well as for non-democratic settings. Huntington and Nelson (1976) describe for instance how participation mobilized from above in pre-democratic developing countries is able to give civic skills to people with less resources and to make society political opportunities more equal. Another example is the experience of Fascism for Italian citizens. The Fascist regime was indeed totalitarian and therefore interested in creating participatory citizens. Despite the non-pluralistic features, the fascist regime was a politicizing experience for many citizens that had never participated to politics before and the number of people that participated was enlarged. The interesting fact is that the culture of political participation that had been generated from above by the strength of fascist political organizations did not disappear with the end of the regime, but survived many years also in the democratic, post-Fascist Italian democratic republic (Riley and Fernandez, 2005).

Of the three illustrated modalities to politicize a society, increasing resources, increasing social associationism and increasing mobilization from above, the most

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desirable way to foster participation in a democracy is probably the increasing of voluntary social associationism that seems likely to be able to produce an equal and pluralistic democracy, as the praise of American associations made by Tocqueville suggested. At the time of his trip, however, the French author was also very aware of the existence of a huge difference of these organizations between a country with a limited and recent experience of liberty such as XIX century France and a country in which people were born equal and free such as the New World. It is then interesting to see in more detail what the Tocquevillian view on political parties and associations in different continents was.

### **5. Tocqueville and Different Types of Associations**

In the early 19th century Alexis de Tocqueville made a long journey from France to the United States, writing about his impressions on the major differences characterizing the political societies of the two continents (2000 [1835–1840]). As we mentioned, coming from the classical liberal political tradition, in his notes the French political thinker and historian was positively impressed by the way in which individual *liberty* and social *equality* seemed to co-exist in the democracy of the New World. In his country of origin, France, the long aristocratic order of the *ancien régime*, with a tradition of administrative centralism, combined with the revolutionary democratic-Jacobin experience had convinced him that rising equality of social conditions cannot exist together with liberty. Given the historical past of France, then, his major concern was that citizens had to be able to defend themselves from the abuses of power of a centralized state. He was also convinced that in a modern democracy, where individuals are increasingly uniform and equal, the State can exert an even more dangerous oppression than the monarchic past. Since control on the monarch exercised by aristocracy and nobles did not exist anymore, citizens were for the first time in history alone in front of the extremely powerful state and had to find new ways to defend themselves.

During his trip, however, he realized that in the US the situation was very different from what he had experienced up until that moment. In his analysis he tried to understand the peculiar nature of the North American political system, and what made it so different from European political life. First of all, he came to realize that, as a consequence of the almost ‘universal’ suffrage, American political parties were not

mere parliamentary groups as in France, since besides participating in legislative assemblies, they were also present in society in view of elections as forms of organization of public opinion. They were indeed in a process of transformation to become 'electoral machines'. Instead, in France, as well as in the rest of Europe, where restricted suffrage existed, parties were simply parliamentary groups, not yet organized in society as election committees. (Aron, 1965; Matteucci, 1990).

According to Tocqueville, the power of American parties at the beginning of the XIX century is reduced compared to the power of European parties for a series of reasons. The first reason is the huge geographical space and the plurality of centres of power of its non-centralized, federal government. The second reason is the habit of American citizens in relying on themselves without any expectations on social authority, reducing in this way the role of government, and making it less exclusive and therefore less important. The third, and most relevant reason to our purposes, is the fact that in North America several associations existed and had been created by citizens to solve specific problems (Aron, 1965; Matteucci, 1990).

This implies that at election times, political parties did not have a monopoly over the expression of public opinion. Rather, they needed to take into account a big part of public opinion that had already been organized by newspapers and associations. Associations were indeed truly bottom-up and they independently constituted themselves in real powers in society. They were not artificially created by political parties, and the parties themselves, operating with a sort of indirect structure, needed only to represent the associations' needs. The main difference that Tocqueville could see between French and American political structure, in this respect, was that while the former was monistic, closed and would eventually lead political parties to become organs of the State, the latter was pluralistic and open, and obliged parties to take into account, at election time, the needs of an already organized, pluralistic civil society (Matteucci, 1990). This was what was making possible the coexistence of equality and liberty in a liberal and pluralistic democracy.

These diverse initial conditions are probably relevant for the differences that almost a century later still existed between political parties on different sides of the Atlantic as the German sociologist Max Weber was writing in the early 1920s (1922). Indeed, American 'electoral machines' had not much changed, keeping a weak



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organization, cohesion and internal discipline, and operating a mobilization for elections, trying to make their programme appealing to the majority of public opinion. Continental European parties had instead deeply changed, becoming ‘mass organization parties’ that, contrarily to American parties, had a strong, centralized and bureaucratic organization, made up of professional politicians, but operating a permanent mobilization of their members through a deep penetration in society. In the first part of the XX century, many European parties adopted this party structure on the model of socialist parties before, as well as fascist and communist totalitarian parties afterwards (Matteucci, 1990).

According to Tocqueville, almost universal suffrage in US and reduced suffrage in Europe did not only affect the structure of parties but also the way in which the right of association was understood and the different uses made of these organizations. The right of association is indeed seen by this author as essential and “almost as inalienable in its nature as the right of personal liberty. No legislator can attack it without impairing the foundations of society”. Yet, due to different historical experience of liberty, freedom of association was experienced in almost opposite ways in North America and in Europe. While this right could lead to “advantage and prosperity” in countries “in which liberty is well understood”, it “may be perverted or carried to excess” by countries in which “liberty degenerates into license”. Due to restricted suffrage in Europe “there are few associations which do not affect to represent the majority, or which do not believe that they represent it”. They indeed “consider themselves, in some degree, as the legislative and executive council of the people, who are unable to speak for themselves”. Associations in the US, on the contrary, “know [...] that they do not represent the majority”. While in the US associations “argue and petition” since they hoped to reach this majority, associations’ objective in Europe was “not to convince, but to fight” the legal majority because they knew they would never be able to reach it. For this reason “they act and they command”, resembling more and more the Jacobin associations that Tocqueville feared (Matteucci, 1990):

“Most Europeans look upon association as a weapon which is to be hastily fashioned and immediately tried in the conflict. A society is formed for discussion, but the idea of impending action prevails in the minds of all those who constitute it. It is, in fact, an army; and the time given to speech serves to reckon up the strength and to animate the courage of

the host, after which they march against the enemy. To the persons who compose it, resources which lie within the bounds of law may suggest themselves as means of success, but never as the only means.

Such, however, is not the manner in which the right of association is understood in the United States. In America the citizens who form the minority associate in order, first, to show their numerical strength and so to diminish the moral power of the majority; and, secondly, to stimulate competition and thus to discover those arguments that are most fitted to act upon the majority; for they always entertain hopes of drawing over the majority to their own side, and then controlling the supreme power in its name. Political associations in the United States are therefore peaceable in their intentions and strictly legal in the means which they employ; and they assert with perfect truth that they aim at success only by lawful expedients." (de Tocqueville, A., *Democracy in America*, 2000 [1835–1840], Volume I, Chapter 12)

In this excerpt it is well highlighted how the French thinker sees the difference in means used by associations in the two continents. Tocqueville holds that the historical inexperience of liberty of French people led them to see "the liberty of association only as a right of attacking the government", since the first reaction of an individual that "has acquired a consciousness of its own strength is that of violence; the notion of persuasion arises at a later period, and is derived from experience". The critical metaphor he uses for European associations being similar to army is renewed in more detail also in another excerpt:

"The means that associations in Europe employ are in accordance with the end which they propose to obtain. As the principal aim of these bodies is to act and not to debate, to fight rather than to convince, they are naturally led to adopt an organization which is not civic and peaceable, but partakes of the habits and maxims of military life. They also centralize the direction of their forces as much as possible and entrust the power of the whole party to a small number of leaders.

The members of these associations respond to a watchword, like soldiers on duty; they profess the doctrine of passive obedience; say, rather, that in uniting together they at once abjure the exercise of their own judgment and free will; and the tyrannical control that these societies exercise is often far more insupportable than the authority possessed over society by the government which they attack. Their moral force is much diminished by these proceedings, and they lose the sacred character which always attaches to a struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors. He who in given cases consents to obey his fellows with servility and who submits his will and even his thoughts to their control, how can he

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pretend that he wishes to be free?" (de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2000 [1835–1840], Volume I, Chapter 12)

It seems then that Tocqueville was seeing social associations as the solution for making liberty and equality coexist in a democratic society only if a specific type of associations were in place. Since North American associations were subtracting tasks from the state, they were in this way able to limit its power. Social power was disseminated in a plurality of centres, the role of the state was not overwhelming, and political parties tended not to separate from civil society but to represent it. In continental Europe instead, due to a lack of associational tradition, associations were almost 'militarized', political parties getting into power tended to reinforce the State and to become part of it, using associations for their own purposes, rather than being a self-governing organ of civil society.

### **6. What if Tocqueville had travelled to Italy?**

The occurrence of equality through a politicization from above was not present in Tocqueville's work because when he wrote *Democracy in America* he travelled from France, characterized by centralized power and with a revolutionary past directed at the abolition of feudalism and privileges, to North-America, a non-centralized state without any experience of aristocracy. In a speculative argument we could wonder what would have happened if instead of travelling to the US in the early XIX century, he had travelled to XX century post-fascist Italy? Our guess is that he would probably have written a completely different book. He would have indeed surely found a very different socio-political context than XIX century France, but which, at the same time, was very similar for certain characteristics. In fact, also Italy was characterized by hierarchical, very ideologized and conflictual associations, as the French associations described by Tocqueville. We might then hypothesize that observing Italian associations, he would probably not have come to the conclusion that associations can work as 'schools of democracy', able to produce citizens and to enhance democracy as he did for American associations, but he would have rather confirmed his worries that associations were centralized, non-democratic and non-pluralistic 'schools of partisanship'. During the first 50 years of the Italian republic subcultural belonging in party-dominated social associations has indeed been particularly crucial for determining involvement in the

political process. After the Second World war, Italian mass political parties have been described as organizations of ‘social integration’ (Neumann, 1956) or of ‘negative integration’ (Roth, 1963), since they were surrounded by political subcultures with a communitarian base, that constituted themselves as a separate society, opposed to the dominant one, trying to integrate groups that had previously been excluded from politics. They were characterized by a strong link with a network of intertwined formally non-political organizations and a privileged relationship with trade unions, as a sort of state within the state and, therefore, *against* the state. The decision to participate depended on the fact that individuals were part of this close cultural and social context in which the political dimension was not necessarily explicit. Despite the many parochial characteristics of these subcultures, however, it has been observed that it was thanks to them that people coming from disadvantaged social strata have been involved in the political process with extraordinary results (Barbagli e Macelli, 1985), since voter turnout was over 90% and parties could count on millions of members. Moreover, as part of these subcultures, the main political parties had a strong ideological connotation, a bureaucratic and hierarchical structure, as well as a strict discipline of its activists.

### ***6.1 Political Participation During Fascism***

The relatively high party membership and extremely high voter turnout characterizing the Italian socio-political context after Fascism was in sharp reversal of its pre-totalitarian pattern of political participation, and even though it was almost completely dominated by and dependent on political parties, civic associationism was also quite high. Yet, this culture of political participation should not be seen as a proof of the existence of a conflictual but lively and participatory bottom-up civil society, but rather of a strong mobilization from above determined by the existence of ‘negative integration’ mass parties when Italy had become a democratic Republic. The peculiar structure of these parties had not come into being in 1945 by chance, but it clearly reflected prior characteristics of the political party shaped during the twenty-year long Fascist regime (1922-1943) (Riley and Fernandez, 2005).

Benito Mussolini and his party-militia attained power in Italy in 1922. Although they used paramilitary means, and, despite the disorders of the early 1920s, their path to power was relatively non-militaristic. For this reason they remained a political movement engaged in a political struggle, with the Fascist National Party (PNF) as a

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key institution of the fascist regime. On the one hand, in the late 1920s and early 1930s Mussolini started a process of normalization of the PNF to the state, thus eliminating internal party democracy and subordinating it to the central state, with the implicit goal of transferring the control over civil society to the party and party affiliated organizations. On the other hand, there was a process of “fascistization” of both the state and civil society. By mid-1930 a true “party-state” emerged, a sort of dual regime, with an explosion of membership in both party and mass organizations. By the early 1940s the fascist party had even more thoroughly penetrated Italian society. In fact, the process of institutional fusion between party and state had been only a partial success, since the party and the various organizations associated with it remained relatively autonomous throughout the regime. It is precisely the intra-regime competition, especially between the party and the state, but also within different segments of the party organization that produced a tendency to expand party and para-party organizations (Riley and Fernandez, 2006).

The striking fact was that the size and geographical reach of the membership of the PNF and its affiliated organizations was without precedent in Italian history. Membership expanded rapidly in the early 1930s, and steadily through the 1930s and early 1940s. From 1926 to 1931 the PNF reached around 1 million members, few years later around 2.5 million people had enrolled, and by the end of the regime it could count 5 million members. The fascist regime tended to incorporate the mass of the population in the fascist organizations either by taking over pre-existing organizations initially attached to the state or creating new party organizations (Gentile, 1995: 187). The first strategy was used more in the north, where cooperatives already existed, while the second strategy was used mainly in the south and the islands and was particularly important since these areas had completely lacked any modern political organizations prior to the March on Rome and the advent of fascism. Fascism tended to politicize people through a totalitarian approach to the social life of Italians, by developing fascist organizations that progressively drove the party into areas that had previously been *non-political*, such as family, sporting activities, and education. Also youth organizations were key institutions for the regime, and after 1932 they were the main source of recruitment. Their membership grew from almost half a million members in early 1930s

to seven and a half million members by 1938 (Riley and Fernandez, 2006). As Togliatti (1976: 75-6), the founder of the Communist party, writes:

Bear in mind that the only club that could be found before in the cities, villages and rural areas of the South was the gentlemen's club. Today there is a local [fascist] *Dopolavoro* [or after work organization] in almost every town. These organizations can be defined as compulsory, but the worker does find in them a place where he can pass the evening, where he can stay warm when the weather is cold, where he can play cards, where he can drink a glass of wine if he has money, etc. These organizations are very important, for they represent the link fascism has forged to tie the masses to itself.

It is no surprise that the institution of the party card (*tessera*) was very important: not only did it function as a way for citizens to declare their loyalty to the regime, but was also an identity card, the document with which one could participate in public life, and a fundamental condition for the normal pursuit of 'private' activities (Gentile, 2002).

## **6.2 The Legacy of Fascism on Post-Fascist Mass Parties**

The role and structure of the PNF had strongly influenced the Italian, post-fascist context and the structure of the *First Republic*<sup>3</sup> parties. The Fascist regime and the PNF developed a model of national, highly organized modern political organizations in which the civic sphere was party-dominated, and the institutions simply could not change what had existed until that moment. Indeed, the two, main, post-war mass parties, the *Christian Democrats* (DC) and the *Italian Communist Party* (PCI), were not only and not mainly electoral machines, but they were real *mobilizing* forces, providing the organizational infrastructure for citizen mobilization and more interested in increasing membership than votes. Firstly, they were direct membership parties to which individuals belonged by purchasing a party card (Galli and Prandi, 1970: 91). Secondly, these parties also dominated a series of extra-political organizations such as local welfare as well as cultural and leisure organizations. Thus, both in post-war democratic and non-democratic Italy political parties assumed a protagonist role in mass political mobilization, transforming themselves into constitutional organs and interclass organizations, based on autonomization of civil society from the State. Moreover, since in 1945 television was not present in Italian households, a consistent part of communications between parties and citizens, and between centre and periphery, had to

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<sup>3</sup> The *First Republic* goes from post-war (1945) to the 'Bribery City' (*Tangentopoli*) scandal of 1993.

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go through political parties that were deep-rooted in the territory, contributing in making party structure even stronger, contrary to parties created 'from scratch' in a highly mediatised environment (Linz, 2002).

Italian Fascism ended after a quasi civil war between the fascist *Italian Social Republic* (RSI) and a heterogeneous coalition of anti-fascist partisans, along with allied forces and monarchists. Anti-fascism had a very important role in the newborn Republic of Italy. As Michele Salvati (2003: 43) claims "the radical ideological conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century penetrated deeply into the initial definition of the Italian political system and into the ideological universe in which the public sphere of the (re) born democracy took form." From the end of the war until a few years later, divisions between the Soviets and the allies was unclear and Italy was an international battle ground since it had been liberated by the allies but the *Italian Communist Party* had played a crucial role in the anti-fascist resistance and, most of all, it was the largest communist party outside of the Eastern bloc. International tensions contributed to increasing the political conflict that also existed in internal Italian politics, which was very polarized from the beginning, and led parties to mobilize to their side the largest number of people. In this respect, it is astonishing how fast communism virtually disappeared in Italy after the fall of the Soviet Union, since it suggests how strongly political participation of the *First Republic* was mobilized from the top and not genuinely fostered from below.

In this context, relations among civil society units and between civil society and the state tended to be conflictual with high levels of institutionalized class struggle driven from above and by radical civil society organizations (particularly trade unions and social movement organizations). Even though we can go back many centuries in time in Italian internal politics to find political factions that acted as a totality with the goal of annihilating the adversary, such as the famous struggle for power in city-states from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century between Guelphs and Ghibellins narrated also in Dante Alighieri's epic poem *The Divine Comedy* (14<sup>th</sup> century), it is with fascism that the concept of 'part' has been irremediably delegitimized and destroyed. During Mussolini regime, indeed, the political system was modernized and the concept of political party became much more important than ever. Yet, at this time, the PNF was the only existent party and it became a totality for its members, whom had not been socialized in a way

in which possible conflict between different parts of society was legitimate, a principle that is instead at the base of a pluralistic society.

Linz and Stepan (1996) have argued, in this respect, that while authoritarian regimes such as Franco's Spain, which had tried to create apathetic citizens, have left to post-authoritarian democracy a legacy of 'limited pluralism', totalitarian regimes have left a legacy of no societal pluralism ('a flattened landscape'), particularly in a country in which the political party system has been modernized during this regime. The difference between legacies of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany on post-war politics is indeed due to the fact that in the latter case parties were already strong before the non-democratic regime, while this was not the case for Italy that had a weakly developed party system and very low political membership. As Galli and Prandi report: "...the idea of party membership as a natural part of civic life began to be accepted with fascism" (1970: 90) and although the fascist regime despised electoral politics, the first massive voter turnouts took place under the fascist regime and high voter turnout did not change after the establishment of the new Italian Republic, reaching 92% turnout in 1948 elections<sup>4</sup>. In the *First Republic*, PCI and DC were certainly particularly rooted in those regions in which socialists and the popular party were strongest before fascism. Yet, these regions had also been a key area for fascist mobilization in the early twenties, and while, before fascism unions and workers leagues were acting autonomously from another, in the post-war period these parties, and particularly the PCI, were strongly organized and linked to civil society associations (Ventrone, 1996: 123). Moreover, they were no more local parties rooted in the centre and north of Italy, they had, by then, become highly organized *national* parties (Riley and Fernandez, 2006)<sup>5</sup>.

If we are to study the determinants of political participation in a pluralistic democracy, the historical evolution of Italian political parties and civil society makes Italy a very interesting case to study also for an international audience. Why is it so?

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<sup>4</sup> Voter turnout for the last truly free elections in 1921 was about 58% but increased by more than 32% in the plebiscites of 1929 and 1934 (Piretti 1995: 315; 406). Earlier VEP (voting-eligible population) turnout for Chamber of Deputies were of 59% in 1913, 57% in 1919 and 58% in 1921 (Piretti, 1995: 404-407).

<sup>5</sup> Post-fascist mass parties still differed in terms of their regional bases, since the DC was more rooted in the Northeast, particularly in Veneto, while the PCI was more rooted in the Centre-north, above all in Emilia Romagna and Tuscany. Yet, in southern Italy where this old geographical polarization did not exist before, high DC and PCI votes existed together in the same geographical areas.



## 7. Why is Italy an Interesting Case to Study?

In the early 60s a very famous, five-country comparative study by Almond and Verba (1963), *The Civic Culture*, described Italy as a country characterized both by high disaffection and low social participation. According to these authors, the decentralized pluralistic democracy seen by Tocqueville in his trip to the New World was certainly still non-existing in Italy more than a century later. Post-war Italy was indeed divided between a partisan minority that actively participated in political parties (and related organizations), and those who did not participate at all. This was not a picture of a healthy pluralistic democracy, particularly if compared with other more economically advanced countries, characterized by a *participant* (and not partisan) civic culture. The *participatory* model of citizenship was indeed characterized by individuals with high levels of trust toward the authority, political institutions and political actors, and by high levels of political efficacy, as well as high participatory behaviour. In opposition to this type of political culture, Italy was labelled as a country with a predominant *parochial* political culture.

In the last sixty years Italian society has undergone a process of modernization, at least apparently significantly changing the context of *parochial* civic culture of the late 1950s. At the end of 1960s mass scholarization increased the levels of resources in society, an intense season of social mobilization led to an expansion of civil society participation, and the process of secularization brought about a gradual separation from subcultural belonging (Parisi and Pasquino, 1977; Mannheim and Sani, 1987; Corbetta, Parisi and Schadee 1988). After all these changes, levels of social participation increased and expanded through the 1960s and 1970s, as well as a real growth in voluntarism took place during the 1990s (La Valle, 2003).

The case of Italy is a very interesting one to study because according to the neo-Tocquevillian thesis of *political socialization* of associations, the participatory culture of a society is produced from below and by a spread of associationism. Following this thesis, the slow, but persistent, upward movement of Italian social participation and civil associations should have then transformed Italian *parochial* citizens into *participatory* citizens, with higher political efficacy and less partisan views, closer to the ideal model of citizen drawn by Almond and Verba (1963) and more likely to engage in political activities. Social participation, now much more independent from

politics than in the past, as well as increasing education in society, should have indeed made citizens become more efficacious and trustworthy in the way the political system works, and more likely to participate at higher rates in politics and in less partisan ways.

The evolution of the Italian socio-political system, how it has been reported in literature, has however been completely different from this scenario. This means that, in light of neo-Tocquevillian theories of social capital, we are therefore facing a paradox. First of all, the increase of independent social associations, along with scholarization, does not seem to have brought about any change in levels of society's political disaffection. This negative attitude toward political participation has indeed stayed quite constant (and extremely high) through the years (Segatti, 2006). Political disaffection has actually been a widespread attitude among citizens of this country for a very long time, appearing here much earlier than in other countries, but changing contexts has not affected its high levels (Segatti, 2006; La Palombara, 1965; Banfield, 1958; Putnam, 1993). At the same time, conventional political participation, relatively high in the 1960s compared to other countries, not only has not increased in the last sixty years as expected by these theories, but has actually decreased. Participation in political parties and in trade unions has indeed undergone a slow but profound crisis since the 1980s. Also, electoral participation that had been surprisingly high since the end of the war (more than 90% turnout), and quite stable for many years, started to decrease.

What appears from these macro level trends of the socio-political context is that in Italy the theory that sees the spread of social associations as producing participatory citizens has not worked, and the three indicators of interest, social participation, political disaffection and political participation, seem to follow rather independent behavioural paths. Why is it so? How has it been the relationship between civil society and political participation in Italy and how does efficacy interact with these two types of participation? It seems crucial to us to verify the relationship at work at the analytical level. This, in particular, is an extremely important issue because if the same results found at the macro level were also to be found at the individual level it would mean that the Italy of today is still not the pluralistic democracy that Tocqueville was talking about, with reference to US society, and that was to be expected after a growth in social associationism. But if this is the case, how is it possible to explain that political participation was so high when independent civil associations were virtually non-

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existent? What influence had the top-down process that led to a politicization of Italian society on democratic socio-political Italian context? And how has this affected the relationship between political participation, civil society participation and political disaffection? Who is responsible for the low levels of political efficacy and for decreasing political participation, while social associationism is growing?

This study is very important for understanding Italy dynamics but it has however much wider implications that go beyond the specificity of a single country. If similar results between macro and micro levels were to be found, this would also mean that the underlying mechanism hypothesized by social capital theories would be undermined, at least in its universalistic perspective. Although, due to time constraints, investigating different contexts is not the concern of this study, if the thesis of *political socialization* of associations should not work in Italy, we would be faced with two possible, yet different, scenarios: either Italy is an exception because is a very peculiar country, or the thesis of social capital does not work everywhere indiscriminately and is not the 'easily exportable' thesis it has been thought about until today. This would not necessarily mean that the thesis of 'social capital' does not work at all. Rather, that it might be context-dependent and that perhaps that it functions properly only if a certain structure of the political system and a certain relationship between the state, civil society and political parties is in place. And this is a particularly relevant issue if we consider that, historically, America and Europe have been politicized in very different ways.

In this volume we limit our research to analyzing the Italian context, exploring whether the macro-level connection between social participation, political efficacy and political participation can be found also at the micro-level, and we do this in a longitudinal way. With a single country study it is not easy to disentangle the degree to which civic associationism (or social capital) is able to produce participatory citizens and to cause a pluralistic democracy, one aspect being political participation; or, rather whether the determining feature of participation is, in fact, the structure of parties and of the political system. It is not easy because the socio-political context does not vary in a single country and is not compared to different contexts. We are however able to make one crucial first step verifying if the mechanism of *political socialization* is at work in this country or not. And if not, we are left with understanding why this is possibly not so, which then asks for a future similar empirical longitudinal but comparative study.

Although we focus throughout most of the volume on bottom-up politicization theses, both for understanding the ways in which participation can be explained and for the consequences for democracy that might originate from them, it is then crucial to keep in mind the difference between the two radically different modalities of bottom-up and top-down participatory culture that might lead citizens to join political parties or to vote.

## **8. What This Volume is About?**

This volume consists in two main parts. The first one includes Chapter 1 to 3 and relate to a broad and extensive literature review on the world of political and social participation as well as of political disaffection, both in general terms and in more specific terms relating to the Italian case. The starting point is a general theoretical framework in Chapter 1 on the most known theories existent in literature that explain the decision to participate in political actions. We build a theoretical analytical model including all these theories taking into account determinants of different levels influencing the decision to participate politically for both the demand and the supply side. We therefore consider micro, meso and macro levels, as well as exogenous and endogenous variables. The empirical analyses of the volume concern only a small part of the model we sketch in the first chapter. Yet, we are to use the entire theoretical model throughout the whole research as a reference for a more complete interpretation of our results and as a guide to our analyses. In Chapter 2 after shedding light on the complex and differently defined concepts of political disaffection and social capital, and the relationship that exists between them, we present a literature review of the evolution of the Italian socio-political context since the end of World War II with respect to participatory behaviour and disaffection. We finally better define the analytical focus of our research and of our analyses. While in Chapter 1 and 2 we list and reflecting upon theories that use different definitions of the three main concepts we are interested in (political participation, civil society participation and disaffection), in Chapter 3 we define the way we are using these concepts in our analysis, understanding political participation as mainly the decision to join political organizations or voting, civil society participation as the decision to join non-political social associations, and disaffection as the political efficacy attitude.

The second part of the research includes Chapter 4 to 8 and relates to the empirical analyses of the Italian socio-political context. This study is first of all a

## Introduction

longitudinal investigation. We want to research first in a descriptive and then in analytical ways how social and political participation as well as citizens' attitudes have changed across time. In Chapter 4 we describe through secondary data analysis the evolution of the Italian socio-political context since the early 1960s using multiple sources of national and international surveys, increasing validity of results through triangulation. We map the longitudinal trends of the most commonly measured modes of conventional and unconventional political participation, of participation in broad categories of civil society associations, as well as individual attitudes of political efficacy, framing also the country participatory behaviour in an international perspective. In order to have a better manageable dataset, in Chapter 5 we build a single pooled dataset using five repeated national and international survey series already explored in Chapter 4. This does not only allow us to correct for possible survey source bias, but also to run analyses on longitudinal trends. We construct a few hypotheses linking education and time in its time-period, political cohort and life-cycle aspects, in order to test whether the thesis of *individual modernization* (Inglehart, 1977, 1997; Dalton, 1984; 2002) has been at work in Italy after the post-war process of societal modernization that has increased resources and scholarized the masses. After a short description of the main characteristics of associations' members across time, in Chapter 6 we will test these hypotheses on two broad types of associations. According to the theory of *individual modernization*, with the spread of education and of post-modern value orientations, hierarchical, 'church-like' associations such as political parties and trade unions should be increasingly less popular among well-educated younger generations. At the same time bottom-up civil society associations such as activist associations, but also as professional, civic, as well as leisure associations should be instead more popular among the same population group compared to the past.

This research is not only a longitudinal study, but it is also a research that focuses on causal mechanisms acting at the individual level between different types of participation. In Chapter 7 we move indeed to a more analytical level constructing several hypotheses in order to study the existent causal relationship between social participation, political participation and political efficacy. Since it is impossible to construct a causal model with cross-section data, in order to test these relations we use a three-waves panel data on Italian elections studies (*Itanes*), a great resource for

answering this question. At the macro level it seems that in Italy these have been rather independent concepts and the famous and dominant neo-Tocquevillian theory of participatory culture (Almond and Verba, 1963) and of social capital (Putnam, 1993, 2000) does not seem to be at work since higher levels of associationism in society have not led to higher levels of political efficacy nor of political participation. The former has indeed remained constant and extremely low across time, while the latter, at high levels after the Second World War has started to decline in the case of voting and has dramatically dropped in the case of party membership. In Chapter 8, after a brief descriptive analysis of data, through structural equation modelling (SEM) we test for several forms of association, whether at the micro level the theory of *political socialization* of associations holds in our panel as formalized by Verba and colleagues (1995) in the analytical *civic voluntarism model*. We also test alternative models, such as the theory of *self-selection* (Erbe, 1964; Hooghe, 2003; Armingeon, 2007), or the theory of *reverse causation* (Finkel, 1985; 1987). Finally, in order to give more insight to our findings we run a latent class analysis identifying different profiles of participation among the Italian population.

In Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, we summarize our findings, thinking upon the general interpretation of results and discuss the implications for future research. The importance of a similar study on the Italian case is straightforward. First of all, the questions we pose can be applied elsewhere and are very relevant to shed light particularly on the mechanism that make people join political parties. Secondly, the relationship between associations and political participation, as well as the other problems we face are well known in the international academic debate. There is, however, often a tendency to prefer cross-section analysis comparing different countries at a certain point in time. Indeed, longitudinal models that take into account different causal directions of the relation between the three core variables mentioned above have only occasionally been built. The ideal study would be a longitudinal cross-country comparative study that is unfortunately not possible at this time. Having to choose between another cross-section comparative research and an innovative longitudinal study, we chose the latter, yet consequently having to focus on one single country. Research of this kind is new in Italy, since here causal models of political participation have never been tested before. Only one panel dataset on political participation exists

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and to our knowledge it is the first time that it has been used for this purpose, and this allows us to make an original contribution to the Italian academic field. By making an in-depth study on the causal mechanism that explains participatory behaviour in a specific country in order to be able to reason more intensely on the mechanism at work between civil society and political participation we also make an interesting contribution to the international academic community. Starting from this study, in future research we will hopefully be able to generalize and test whether our results are also found in other countries with historical backgrounds different from Italy.

# **PART I**

## **The World Of Participation and Disaffection**



## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **AN ANALYTICAL MODEL FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Political behaviour literature has defined political participation in many different ways. Part of the debate over the role of political organizations in contemporary societies, over the determinants of political behaviour and over the decline of conventional political participation among citizens refers to disagreements over conceptualization. Definitions are thus pivotal because they affect the outcome of the analyses. The first thing one has to do when undertaking research in this area is to develop and clarify a good definition for political participation that is to be used throughout the entire volume. Political participation is used by us in the way most classical studies of political behaviour literature define it: “voting and voluntary activity by private citizens within political organizations designed to directly influence government decision-making”. Although we take into account also other types of participation, within this definition of political participation we are particularly interested in membership of political parties. Many studies have indeed observed a worrisome decline in this peculiar act of political participation in Western democracies across time (e.g. Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000).

We leave to Chapter 3 more details about the process that led us to define political participation in this way, as well as to the process that led us to the definitions of the two other relevant concepts used in this volume: social participation and political efficacy. In this chapter we want to review and organize the main explanatory models for individual political behaviour that can be found in literature, without focusing on the different concepts of political participation that have been used by different authors and the different participatory modality that a specific mechanism refers to. Our goal is indeed of having a wide perspective on the existing mechanisms at work able to influence the decision of a citizen to participate in formal politics. In order to do this we first build an analytical model of political participation which does not only take into account the political demand, such as the characteristics of citizens and the context they experience, but also the political supply, and, more in general, the existing socio-political system. This will serve as a theoretical road map to guide us throughout this

study. Although in this volume we are not going to investigate empirically all the mechanisms we list, by building a complete analytical model we want to make easier the framing of each part of the research in a wider and more complete context, as well as always to let us know where we stand.

## **1.2 How can we explain political behaviour?**

One of the most important questions in democratic literature is how political behaviour can be explained. In the introduction we talked about the importance of political parties and of their representative role in a pluralistic and liberal democracy and in this research we are particularly, even though not exclusively, interested in why people decide to join political parties, and, to a lesser extent, why citizens go to the polls at national elections to express their preference for a specific party. When trying to analyse political activity and behaviour, the set of theories addressing the question of who participates and why and that give us insights on how we can explain political participation include two main approaches. The first one concentrates on individual attributes that are systematically related to various forms of political participation. Literature on participation refers to a heterogeneous set of these factors that are however mainly based on individual level socio-economic resources (SES), and that are often limited to identifying which variable is associated with a political behaviour. In this type of approach, underlying mechanisms of how and when socio-demographic characteristics of citizens can be transformed into politically relevant resources are not always self-evident and explicit, nor even are they always empirically tested.

The second one takes a step further and fills this gap by trying to disentangle the causal mechanisms that link certain individual characteristics to the decision of citizens to participate. Some of them are interpretative explanations of results of (multiple) associations analysis found through regression. Some other mechanisms are included in theoretical models from the beginning with the purpose of trying to disentangle how the relationship between characteristics and political participation works. The most important thing is that these theories often consider only micro-level explanatory mechanisms, while less often they focus also on higher levels of explanations. Yet, opportunities for participating in political activity are not only a function of individual characteristics as behavioural approaches seem to claim (micro level), but, to a larger extent, they are also a function of the political and social context in which citizens live

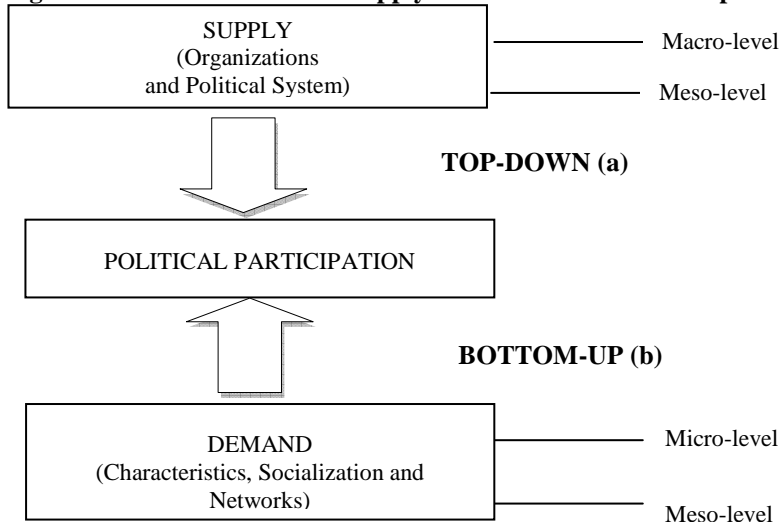
in. Being part of social institutions, like families, social associations, as well as social movements, enhance (or not) civic attitudes and give chances to expand individual networks. The most interesting theories are those which focused, along with individual characteristics, on context.

Many of these studies are, however, not able to give the whole picture and to explain thoroughly the decision to take a political action since they predominantly concentrate only on the demand side of politics. Changes in the amount of political participation in a society across time are indeed, more or less comprehensively, usually understood in sociological literature as a consequence of social transformations. Also the widespread neo-Tocquevillian theses of ‘social capital’ and of social associations as ‘school of democracy’ (e.g. Putnam 1993, 2000), are going in this direction, since social associations are thought to teach individuals how to become citizens by providing them with pre-political skills. If, due to social transformations, the amount of social capital in society increases, there will also be an increase in participation in political affairs; if the amount of social capital in societies decreases, political participation should diminish as well. However useful focusing on the demand side of political participation may be, if we only look at this we run the risk of looking at one side of the coin with the necessary result of putting great limitations on the explanatory power of our models. The other side of the coin is indeed represented by the supply side of political participation, which is more rarely studied in political behaviour research, and is studied even less together with the demand side. The network of existing social and political organizations along with their organizational structure and the way they relate to citizens through communication and mobilization are indeed also very relevant to the explanation of the individual choice to take (or not) part in a political act both in democratic and non-democratic regimes, because it determines the participatory choice a citizen has (meso level). Moreover, crucial elements are also the characteristics of the institutional context by which this network is regulated and that regulates as well participation modalities of citizens (macro level).

In Figure 1.1 we present a synthetic model indicating the different levels of action of the determinants of political participatory behaviour. We mainly distinguish between bottom-up decisions to participate that come from individual characteristics (micro-level), group socialization and networks (meso-level), and participation fostered by top-

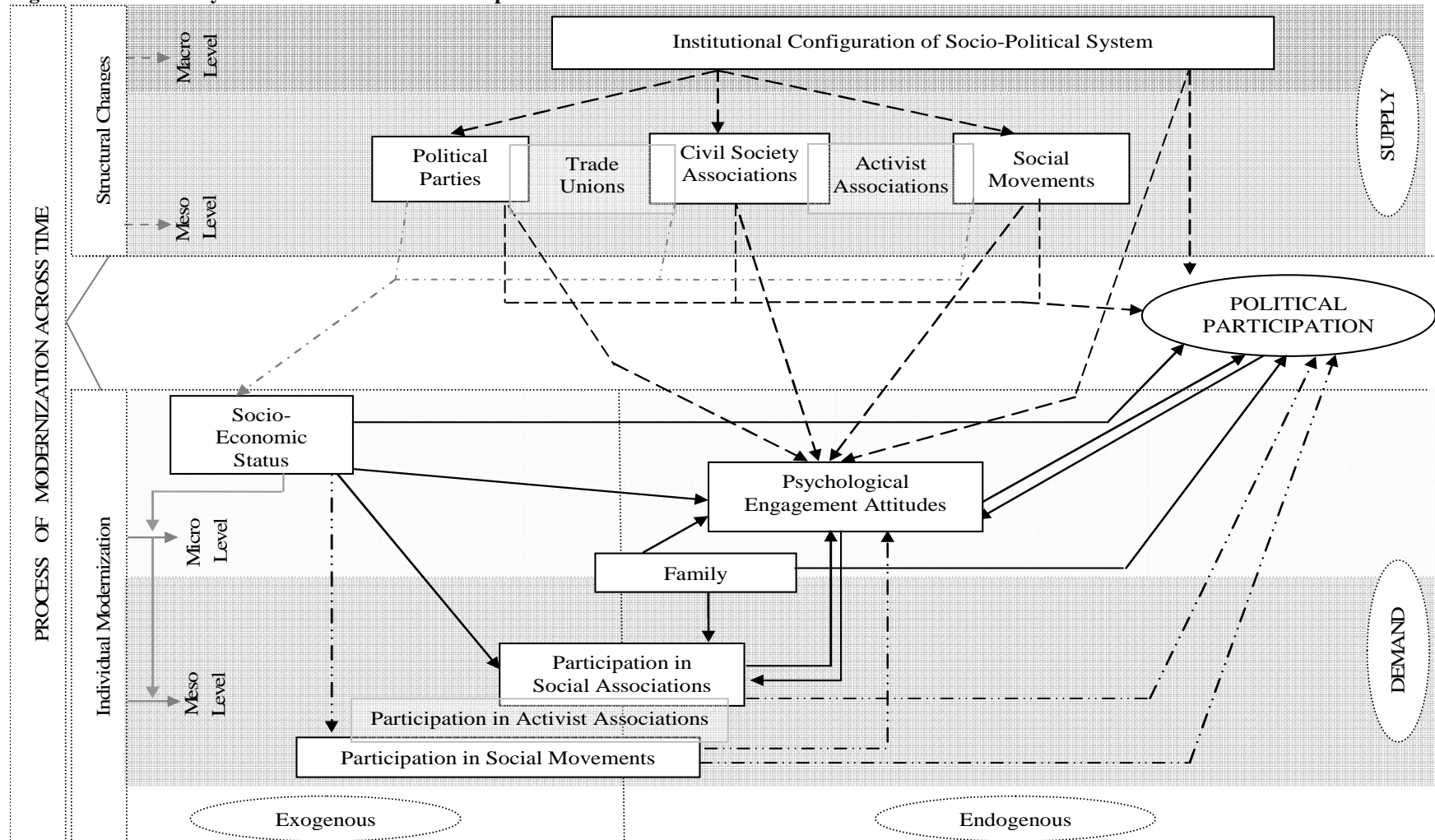
down features, such as the characteristics of existent organizations, their communication and mobilization with individuals (meso-level), as well as the ‘rules of the game’ (macro-level).

**Figure 1.1 - The Demand and Supply Model of Political Participation**



This model can also be expanded into a more detailed analytical model that includes which actors and which determinants are systematically related to participation, as well as the mechanisms at work according to the main existing theories between these variables and political behaviour (Figure 1.2). Like the previous model, this analytical model is organized distinguishing between the demand and supply side. The bottom part of the model refers to the demand side and includes a micro and meso level, while the upper part of the model refers to the supply side and includes a meso and macro level. The background of the figure is highlighted with different colours for each level, while determinants of political participation are framed in rectangles.

Figure 1.2 - The Analytical Model of Political Participation



On the demand side, the micro level includes individual socio-economic characteristics such as education, income and civic skills, as well as feelings of psychological engagement, such as interest in politics, political efficacy, and collective identity as well as the individual experience of being part of a politicized family. The meso level covers instead the individual experience of participating in social associations as well as in social movements. The determinants of the demand side of the model can be distinguished between *exogenous* and *endogenous* with respect to the dependent variable of political participation. Variables are exogenous when they clearly precede the dependent variable in the causal path, whereas they are endogenous when the causal connections between endogenous variables are not very clear and a certain direction is often established in literature only for convention. In our analytical model, we define as clearly exogenous only individual socio-economic characteristics. Attitudes of psychological engagement are instead so close and related to the dependent variable of political participation that they should be considered endogenous. All the other variables, individual participation in social movements or in social associations as well as being part of a family are instead situated half way between and are progressively more endogenous.

On the supply side of the model, the meso level includes political parties, civil society associations and social movements. It also includes hybrid categories such as trade unions, halfway between political parties and civil society associations, and activist associations, halfway between civil society associations and social movements. These are all agencies that offer to citizens more or less opportunities for participation in collective action. The macro level covers instead the specific institutional configuration of a political system, along with the setting of society rules.

Finally, on the left side of the model we can see that the process of modernization of societies cuts across all levels of the demand and supply side of political participation, influencing across time the demand side with the process of *individual modernization* and with structural changes of the socio-political context on the supply side.

The rectangles containing political participation determinants are linked to each other with arrows, which indicate the direction of the underlying causal mechanisms at work. In the next sections we first present the micro-level mechanisms of the demand

side that connect individual socio-economic characteristics to political participation by focusing on the two most classical approaches: the ‘rational choice’ theory and the ‘social-centrality’ approach. The next step is to include in this relationship feelings of psychological engagements that act as a mediation variable between the two and socialization by family political tradition. At a higher level we find meso-level factors such as socialization by civil society associations and social movements, as well as the importance of creating personal networks or participating in these institutions and the personal will to be part of a collective identity. We go on by considering the effects that modernization has on the demand side of the model concerning both the individual and participation in social and political institutions. We move then to the political supply. The meso-level focuses on the role of political mobilization strategies performed most of all by political organizations, trade unions, social movements’ networks and activist associations, as well as on party structure and on the offer of social capital and collective identities to citizens.

We then consider macro-level opportunities for participation offered by the institutional context that encourages or discourages political participation. We explain how certain characteristics of a political system such as level of statism and corporateness, openness of the political system, norms of participation, rules of mobilization and rule of law might more or less indirectly influence in different ways the decision to participate in political activity. Finally, we present the effect that modernization of Western societies has produced on all the determinants of the supply side of political participation through structural changes across time both on organizations and on the socio-political system as a whole.

### **1.3 The Political Demand**

#### ***1.3.1 Micro Level: Individual Determinants***

The micro level of the demand side of the model includes the link between individual determinants and political participation. Two of the most important early approaches to citizens’ political activity are the rational actor and the socioeconomic (or SES) model. The former tackles the decision to participate as the result of a rational cost-benefit calculus putting emphasis on the search for the individual benefits, presumed to be sufficient to justify bearing the costs of activity (Downs, 1957; Olson, 1965), whereas the latter suggests that people who are better-off and are high in resources such as

education, income and social class are more likely to participate in politics because they want to promote their own interests (Pizzorno, 1966; Milbrath and Goel, 1977). The difference between the two is that the rational choice approach is theoretically rich but weak in its predictive power, whereas the SES model is strong in its empirical power to predict activity, but it is theoretically weak. Indeed, it reduces everything to the establishment of an existing connection between resources and behaviour, failing to specify the underlying mechanism that links socioeconomic status to political participation. One of the main limitations of both classical models, however, is the very reduction of the explanation of variations in political participation to factors related to the individual.

#### *1.3.1.1 Costs-Benefits Rational Calculus*

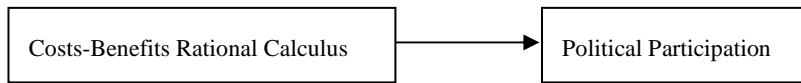
The rational choice model tries to explain political behaviour by interpreting political participation as a rational instrumental act. The approach displays a powerful and parsimonious logic: political participation occurs when the trade off between the costs of involvement of rational actors and the benefits of successful action are positive (Downs, 1957; Olson, 1965). People decide whether to participate or not after making a simple cost-benefit calculus where they take into account the costs of participating, the benefits for the individual, and the probability that their action makes a difference (Figure 1.3). The theory contains, however, a noteworthy paradox. Under most circumstances it predicts that participation will be equal to zero because the probability of a single person participating making any difference for the outcome of an election or for contributing to securing a political goal is extremely low (Downs, 1957). This logic assumes that if individuals are rational and self-interested they will indeed attempt to maximize their own interests by not taking part in collective actions intended to obtain a public good and by behaving as free riders: they will save the participation costs and obtain benefits if the collective action is successful. In real life, however, many people do decide to participate in collective action.

Multiple theories have been proposed over the years as a solution to this paradox. Some of them focused on increased benefits of participation or increased costs of non-participation through 'selective incentives' (Olson, 1965), but none has been completely satisfactory. Moreover, despite the attractiveness of this theory, it has many pitfalls not only because it is empirically weak, but also because it over-simplifies reality limiting



our understandings of citizens' political behaviour. Research has shown that activists can and do, indeed, participate in politics for a multitude of reasons and benefits, most of which go substantially beyond narrowly defined self-interest (Verba, Scholzman and Brady, 1995).

**Figure 1.3 - Costs-Benefit Rational Calculus**



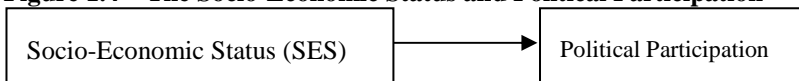
### *1.3.1.2 Socio-Economic Status Model*

Contrarily to studies on rationality of participation that focus on the benefits that lead one to participate in collective actions, other studies (Verba *et al.*, 1995, 1972) propose a reverse logic, looking at the costs that make participation more difficult, the most important being the amount of politically relevant resources belonging to an individual. The central thesis of models focusing on individual resources is that people of higher socio-economic status (SES) are expected to be more active in politics (Verba and Nie, 1972; Milbrath and Goel, 1977; Almond and Verba, 1963). Traditionally the number of individual level explanatory factors of conventional participation considered by these studies is relatively limited. Participation does indeed depend on resources such as education (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980; Peterson, 1990; Parry *et al.*, 1992; Barnes and Kaase, 1979), income and social class (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Van Deth, 1997; Verba, Nie, Kim 1971, 1978), along with other socio-demographic factors closely related such as age, ethnicity, gender, religion or location (Figure 1.4).

In the *civic voluntarism model* presented by Verba and colleagues (1995) also resources of time and civic skills are considered as politically relevant. In their view, money and time are the resources expended most directly in political activity. Citizens with higher incomes face lower costs for giving money to political parties than lower-income citizens, as well as individuals with little free time available who face higher costs for participating in political acts than people with more free time. Education acts more indirectly since it leads to one having higher civic skills and, accordingly, people with few cognitive and educational resources are confronted with higher costs than well-educated individuals. Yet, time is more constrained than money since it has a fixed upper bound, and it is also more evenly distributed, while education can be placed somehow in the middle between the two. In Western societies socio-economic resources

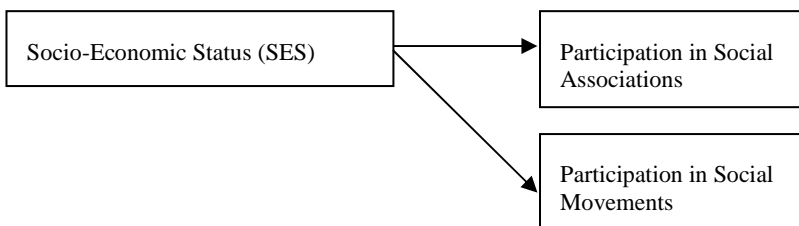
such as education, income, or social class are more or less strongly unequally distributed among citizens. Since individuals with different amounts of social resources have different propensities to act in politics, these inequalities are likely to create not only a *social* but also a *political* concern, seriously undermining the basic principle of political equality of democracies.

**Figure 1.4 – The Socio-Economic Status and Political Participation**



The ‘social centrality model’ seems also to be at work for participation in civil society associations and social movements (Milbrath 1965; Pizzorno 1966), since citizens with central positions are more eager to participate in society in different ways in order to extend their position of power. On the contrary, citizens that occupy marginal positions in society feel more often incompetent or unable to affect the society in which they live.

**Figure 1.5 – The Social Centrality Model and Other Types of Participation**



Since participation is costly, participants need relevant resources, either economics, social or cognitive-related, and since resources have an impact on the cost structure of citizens’ participatory activity, individuals will be likely to participate according to the different amounts of resources they have (Figure 1.5).

*1.3.1.3 The Psychological Engagement by Socio-Economic Status*

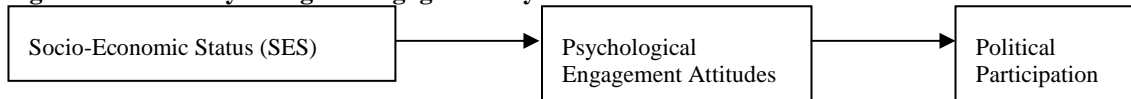
Adding a bit of more of complexity in explanatory mechanisms, socio-psychological models of participation try to explain political behaviour by claiming that not only resources but also political engagement is a crucial factor for activating voluntary participation in politics. Political engagement includes a set of psychological orientations to politics such as political interest, information and knowledge, political trust as well as political efficacy. Since political participation is a voluntary act, being interested in public affairs is a crucial pre-requisite for participation. People may lack motivations because they do not give much importance to politics and are more

interested in other aspects of life, they might think it is useless or they are happy with the status quo (van Deth, 2000). However, people may lack motivations because they are not acquainted with the concept of civic duty or because they do not understand politics, since they do not possess enough information on public affairs or they lack the skills to organize this information. Nonetheless, information and interest in politics might not be enough if citizens do not have a minimal level of trust in the system, or if they think that their acts are useless and they are not able to affect the political system. It is in this respect that feelings of political efficacy are particularly important. If people understand what happens in the public realm, think they have the abilities to affect it, and that politicians are responsive to their actions, their probability to act politically is highly enhanced. And this happens also because when they are highly politically efficacious, they tend to overestimate the success of their political act (Verba *et al.* 1995).

Civic attitudes and orientations might be partially intrinsic features belonging to the nature of each individual. Some of the most important factors that strongly influence them are, however, socio-economic characteristics, such as education, civic skills, income and social status. Many scholars have focused on the mechanisms that link SES and political activity, and in which psychological political engagement plays a mediation role (Rokkan and Campbell, 1960; Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Huntington and Nelson, 1976; Verba *et al.* 1995). Family income and social class have for instance an influence on the amount and type of education a citizen is likely to have, which is in turn in a close, more or less direct, relationship with political activity. This happens because education provides individuals with information about politics, teaches them the importance of politics and develops politically relevant skills such as the ability to speak and write or the cultural instruments necessary to orientate themselves in the political world. This also encourages attitudes such as a sense of political efficacy that predispose an individual to political involvement and, in the end, to political acts (Almond and Verba, 1963; Hyman and Wright, 1979; Verba *et al.*, 1995). The ‘cognitive model’ holds that through education citizens learn how to handle the political world by getting used to the existence of different views on society, while the ‘socialization model’ holds that educational institutions are responsible for socializing individuals for future occupational roles (van de Werfhorst and de Graaf,

2004; Weakliem, 2002). The unequal distribution of socio-economic resources also in this case then run the risk to transform into political inequality since individuals with higher stocks of resources will develop higher involvement in politics, in the form of political knowledge and interest as well as political efficacy and political trust, and therefore are more likely to participate (Figure 1.6).

**Figure 1.6 – The Psychological Engagement by SES**



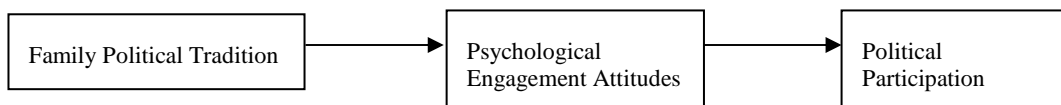
#### *1.3.1.4 The Psychological Engagement by Family Political Tradition*

The socio-economic status is not the only way to foster attitudes of psychological engagement in politics of an individual. As it occurs in educational institutions, also the family of origin teaches individuals, more or less directly, how to relate to political affairs (Verba, Nie *et al.* 1978, Blais 2000). The strength of the political tradition of the family of origin is then a quite important factor. Although family is a meso-level institution and is not strictly part of the individual like SES or political attitudes, in political behaviour studies, when it is taken into account, it is very often measured at the micro level because it is closely related to the individual and to his personal context. This happens on the one hand because family political socialization is, along with educational institution socialization, the early approach of people to the world of politics and current affairs, and by the time individuals are legally able to participate in politics they have completely interiorized this tradition. Family political socialization occurs indeed throughout individuals' youth, and is particularly strong during adolescence. On the other hand, since methods used to collect data are usually surveys, the common way to measure family political tradition is by asking whether the father and/or mother were politically interested during the respondent's adolescence.

The political tradition of families plays a major role in shaping political attitudes and in stimulating citizens (not) to participate in politics acting in different ways. Early exposure to political stimuli due to politically active parents or parents who discuss politics at home enhances, through a socialization process, citizens' interest in politics later in life. Accordingly, some family context might favour interest in politics, as well as civic and political engagement, while others might discourage it. Family political tradition might help family members to better understand and evaluate politics, offering

them a certain way to look at the political system that might help them handle the frustrations of having to deal with the way politics work. This affects the levels of political efficacy of family members and influences their likelihood to participate in political activity themselves (Figure 1.7). Beyond these socialising properties, family networks and social ties also influence individuals' ability to obtain politically relevant information and skills to participate in politics. They facilitate the exchange of communication, by reducing the costs of politically relevant information and by distributing incentives for participation (Granovetter, 1983).

**Figure 1.7 – The Family Political Tradition**



### ***1.3.2 Participation as Bottom-Up: the Meso-Level***

The enhancement of civic and political attitudes does not depend exclusively on formal education and family political tradition, and, indirectly, by family income and social status, but it might depend also on other groups and social institutions. Citizens do not act in a vacuum and too often political behaviour studies focus only on individuals' attributes, without taking into account the fact that individuals are also strongly influenced by institutions that socialize them to politics and to civic duties, as well as by their personal and organizational networks they have to deal with in their daily life. Since meso-level contexts are crucial in affecting people's decisions to participate they should be included more often in analytical models or at least be made more explicit in the explanation of underlying mechanisms of political participation. In truth, the amount of empirical studies that paid attention to the social context of political action has changed across time. Early research on political behaviour, particularly on voting behaviour, gave great importance to the social context in which citizens live: both the European (Rokkan, 1999) and Columbia (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1944) traditions used a sociological approach that asserts that 'people vote in groups'. According to this perspective, organizations were then an important analytical dimension.

Later research, however, placed greater emphasis on the psychological processes of the individual voter, moving away from social group theory. This trend was partly a

reflection of transformations of the structures of contemporary democracies such as the erosion of traditional religious and class cleavages, and the process of individualization of political behaviour. This shift has been very helpful for the comprehension of mass political behaviour, but it has also discouraged research on the social context of political participation. It is in the last 20 years that scholars rediscovered the importance for democracy of linkages as well as the mediating processes between individual political participation and social context. Accordingly, they brought civil society and groups back into normative and empirical research (Edwards, Folwy, and Diani, 2001; Gunther, Montero and Puhle, 2007; Bellucci, Maraffi and Segatti, 2007).

We saw that several researchers have observed how in many democracies political participation is higher among those who have high education or who regularly discuss politics (Verba, *et al.*, 1978; Blais, 2000), as well as among people who have high income. If the choice to participate in politics depends on the socio-economical condition of an individual, social inequality might transform into a political inequality, which in a democracy is a much less accepted type of inequality because it goes against. In this sense, families might partially re-equilibrate unequal distribution of educational resources, since they allow also more disadvantaged sectors of society to self-select and get involved in politics, and ultimately, to participate. Yet, also family political traditions are not equally distributed in society and are certainly not the solution to assure equal political opportunities to individuals.

Research has observed, however, how in certain democracies social inequalities do translate less into political inequalities. Why does this happen? In the introduction we mentioned that there are two different types of theory that deal with how a society could be more equal, pointing out what kind of agencies or characteristics of a socio-political system helps to avoid social inequalities turning into political inequalities: one is bottom-up and one is top-down. The dominant one comes from studies of bottom-up civil society associations. The main cause of the renaissance of these studies and the increased attention paid to group membership and to its connection to democracy has been the neo-Tocquevillian revival of the 'social capital' literature, made popular by Putnam's work (1993, 2000), in which associations have an important mediating role in democratic society, since they usually embrace principles of egalitarian and voluntary participation and perform essential integrative tasks for a society. A great amount of

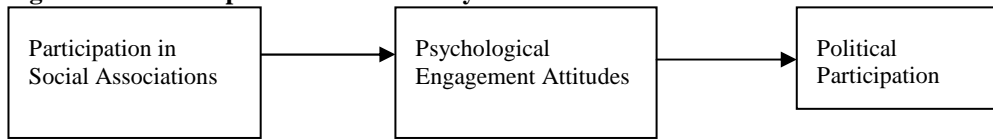
literature since then focused on the importance of participation in voluntary social associations for a vibrant democracy. In this view associations are indeed seen as ‘school of democracy’, able to enhance pre-political civic skills among citizens with less resources. These theories see participation in secondary social associations, such as trade unions and activist associations, as well as leisure organizations and religious groups, as a way of promoting political participation among the most disadvantaged people. Accordingly, these types of theories understand politicization of society and the possibility for equality of participation as a bottom-up force that comes from the associationism world.

### *1.3.2.1 The Psychological Engagement by Participating in Civil Society*

The *civic voluntarism model* (Verba *et al.*, 1995) can be thought of as the first to have tried to include micro and meso-level social contexts in an analytical model. In fact, the authors expanded the set of politically relevant groups by emphasizing the importance of non-political institutions – such as associations, religious groups and work-settings – in providing skills and attitudes that favour political participation.

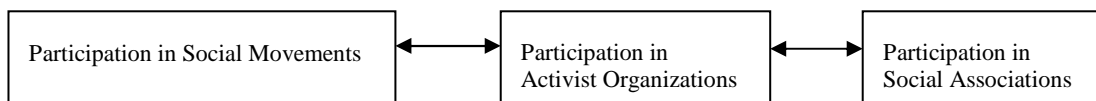
A similar role of families and educational institutions is performed by non-political associations, which are thought of as social institutions that can stimulate citizens to participate in politics. Group activity, even if non-political, might provide exposure to political stimuli and broaden individuals’ spheres of interest, enhancing the probabilities of getting more political knowledge and more interest in politics. In non-political associations people might engage in informal political discussions, or political issues can be included in meetings agenda (Nie *et al.*, 1969). In addition, social associations also serve to teach civic skills, since members are offered many opportunities to acquire and improve organizational and communicative abilities, such as talking in public or writing a formal letter, and other politically relevant personal resources (Verba *et al.* 1995; Olsen, 1972). Even if skills are developed in a setting that has nothing to do with politics, people are likely to become more politically competent and perceived to be politically efficacious. As a consequence of this, chances of political participation increase. Finally, participation in associations also encourages a sense of civic duties and of satisfaction with the democratic process (Rose, 1954: 50-71). Social associations then provide psychological engagement attitudes such as political efficacy, that in turn foster political participation (Figure 1.8)

**Figure 1.8 – Participation in Civil Society Associations**



A particular type of social association is represented by activist organizations, since they are civil society associations that might be linked to (political) social movements. Social movements are indeed only occasionally linked to political parties, but they are instead often connected to activist associations or to what have been called social movement organizations (e.g. Greenpeace). It is certainly not an easy task, and not a goal of this study, to judge which organization is part of a social movement and which is not, because any organization (from radical political ones to classic associations and voluntary groups) may or may not be part of movements, depending on whether or not they mobilize resources on conflictual issues and identify themselves (and are recognized by others) as part of a broader collective entity (Diani, 2001). In our model we just acknowledge that there are no clear boundaries between social movements and these types of social associations and that there might be a spill-over effect from one to the other in both directions (Figure 1.9).

**Figure 1.9 – Participation in Social Movements**



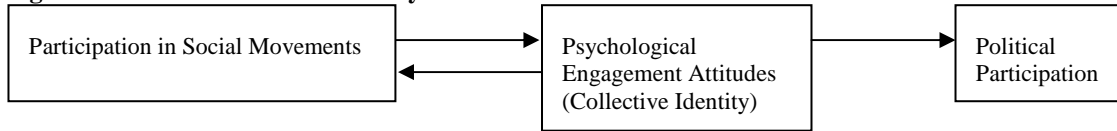
### 1.3.2.2 *The Collective Identity*

A different approach to collective action that tries to counteract the ‘rational choice’ theory at a mes level is taken by Pizzorno (1983). According to this author, contrary to the Olsonian logic the question at stake is not rational interest, but rather individual and, most of all, collective identity, with which the free rider problem simply ceases to exist. The individual self-interest and collective action are not in conflict anymore because people’s interest in participating in collective action is to establish their own self-definition within a wider collective identity that will persist across time (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1989; Pizzorno, 1978). People then are motivated to participate in social movements because they are attracted to being part of a collective identity, which they can acquire and reinforce only through participation. This logic is the same that applied



also to the cultural identities of certain areas of Italy after the Second World War where subcultural identities acted as a source of social integration toward a specific political idea (Pizzorno, 1980; Neumann, 1956; Roth, 1963) (Figure 1.10).

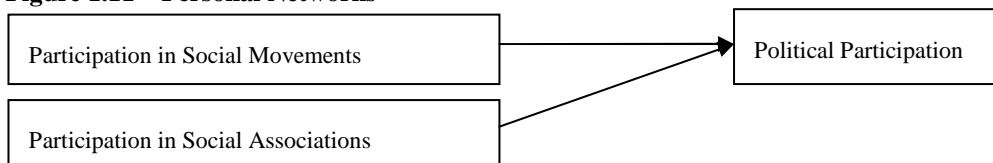
**Figure 1.10 – The Collective Identity**



### 1.3.2.3 Personal Networks

Whereas SES, political engagement and collective activities are important determinants, several studies have shown that citizens who are asked to take part in a political act are always more likely to participate than people that are not asked (Pollock, 1982; Klandermans and Oegema, 1987; Kriesi, 1988; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Verba et al, 1995). When individuals are members of some network their chances of being recruited to political action increase since they have the potential to become a political network and act as an agent of political mobilization (Snow, Zurcher, Ekland-Olson, 1980). In this sense participation in social associations and in social movements might foster political participation. Citizens extend indeed their networks of friends and acquaintances from which requests for political participation might emerge. Moreover, particularly in social movements and in the most politicized social associations, leaders and staff might make deliberate attempts to make members participate in political acts (Figure 1.11).

**Figure 1.11 – Personal Networks**



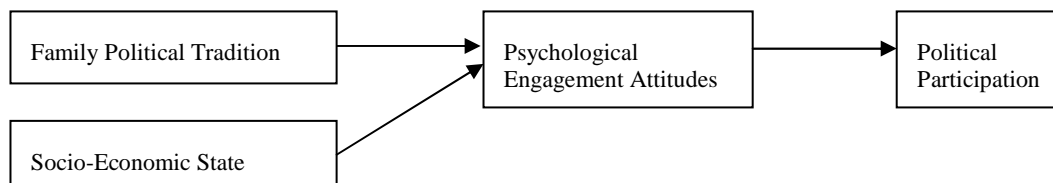
### 1.3.3 Issues of Endogeneity

In the individual and meso level mechanisms on the demand side of the analytical model of political participation that we have seen so far, issues of ambiguity connected to the causal direction of the relation between some of these concepts exist. In this volume we are particularly interested in the causal direction between participating in social associations, psychological orientations and political participation. While socio-economic resources serve as *exogenous* explanations in the analytical model, civic and

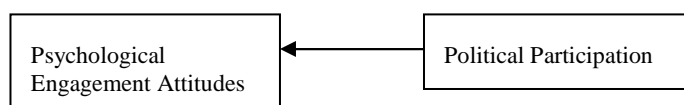
political attitudes, social and political participation are all *endogenous* factors. This means that although we know from several studies that a relationship exists between these variables, it is often a convention that the causation that has been established among these variables goes in one direction and not in another. Indeed, the individual experience of participating in civil society associations, political engagement and political participation are strictly intertwined and whatever variable we choose as dependent, the other two remains so close in the causal process to what is being explained that we can not claim with certainty that the direction is not reversed if we analyze the relationship at the same point in time. Since we can not easily establish which is the cause and which is the consequence, and it is not clear in which direction the causal path goes (van Deth, 1996), these cases are said to be faced with a problem of *endogeneity*.

In literature some scholars have sometimes proposed different directions of causation from the most commonly assumed. For instance a reciprocal causation direction between political attitudes and political participation might exist. Presumably, people with certain socio-economic characteristics – higher education, higher income, and higher job status – or those who have parents interested in politics are more likely to have higher political engagement – high interest in politics, knowledge and efficacy – and enhance their likelihood to self-select for participating in political activity (Erbe, 1964; Hooghe, 2003) (Figure 1.12). Yet, reciprocally, those that act in politics are more likely to increase their political engagement since through participation they become more interested, knowledgeable and efficacious with respect to politics (Finkel, 1985; 1987) (Figure 1.13).

**Figure 1.12 – The Self-Selection Mechanism**

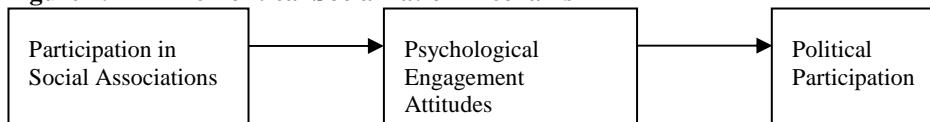


**Figure 1.13 – The Reverse Casual Relationship**

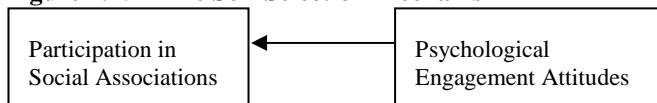


Issues of ambiguity connected to the causal direction of the relation between psychological orientations and social participation have also been raised. Do voluntary organizations generate civic and political attitudes through *political socialization*, or do trusting and efficacious people *self-select* themselves to join voluntary associations? While voluntary activity may strengthen and reinforce trust and political efficacy, fostering political participation (Verba *et al.*, 1995) (Figure 14), those with high class, income, and education, who are also likely to feel politically engaged and to find society trustworthy as well as responsive to their requests might be more likely to be active in voluntary groups. In the latter case, political efficacy and other political attitudes would not then be the consequence, but rather the cause of participation in social associations (Hooghe, 2003; Armingeon, 2007) (Figure 15).

**Figure 1.14 – The Political Socialization Mechanism**



**Figure 1.15 – The Self-Selection Mechanism**



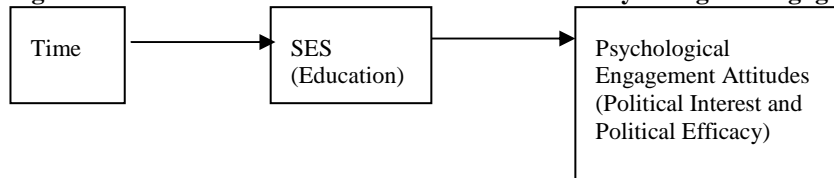
We go back to issues of endogeneity and reciprocal causation in Chapter 2 where we present in more details the most important models of causal direction that are to be tested in the panel analysis section (Chapter 7 and 8). We now proceed by listing theories about the effect that time and modernization structural changes have had on the mechanisms that lead citizens to participate in politics.

### ***1.3.4 The Influence of Modernization on the Demand Side***

The changes produced by the modernization process of societies across time have been very broad and diffuse and have had effects on the micro and meso level on the demand side of politics. Scholars have observed that with structural changes in society the role of citizenry has been changing. First of all, increasing scholarization and higher levels of education have presumably led to a broader availability of politically relevant and cognitive resources of citizens that have increased feelings of psychological involvement with politics (Inglehart, 1979). People have indeed today more political

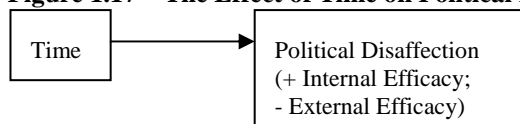
information than the past, and possess more political skills to feel able to understand and participate in politics (Inglehart, 1990; Dalton, 1984) (Figure 1.16).

**Figure 1.16 – The effects of Mass Scholarization on Psychological Engagement Attitudes**



At the same time, however, increasing resources in society are also thought to be the reason why political disaffection is growing and critical citizens are increasing. Their disaffection is not caused by the fact that they feel alienated because they lack resources to be competent in politics. Rather it comes from the fact that they are highly informed as never before. Indeed, increases in education have brought a change in values that make these citizens feel at odds with hierarchical and ‘church-like’ rituals and, accordingly, make them more critical toward conventional democratic practice. This means that while their (perceived) abilities and skills to affect the system increase (internal efficacy), their (perception of) system responsiveness decreases (external efficacy) (Norris, 1999) (Figure 1.17).

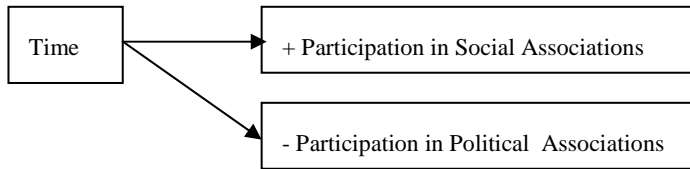
**Figure 1.17 – The Effect of Time on Political Disaffection**



This also implies that citizens are less inclined to accept ‘church-like’, authority-based organizations’ guidelines or to support political parties out of habit, and are more prone to question elites and join new modes of political expression and participation. This happens because younger generations are more interested in new post-materialist issues such as lifestyle choices or environment preservation expanding the boundaries of what they consider ‘political’. These issues, however, are not well represented in contemporary party systems, and this leads younger generations to be more likely to participate in non-hierarchical modes of political participation such as social movements and to prefer direct democracy institutions to traditional hierarchical political participation (Inglehart 1990, 1997). Dalton (1984) also observes that political interest

presents a strict relationship with unconventional forms of participation that offer citizens a more direct link with their elected representatives (Figure 1.18).

**Figure 1.18 – The Effect of Time on Different Forms of Participation**



#### **1.4 The Political Supply**

Whether they be individual characteristics, socialization or networks stimuli, the mechanisms analysed so far are all part of the political demand. The political supply is, however, crucial for satisfying the demand side of political participation. If a citizen has enough resources and engagement in politics, participates in civil society, and has a strong family political tradition, but no political parties exist or no party is attractive enough or open to participation, s/he will not make any political act or s/he will choose to join some other more appealing associations or movements.

##### ***1.4.1 Participation as Top-Down: the Meso Level Context***

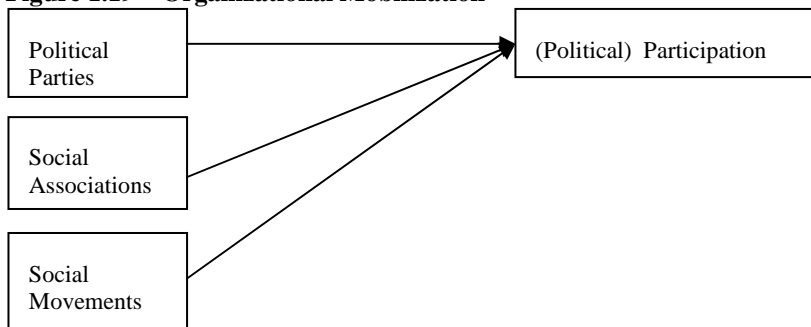
As we mentioned in the introduction, a totally different solution to bottom-up associations for solving the problem of political inequality has historically been found in politicization through top-down mobilization forces (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978). A few scholars have observed the mechanisms through which political organizations have mobilized people to convince them to participate in political activities (Huntington and Nelson, 1976). This is, however, not the only way that top-down forces might have an influence on the decision to participate. Political psychological engagement of a citizen can indeed be influenced by the participatory offer and by collective identities provided by social movements, social associations or political parties, as well as by the reduction of the costs of information for the citizen. Moreover, the decision to participate in politics is strongly influenced by the type of structure of political parties and its historical legacies.

##### ***1.4.1.1 Organizational Mobilization***

Contrary to the self-directed behaviour, the branch of research of mobilization theories investigates how political participation occurs due to mobilization by political organizations. The role of political recruitment and mobilisation has received more

attention in social movements studies than in studies of conventional political participation but the same mechanism exists also for political and civil society organizations. Mobilization of citizens happens mainly in two ways: social movements or (political) organizations explicitly ask to the citizen to join a (political) network or they enhance citizens' levels of psychological involvement by offering (politically) relevant information. In line with 'rational choice' theory, authors argue that "few people spontaneously take an active part in public affairs. Rather, they participate when politicians, political parties, interest groups, and activists persuade them to get involved" (Nie and Verba, 1972: 228; Jordan and Maloney, 1997: 119; Huntington and Nelson, 1976). Research shows that higher levels of mobilisation by organisations and social movements do indeed translate into higher levels of participation in political organizations as well as in other associations and movements (Figure 1.19).

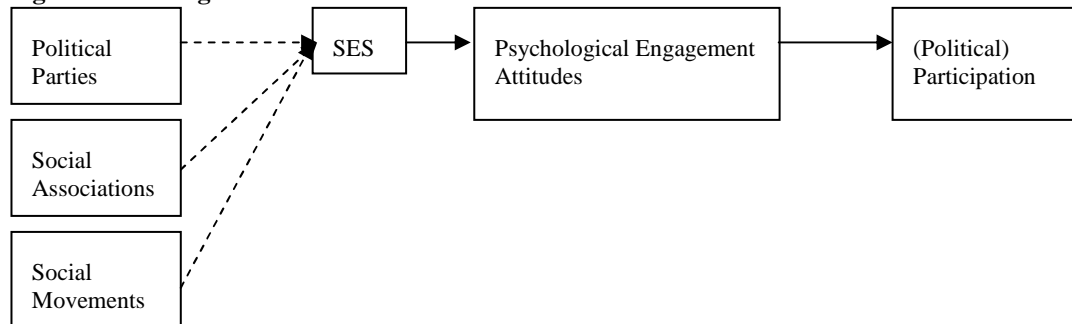
**Figure 1.19 – Organizational Mobilization**



On the one hand social contacts and recruitment efforts of political parties, as well as of social associations and social movements, are not distributed uniformly amongst citizens and they can at least partially reproduce individual resources inequalities. Past research has indeed pointed out the existence of what has been called the mobilization *bias*, which means that mobilization actions of (political) organizations are not distributed uniformly amongst citizens. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 83) state that "the more involved people are in social life, the more likely they are to be mobilized, the more likely they are to be offered the social incentives toward activism, and the more prone they are to take part in politics". Since the effectiveness of mobilising strategies is maximized when aimed at people that are most likely to respond positively, explicit recruitment opportunities to participate are often offered in strongly unequal and non-randomly distributed ways to people with different stocks of income, education and social class, as well as to people of different age and gender. Thus, in their

strategies, organizations usually tend to target people with high socio-economic resources, that are also more likely to have higher cognitive skills, political engagement and to be surrounded by people who participate in public affairs who might encourage them to act (politically) (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993) (Figure 1.20).

**Figure 1.20 – Organizational Mobilization Bias**



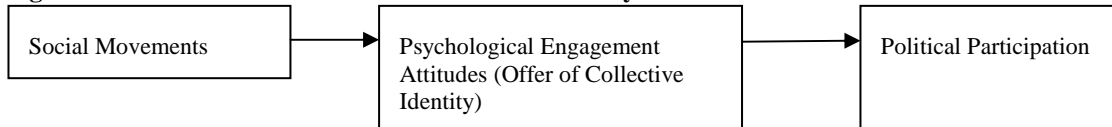
On the other hand, researchers have also observed how top-down mobilization can succeed in making political opportunities more equal by politicizing groups of society with low resources and giving them the opportunity to participate in politics (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978). This is something that can happen in both democratic and non-democratic regimes (Huntington and Nelson, 1976). In the introduction we explained how the undemocratic regime of Fascism has been an opportunity to overcome social inequalities and to encourage Italian people to approach politics. This despite the fact that Fascist politicization developed partisanship while suppressing political conflict, therefore promoting a monistic idea of political opinions. Party top-down mobilization did not disappear with the end of Mussolini’s regime, but it was adopted and adapted from new democratic political mass parties that have been responsible for making political participation more equal, visible from the very high levels of electoral turnout and by the millions of members of party organizations of the first decades of the Italian democratic republic (Segatti, 1990; Barbagli and Macelli, 1985).

#### 1.4.1.2 The Formation of Collective Identities

We saw in the demand side of the analytical model that citizens might decide to participate in a social movement because they want to be part of a collective identity (Figure 1.21). Yet, for this to be possible, a collective identity needs to be constructed by someone. Collective identities are “produced by the social construction of boundaries” (Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995: 74), and they require the presence of

someone who can take advantage of political opportunities, interpret protests and mobilize consensus around them. Citizens will then join a collective action only if there is an offer of collective identity so that they can feel they belong to a certain group and that share the same identity (Pizzorno 1986, 1991, Melucci 1996).

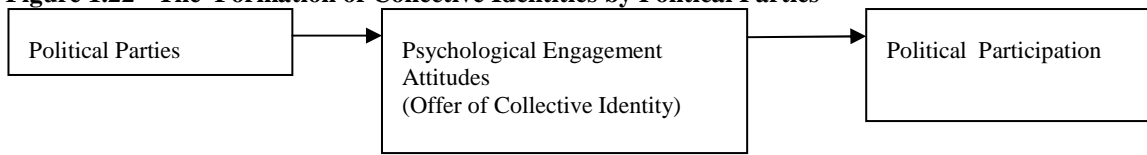
**Figure 1.21 – The Formation of Collective Identities by Social Movements**



The collective identity logic was shaped initially in the context of social movement participation, but as we mentioned this logic can also be applied to political parties that appeal to citizens creating identities along the lines of social, economic, cultural and ethnic cleavages. Collective consciousness is indeed intensified and stimulated by social segmentation, but it also requires a top-down organization and coordination in different political associations of distinctive collectivities (Huntington and Nelson, 1976: 103). Political parties, particularly in Europe, used to offer citizens the possibility of integrating into structured group identities, intending to guide their vote and to mobilize them into participating in other modes of political behaviour, as was for instance the case of the Italian experience of Communist and Christian post-war parties or the case of the Socialist (SPD) and Christian parties in Germany. Political organizations tended also to encapsulate specific groups of citizens in parallel non-political organizations that were isolating them from outside influences, eventually leading to the development of separated political subcultures, which took care of all citizens needs ‘from the cradle to the grave’ (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Bartolini, 2000). The cultural collective identity of the areas most interested by these subcultures were indeed a source of social integration around a certain political party (Pizzorno, 1980). In this respect also past experiences in mobilization have an impact on present behaviour, both because networks and infrastructures developed for past mobilization contributes to further mobilisation and because past experience creates a certain culture of cooperation and mobilisation by enhancing or depressing feelings of political efficacy (Figure 1.22).



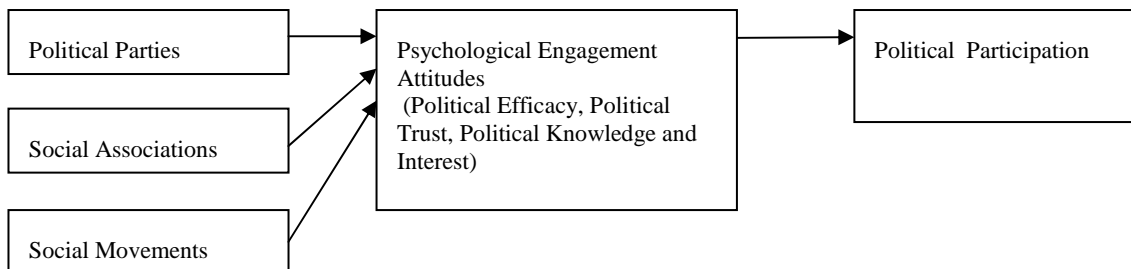
**Figure 1.22 - The Formation of Collective Identities by Political Parties**



*1.4.1.3 Enhancement of Psychological Engagement by the Participatory Offer*

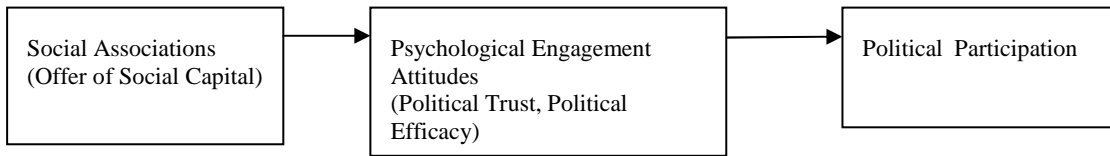
One of the goals of both political parties and social movements is usually to transmit political information to citizens by providing them with reasons to participate. They do so using several strategies and activities and informing them of the existence of organizations and on their political aims, as well as giving information on the most important issues of the political agenda. In addition, organizational strategies might help to enhance feelings of political efficacy since they provide citizens with information on the positive results of past action, while encouraging and overestimating the importance of the contribution of each participant, and offering an optimistic view of the future implications of their participation in the likely successful collective action (Rosenstone and Hansen, 2003) (Figure 1.23).

**Figure 1.23 – Enhancement of Psychological Engagement Attitudes by the Participatory Supply**



Not only political parties, but also social associations and social movements can contribute to the reduction of information and transaction costs implicit in the decision to join an organisation. By offering social capital, voluntary associations create communication channels between citizens and the socio-political system, as well as organized ways to participate in civil society life. Social associations bond like-minded people, and create bridges between different groups in society, providing them with the feeling of belonging to a wider community. In this way they are likely to facilitate psychological engagement of citizens, enhancing attitudes such as social and political trust as well as political efficacy and thus increasing the chances of making citizens participate in political acts (Figure 1.24) (Putnam, 1993, 2000).

**Figure 1.24 – The Offer of Social Capital**



#### 1.4.1.4 Party Structure

Simplifying literature on political parties, we can claim that there are two main different approaches to their goals. The Downsonian rational approach (1957) claims that political parties have specific preferences and they pursue re-election, thus they respond to voters' preferences, understood as rational actors. The identitarian approach (Pizzorno, 1983) claims instead that preferences are not defined, and political parties contribute through ideology to the construction of collective identities and to the formation of preferences among the electorate. According to this view the survival of political parties is crucial in order to maintain the consensus, to coordinate political personnel, to investigate citizens' opinions while responsibly representing them and to reduce the excess of problems that would originate if all the requests from society were made directly to the state bureaucracy. The structure adopted by political parties is then closely related to these issues and it is also very important in influencing the decision of citizens to (not) participate.

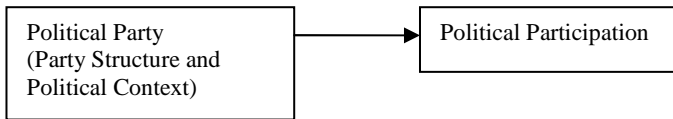
Political parties can, in fact, be structured in many different ways, determining whether they will be closer to the civil society or to the State. The closer political parties are to civil society the more citizens are likely to join them, while the opposite is true if they are closer to the state. Observing different societies, in 1922 Max Weber made a distinction between two broad categories of parties: *party of notables* and *mass party*. The first one is a party structure closer to civil society and is characterized by individuals with autonomous resources, occasional political activity as well as deference toward politicians. The second is instead characterized by professional politicians, permanent activity and delegation from civil society to politicians. The main historical reason for the switch from the first to the second was the enlargement of electoral suffrage. Kirchmeier (1966) introduced the concept of a *catch all party*, a party characterized by a reduction of ideological support and party activism, a strengthening of leadership, messages oriented toward a wide public and the opening to several interest groups. Panebianco (1982) distinguished instead between the *bureaucratic mass*

*party* and *professional-electoral party*. The former is characterized by the centrality of bureaucracy and a great importance given to ideology. It is also characterized by high party membership, supremacy of internal managers, as well as financing through party membership fees and activities. The latter is instead characterized by the centrality of professional politicians, as well as a great importance given to issues and leadership. They are more oriented toward elections, whereas they are characterized by the supremacy of public representatives and interest groups and by public money funding. We can say that *catch all party* and *professional-electoral party* are more detached from civil society than *(bureaucratic) mass party*. Finally, the *cartel party* is a party characterized by a lighter structure than other parties, being very close to the state and quite far from civil society (Katz and Mair, 1995). Such a party is particularly focused on electoral profiles, the main financing resource is public money, and, most of all, there is full control over political communication channels since great importance is given to communication and messages rather than to party programmes.

The political context at the time of party construction as well as the legacy of how party structures have historically been are quite important in determining which structure new political parties choose to adopt. We explained in the introduction that Italian political parties were for instance very weak before Fascism, whereas after the non-democratic but totalitarian regime they were very strong and powerful, ending up creating a truly party-dominated system during the newly born period of Italian democracy (Pasquino, 1982; Lanaro, 1992). A different legacy from non-democratic regimes is given by authoritarian regimes such as the one in Spain. Contrary to the totalitarian Fascist regime, the authoritarian Franquist regime tended to encourage political passivity (Linz, 1970), and the result is that post-regime democratic political parties are weak, without a strong penetration in society (Riley and Fernandez, 2005; 2006). Moreover, there is a difference between political parties that are created in contexts in which almost no mass media exist compared to parties created in highly mediatized contexts. In the first case, parties tend to develop strong structures because they try to penetrate deeply in society and to use party local branches as a way to communicate with citizens. This is the case of parties created in the early XX century, as well as by mass Italian parties created in 1945. In the latter case instead, party structures tend to be much weaker because they can use mass media to appeal directly

to potential voters, without being deep-rooted in society. This is for instance the case of post-Franquist Spanish parties and parties that were created in the Italian context after a collapse of the old party system in 1992 (Linz, 2002) (Figure 1.25).

**Figure 1.25 – The Party Structure**



#### ***1.4.2 Participation as Top-Down: The Macro Level Context***

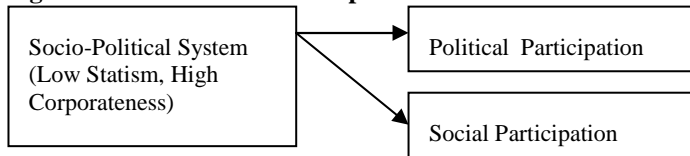
In looking at the individual and organizational level of the demand and supply side there is one last step missing of what might influence one's decision to participate in politics. If individual social inequalities are reinforced by the social context where people live, not only the meso but also the macro-level context of political institutions is crucial. The setting where political participation takes place might be responsible for encouraging or repressing political participation. There is, however, a gap in literature in this respect, because the study of institutional configurations has been used much more often in electoral behaviour studies than for any other type of (political) participation acts. An important exception is represented by a recent study on joining political parties made by Morales (2009) that takes into account macro level context next to micro and meso level features in order to explain cross-national variations. At the macro level we can consider the level of centralization of political power, as well as the relationship between civil society and the political system, the openness of the political system, the characteristics of the political context such as its competitiveness as well as the rules of participation, and how the working of the system affects citizens perceptions.

##### ***1.4.1.1 Statism and Corporateness***

The macro link between state and citizens has a deep influence on participatory patterns of a society and particularly important in this respect are the degree of 'statism' and of 'corporateness' of a country (see Schofer and Fourcade Gourinchas, 2001). When 'statism' is high decision-making is centralized in the hands of the state and its bureaucratic elites and this is typical of countries with absolutist or centralized legacies (such as France, Italy and Germany). Since associations are kept away from centres of power and subjected to central-state control through administrative supervision, participation in political organizations and in civil society is discouraged (Veugelers and

Lamont, 1991). On the contrary, when statism is low, the main locus of public life is associations and civil society, which is represented by and largely autonomous from the less bureaucratic state (such as the US, Britain and Scandinavian countries) (Birnbaum and Badie, 1983). In this cultural context, citizens' organized actions are promoted and seen as more legitimate in the public context by the state and by prevailing cultural frames (Jepperson and Meyer, 1991).

**Figure 1.26 – Statism and Corporateness**



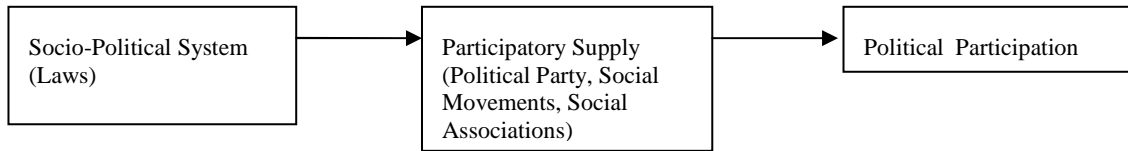
The degree of corporateness affects instead the way in which social actors are incorporated into the socio-political system. System with low corporateness assign interest representation to individuals rather than groups, while system with high corporateness locate sovereignty to organized groups rather than individuals, that are merely seen as members of broader groups (Jepperson and Meyer, 1991: 214-17). In the former case there is a focus toward decentralized decision-making representation, that might originate either from a cultural deference toward individuals (such as the *gentlemen* in Britain or the ‘self-made men’ in the US), or for an aversion to forms of corporatism, depending on the past of country (such as in France and in Italy). In the latter case, organized groups are more legitimate than individual actions. The state supports and encourages political and civic activities as a way to promote political order if corporations originate from a hierarchical past (such as Germany and Austria), or to promote social consensus if they originate from broad-based class movements (such as Scandinavian countries) (see Schofer and Fourcade Gourinchas, 2001) (Figure 1.26).

*1.4.1.2 The Legal Framework and the Characteristics of the Context of Participation*

Macro-contexts have both direct and indirect impacts on individual participation opportunities. First of all, the normative and institutional configuration of a political system determines the participation channels available to citizens. Indeed, macro level structures shape first of all the development of national institutions and laws, and by doing that they constrain the opportunities for more or less institutionalized collective action (associations, political organizations, social movements), and, accordingly, they

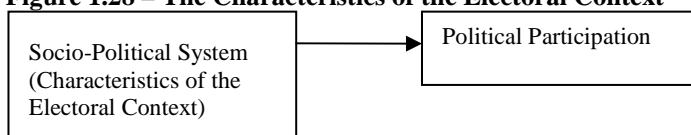
shape the possibilities for individual action (Clemens, 1997; Skocpol, 1985; Skocpol, Ganz and Munson, 2000) (Figure 1.27).

**Figure 1.27 – The Development of Participatory Supply**



The decision to participate politically, and particularly the decision to go to the polls, is also strongly influenced by the characteristics of the electoral context such as the levels of competitiveness of the political context and the rules of participation. Franklin (2004) shows that in not very competitive elections, participation tends to decline. Moreover, existing rules affect participation, particularly in the case of voting behaviour. Compulsory voting is in fact usually responsible for increasing turnout by 10-15 percentage points, while other factors such as the procedure for voter registration, the number of days on which elections are held and whether they are held during working days or public holidays are all affecting the decision to vote in different ways (Jackman, 1987; Franklin, 2003; Blais, 2000) (Figure 1.30).

**Figure 1.28 – The Characteristics of the Electoral Context**



#### 1.4.1.3 Openness of Political System

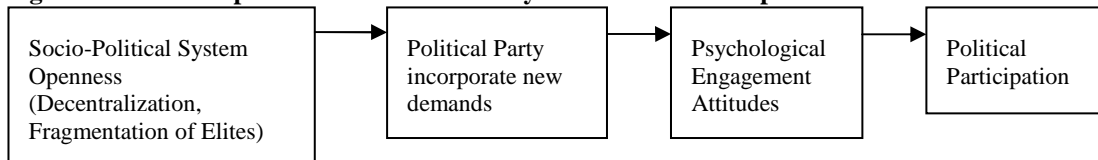
Institutions, rules, as well as changes in the economic, social and political context are responsible for determining the incentives or political opportunities structure of political parties, conditioning their very creation, as well as their mobilisation strategies. Citizens should be afforded by the existence of institutional opportunities to have a say in government activities. Since equality is the heart of democracy (Dahl, 1971), if citizens' decision not to participate in politics originated from the fact that political organizations do not offer enough opportunities for people to participate, the problem for the quality of democracy would be huge.

If political institutions incorporate citizens' associations and new demands for influence, a political system is said to be open. If on the whole they are able to respond to citizens' demands, they are indeed likely to modify the incentive structure for joining

political parties, by reducing the costs of political action and increasing the benefits. Since political associations are the main actors in the process of demand creation, it goes without saying that if they are open to new demands they have also higher legitimacy among citizens. Individuals will then be more likely to participate in collective action through group associations rather than through forms of protest. In the opposite case, the political system is said to be close and is likely to foster social protest outside of organizations (Rochon, 1998; Hardin, 1991: 370).

The expected benefits of citizens' participation and openness of the political system are increased by aspects such as fragmentation of political elites and political decentralisation. The degree of fragmentation of political elites on the one hand spurs political leaders to be more open in incorporating new demands (Tarrow, 1994; Rochon, 1998), while on the other hand they become more inclined to respond to new citizens' demands since party élites need to make compromises (Kitschelt, 1986: 63; Morales, 2009). Moreover, the degree of political decentralisation and availability of direct democracy institutions (Rochon, 1998; Morales, 2009) makes it easier for new actors to achieve their goals (Figure 1.28).

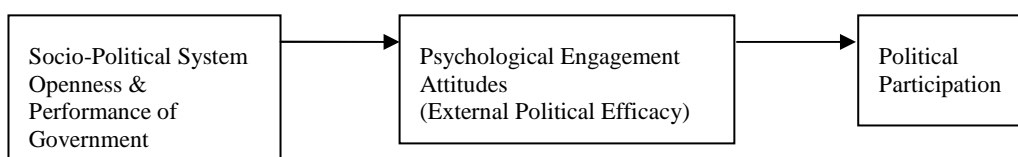
**Figure 1.29 – The Openness of The Political System and The Incorporation of New Demands**



*1.4.1.4 Feelings of External Political Efficacy*

The network of political institutions, traditions and organizational framework might affect individuals also in different ways by increasing or decreasing the level of some relevant attitudes for participation such as the level of political efficacy. The degree of openness of the political system to citizens' request as well as other features of the political system are ultimately strongly influencing the perceptions of individuals that the system is responsive and that there are real possibilities to make one's voice heard with politicians as well as to truly affect political decisions (external efficacy).

**Figure 1.30 – The Openness of The Political System and External Political Efficacy**



Feelings of external political efficacy are, however, not influenced exclusively by objective reasons such as the openness of the political system, but they are also influenced by individual perceptions of participation and of the political system. The political system as a whole is indeed responsible for shaping political opinions, providing lenses to look at society, as well as constructing and institutionalizing legitimate attitudes and behaviour (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000; Steinmetz, 1993). (Figure 1.29). On the one hand, normative ideas of participation and of political system might depress feelings of external political efficacy if the expectations of citizens are too high or clash with a different political reality, therefore inhibiting political participation. On the other hand, the rule of law (Almond and Verba, 1963) and the amount of fairness perceived in the way the system works is also very important. If the political system is perceived as highly arbitrary, external feelings of political efficacy tend to increase and political participation is likely to decrease (Segatti and Vezzoni, 2007; Sani and Segatti, 2001) (Figure 1.31).

**Figure 1.31 – Perception of Political System and External Political Efficacy**



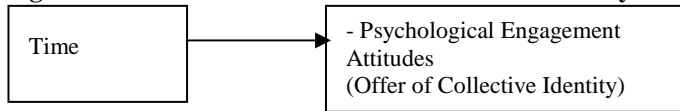
### ***1.4.3 The Influence of Modernization on the Supply Side***

The modernization process of societies has affected not only the demand side, but also the supply side, slowly transforming the roles of societal and political actors, as well as of institutions. In advanced industrial democracies there has indeed been, first of all, an erosion of group-based politics due to geographic mobility, social mobility and other modernization processes. This means that the strong bonds between citizens and groups such as working-class or church communities have weakened. Accordingly, political parties that were once based on these groups are also weakening their strength and are less able to make people feel engaged with a certain political identity or partisanship (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). In nations in which there is a tradition of cleavage politics (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan, 1977; Bartolini and Mair, 1990) people used to join political parties and labour unions not so much because they were interested in politics but because they felt they were belonging to a certain sector of society, such as religious, ethnic or occupational group, and this group was able to represent their interests. With the process of modernization, attachment to specific subgroups has



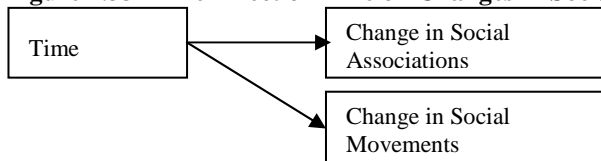
changed and does not have as many implications for participation as it used to have before (Franklin *et al.* 1992). Accordingly, identification to a political party tends to decline (Dalton, 1984), while the offer of collective identities necessarily decreases in power (Figure 1.32).

**Figure 1.32 – The Effect on Time on Collective Identity Offer**



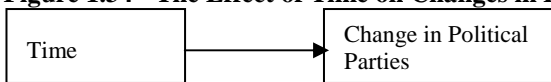
With modernization social associations based on interest groups and single-issues started to take on some political party tasks by representing civil society interests. The proliferation of these types of associations is thought to be due to the increasing diversity of interests of citizens, a change in education and values, and their consequent ability to undertake independent political and social action. Even though these associations might partially be connected with political parties, usually they are mainly acting independently (Dalton, 1994). The modernization process leads then to changes both in the structure of social associations and of social movements (Figure 1.33).

**Figure 1.33 – The Effect of Time on Changes in Social Associations and Social Movements**



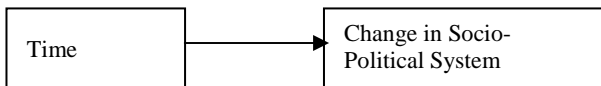
Along with modernization, the role of political parties also changes and weakens. Not only does the multiplication of conflicting policy demands go beyond the ability of contemporary political systems to perform in optimal ways (Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki, 1975; Huntington, 1981), but political parties also become increasingly professionalized and institutionalized (Katz and Mair, 1995; Farrell 1994; Scarrow 1996). Katz and Mair (1995) argue that modern political parties have become *cartel-parties*, more centralized, candidate centred and controlled from above, trying to achieve ideological purity. Accordingly, they are less dependent on citizens' support compared to the past, at least to a certain extent. This is partly due to changes in society and mass membership decline, and partly to the transformation of the media environment. Not only are the media taking on the political as well as campaign information task once held by political parties, but also political parties are increasingly doing their campaigning through mass media (Figure 1.34).

**Figure 1.34 - The Effect of Time on Changes in Political Parties**



Finally, modernization has brought changes in the political system dynamics, transforming for instance the cost structure of elections, the way in which campaigns are run, the shift from deep party penetration in society for better understanding citizens political feelings to low-cost public opinion polls. Also the end of the Soviet world and the subsequent collapse of the communist ideology caused a deep crisis in political parties in the West that had to change their identity. The result is that party systems are nowadays less clearly based on class and religious cleavages, that civil and political societies have tended to separate, and that the substantive differences between mainstream parties are less pronounced (Gray and Caul, 2000: 235). There is, however, an increasing problem of lack of representativeness since parties are no longer deeply rooted within society (Figure 1.35).

**Figure 1.35 – The Effect of Time on Changes in the Socio-Political System**



### 1.5 The Mechanisms We Want to Study

The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter and the broad set of micro, meso and macro level mechanisms to explain political participation that we presented and included in our analytical model was very important in order to place existing literature in a wider and complete context. Our analytical model highlights how participation is not just the consequence of individual resources, psychological engagement attitudes, political socialization and personal as well as organizational networks. Nor is it only a consequence of existing organizations and the socio-political structure of a country. It is rather the consequence of the interplay of the bottom-up demand and the top-down supply side of politics, as well as socio-structural change of society brought by modernization that has had a transforming impact on micro, meso and macro levels of the model.

In this volume, however, we do not investigate empirically all the mechanisms that we have presented so far. The straight lined arrows of the analytical model (Figure 1.2) indicate the mechanisms we do investigate, whereas the cross-hatch arrows indicate

the mechanisms we do not investigate. Cross-hatch arrows have diverse patterns depending on whether they are mechanism of the demand or of the supply, they are instead of lighter colour when they represent moderator indirect effects. As can be seen in this research we focus first of all only on the demand side, which is related to individual and societal features. As mentioned earlier, studying the characteristics of the supply side determinants of political behaviour and its evolution across time would work quite well in a comparative study. Yet, since this investigation restricts its focus to one single country, Italy, this information is for us almost a constant. Although this allows us to make a more in depth study, it unfortunately also means that we are not able to test any top-down mechanisms in a direct way. A comparative study would be a logical consequence of this study because it would allow us to empirically test, along with the demand side, the supply side of the model and to investigate how different socio-political contexts and organizational configurations are able to affect the political participation of citizens. Outlining these mechanisms in the model of this study, however, makes it possible to indirectly test them by checking whether bottom-up mechanisms are able alone to explain the participatory behaviour in Italy, providing us with the opportunity of widening our understanding and the interpretation of our findings.

In the introduction we presented the reasons why we chose to study Italy, and why the evolution across time of the Italian socio-political context is a particularly interesting case. The picture of Italy has changed in the last 50 years from the country poor in associational links described by Almond and Verba (1963). Compared to the early 60s, today civic associations have spread and are much more independent from party politics than they were in the past. At the same time, however, voter turnout has started to decline and party membership has consistently dropped. If we consider that a wide part of neo-Tocquevillian literature assumes that civic associations are ‘schools of democracy’ and produce citizens, eventually leading them to participate politically, the Italian situation represents a paradox. Why, if (independent) social participation in civil society associations has increased in the last 50 years in Italy, has political participation decreased, rather than increased? And why has political efficacy stayed very low and constant throughout this period? We are then particularly interested in restricting the focus to two specific parts of the demand side of the model: the effects of the

modernization process at the micro-level and the existing causal connections between three endogenous variables: social participation, political participation and political disaffection. In the next chapter we are going to describe in more detail the focus of our research, after having reviewed literature on social capital and political disaffection, as well as the evolution (as presented by literature) of the Italian socio-political context across time. In Chapter 3 we will instead give operational definitions for the three main concepts we use.

## CHAPTER 2.

### THE FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

#### 2.1 Introduction

After having presented the analytical model including all the determinants of political participation, as well as the literature that explain the mechanisms connecting these determinants to political behaviour, we now enter, in more detail, in the part of the model we want to investigate. We have explained that our empirical investigations will concern only the demand side of the model to investigate the specific case-study of Italy. Due to the importance of civil society associations for democracy given by neo-Tocquevillian ‘social capital’ literature and the lack of them in post-war Italy, and due as well to the relevance of intrinsic implications for democracy of political disaffection and the long-term widespread presence of this attitude among Italians citizens (Almond and Verba, 1963), when looking at the analytical model of Chapter 1, we restrict our attention mainly to these two concepts and to their relationship with political participation.

In this chapter we present how existing literature face the concepts of political disaffection (along with political trust and political efficacy), social capital (along with social trust and social association involvement), as well as the connection between them. After briefly introducing the general debate on the origin of attitudes and behaviour, whether they come from the individual or from the macro-structure of society, and whether they are endogenous or exogenous to politics, we report a brief literature review of the evolution of the socio-political context in Italy with respect to social participation, political disaffection and political participation in the last 50 years. At the end of the chapter we explain in more detail the empirical focus of the different sections of this volume.

#### 2.2 Political Disaffection and Social Capital: Some Complex Concepts

##### 2.2.1 *Political Disaffection, Political Trust and Political Efficacy*

The concept of *political disaffection* has been present in literature at least since Almond and Verba (1963) and Lane (1959). Whereas Almond and Verba (1963) elaborated a

model of civic culture, studying important preconditions for democracy development, and introduced political disaffection as a concept of *disaffected political culture*, Lane (1959) investigated the link between effectiveness and *democratic legitimacy*. However, while political disaffection is often taken as object of research, it is a quite complex and still a largely under-conceptualized term. It was initially defined as “the subjective feeling of powerlessness, cynicism, and lack of confidence in the political process, politicians, and democratic institutions, but with no questioning of the political regime” (Di Palma, 1970: 30). Yet, different scholars give different interpretations to this definition and it is not always clear what the relation between political disaffection and related concepts is. Confusion is created by the unidimensional continuum on which attitudes such as political discontent, lack of democratic legitimacy and political disaffection are often placed. This might be due to the theoretical legacy of the concept of *political support* introduced by David Easton’s system theory (1965; 1975), and to the misunderstanding of the distinction between *specific* and *diffuse* political support (see Torcal and Montero, 2006). According to Easton, indeed, whereas *specific support* should tap specific evaluations of political authorities’ performance, *diffuse support* should refer to more fundamental evaluations of the political system. On the one hand *specific support* assumes that people are able to know and to judge how politicians act in the political system; on the other it takes into account the perceived decisions of political actors. *Diffuse support* is instead a more durable attitude since, although it can also be the result of negative evaluations of performances repeated across a long period of time, it is usually generated and fostered quite independently of political performances and outputs. It is indeed based on early political socialization and, although not unchangeable, is very difficult to change (Torcal and Brusattin, 2003).

Torcal and Montero (2006) argue that from the definition of *diffuse political support* several scholars have come to the conclusion that *political disaffection* is part of a broader support for the political system. As a consequence, political objects have been placed on a continuum from *specific* to *diffuse* support (Norris, 1999b:9-10; Dalton, 2004: 23-24). This concept transformation has led to a concept of *democratic support* that no longer differentiate between the two dimensions, and studies have often tackled *political disaffection* together with a vast array of negative feelings towards political institutions, political actors and political participation. From this perspective, *political*

*disaffection* is usually treated as a residual category of negative attitudes toward democratic institutions (*democratic legitimacy*) and low satisfaction with government performance (*political discontent*). In contrast with this approach, Torcal and Montero (2006) suggest that *political disaffection* is instead an essential object of democracies and an attitude in its own right. Accordingly, it should be treated separately and not confused with these two broader concepts.

*Democratic legitimacy* refers indeed to citizens' beliefs that democratic, representative politics are the most appropriate framework for government. It is not an absolute concept and intensity of support varies from one person to another, since it is unrealistic to expect that every citizen is fully satisfied with democracy. Democratic legitimacy can, then, be considered 'the belief that, in spite of shortcomings and failures, the political institutions are better than any others that might be established' (Linz 1988: 65). *Political discontent* is instead "the expression of displeasure resulting from the belief that the performance of the government is falling short of the citizens' wishes or expectations" (Torcal and Montero, 2006: 8; di Palma 1970: 30). In other words, political discontent arises from citizens' evaluations of the performance of the regime or politicians, as well as of their political outcomes, and is closely associated with partisanship (Farah *et al*, 1979). Yet, in democratic countries high levels of *political disaffection* can and do co-exist with strong support for democracy, and the amount of this attitude among citizens is quite independent of the colour or the performance of the incumbent government.

It is for this reason that *political disaffection* is often referred to through its component of trust. But along with the emotional component of low trust, the concept of political disaffection includes also a cognitive belief that politics is complex, difficult to understand, self-referential and distant from citizens. As Segatti (2006) writes, political disaffection is "a system of beliefs, charged with emotional feelings, that the body politic is not working in a responsive way either because citizens are incapable of, or are not interested in making their voice heard". It can then be analytically divided into the two dimensions: *political disengagement*, measured as political saliency in a person's life, and *institutional disengagement*, measured as distrust (normlessness) and as political inefficacy (powerlessness).

In this study we want to focus predominantly on the second measure of the dimension of *institutional disengagement*: political *inefficacy*. Political inefficacy is indeed a particularly important attitude for political participation because, alone, can be considered one of the best proxies for *political disaffection*. If increasingly more citizens believe that they have not enough abilities to influence political decision-making and opportunities to participate in politics, whilst simultaneously not believing in the accountability of how the political system works, they will become frustrated and discontent, reducing their likelihood to act politically (see Torcal and Montero, 2006).

While we define in more details the concept of *political (in)efficacy* in the next chapter and its operationalization, we focus here on the many factors identified in literature as culprits for increasing citizens' *disaffection*. Some authors pointed the finger at the economic performance of governments (Mc Callister, 1999), some others blamed political performances and officials' misconduct (Miller and Listhaug, 1999; Pharr, 2000), while still others looked for institutional explanations or identified the media as the main responsible party (Norris, 2000). Other factors commonly cited by scholars are also the post-modern erosion of authority respect and value changes (Inglehart, 1999; Dalton, 2000). Dalton (2004: 194) identifies as being responsible for disaffection: a change in citizen expectations of government, proliferation of political interests in advanced industrial democracies, and government performance and scandals. Proponents of deliberative and participatory democracy have come to claim that the culprit might be searched in representative forms of electoral politics that lead to distrust because they do not allow all citizens to discuss and participate (Norris, 2005; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2005). A different body of empirical literature, identifies instead the dimension of conflict intrinsic in politics as an important factor that contributes to citizens *disaffection* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944, Campbell *et al.*, 1960; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; Mutz, 2006). Finally, some other authors claimed, quite successfully, that the main responsibility for disaffection lies with the increasing decline of social capital in Western Societies (Putnam, 1993, 2000).

### **2.2.2 Social Capital, Social Trust, Associations Involvement**

Since the writings of Tocqueville, civil society associations have often been seen as 'schools of democracy' by neo-Tocquevillian scholars. As we saw in the introduction,



the French author argued that involvement in the local community and its voluntary organizations teaches ‘the habits of the hearth’ of trust, reciprocity, solidarity, and co-operation, which are the necessary foundations of democracy. *Social trust* is created in the dense networks of voluntary organizations and clubs that bring people together and teach them how to co-operate and compromise in order to achieve common goals. Similarly, John Stuart Mill argued that participation in civic life was an end in itself and a great teacher of the skills and attitudes necessary for democracy.

Partially inspired by the Tocquevillian tradition are the theories of ‘social capital’. As for political disaffection, although this concept has become popular and extensively studied, it is still rather vaguely defined and understood by different scholars in different ways. Coleman’s original definition (1988; 1990) did not attribute any special role to associational involvement because *social capital* is to be found in the relations between people, contrary to *human capital*<sup>6</sup> that is explicitly individual. Moreover, Coleman presented it as a value-neutral term: social capital is neither good nor bad. It was Putnam (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000) who, in his definition of *social capital*, introduced individual membership in voluntary associations as one of its main indicators, and linked the concept to a set of positive values and to the quality of democracy. He asserts that ‘social trust and civic engagement are strongly correlated; the greater the density of associational membership in a society, the more trusting its citizens. Trust and engagement are two facets of the same underlying factor – social capital’ (1995a: 73). According to him, then, social capital mixes two types of components: a *cultural dimension* (social norms and values) as well as a *structural dimension* (institutions and networks). The former refers to attitudes (particularly *social trust*, faith in cooperation or reciprocity), while the latter refers to behaviours (*civic engagement* in civil society). *Social trust* is thought to be ‘a set of institutionalised expectations that other social actors will reciprocate co-operative overtures’ (Boix and Posner 1998: 686). The *structural dimension* of social capital is instead the participation in a wide range of voluntary organizations, like civic associationism, trade unions and religious community membership (Putnam 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Hall 1999). Putnam presumes the strength of American democracy is due to the historical existence of a wide variety of several types of associations, clubs, groups and organizations and

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Human capital’ in Coleman terminology refers to a person’s skills, education, knowledge, health, etc.

that *civic engagement* (participation in associations) is of vital importance for a minimum level of civic virtue and *social trust*. It also contributes to the development of citizens' civic skills, democratic values and political attitudes such as political trust and efficacy, which eventually shape political behaviours.

These theories have sometimes been criticized. It has been said that *social capital* and *social trust* are elusive concepts that are not easily connected to observable empirical realities and is still unclear how participation in social associations should create *social trust* (Levi, 1996; Paxton, 1999). Moreover, alternative approaches claim that the vibrancy of associations is not always conducive to democracy. Positive values attached to *social capital* limit the conceptualization of what Putnam considers good for democracy, but, according to some, a 'dark side' of *social capital* also exists and is exemplified by the Italian mafia or similar organizations such as the militia movements or the Ku Klux Klan in the US. According to this alternative view, associational configuration depend on context, on the nature of the associations, and on the values and attitudes that elites attempt to convey through associations (Fiorina, 1999; Ostrom, 1997:162; also Putnam, 1993:221). Furthermore, the fact that activity in either 'bonding' (homogenous) or 'bridging' (heterogenous) voluntary associations generates *social trust* creates a problem of cause and effect. Do voluntary organizations generate trust, or do trusting individuals join voluntary associations? It seems that while voluntary activity may strengthen and reinforce social trust, it is also true that those with high class, income, and education, who are also likely to find society trustworthy and to express life satisfaction and happiness, are more likely to be active in voluntary groups (Stolle, 1998). Along this line of reasoning, however, also Putnam (2000) suggest that *social trust* and involvement in associations are likely to reinforce each other in a virtuous circle.

### ***2.2.3 The relationship Between Political Disaffection and Social Capital***

Since the 1960s increasing feelings of disengagement with democracies among citizens, as well as a decrease in levels of confidence in political institutions, and a widening gap between citizens and their representatives within Western democracies raise many concerns within social sciences literature (Barnes and Kaas, 1979; Dalton 1988; Lipset and Schneider, 1983). At the system level, some studies have observed that Western societies are on the one hand witnessing a decrease in *social capital* and on the other an

increase of *political disaffection* of citizens. But what is then the relationship between these two crucial objects for democracy?

### 2.2.3.1 *Bottom-up vs. Top-down Explanations*

As we saw in Chapter 1 for participatory behaviour, there are two ways of looking at the origin of politically relevant attitudes: one gives more importance to individuals (the demand side) and one gives more importance to the structure of society in which a citizen lives (the supply side). The most famous views on the relationship between citizens and attitudes toward political institutions and participation are bottom-up and see the value systems as internalized by citizens after changes at the individual level (Inglehart, 1977; Putnam 1993, 2000; Verba *et al.* 1995). Later developments of these theories often recognize the importance of larger contexts, by emphasizing for instance how voluntary associations mediate individual level characteristics and produce particular attitudes and behaviour. Along this line of thought we find the five-nation study of Almond and Verba (1963) in which higher levels of civic participation in Anglo-Saxon countries (UK, USA) compared to West Germany, Italy and Mexico were correlated with high levels of *social* and *political trust* of its citizens. We also find the *social capital* thesis of Putnam (1993, 2000) that claims that participating in social association generate trust, norms and habits of cooperation that give individuals politically relevant resources that finally transform them into better citizens. Finally, we find the thesis of *individual mobilization* of Inglehart (1990, 1997) that claims that modernization and industrialization of societies provide individuals with more education and resources that lead to the development of post-materialist values. These values then favour participation and the development of new types of bottom-up associations, such as ‘new’ social movement organizations, while discouraging participation and development in ‘church-like’ associations, as well as enhancing feelings of political disaffection (Norris, 1999a; Inglehart and Baker, 2000). In this view the value system that exists in a society determines individual behaviour, and associations develop then as an aggregate level consequence of the joint actions of many citizens that share similar values and attitudes.

The possibility of a different point of view is raised by institutional approaches to attitudes. Some authors claim for instance that the role of associations is exaggerated within literature because *social capital* does not arise from a micro individual level

participation in associations but from macro level institutions. Rohtstein and Stolle (2003) examine for instance how the structure, functions and perceptions of central society institutions influence attitudes, values and beliefs. The welfare-state institutions might foster *social trust* since individuals have higher chances to experience a non-arbitrary treatment than citizens living in less transparent systems, more open to abuse. Moreover, trust in the fact that conflict-solving institutions such as police and court would sanction law-breaking actions make individuals think that people in society would play by the rules instead of maximizing individual gain.

A different point of view is also raised historical-institutionalist views that claim that the strong correlation between civic participation and attitudes can be explained by a top-down view. Not only individual values and attitudes originate thanks to institutions and political structures that guide them in one direction or another and make them legitimate (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Meyer and Jepperson, 2000; Steinmetz, 1993), but also institutions of the past shape present attitudes, and action is influenced by the view of the world that citizens already hold in a certain context. Historical legacies and institutionalized cultural frames, based on political, economic and religious histories of countries are then crucial for understanding different types of attitudes and behaviour since they operate at the individual as well as the organizational level, and shape the development of a system of rules and institutions (Berger and Luckman, 1966; Sewell, 1992; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Meyer, Boli *et al.* 1997). It is for this reason that (historical) political contexts assume much relevance for the relationship between *social capital*, *political disaffection* and political participation (Torcal and Montero, 2006; Hall and Taylor, 1996).

#### 2.2.3.2 *Endogenous vs. Exogenous explanations*

Literature on political disaffection and on social capital is also well connected to the more general, theoretical discussion of whether political attitudes are culturally determined (exogenous to the political system) or rationally determined (endogenous to the political system). In this respect, contemporary literature on political disaffection can be divided into two main general perspectives: the *traditional-culturalist* approach and the *rational-culturalist* model (see Torcal and Montero, 2006). The *traditional-culturalist* approach, originally proposed by Lerner (1958), claims that attitudes can only change slowly because they are rooted on processes of political and cultural

socialization that are reproduced over long periods of time. In this case *political disaffection*, as a cultural orientation, is considered *exogenous* to the political system. The *traditionalist-culturalist* approach has become quite dominant in literature after the success of the ‘social capital’ and *social trust* literature. Almond and Verba claimed the important role of associations in creating the preconditions for democracy developments and, taking as ideal model the existing conditions in the US and UK, introduced the models of *civic culture*. It is however thirty years later that Putnam (1993) proposed the ‘social capital’ model, one of the most famous cultural explanations of *political disaffection*. In this view, *social capital* is then a concept that is relevantly associated to it and to democracy (Putnam, 1993; cf. Mishler and Rose 2001: 31). Moreover, for a few scholars a clear conceptual differentiation between political behaviour and civil society associational engagement does not seem to exist since they are both treated as ‘civic engagement’ (Putnam, 2000: 336), and participation in social and political organizations are used alternatively to explain the same underlying concept (Putnam, 2000). This view enlarges the boundaries of what is endogenous and what is exogenous to the political system. The problem with this view is however that it fails to recognize the relative independence of civil society associations from political organizations.

In the mid-1990s, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) introduced the *civic voluntarism model* (CVM) to examine the process of political participation in America, developing a theoretical framework that shares several aspects with the ‘social capital’ literature. This study brought a big innovation in the field of political behaviour literature because the authors were pioneers in opening the ‘black box’ that contains the underlying mechanisms of how participation in social associations has a mediating role between individual level resources and psychological engagement, and in the end, with political participation.

Contrary to the *traditionalist-culturalist* model, the *rational-culturalist* model argues instead that political attitudes can change much more quickly as a result of economic or political events, or by factors such as the characteristics of political institutions (Listhaug and Wiberg, 1995; Nye *et al.*, 1997; McAllister, 1999; Miller and Listhaug, 1999; Katzenstein, 2000; Newton and Norris, 2000, Magalhães, 2005). In this perspective the different levels of political confidence in different countries are related

to particular institutional and political factors. *Political disaffection* in this view is thus considered as politically endogenous (Lane 1992; Mishler and Rose 2001).

In short, the different questions that literature poses is whether *political disaffection* is a long and stable process with politically exogenous cultural roots in which *social capital* is quite relevant or whether it is caused by a discrepancy between expectations and evaluations of political and democratic performances in which *social capital* has almost no impact. While the *traditionalist-culturalist* and the *rational culturalist* approaches seem antithetical in their search of attitudes origins, Torcal and Montero (2006) hold that they could be somehow complementary to each other. Indeed, they see attitudes as more or less stable over time and as the result of both short-term and long-term factors:

“advocates of the rational-culturalist approach are on the track when they state that politics and institutions play a crucial role in shaping political attitudes. But we additionally believe that politics, institutions and memories of the past also matter. In fact, we do not see any inherent incompatibility between these two approaches. In both of them politics matter, in both political attitudes are malleable by political events, both share the otherwise obvious premise that similar factors might cause differentiated effects according to somewhat different political pasts. Furthermore, the cluster of political attitudes for a distinctive set of citizens only really makes sense in the political context in which they have originated and developed collectively, in the end, culture is more than a mere aggregation of individual attitudes and beliefs. The coexistence of high levels of democratic support and political disaffection in some new democracies, for instance, only makes sense if we take into account the political context and circumstances in which these attitudes were formed. The much sought-after ‘attitudinal coherence’ of citizens lies in a country’s political history and not, as it is often suggested, in its convergence with any ideal theoretical model of citizenship. This also means that there is no single model of political culture, nor is there any set of political attitudes that, by definition, better suits a particular democratic regime’s stability and functioning” (Torcal and Montero, 2006: 341)

The authors suggest then that differences in political disaffection across countries might be explained by diverse political context and existing institutions. Since social capital is a collective property of a society, and not a characteristic of individuals, this should imply that it is not *social capital* that causes *political disaffection* and affect politics but rather both social capital and political disaffection that depend on politics, institutions and long-term contextual factors (Torcal and Montero, 2006).

### **2.3 The Evolution of the Italian Socio-Political Context in Literature**

Having explored the concepts of social capital and political disaffection, as well as their relationship, we now move to present the evolution of the Italian socio-political context since the beginning of the *First Republic*, after the Second World War. We organize this literature review according to the main published studies, focusing particularly on the evolution as well as the relationship at the level society between participation in political parties and voting, civil society, and levels of disaffection of the country.

#### ***2.3.1 The Fifties and the Sixties***

##### ***2.3.1.1 Amoral Familism and The Civic Culture***

In the early 60s, La Palombara (1965) revealed that the Italian citizen was very different from the participatory citizen of the US or the UK. Excluding voting at national elections that was mandatory and 'enforced' through symbolically penalizing sanctions, the Italian citizen appeared totally uninformed and not interested in the structure and functions of the political system, toward which s/he was totally mistrustful. Cultural isolation and alienation from the political system did not mean only apathy and passivity. After centuries of particularisms and political competition, Italians seemed to have inherited also a strongly conflictual attitude, which characterized both interpersonal and group relations. Within political parties, trade unions and any type of other non-political secondary association, the author found a strikingly high rate of sectarianism and intolerance, able to transform political discussion, at every level, in a total conflict between opposed 'conceptions of life'. The responsibility of sectarianism and intolerance was attributed on the one side to the parties of the left, with their anarchist-individualist and revolutionary components, and on the other side, to Catholic forces, with their tradition of clerical conservatism and their propaganda. At the end of the 50s, the Italian political culture was then characterized by many traits of 'traditional' society (in the Weberian sense), such as political disinformation and particularism. At the same time, however, a considerable degree of fragmentation and ideological polarization emerged as the most significant element of the Italian political culture. La Palombara had been influenced by a series of anthropological and politological researches that during the 50s focused on the lesser advanced areas of southern Italy, among which a study of 'amoral familism' (Banfield, 1959). This term is used as the opposite of 'civic spirit' to describe the distrustful attitude, hostile to the outside, as well

as the exasperated individualistic utilitarianism that characterized the situation of big areas of south Italy. Citizens, being exclusively concerned with short time individual benefits, were unable to act together for the public good.

A few years later, this concept has been used explicitly in the comparative study conducted by Almond and Verba (1963). Their definition of political culture was made in terms of psychological attitudes toward political objects such as the political system as a whole, elements connecting society to the political system such as parties, interest groups and the media, the application processes of politics, such as the administrative and executive system, and the single citizen considered as a political actor. Almond and Verba found that in the '50s Italy had a 'parochial' and 'alienated' political culture, characterized by low trust toward the political system and distrust in people's own abilities to have any influence on it (low political efficacy).

'Parochial' culture relates to a state of apathy and isolation from the political system at all levels. Italians were indeed showing "relatively unrelieved political alienation", "social isolation", and low political integration, as well as low national pride, partisan attitudes in political conflict, low trust toward social environment, poor civic skills and spread indifference toward the duty of participation. A deep cognitive gap between citizens and the political world existed. This was significantly correlated with the level of education and referred, at least in part, to the mass schooling process, which had not yet occurred in Italy at that period. But the detachment of civil society from the political system did not exist only in the high degree of misinformation. It was also accompanied by elements of 'emotional' detachment and open rejection of politics, confirming a state of widespread political alienation involving all sections of the population, without important distinction of education levels or professional status. The authors noticed how participation in voluntary associations (both social and political) in Italy was lower than the US (57%), Great Britain (47%) and (Western) Germany (44%), and was only slightly higher than Mexico (25%). Particularly striking was that the percentage of Italian people claiming to participate in voluntary associations was half that of the US. Moreover, in Italy people usually belonged to only one association and rarely to more associations, a behaviour quite common in the US (Table 2.1).



**Table 2.1 - Participation in voluntary associations (membership)<sup>7</sup>**

	(N)	%	Social	Political	More than 1
US	(970)	57	13	11	32
UK	(963)	47	14	3	16
Western Germany	(955)	44	10	3	12
Italy	(955)	29	3	8	6
Mexico	(1007)	25	4	3	2

Source: *The Civic Culture*. Almond and Verba (1963)

To be more precise, however, in Italy it was participation in purely social associations that was particularly low, somehow resulting at odds with more economically advanced Western countries. Political membership was, on the contrary, almost three times higher than membership in social associations and much higher than all the other countries, except the US. An apparent paradox of the findings was the fact that the most participant citizens in Italy were actually voters of anti-system parties (PCI and MSI<sup>8</sup>). Support for government practices were instead made by *parochial* or *subject* citizens. The authors revealed indeed the fact that political parties were centres of aggregation, alternative or competitive with the political system, and were surprisingly objects of loyalty and legitimacy. This could be explained by the fact that the two great mass forces in particular, the DC<sup>9</sup> and PCI, which in the elections of 1958 had absorbed two-thirds of the electorate, had an organizational structure and a capacity of social penetration so large at that time that it could be considered an object of privileged political attachment.

Data emerging from the subsample of interviewed people sympathetic to the three main parties in Italy - DC, PCI and PSI<sup>10</sup> - showed a picture of very strong attachment to their own party and of extreme aversion between left and right, and in particular between the DC and PCI. In fact, supporters were keen to give the most positive features only to their own party, while reserving the most negative features to the opposite party. Yet, in an apparently contradictory way, this ideological climate of conflict did not translate to the political system and to the opportunities that this institutionalized expression offered, as attitudes of indifference in relation to elections and electoral campaigns showed. In short, Italians were described as people with a low

<sup>7</sup> The question in the survey was: "Are you a member of any organizations now – trade or labor unions, business organizations, social groups, professional of farm organizations, cooperatives, fraternal or veterans' groups, athletic clubs, political, civic or religious organizations, or any other organized group? Which ones?" (Almond and Verba, 1963: 301)

<sup>8</sup> PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano – Communist Party; MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano – Extreme Right Party)

<sup>9</sup> DC (Democrazia Cristiana – Christian Democracy)

<sup>10</sup> PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano – Socialist Party)

propensity for associationism, and the people who did join an association, were predominantly connected to polarized political activism.

The research by Almond and Verba, as well as other research later on (e.g. Putnam, 1993), show that the higher the education level, the higher the likelihood that people would participate in some associations. Yet, even though in Italy at that time there was a low level of schooling, the cause of a low level of social participation was to be searched elsewhere, because when controlling for education the difference between Italy and other countries still held. Likewise, socio-economic variables were not very important. The propensity and the type of associationism were instead influenced by the type of political affiliation.

Thus emerged the presence of phenomena that the authors considered typical of a participant culture (and essential for the functioning of a stable democracy), like 'open' party membership or the willingness to participate in associations, in areas not classifiable as socio-economic élite, that were mainly part of the Communist left that the authors had defined as potentially anti-system party. Potential DC voters had indeed a defensive closure towards the outside that resulted much higher than among supporters of the left, whose elite had a greater willingness to accept a wider society, a feature that Almond and Verba described as crucial for a democratic political culture.

According to the authors, an important prerequisite to participation, is the sense of 'subjective competence', namely the confidence of individuals in their own ability to influence politics (i.e. internal political efficacy), but in Italy, less than a third of people (27%) thought they could act against an unjust law at a local or national level. Consciousness of oneself as active political subject seemed also to affect the degree of party affiliation, so that the active supporters and party activists were the most politically secure of their potential and opportunities for action. All this allowed to prove the correlation already assumed that the national 'subjectively competent' would have been the most politically active citizen. Different results led to the examination of the relationship between subjective political competence and political opinion on society as a whole. In Italy between the two factors there wasn't any relationship, and even the level of education did not have any positive impact on it.

In short, confidence in one's own possibility to act is revealed by Almond and Verba (1963) as a key political attitude: 'subjectively competent' Italian citizens

thought they could participate, that it was good that everyone participates and were actually more politically active. But, contrary to the general hypothesis of these authors, they were not citizens identified with their own political system and proud of their institutions. While some of the cognitive attitudes, such as information, political interest or awareness of oneself as politically influential actor were positively associated with education or with variables such as income or profession, and therefore characterized the areas of privileged socio-economic status, other traits such as criticism against political institutions, and dissatisfaction with one own role as a voter and electoral trends in campaign or phenomena such as the reluctance or unwillingness to join associations, did not respond to the same indicators. After the information provided by Almond and Verba (1963) on participation in social associations there are few complete and exhaustive sets of data that make possible a systematic comparison between Italy and other countries, and even less studies, if any, make this comparison across time. This is an important lack because in *The Civic Culture* it was shown that the weakest point of associationism in Italy was not militancy in political parties and trade union, but rather participation in civil associations.

### 2.3.1.2 Italian Subcultures

The image that Almond and Verba (1963) give of Italy, as well as the 'amoral familism' of Banfield, was considered very relevant in the international academic community but it was refused by Italian scholars that, to contrast the image of political alienation and parochialism, brought attention to a different idea of political culture. They talked instead of very ideologized and lively political subcultures, able to direct the political behaviour of single individuals, to encourage process of political party identification and to produce political solidarity among people who shared the same subculture. They called then the attention to the millions of members of Italian mass parties, to the high electoral participation and to the wide socio-political mobilizations, as well as to the biased sample toward well-educated communists that had been used in the research by the two American scholars (Sani, 1980). The *Cattaneo Institute* research<sup>11</sup> describes a process of political integration based on partisan political culture and (direct and

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<sup>11</sup> 1963-1965. Researches conducted by the équipe composed by Giorgio Galli, Alfonso Prandi, Giorgio Evangelisti, Gianfranco Poggi. Results were published in 5 volumes. G. Galli, V. Capecchi, V. Cioni Polacchini and G. Sivini, *Il comportamento elettorale in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1967; G. Poggi (ed), *L'organizzazione partitica del Pci e della DC*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1968; A. Manoukian (Ed), *La presenza sociale del Pci e della Dc*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1968. Final results were anticipated in G. Galli, *Il bipartitismo imperfetto*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1966.

indirect) associational nets of mass political parties. On the one side, while fascism had introduced party membership as a requirement for the status of citizens, socialist and Catholic traditions had created the basis for mass political socialization (Galli and Prandi, 1970). Not only this. Main political parties were also supported by collateral organisms (such as trade unions, student, cultural and leisure associations) in which individuals could participate at different stages of their life, so that in different territorial areas (*white belt* and *red belt*<sup>12</sup>), political tradition strongly merged with local subcultures (Biorcio, 2001). In the phase of extensive and intense participation that characterized the post-war period, parties were the promoters of participation and of different types of collective action. The most participant people were very often members of political parties and were promoting parallel associations for a general project of renewal and transformation of society. In this context, the ‘Michigan’ concept of party identification, understood as an *individual* psychological allegiance with parties acquired through socialization and reinforced through lifetime experience, did not capture the historical link that Italian voters had with parties. Rather, Italian party identification was a

“social and political cleavage, where identification with a political party was the result of a sharing of cultural values, an objective location in the social structure, a membership (or closeness and trust) in secondary organizations, a territorial base. It was a form of social embeddedness, a closure in distinctive and separate political sub-cultures and enclaves which Italian mass parties were able to bring about” (Bellucci, 2004: 3).

In this sense, data used by Almond and Verba were not always suitable to Italian political-institutional reality. Moreover, the skepticism in the use of surveys in research of political culture was reinforced by the fact that Italians, in those years, were quite reticent in expressing political opinions and preferences (Sani, 1980). A few years later, Alessandro Pizzorno (1966), did some research into political participation in five areas of Milan and he confirmed that the centrality model (i.e. the higher the social position of an individual, the higher their political participation) was only partly confirmed in Italy, since it held only for attitudes such as political interest or information, but it was not able to explain party and trade union membership, that were instead influenced by the existence of deep-rooted (predominantly working class) subcultures.

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<sup>12</sup> White belt (zone bianche) – catholic subculture; Red belt (zone rosse) – communist subculture

Party membership and political motivations tended to prevail on social motivations, even though members of social associations often claimed to be distrustful toward institutions and denied any links with politics. Multiple memberships in social associations in specific geographical areas created in this way the conditions for 'subcultural participation', and this aspect of participation is maintained even in the sixties, at the end of the phase of collective enthusiasm for the renewed democratic life.

### ***2.3.2 The Seventies and the Eighties***

#### *2.3.2.1 Party Government and New Social Movements*

During the Sixties and Seventies in Italy there was a lively phase of social life, as part of an international phenomenon, which however lasted more than in other countries. After 1968 there was a politicization of many areas of social life, both public and private. This not only gave rise to many social and political movements, but also led to an increase in party memberships. In the mid-Seventies, along with mass scholarization, subjects almost entirely unrelated to politics (*parochial*) had dramatically reduced in number. Young people recorded during those years the lowest percentages of political apathy and indifference, and greater openness and participation in associations. In the late seventies-early eighties, however, all the indicators followed a reverse trend and the levels of disinterest in politics, particularly for young and educated went close to those touched in the fifties, so that the Italian electorate went back to be largely uniform. The tendency of party presence in citizen life still held and it led many to denounce the existence of a partycratic system and a logic of 'allotment' (*lottizzazione*). The political system of Italy appeared as an extreme case of 'party government' (*partitocrazia*) (Pasquino, 1982). The secretaries of parties took the most important decisions, rather than the parliament. Italy was then a party-centred democracy (Lanaro, 1992). At the same time that the economic situation was getting worse, violence was spreading, and awareness of the limitations of government was increasing, civil society and political system started progressively to separate (Guidorossi, 1984).

Starting from the work of Pizzorno (1977, 1978), the belief is often found in literature that a 'new collective identity' external to the traditional political allegiances had arisen, along with the development of 'extra-parliamentary' parties and the spread of 'new social movements' (Melucci, 1982), such as the movements of students, women

and environmentalists. The traditional parties then lost the monopoly on the ability to act collectively that to a large extent still held in the fifties.

However, in the mid-seventies, the enthusiasm aroused by the decentralized and direct forms of participation strongly decreased, while politics was increasingly going back to being identified only with parties and institutions. Compared to the Fifties, in the Seventies and Eighties, the democratic political system enjoyed relatively high legitimacy, but at the same time the legitimacy of the work of politicians and government had undergone an unprecedented collapse. The changes seem to have happened, both structurally and culturally, within civil society, rather than on the political system. On the one hand the social and economic structure of the country had changed, on the other, and partially as a result of it, the expectations and demands of social groups toward the political system had changed too.

Not only citizens were more educated and exposed to wider information through mass communication, but the perception of political reality, especially among younger generations was gradually (partially) liberated from a narrow and exclusionary particularistic logic of traditional type. For long time, this type of 'subcultural' logic had provided a justification for the principle of mass private interest involvement in activities of a public nature. Secularization brings a detachment from a priori dogmatism, rejecting the pragmatic principle of subordination of all political beliefs to the test of facts and leading to a partial abandonment of cultural-political ideologies designed as unchangeable and as closed systems. Yet, reciprocal image of party supporters seems to be still characterized by closing sectarian and aggressive attitudes: they were isolated and fragmented not on a rational level anymore, but on a purely affective level (Guidorossi, 1984).

In the Seventies the Italian crisis of governability has been stronger than other Western European countries. Political parties were still strongly controlling social actors, and a consistent part of the electorate was member of a party (see Bardy and Morlino, 1992). Moreover, despite secularization and modernization, Church hierarchies and trade unions still played a pivotal role in managing collective conflicts. Finally, mass media and opinion leaders tried to convince citizens to trust old political parties and that the political system of the moment was the only one possible (Morlino and Tarchi, 1996).

### *2.3.2.2 The Problem of Disaffection*

In 1970 the study by Di Palma (1970) further elaborated on data used in *The Civic Culture* by constructing different scales and indexes. He found that Italians had low levels in the three dimensions of its political disaffection indicator: political efficacy, political closeness and commitment to the system. The sense of political efficacy and of system accessibility resulted in being the dimension most related to political participation (.66 Pearson correlation); but also the other two dimensions had quite high levels of correlation (respectively .45 and .47). Once again, people more conscious of their political active role within the system resulted in being also the most informed and active participant. Their level of satisfaction with the system was, instead, not relevant for participation and did not even reveal the state of profound alienation that both Almond and Verba, and La Palombara suggested. Yet, the author noted the obsessive presence of political parties in the daily life of individuals as a peculiar feature of the Italian system. As La Palombara (1965: 290) had already remarked, the whole complex of civil society associations, were indeed generally divided into at least one faction of the Communist, Socialist, Catholic and Fascist. To some extent, each party tended to create its exclusive infrastructure of functional organizations and auxiliaries, which served to reinforce a certain kind of attitude towards politics and political actors.

### *2.3.3 The Nineties and The New Millennium*

#### *2.3.3.1 The Social Capital*

Italy has historically been a centralized state. Yet, in 1970 a constitutional reform undertook a regional decentralization, a very interesting experiment to be studied since the reform was identical for all Italian regions. The research performed by Putnam (1993) found out deep diversities in the success of this reform between different regions and he tried to look for explanations that 'made democracy work'. He took into account economic development, life evaluations by citizens, and policy process to show that regions from the north were more successful than regions from the south. Moreover, in southern regions low performance correlated with distrust and dissatisfaction, while northern and 'red belt' regions correlated with local government satisfaction. The relationship between socio-economic development and quality of institutions was thought to be spurious, since, according to the author, they were both caused by the level of civic community, measured as non-political association density, newspaper

readership and referenda turnout on 'civic' issues that was much lower in the south compared to the north and the 'red belt'. Also Cartocci (2007: 119) finds an existing relationship between dimensions of society, economy, culture and institutions. He holds, however, that the relationship has a negative circular causality that is responsible for a multidimensional fracture that separate wide areas of the country and that develop differentiated integration process that made them in different ways.

### 2.3.3.2 *The First and The Second Republic*

In 1996 research by Pisati and Barbagli, replicating a study of ten years before in the area of Bologna (Barbagli and Maccelli, 1985), showed how psychological involvement in politics had strongly increased among the entire population of every social condition and political ideology and certain participation modalities were more common among disadvantaged people. This was, however, not an indicator of a lively society. Bologna was the centre of the 'red belt', a geo-political area in which subcultural belonging and top-down mobilization by parties had always been very strong. Diffuse participation was then the result of an effective mobilization machine. In the rest of the territory during the Eighties, party membership had indeed decreased in a relevant way, while in the early 1990s Italian politics had entered a phase of (apparent) profound transformation that had brought to the crisis of traditional party system and of party membership (see Morlino, 1996). This happened mostly due to the big political scandal of 'Bribery City' (*Tangentopoli*)<sup>13</sup> and the 'Clean Hands' trial (*Mani Pulite*) to a big number of politicians and entrepreneurs and that was a turning point for Italian politics.

Two terms have been adopted to describe the period prior and post to this scandal. The *First Republic* is the term that indicates the period that goes from the end of World War II to the *Tangentopoli* that has been characterized by an intense clientelistic exchange. According to somebody the *Second Republic* starts in 1992, year in which the Clean Hands trial begins; according to other it starts in 1993, year in which the electoral law in Italy was changed from proportional to (predominantly) majoritarian. The term *Second Republic* should also indicate the socio-political changes undergone in Italy after 1992, even though one could doubt that it makes sense to talk of two different

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<sup>13</sup> *Tangentopoli* (Bribery City scandal) is a term which was coined to describe pervasive corruption in the Italian political system. It began on February 17, 1992, when Mario Chiesi, a member of the Italian Socialist party (PSI) was arrested for accepting a bribe from a Milan cleaning firm.



republics since still today it is not clear whether a complete transformation process has been brought to an end.

### **2.4 The Paradox of Italy and The Focus of the Research**

We mentioned a few times already that after Tocqueville, Almond and Verba (1963) and then Putnam (2000) gave the most important contributions to the hypothesis of creation of participatory culture through participation in civil society associations. They asserted the importance of civil associations for political participation and for democracy, since participation in social associations should bring to the development of civic skills and pre-political abilities that raise people's sense of political efficacy and allow them to participate in politics, having in this way an equalizing effect for citizens with low resources. Following this dominant theory, with the increase in social participation and civil associations in Italian society, and with a greater independence of associations from politics compared to the past, a political participatory culture should have spread in the last 50 years among Italian population. Increasing social participation, as well as increasing education, should indeed have made citizens become more efficacious and trustworthy, and therefore likely to participate more and in less partisan ways in politics. This however seems not to be the case described by the literature review we just reported. The object of this research is to identify whether this new type of non-partisan participatory citizen has not, in fact, appeared in Italian society as it would seem and why.

Since we study only one country the only way we can explore different explanations of the longitudinal evolution of a specific socio-political context is to challenge the demand-side view in indirect ways, by testing bottom-up theories and seeing whether and to what extent they have empirically worked. Despite the limits of this approach, this is a useful point of departure for challenging dominant explanations that consider only the demand side and as a starting point for future comparative analysis. If bottom-up theories were proved wrong, an alternative explanation for political attitudes and behaviour should probably go in the direction of considering differences in the supply-side of politics as responsible for producing distinct levels and characters of political attitudes as well as of political activity across countries (Morales, 2009). Within the part of the model we focus on, in the second part of this volume after mapping empirically through secondary data survey analysis the evolution of the Italian

socio-political context (Chapter 4), our goal is twofold. Firstly, we want to investigate the *individual modernization* hypothesis at the micro level on the decision to join different types of political and civil society associations (Chapter 5 and 6). Secondly, we want to explore the causal link between the three most interesting endogenous variables of our model: political participation, social participation (used as individual proxy for *social capital*) and political efficacy (used as individual proxy for *political disaffection*) (Chapter 7 and 8).

#### **2.4.1 The Individual Modernization Hypothesis**

With modernization western societies have undergone deep changes in the relationship between citizens and politics. Contrarily to the original general agreement among scholars that political disaffection had very negative effects and represented a big problem for contemporary representative democracies (see Lipset and Schneider, 1983), since the 70s a big portion of scholars have provided an important alternative explanation to this attitude with the theories of *individual modernization* (Inglehart 1977, 1997) or *cognitive mobilization* (Dalton *et al.* 1984, 2002). Our first goal is to focus on this thesis, already briefly presented in Chapter 1.

*Individual modernization* thesis refers to changes in structural transformations in post-industrial societies, particularly the expansion of education, which has led to enhance personal skills of citizens and to change their value orientations, with the rise of post-materialists values. This has led to an apparently paradoxical development. On the one hand, rising levels of education of citizens lead to more cognitive and politically relevant skills that increase their sense of self-efficacy within the political field (Inglehart, 1979, 1990; Dalton, 1984). On the other hand, changes in education expand the set of interests of younger citizens and make them more interested in post-material issue that are not well represented in conventional politics. According to these theories, the tendency to reject hierarchies and big bureaucratic organizations and to question élites, along with a failure of politicians to meet the post-materialist demands of this new educated public, result in a decline in their confidence in the political system and a decline of participation in organizations such as political party and trade unions membership.

Low confidence in the system, however, does not produce political apathy and alienated citizens. Rather it produces ‘critical citizens’, since younger generations are

thought to be more interested in politics, more competent, feel politically more self-efficacious than the past and broadly support democratic ideals, but to hold at the same time lower trust in political institutions. Accordingly, they have critical attitudes toward conventional democratic practices and ‘church-like’ associations and they change modes of political participation in favour of ‘bottom-up’ social movements and of civil society volunteering (Inglehart, 1979; 1990; 1997; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995a, 1995b; Dalton, 1988; Kaase and Newton 1995; Nye *et al.*, 1997; Norris 1999a, 1999b, 2005; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2005).

In this study we investigate whether mass scholarization and the spread of education in Italian society has had negative effects for the choice to join ‘church-like’ organization across time, while having positive effects for the choice to join more bottom-up social associations. We also investigate whether this is particularly true for younger generations. To test this thesis, we construct a pooled dataset with different data sources, with which we look at changes in the Italian socio-political context, political generations and citizens’ life-cycle participation (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

### ***2.4.2 The Political Socialization vs. The Self-Selection Thesis***

We saw that a lively society is considered to be very important in democracy. In theory we find two main bottom-up opposing lines of thought that have tried to explain the causal relationship between participation in social associations and political participation. Our second goal is then to disentangle the causal connection between the three endogenous variables on the demand side of the model: social participation, political efficacy and political participation. Could *self-selection* or alternative causal models work better than the dominant *political socialization* model to explain the evolution of participation and efficacy in Italy at the individual level?

If associations are thought to provide civic skills and psychological engagement to participants, they might work as substitutes for education and social status, giving people with low resources the same opportunities to participate in society life and reducing political inequality where resources are not equally distributed. Indeed, given the assumed socializing role of associations, participation should contribute to a healthy democracy not only when citizens decide to join associations for their interests in politics, but also when they participate for other reasons. The *political socialization* model finds its individual-level specification in the *civic voluntarism model* (CVM) that

gives an analytical explanation of how associations can be ‘schools of democracy’ (Verba *et al.*, 1995). In this model, organizational involvement is conceived as providing politically relevant resources in terms of attitudes, skills and, in general, of political psychological engagement that are a precondition for political participation. Along with socio-demographic factors such as education, gender, social status or with family socialization, associations are thought to politically socialize their members.

According to the main alternative hypothesis, the *self-selection* thesis (Hooghe, 2003; Armingeon, 2007), however, the correlation between organisational membership and political participation is not causal, but spurious. Associations are self-selective because the same individual characteristics that promote non-political association involvement also promote political participation. Associations do not educate citizens; rather it is educated citizens that join associations (Newton 1997, 1999b). Another two theses exist from the bottom-up perspective. One takes into account reciprocal effects between political efficacy and participation (Finkel, 1985). Another theory denies the causality approach since it claims that involvement in associations is not at all correlated with political efficacy and political participation (van Deth, 1997)

Using a three-wave survey panel dataset, we investigate the role of political efficacy in the causal path between participation in social associations and political participation. We first test the two theories of *political socialization* (CVM) and of *self-selection*, that see political efficacy as the mediation variable between social and political participation, and as the cause of both participation types respectively. Since the three variables are endogenous, we also consider that the relationship between these variables could be reversed or reciprocal (Finkel, 1985; 1987). Accordingly, we test longitudinal relations between two variables at the time in order to check which causal direction exists, if any, between different types of participation and political efficacy, or which one is stronger. Finally, with the same data we also identify which are the most common participatory profiles among the Italian population (Chapter 7 and Chapter 8).

## CHAPTER 3.

### PARTICIPATION AND EFFICACY: SOME DEFINITIONS

#### 3.1 Introduction

At the beginning of Chapter 1 we gave a short definition of political participation, whereas in Chapter 2 we explained why the concepts we are most interested in this research are political participation as well as social participation and political efficacy, what is their causal relationship and in what way these evolved in the Italian context according to the most important existing studies on participatory behaviour. In this chapter, we find a place in literature to the multidimensional concept of political behaviour and we explicit the process that led us to choose that particular definition as our main focus. We also give analytical and working definitions of the other two concepts of study: social participation<sup>14</sup> and political efficacy. We set the limits of social participation to organizational membership, and we define which associations are *political* and which are *social*, distinguishing also between different types of civil society associations, and placing them on a continuum of politicization. Finally, we explain the origins of the importance of the concept of political efficacy for political behaviour and define its conceptual boundaries.

#### 3.2 Political Participation

##### 3.2.1 A Multidimensional Concept

We could look at *political participation* in different ways. Several definitions have been used over the years, and to better categorize different types of political participation we can use four general dimensions (Cotta, 1979). A first major distinction is between *micro-politics* and *macro politics* perspectives. Micro politics focus on individual actors, and give importance to sociological, psychological and contextual conditions that might influence participation from the point of view of political sociology and political culture analysis. Macro politics focus instead on the aggregate equilibrium of political systems, such as democracy or pluralism levels, as well as web of institutions and rules of the game that outline the opportunities and incentives that citizens have to

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<sup>14</sup> The terms *social*, *non-political* and *civil society participation* in this research are used interchangeably.

participate in politics. Starting from micro politics, the classical dominant view in political science literature limits participation to:

“activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making” (Huntington and Nelson, 1976: 3; Sartori, 1987: 257; Raniolo, 2002: 20; Verba *et al.*, 1995: 38)<sup>15</sup>.

The common keywords shared by all definitions of this kind are: citizens, activity, voluntary and government/politics (Van Deth, 2001). Political participation is performed by private citizens, not by politicians or civil servants (*citizens*); it includes several activities, but does not refer simply to attitudes such as interest in politics or knowledge about politics (*activity*); it is meant to be voluntary, and not forced (*voluntary*)<sup>16</sup>; it concerns *government and politics* and the political system in general but does not include everything that concern *society*.

The other three dimensions for categorizing different types of political participation are the following. First, a distinction between *indirect* and *direct participation* can be made. The former is the active participation of citizens in the political system through democratic intermediation (or *active citizenship* following Bendix and Rokkan, 1971), while the latter is direct participation without intermediation or representation. Second, we can separate *organizational or institutionalized participation* from *movement participation*. With *organizational* participation is understood as any type of regulated and channelled participation through organized groups and associations, while *movement* participation includes unregulated and routinized forms. Third and finally, we can distinguish between *decision-oriented* or

<sup>15</sup> Other widely used definitions are: ‘Political behaviour [...] is behaviour which affects or is intended to affect the decisional outcomes of government’ (Milbrath, 1965:1).

‘...these activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take (Verba & Nie, 1972:2)

‘... these actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics’ (Milbrath & Goel, 1977:2).

‘... all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system’ (Kaase & Marsh, 1979:42).

‘... action by citizens which is aimed at influencing decisions which are, in most cases, ultimately taken by public representatives and officials’ (Parry, Moyser & Day, 1992:16).

‘... activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make these policies’ (Verba, Scholzman & Brady, 1995:38).

“Political participation is in essence the activity of citizens to influence political decisions.” (Brady, 1999: 737-738).

‘... is action directed explicitly toward influencing the distribution of social goods and social values’ (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003:4).

‘the interest, shown by private citizens or groups, to take part in a direct way to the political life of a community or of a state, in every possible way’ (Sani, 1996)

<sup>16</sup> Mandatory vote, still existing in some democratic countries, is an exception to the principle of voluntariness and might cause distortions in measuring the levels of political participation of the citizens of a country.

*instrumental participation* and *expression-oriented participation*. The former is participation in order to get government to implement public policies. The latter is participation for its own sake, since it is inherently rewarding either because politics is seen as exciting and as offering opportunities for self-expression (e.g. political interest), or because it fulfils a subjectively-felt obligation to participate (e.g. civic duty, namely the belief that one *should* participate in politics)<sup>17</sup>

Since the first definitions of political participation changes have occurred in society and political system, and the fact that definitions have changed through time and in different contexts complicate the matter even further (Verba *et al.*, 1995: 40-41).

‘Political activism has been reinvented in recent decades by a diversification in the agencies (the collective organizations structuring political activity), the repertoires (the actions commonly used for political expression), and the targets (the political actors that participants seek to influence)’ (Norris, 2002:215-216).

‘[M]odern definitions [of political participation] have sought to incorporate informal political activity, including protests, social movements and, increasingly, voluntary activities in pressure groups, civic associations, charities and other associations’ (Norris, Lovenduski and Campbell, 2004a:15).

During the 1940s and 1950s the focus of political participation studies was almost exclusively on voting, since the political role of the people was often confined to voting in elections (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and MacPhee, 1963; Campbell *et al.*, 1960), a unique form of participation because is the most common act of democratic citizenship, as well as the less demanding and most equal form of political activity (see Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). Starting from this, in the early seventies political participation began to be understood in its multidimensional character, including four dimensions of participation in political party politics: ‘voting’, ‘campaigning’, ‘communal activities’ and ‘particularized contacts’. (Verba, Nie and Kim, 1971; Verba and Nie, 1972). At the end of the 1970s new modalities of participation were added to the definition, labelled as *unconventional participation* in contrast to conventional participation within political parties (Marsh, 1977; Barnes and Kaase, 1979). This distinction is one of the most common classifications of political participation, although a very complex one. In

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<sup>17</sup> A term quite different of Verba and Nie’s *civic mindedness*, namely a person’s belief that he contributes to the community’s welfare

political participation literature, voting has always enjoyed a distinct status and can be placed outside of this classification because no other political actions are systematically related to voting (Van Deth, 2001: 8).

*Conventional political participation* aims to influence the political process in a system of representation mainly through the electoral process (Verba and Nie 1972) and is traditionally linked to political parties and it includes rather formal, common and politicized forms of political participation performed by citizens. The most common activities that define conventional political participation are membership in political parties, donating time and money to parties, participating to electoral rallies or political meetings, and contacting the electoral representatives (Sani, 1996; Peterson, 1990). *Unconventional political participation* is instead mainly characterized by its informal, loosely structured, small-scale nature, multiple target orientation and spontaneous and irregular mobilization. It is traditionally linked to political and protest movements and aims to influence the political process from the outside of political parties, in line with people's norms and values – for instance, by holding a demonstration or boycotting/buycotting products, or by doing 'protest politics', namely actions of dissent, including unofficial strikes and signing petitions (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Sani, 1996). Yet, definitions are constantly subjected to changes according to the context and time in which they are used. Modes of participation are increasingly overlapping with each other and boundaries between what we can refer to with the term *conventional* and *unconventional* are neither much fixed nor clearly defined anymore. Activities that were once labelled as 'unconventional', because minoritarian and elite-challenging, are now becoming widespread and generally accepted, such as participating in demonstrations or signing a petition. Nonetheless, the different nature of these forms makes this analytical distinction still useful.

The neo-Tocquevillian literature in the early 90s expanded the set of politically relevant groups and emphasized the importance of engagement in all kinds of voluntary political as well as non political associations for a vibrant democracy. Many authors started then to include also civic or social participation (Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2002), political consumerism (Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti and Stolle, 2007) and life politics<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 'Political issues which flow from processes of self-actualization in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies' (Giddens, 1991: 214).



(Giddens, 1991) in the definition of political participation. Finally, more recently, several activities on the Internet have started to be considered as political participation, especially as a new mode of participation of young people (Bennett, 2008; Pasek *et al.*, 2006). To be precise the Internet is a new platform in which both conventional and unconventional, but also new, Internet-specific modes of participation have appeared on the scene, rather than a new mode of participation in itself. Although the core concepts of different definitions has remained relatively stable, we can see that the importance of components has differed over time and has made the concept increasingly encompassing.

### ***3.2.2 Our Definition of Political Participation***

After the excursus on the array of components and dimensions to classify political participation, we need to set the boundaries of our study. Political participation can be mainly looked at from two different points of view: the demand side and the supply side. Since in this research we focus predominantly on the demand side, the individual actor that participates in politics, in doing so, we also implicitly assume that no changes have occurred in political modes of participation, political organizations and in the socio-political context across time. We are extremely aware that this does not correspond to reality.

Briefly, since the early 1960s there has been a rise of individualized modes of participation. Individualistic modes of participation have been available for a long time (e.g. casting a vote, donating money, signing a petition), but the situation is now changing. The difference is that new forms of participation such as boycotting or buycotting<sup>19</sup> products or participating through Internet technologies still requires a large number of people for the participation to be effective, but they do not necessarily require any organization or collective action and everybody can act individually and separately. The growth of individualistic modes of participation reflects the growing importance of government and politics to the life of citizens, and also the increasingly blurred borders between the public and the private, as well as the political and the non-political (Van Deth, 2001). In addition to this development, we saw that political parties have ceased to be the mass mobilizing parties of before, and they have undergone a process of modernization, becoming *professionalized campaigning parties* (Katz and

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<sup>19</sup> Ethical shopping

Mair, 1995). Cheque-book participation and ‘outsourcing activism’ (Fisher, 2006), that requires a minimum effort to be performed, allow both citizens and associations to focus on their own goals and interests more than the past. As a result, associational involvement has become less essential for political participation and less salient for citizens (Van Deth, 2009). Finally, the Italian associational and political context has deeply changed, not to mention the substantial transformations in the international economical as well as socio-political context.

We try to overcome this partial overlook of the scenario in the interpretation of results by taking into account in what ways the evolution of the supply side might have affected and still affect the demand side. In this line, although we recognize the importance of other types of political participation for contemporary societies, we restrict our focus to the classical definition of political participation, and particularly to organizational participation:

“voting and voluntary activity by private citizens within political organizations designed to directly influence government decision-making”.

We therefore primarily analyse the decision to join a political party and voting at national elections. This choice depends on five substantial reasons. First of all, we want to avoid using a concept that includes everything. The increasing blurring between the private and the public sphere, as well as between the political and the non-political, could lead us to the conclusions that politics is everything and everywhere. This makes very difficult any investigation on the concept of political participation. It is necessary to set analytical boundaries and define what we want to include in the definition of political participation and what we want to exclude, to avoid that the study of everything turn into the study of nothing (van Deth, 2001).

Second, *unconventional* political activities differ from the traditional definition of (*conventional*) political participation because these acts are not always aimed at influencing politics directly, but are often used as an expression of (political) ideas, and often directed towards supra-national politics or to other nation’s governments. Since we are mainly interested in explaining participation concerning national politics and in issues of representativeness, in this research our focus is addressed toward *decision-oriented* national political action, and not on *expression-oriented* political action. Third,

as Rosenstone and Hansen (2003: 4), we hold that ‘political’ participation is ‘directed explicitly’ towards government and politics, and this almost automatically exclude civil society participation from the definition of our main dependent variable that, if any, has mostly indirect effects on politics. Fourth, since social movement participation has increasingly blurred boundaries between political and social spheres, we want to restrict our definition of political participation to *organizational* politics. This includes actions linked to electoral participation and to conventional political parties. It excludes instead spontaneous meetings, flash mobs, and protest social movements, but also petition signing and product boycotts.

Finally, data availability and data manageability as well as time constraints led us to choose the most relevant political behaviour to us: political party membership, which is also one of the most important and used indicators of political participation. Despite its decline in the last decades in most Western countries, the existence of political party organizations are normatively crucial in a democratic system, since they should serve as the main channel through which citizens get involved in mass politics. They should have the role of re-equilibrating the unequal distribution of social resources, most of all trying to avoid social inequalities transforming into political inequalities. A representative pluralistic democracy is indeed supposed to work at its best when the role of organized groups to equally represent groups of ordinary citizens within political institutions is well fulfilled (Dahl, 2006).

For the sake of completeness, in the descriptive part of the dissertation (Chapter 4), we report the evolution across time of several acts of conventional and unconventional participation, including direct and indirect, organizational and movement as well as decision-oriented and expression oriented acts of political participation. Yet, in the analytical part, we restrict our focus of investigation to political party membership (Chapter 5 to 8), the indirect, institutional and decision-oriented participation par excellence, and, to voting (Chapter 7 and Chapter 8).

### **3.3 Civil Society Participation**

#### ***3.3.1 Our Definition of Social Participation***

As with political participation, we restrict social participation to voluntary and secondary organizational participation, namely membership in civil society associations:

‘voluntary activity by private citizens within secondary, voluntary, *civil society* associations’.

First of all, an *association* can be defined as “a formally organized named group, with specific purposes, most of whose members are not financially recompensed for their participation” (Knocke, 1986: 2). Associations are one of the three central “types of operative organization” in modern societies, together with markets and bureaucracies (Parsons, in Warren, 2001: 49). Yet, associations, in contrast to markets and bureaucracies, are a “form of social organization that thrives on talk, normative agreement, cultural similarity, and shared ambitions – that is, forms of communication that are rooted in speech, gesture, self-presentation, and related forms of social interaction.” (Warren, 2001: 39).

The most common theoretical take on associations relies on the distinction between the thickness and thinness of associative relations, that allow us to identify three levels of associations or institutions. Primary associations or groups, based on face-to-face relations, include families, friendships and workplace (Sani, 1976); secondary (or intermediate) associations, such as civic groups, sports clubs, religious associations, and the like, have a less immediate but nonetheless close social attachments; tertiary associations or bureaucratic organizations, are the membership-based interest and professional groups (e.g. private-sector firms and government bureaus), in which members are relatively anonymous to one another and have little in common beyond the specific purpose they are pursuing (Warren, 2001; Knocke, 1986). We refer to secondary associations since these are those that are more commonly understood as associations and those that are supposed to be the ‘schools of democracy’ par excellence.

Finally, secondary associations are *voluntary* when they are sustained by voluntary citizen involvement and voluntary philanthropic contributions. Voluntary involvement is “participation that is not obligatory and that receives no pay or only token financial compensation” (Verba *et al.*, 1995: 38-39). Participation is voluntary if it can be freely chosen by people and no one is forced to join. In the common liberal view, the voluntariness of associations is an essential feature since associations are thought to be “the means through which people freely pursue their goals within

pluralistic societies” (Warren, 2001: 96) and are therefore the ultimate social expression of freedom and of pluralistic democracy.

### ***3.3.2 Political Organizations vs. Civil Society Associations***

In democratic literature, *political* and *social* participation have often been associated, since they are based on similar ideological and cultural roots (Cotta, 1979) and Putnam (2000: 37-45) even treats political participation like any other civil society voluntary organization. If we look at society, the boundary between *political* and *non-political* activity is indeed by no means clear and is slowly dissolving, since activities are increasingly intertwined. We saw in Chapter 2, at the individual level, participation in non-political voluntary associations is thought to be a potentially politicizing experience in many ways. At the organizational level, things are more complex since institutions that provide a context for non-political voluntary participation have usually a complex relationship to politics and public purposes. In one way or another all associations sooner or later get into contact with (local) politicians or raise their issues in the (local) political public sphere. However, it is straightforward that a sport club that has contacts with local administrations cannot be thought to be as political as an environmental movement which is trying to promote its cause in parliament, and obviously not as political as a formally organized political party.

Although reality is very complex and has blurry boundaries, from an analytical point of view accurate indicators are needed if we are to be able to make arguments about any changes across time of participation in different types of associations, and on the causal link between social associations and political behaviour. First of all, state and non-politicized civil society are two ideal types of a continuum. The major difference between political and social associations is the diversity of contents in the spheres they belong to: on the one side we find the state, traditional political organizations and the electoral process, while on the other we find organizations and associations of the civil society (Cotta, 1979). For political organizations we then consider only political parties, namely organizations that are mainly acting in the *conventional political* sphere and that are the main expression of representational politics. They are acting continuously (contrarily to unconventional politics like protest movements), and explicitly to affect governmental actions, providing through their organizations a degree of predictability to political processes that would otherwise be episodic and uncertain. Moreover, their goal

is to get power. All other associations different from political parties are then considered as part of *civil society*. Even those associations that have some political goals are at best organized in some ways that try to influence politics but without directly taking the power.

A special attention must be given however to trade unions. The history of the origin and evolution of trade unions in European countries (and particularly in Italy) makes it improper to consider trade unions participation only as part of non-political participation, since unions have a long and established tradition of political and party involvement. In fact, if, for a long time, Italian social associations have been strongly influenced by political party sub-cultures, trade unions were directly created and have been the direct expression of political parties in civil society. As Pizzorno (1966: 283) claimed, trade union membership in Italy is (or at least was) a political choice. For this reason, we consider that trade unions in this research must be considered as a separate category that is located half way between political parties and other social associations.

Even more difficult to categorize are different types of non-political civil society associations. The network of voluntary social associations belonging to civil society can be theoretically understood by representing the four domains of society in the triangle of Figure 3.1 (Van der Meer, te Grotenhuis and Scheepers, 2009; Cohen and Arato, 1992). In this figure we can see that civil society associations are placed in a sphere in the middle of the three most important areas of society placed on the corners, namely the market (the economic sphere), the state (the government sphere) and the family (the intimate sphere). Voluntary organizations are public (not part of the intimate sphere), they do not primarily aim to make profit (not part of the economic sphere) and they are not controlled by the government (not part of the state). Of course, as intermediate sphere, social associations do not have clear boundaries with the three core spheres of society and aim to influence each of these domains (Maloney and Roßteutscher, 2007). Yet, the social domain in which they operate, and the purpose for which they were created could be a useful analytical tool.

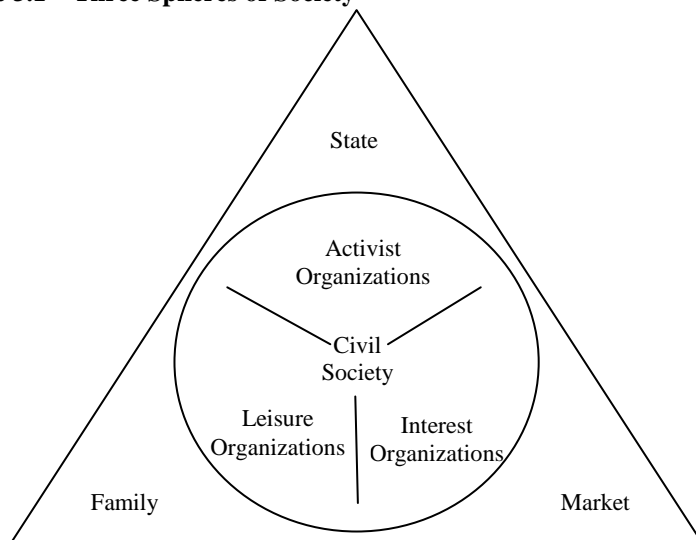
We distinguish between ‘professional’ associations, ‘activist’ associations and ‘leisure’ associations. The first category includes associations with a focus on the market, like professional<sup>20</sup> and business organisations. The activist association category

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<sup>20</sup> Professional organizations and Interest groups are used as synonyms

includes associations with a focus on government, like environmental and humanitarian/peace organizations. Leisure association category includes associations with a focus on the intimate and individual sphere as well as on the organization of free time, like sports and cultural associations. To these three categories we add religious associations (associations that relate to all the main spheres in society) and civic non-religious associations (associations with altruistic initiatives toward society), more often called ‘the voluntary sector’, including associations concerned with health. These five categories are necessarily heterogeneous, but we choose parsimony and simplification of reality to avoid being overwhelmed by data. Not only analytical categories serve to this purpose, but also these are common measures used in public opinion surveys.

**Figure 3.1 – Three Spheres of Society**



Source: Van der Meer, Grotenhuis and Scheepers, 2009<sup>21</sup>

Although we consider only political parties as properly *political* associations and only trade unions as associations as being half way between politics and civil society, also the other non- political associations can be placed on a continuum of politicization. Contrary to leisure associations that are usually completely detached from explicit political action and they are not continuously dealing with political parties or with government, we know that activists and professional organizations often hold (to different degree) some political goals, and we can place them somewhere within a continuum of politicization.

<sup>21</sup> Van der Meer, T.W.G., te Grotenhuis, M. and Scheepers, P.L.H. (2009). Three Types of Voluntary Associations in Comparative Perspective: The Importance of Studying Associational Involvement Through a Typology of Associations in 21 European Countries. *Journal of Civil Society*, 5(3): 227-241.

Activist associations might indeed undertake actions that are aimed to influence governmental decisions or might raise specific issues in the political public spheres (e.g. environment, peace, human rights, etc.). These organizations, contrary to the promotion of altruistic initiatives of civic non-religious associations, organize and promote social conflict (either political or cultural). On the other hand, they deal with broad social and universal interests, and they try to persuade individuals as well as societies to change their general conduct (Aarts, 1995). They however use non-conventional and non-representative ways of putting pressure on policy makers for the success of their demands and they are often connected to social movements.

Also professional associations are clearly more strongly committed to partisan politics than are non-economic organizations, but although they are recognized intermediaries of society, they are more limited in their approach than political parties. They usually lobby for government only to change specific laws concerning labour issues, aiming at directly benefiting the socio-economic interests of their members (Knocke, 1986; Lelieveldt, Astudillo and Stevenson, 2007).

Finally, although civic religious and non-religious associations, especially in Europe (and in Italy), have historical traditions of *conventional* political activism, functioning as collateral agencies of political parties, organizing their members, and channelling their electoral support, we consider them to be at a lower politicization level because the political aim of affecting government decisions is not their main concern and they do not clearly convey their partisan preferences to their members. Leisure associations have finally a very modest interest, if any at all, in conveying partisan information to their members. In short, we do believe that civil associations can be placed on a continuum of four levels of politicization: highly political on economic issues (professional organizations); highly political on new politics issues (activist associations), half-political (civic associations, both religious and non-religious) and non political associations (leisure associations such as sport and culture).

### **3.4 Political Efficacy**

#### ***3.4.1 Democratic Citizenship, Political Efficacy and Disaffection***

We move now to the third main concept of interest in this study: political efficacy. We saw it is a particularly relevant concept for democratic citizenship because it is considered necessary to participate in politics since efficacious citizens have a greater



propensity to engage in political action, and high levels of political efficacy within a population are important in creating support for the political system. It was social psychological theory, through Lane (1959) and Campbell and colleagues (1954) that introduced political efficacy for the first time as one of several components of political involvement that helped predicting voter turnout. A few years later several authors considered political efficacy as essential for the effective functioning of democratic systems (Almond and Verba, 1963; Easton and Daennis, 1967). If a large amount of citizens have the perception of lacking effective channels to influence political decisions, the democratic quality and equality of a political system is under question, since more and more citizens would increasingly become frustrated, discontent, and feel powerless. It goes without saying that this is very problematic for democracies. We saw in Chapter 2 that political inefficacy is part of the wider and more complex concept of *political disaffection*, which is not only an aggregate level variable that captures distrust as a cultural orientation and as the political culture of the people of a country, but it is also an *individual* level attitude and it is on this level that we focus our attention.

The core element of political efficacy is the individual self-image as an influential participant in politics. It can be defined as ‘the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process...the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change’ (Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954:187). Both actual and potential political action have an impact on the political process, but we focus here only on citizens’ perceptions of their possibilities and opportunities to have an influence upon the political decision-making process.

The psychological empirical study made by Bandura (1977, 1982) placed self-efficacy at the core of (political) human coping behaviour. This research showed how self-efficacy, subjective assessments mediate the relationship between knowledge and action, affecting both motivation and (political) behaviour. In addition to self-efficacy, also judgments of the relevant environment (the political system) are crucial to determine whether coping behaviour will be undertaken. This distinction of the two necessary elements for (political) behaviour is matched by the empirical distinction in political efficacy literature made by Hensler (1971), Converse (1972) and Balch (1974). Political efficacy has indeed been split in two analytical dimensions: *internal political*

*efficacy* (image of the self) and *external political efficacy* (image of politics). Both concepts refer to beliefs about the impact a person may have on the political process as a result of their own skills and confidence. Internal political efficacy is formed by the (perceived) personal capacities, skills and critical competences of a person to influence the government and politics (Lane, 1959). A person's external political efficacy is instead the set of perceived systemic opportunities and the impact a person believes they may have on the political process as a consequence of political institutions' responsiveness (the political opportunity structure) (Lane, 1959).

Balch (1974) demonstrated empirically that whereas internal political efficacy had significant positive correlations with political interest, knowledge and activity, external political efficacy had a significant positive correlation with political trust. Both *political efficacy* and *political trust* are so strictly linked and connected that they have been interchangeably treated as broad indicators of political system support. Although also their empirical association is usually quite high, also external political efficacy and political trust must be treated as two analytically separate concepts. External political efficacy is indeed the perception of the responsiveness of government to citizens' (potential) political initiatives, while political trust is the judgment about the performance of government or politicians, regardless of citizens participation. Or as Craig (1979) holds, political trust, unlike external efficacy, taps "the anticipated quality of government outputs", not "the degree to which an individual perceives his political actions as being (potentially) successful".

Although the two components of internal and external efficacy are analytically different, they are usually strongly correlated and are alternatively used in research as one unique factor or as two separate factors (Segatti and Vezzoni, 2007). In Chapter 4 we describe the evolution of both dimensions across time, while in Chapter 7 and 8 we run a factor analysis with our panel data in order to see which choice is the most appropriate in our case.

# **PART II**

## **From Theory to Data Analysis**



## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **THE EVOLUTION OF THE ITALIAN CONTEXT**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In part one of this volume we have constructed an analytical model to explain participatory behaviour, we focused on the concept of social capital and political disaffection, described the post-war Italian scenario as presented by literature and explained the focus of our research, before to provide definitions of the three most relevant concepts for this research: political participation, social participation and political efficacy. We now move to the analytical section of the volume. Using several datasets, we want to re-map the longitudinal trends of the evolution of the Italian socio-political context across 50 years. By comparing participation data from multiple sources, we are able to trace with more accuracy the evolutions of the Italian socio-political context since the late 1950s, as described in the study by Almond and Verba (1963), until today.

#### **4.2 Measuring Participation in Italy Across Time**

There are two main strategies for studying participation on a representative and longitudinal level: either we rely on objective criterion of official statistics or we use citizens' self-definitions of survey data. As we shall see, neither option is without problems. For the purpose of the present research we rely mostly on international and national survey data that include measures for Italian political and social participation, as well as for political efficacy. When relevant and available, however, we also include official statistics data. We face comparability issues in a direct way, proposing a comparison method that takes into account divergences between different surveys, triangulating measures on the highest number of sources available. In this way we not only widen the window of observation but we are also able to better assess the reliability of the results (Firebaugh 2008: 90-119).

In our descriptive longitudinal analysis we choose surveys that contain both measures for political participation and membership in social associations, or at least in

trade unions<sup>22</sup>. After *The Civic Culture* study, the first political-electoral survey was conducted in Italy with ‘modern’ instruments by the American scholar Samuel Barnes on political elections of 19th of May of 1968, through face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of the Italian electorate of 2500 cases. Since then, similar surveys have been used quite regularly, until the most recent conducted by Italian National Election Studies (*Itanes*) in the weeks before the vote of April 2008.

The selected available datasets focusing only on the Italian context are then six: *Political Participation in Five Sections of Milan*<sup>23</sup> by Pizzorno, 1964; elections studies of 1968 by Barnes<sup>24</sup>, and of 1972 by Barnes and Sani<sup>25</sup>; six waves of the Italian national elections studies by *Itanes*<sup>26</sup> (1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2006; 2008); fourteen waves of *Family Multiscope Research* (IMF) by the *Italian National Institute of Statistics* (Istat)<sup>27</sup>; nine waves of the report on associationism of the *Educational and Formative Research Institute* (Iref) connected to the Italian Catholic Workers Associations (Acli)<sup>28</sup>. We also use eight international surveys that have included participation measures for Italy: *The Civic Culture Study*<sup>29</sup> (1959-60); *The Political Action Survey*<sup>30</sup> (1973-76); *The Four Nation Study*<sup>31</sup> (1985); eight waves of *The*

<sup>22</sup> We use only dataset collected by non-profit organizations, excluding private survey institutes, because of easier access to data, beyond any consideration of survey quality.

<sup>23</sup> *Political Participation in Five Sections of Milan: Baggio, Barona, Comasina, Forlanini, Perrucchetti* (Pizzorno, 1964). The study interviewed 2892 residents of five sections of Milan, Italy: Baggio, Barona, Comasina, Forlanini, and Perrucchetti. The five sections were selected according to the following criteria: (1) genesis of the neighbourhood (compact municipality, pre-war settlement spurred by industrial development, recent industrial development), (2) type of residential areas (subsidized versus non-subsidized), (3) morphological characteristics of the section (unplanned versus planned development), and (4) degree of efficiency of infrastructures and services (according to their efficiency index). Questions probed respondents' socioeconomic mobility, political awareness, relationships with neighbours, places of origin, and familiarity with Milan and its cultural-political life. In addition, respondents were asked about their knowledge of events in the neighbourhood, the types of leisure activities in which they participated there, their family life, and their levels of involvement in political and social activities in their neighbourhood. A subsample of 450 respondents were reinterviewed with a second questionnaire that probed more deeply into political and associational participation. See also *Quaderni di Sociologia*, special issue (1967), XIV, pp.3-4

<sup>24</sup> Elections study of 1968 by Barnes. Sample: drawn sample of 3,000 individuals, of which 2,500 interviewed (83.3%). Survey execution: Ciser (Centro Italiano di Studi e Ricerche, Rome), directed by Sergio Lieto. Fieldwork period: June and July 1968 (national elections were held on 19 and 20 May 1968)

<sup>25</sup> Elections study of 1972 by Barnes and Sani. Sample: 1,841 individuals interviewed. Neither the original sampling design nor the percentage of refusals is known. Survey execution: Field Work (Milan) Fieldwork period: May and June 1972 (national elections were held on 7 May 1972)

<sup>26</sup> *Itanes* is the Italian National Election Study research programme launched at the beginning of the 1990s by Istituto Cattaneo and later joined by several Italian universities, which carries out surveys in occasion of national elections. Information on the studies, participants and data can be obtained at [www.cattaneo.org](http://www.cattaneo.org).

<sup>27</sup> *Istat*: Italian National Institute of Statistics. The first Multiscope survey was carried out in 1993 and it was carried out yearly since then. The purpose of the study is to obtain information on individuals characteristics, families structure, daily life, needs and problems of Italian population. <http://www.istat.it/en/>

<sup>28</sup> *Iref*: Educational and Formative Research Institute by the Italian Catholic Workers Associations (ACLI). Research in social field. Original datasets are not available. <http://www.irefricerche.it/>

<sup>29</sup> *The Civic Culture* (1963), classic study carried out by Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba in five nations in 1959/60 and one of the earliest comparative studies. The study compared political attitudes, political culture, political socialisation of the population and democracy in Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, Mexico and the United States.

<sup>30</sup> The first original study of *The Political Action Study* was carried out in eight nations between 1973 and 1976: Great Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, the United States, Italy, Switzerland and Finland. Questions were asked about the extent and form of political participation, political orientation, post materialism, social and political attitudes and life satisfaction.

<sup>31</sup> The *Four nation Study* data set contains information about the political attitudes and beliefs of citizens in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The four surveys were conducted in the spring of 1985 by polling organisations operating in the four countries.

*International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)*<sup>32</sup>; four waves of *The World Value Survey (WVS)*<sup>33</sup>; seven waves of *The Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File (EB)*<sup>34</sup>; five waves of *The Standard Eurobarometer (EB)*<sup>35</sup>; and two waves of *The European Social Survey (ESS)*<sup>36</sup>.

We must obviously be careful in analysing such a big amount of data and such different surveys, each with its own sampling procedure and specific wording of questions. Table 4.1 summarizes all the main characteristics of these surveys. We can see that the modes of data collection are rather homogeneous while there is some variability in sampling designs. We consider only individuals from 18 to 80, while weights are not used due to their extreme heterogeneity in different surveys. We mainly use original datasets<sup>37</sup>, comparing and showing similarities but also contradictions that emerge from them. In fact, more than once, in the same year, different surveys report very different levels of participation of a particular participatory mode.

For simplification purposes, from now on we refer to all Italian national election studies as *Itanes* surveys, including studies of Barnes (1968), Barnes and Sani (1972), *The Political Action Study (1973-76)* and *The Four Nation Study (1985)*<sup>38</sup>. On the one hand, as we discuss further on, survey measurements for participation are far from perfect.

<sup>32</sup> The *International Social Survey Programme* is a continuous programme of cross-national collaboration running annual surveys on topics important for the social sciences. The programme started in 1984 with four founding members - Australia, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States – and has grown to 45 member countries from all over the world in 2008. Italy has participated from 1986 to 1998 with Eurisko and in 2001 with Censis.

<sup>33</sup> The first *European Values Study* was conducted in 1981 by the European Value Systems Study Group. Countries participating in the study were France, Italy, Spain, West Germany, Denmark, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and Ireland. The purpose was a cross-national survey of moral, religious, political and social values in western Europe. The survey was replicated in 14 additional countries between 1981 and 1984, including countries outside Europe such as Argentina and South Korea, referred to as the *World Values Survey* by R. Inglehart and the World Values Survey Group. The second wave of the *World Values Survey (WVS)* was carried out between 1990 and 1993 including 43 nations. In order to investigate further the dynamics of value changes the European survey was repeated in 1999/2000 and in 2008. Italian data collection for these waves refers to 1981, 1990, 1999 and 2005. <http://www.worldvaluesurvey.org>

<sup>34</sup> In the *Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File 1970-2002* measures of participation in political parties and trade unions are available only from 1988 to 1994, while participation in non-political membership associations is never present. For this reason we also use five waves of Standard EB that include measures for social participation: <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/eurotrend/Homepage.html>

<sup>35</sup> The *Eurobarometer* survey series is a unique program of cross-national and cross-temporal comparative social research. Since the early seventies representative national samples of the populations of all European Union member countries have been simultaneously interviewed each spring and each autumn. The Eurobarometer surveys are designed to provide regular monitoring of the social and political attitudes of the EU population. We constructed a pooled dataset including the following waves: 1983 (n.19); 1987 (n.28); 1990 (n.34); 1998 (n.49); 2004 (n.62-2). [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/)

<sup>36</sup> The *European Social Survey (ESS)* is academically-driven social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. The first round was fielded in 2002/2003, and the second in 2004/2005. The third (2006/2007), the fourth (2008) and the fifth round (2010) did not include Italy. <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

<sup>37</sup> Except for *Iref*, *ISSP* and Pizzorno data for which we use data taken from official reports.

<sup>38</sup> Even though formally *Itanes* studies by The Cattaneo Institute begins only in 1990, these previous studies have been incorporated by the Institute to fill the gap of previous elections. Beside *Itanes* data listed above, two panel studies also exist: a short pre-post electoral panel study in 2006 and a long electoral panel study in 2001, 2004 and 2006. In order to avoid panel bias, in the descriptive longitudinal part of the study we exclude some waves of the two panels: the pre-electoral survey in 2006 and the second (2004) and third (2006) waves of the long panel. The former was excluded because we already use a post-electoral survey, while the latter will be analysed in detail in Chapter 7 and 8, where we test several causal models linking the three main variables of political participation, social participation and political efficacy.

Three studies present particularly weak data for cross-survey and longitudinal comparison for different reasons. The survey made by Pizzorno in 1964 includes only residents of five sections of Milan and not data from the whole nation as all the other surveys we consider. In the second wave of the ESS in which Italy was included (2006) the sampling design was not approved by the ESS Sampling Expert Panel, possibly undermining the validity of the results. Finally, in the last wave of the WVS (2008; 2005 for Italy) Italy was included, but no stratification by education was possible, so that people with lower education are underrepresented, and the risk of overestimating the participatory phenomenon exists. We should note that also *IMF* data are quite different from other sources, but in the opposite sense, since data have indeed been collected with very big samples of the Italian population (about 60,000 people, compared to 1000-1500 people of other surveys), making data more reliable. Yet, as we see later, they are less comparable since questions proposed to respondents, particularly on social participation, are different from other surveys. For the sake of completeness, we choose to include these surveys, being however very careful in drawing conclusion from them, particularly from the 2005 *WVS* wave.

On the other hand, we overcome imprecise measurements with descriptive data triangulation. Triangulation is the synthesis and integration of data from multiple independent sources through comparison and interpretation, helping to counteract threats to validity of each study. Through triangulation not only we are able to compare different data sources, but also to compare surveys collected through different data gathering techniques and sampling methods. By examining different types of information, findings can corroborate each other and reduce the effect of both systematic bias and random error present in a single study, strengthening conclusions and reducing the risk of false interpretations (O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003: 78; Glenn, 2005: 43-50). In order to go beyond short term or survey fluctuations, we also draw trend lines in our graphs across all survey data. For membership measures we make use of moving average lines between two periods, whereas for voting and other acts of participation we use linear trend lines in order to grasp the general tendency toward increasing or decreasing, avoiding confusion generated by short-term fluctuations. In Chapter 5 and 6 we sketch a more unified picture of these data by merging some of



these sources together, building a pooled datasets in order to investigate in more detail individual characteristics of people and their evolution across time.

**Table 4.1 - Main characteristics of survey datasets used**

Survey	Waves	Waves used	Extension	Data Collection	Sampling Design
The Civic Culture (1963)	1959-60	1959-60	Internat	Face to face	Multistage Stratified Random Sample
Pizzorno study (1964)	1964	1964	5 areas of Milan	Face to face	Stratified Random Sample of each area
Standard EB	1974-2011	1983; 1987; 1990; 1998; 2004*	Internat	Face to face	Multistage, random(probability)
EB Mannheim	1970-2002	1988-1994	Internat	Face to face	Multistage, random(probability)
ISSP	1985-2011	1992-1998; 2001*	Internat	Face to face	Quota
WVS/EVS	1981-84; 1989-93; 1994-99; 1999-04; 2005-06	1981; 1990; 1999; 2005	Internat	Face to face	Stratified
ESS	2002; 2004; 2006; 2008; 2010	2003; 2006 <sup>39</sup>	Internat	Face to face	Stratified, multistage
Barnes	1968	1968	National	Face to face	Not known
Barnes and Sani	1972	1972	National	Face to face	Not known
The Political Action Survey	1973-1976	1975	Internat	Face to face	Not known
The Four Nation Study	1985	1985	Internat	Face to face	Not known
ITANES	1990; 1992; 1994; 1996; 2001; 2004**; 2006**; 2006 pre**; 2006 post**; 2008	1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2006pre**, 2006 post**, 2008	National	Face to face/ CATI	Multistage / Stratified (+ quotas)
IMF - Istat	1993-03; 2005-07	1993-2003, 2005-2007	National	Self-Administrated/Face to Face	Stratified, then Cluster sampling
Iref (Acli)	1983; 1985; 1989; 1991; 1994; 1997; 1999; 2002; 2006.	1983; 1985; 1989; 1991; 1994; 1997; 1999; 2002; 2006.	National	Face to face	Not known

Note: \* trade unions and professional organizations measured together; \*\*p= Panel Study Wave

#### 4.2.1 Available Measures per Datasets

In Chapter 3 we defined *political participation* as “voting and voluntary activity by private citizens within political organizations designed to directly influence government decision-making”. Other activities such as giving time or money to a party, attending protests and demonstrations, or sign petitions are a few of the other possible acts of political participation. Looking at the political acts measured in the selected surveys, we decide to report the most measured acts corresponding to this definition, namely voting, membership in political parties, financing political parties and acts of conventional

<sup>39</sup>Year of data collection in Italy for First (2002) and Second Round (2004) of ESS.

participation, such as work for a party, attend political meetings/political rallies and contact politicians. For the sake of completeness in this chapter we report also the evolution of some acts of unconventional participation such as signing petitions, attending demonstrations and boycott products. In Table 4.2 we can see in which dataset each act of political participation is measured.

**Table 4.2 - Available Datasets for Political Participation measures in Italy**

	Civic Culture	Pizzorno	Itanes	WVS	IREF	IMF	ISSP	ESS	EB Mann	EB
Voting			X					X		
Party Membership	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Work for a Party			X	X		X	X	X		
Attend Political meetings			X			X				
Attend Political rallies						X				
Contact Politicians			X					X		
Financing parties			X			X				
Sign Petitions			X	X	X			X		
Demonstrations			X	X	X	X		X		
Boycott products			X	X		X				

In Chapter 3 we also saw that in this study with *trade unions participation* we refer to ‘voluntary activity by private citizens within voluntary trade unions’, while with *social participation* we refer to ‘voluntary activity by private citizens within secondary, voluntary, *civil society* associations’. There are several ways to measure the intensity of associational involvement at the individual level. An important distinction can be made between passive and active participation. The former consists in formal membership, while the latter consists in volunteering and participating in organizational activities. While with volunteering we mean “any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause” (Wilson, 2000), participation in associations’ activities indicates instead a sporadic type of participation, linked to some specific organized event, such as participation at meetings.

Through the available datasets we map the evolution of trade unions and social participation. For the latter we use the five associations categories already defined to make order in the very different number and association types measured in each survey. These five categories are activist, professional, religious, civic non-religious and leisure association. In Table 4.3 we can see how trade unions and social participation associations are measured in the selected datasets.

**Table 4.3 - Measures for Trade Unions and Social Participation in Italy in available datasets**

	Civic Culture	Pizzorno	Itanes	WVS	IREF	IMF	ISSP	ESS	EB
Membership (M)/Volunteering(V)/Participation in Activities (A) (e.g. meetings)									
Trade Unions	M	M	M	M	M	V A	M	M V A	M
Social Associations						V			
Professional Groups	M		M	M V	M	A		M V A	
Activist Associations	M		M	M V	M	A		M V A	M
Religious Associations	M		M	M V			M	M V A	M
Civic non-religious Associations	M		M	M V	M	A	M		M
Leisure Associations	M		M	M V		A	M	M V A	M

Note: M= Membership V=Volunteering A=Participating in Activities

Finally, we saw that with *political efficacy* we refer to ‘the feeling that individual political action can have an impact upon the political process’. Moving from conceptual to empirical issues, the classic measures for political efficacy are the indicators used in the Michigan election studies of mid-1950s<sup>40</sup>. The two questions that measure the concept of internal political efficacy are: “People like me have no real say about what government does” and “Sometimes politics seems so complicated that is not possible to understand what is happening”. While the three questions which normally measure the concept of external political efficacy are “People we elect in Parliament lose very soon contact with electors”, “Politicians do not care about people like me” and “Parties are only interested in people’s votes, not to their opinions”. Repeated measures of political efficacy of this type in our data can be found only in the *Itanes* series (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4 - Measures for Political Inefficacy in Italy in available datasets**

Political Inefficacy		59	68	72	75	85	90	96	01	06	08
Internal	Politics is too complicated	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	X	X
	People like me have no say	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X
External	Politicians lose touch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-
	Politicians don’t care	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	X	-	-
	Parties are only interested in votes	-	-	-	X	-	X	X	X	X	-

Source: *Itanes* data series

#### 4.2.2 Methodological Note on Measurement

As for the survey questions, one of the main things to be aware of in the study of participation and efficacy at the individual level is that the validity of measurement is put to test when we consider the effects of question wordings on our estimates. In this sense, it is first of all crucial how the questions are posed. Original questions wording for each survey and year can be found in *Appendix I*. One of the most important difficulties in any attempt to study participation with survey data is the fact that by relying on subjective definitions of participation we run the risk of grouping potentially

<sup>40</sup> See Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954).

heterogeneous behaviour. Self-definitions are varied and divergent, and individuals who have the same relationship to an association may define themselves differently. Moreover, the estimates of participation we get from survey research might be different from the actual participation for social desirability responses. This might constitute a source of systematic measurement error which can bias our estimates about who participates: at the descriptive level, we cannot precisely establish which amount of the population participates through surveys, while at the explanatory level it can be a source of bias on the causal estimates. Official statistics would be a better option than survey data if our purpose was exclusively to study levels of participation, but there are a few problems in this respect (Morales, 2009). First, official statistics in Italy are easily available only for electoral turnout and for membership in political parties and trade unions. Second, only the turnout statistics are totally reliable. In fact, on the one hand external definitions are likely to underestimate levels of membership since many associations do not keep any formal registration of membership or other participatory modes. On the other hand, scholars of politics and industrial relations generally claim that the climate of competition between political parties and different trade unions, and most likely between associations, since the first years of the Italian Republic led these organizations to inflate the reported number of their members for propaganda reasons (see La Valle, 1984). Third, the current research does not require macro data, but rather individual level information to assess the characteristics of who participates across time.

Survey limitations should not prevent researchers from making any use of the available data. They should rather make them more careful with making strong theoretical claims or with drawing strong conclusions about long-term trends of weak data. Given all this and given that we are more interested in longitudinal trends than real levels of participation, we prefer the option of self-reported measures rather than objective participation measures, also because available data in survey format is much wider.

#### *4.2.2.1 Measurement of Associational Membership*

Measuring membership in organizations is a tricky issue. Not only might categories set by researchers differ from real life situations, but, by asking the respondents to classify their association in our given categories, we are assuming that all the respondents will classify associations in the same way. The strength of asking about membership by

association categories is that it makes respondents think through different association types before deciding which one they are member of, since respondents are more likely to answer reliably when confronted with explicit groups (Morales, 2002). Yet, if categories are too broad or ambiguous, respondents will be confused about the exact meaning of a given organizational label and they will respond quite randomly (Morales, 2002; Curtis, Grabb and Baer, 1992). Moreover, usually surveys are calculating the number of *types* of membership instead of the total number of memberships or the actual names of the groups, and this implies an underestimation of the phenomenon. There is no possibility of overcoming this problem unless we use a very long questionnaire on membership, which is not practical for social research. We believe, however, that asking respondents the type of association they are a member of is a good compromise to understand the levels of citizen participation of each association type and to investigate the characteristics that might influence this, giving us a good approximation of association participation.

Still, repeated measures of political and social practice in surveys do not per-se guarantee comparability of results. For better comparability, in longitudinal studies it is necessary that the organizations listed and question wording in each survey remain the same, but even assuming that the question had always been exactly the same from survey to survey, its meaning has changed over time. To overcome the problem we have used conceptual equivalent questions and grouped different social associations under the five general theoretical categories specified in Chapter 3: ‘activists’ associations, ‘professional’ organisations, ‘religious’ organizations, ‘civic non-religious’ associations and ‘leisure’ organizations (see *Appendix II*). Although these categories are a simplification of the much diversified panorama of associations, they are classified for all datasets according to the same criteria, and can help us giving a concise idea of how different types of associations have evolved in Italy from post-war till today.

#### *4.2.2.2 Measurement of Political Efficacy*

The indicators of political efficacy have been actively debated in literature, and the adequacy of the measurement instruments is somehow confusing, since it is not always very clear what these indicators of efficacy exactly do measure. A first problem is whether efficacy questions tell us something about the way a particular individual is constituted psychologically or something about the probability that the political system

will be responsive. The distinction between internal and external efficacy helps to give an answer to this dilemma but does not eliminate all of the ambiguities of meaning. Items might be interpreted in different ways and it is not very clear which sentence measure internal and which sentence measure external efficacy<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, the wordings of some items are contaminated by social desirability response (e.g. do you think politics/government is too complex to be understood). A second criticism is the temporal stability and reliability of the same items (Converse, 1972; Asher, 1974), and a third criticism is that individuals feel efficacious (or powerless) with relation to specific level of government and to particular institutions at each level (Balch, 1974). It is therefore very different asking about politicians, local politicians, parliament, government and so on. Despite these relevant criticisms, in a longitudinal study the advantages coming from the availability of repeated measures are much higher than the disadvantages coming from measurement imprecision, and are then adopted in this research.

### **4.3 Political Participation**

Having explained the complexity, ambiguities and different understanding of concepts that exist in literature, as well as methodological imperfections that characterize this area of research, we can now proceed in mapping the evolution of political participation in Italy, according to the definition we gave and to the data we dispose of.

#### ***4.3.1 National Elections Turnout***

In Italy the most classic and institutionalized form of political behaviour was extended to the entire population after the end of World War II, and, since then, voting has always encountered a considerable degree of favour among Italian citizens. The percentage of voter turnout at national elections has indeed remained at very high levels since 1948 (on average above 90% of voters in general elections), with a peak of support in the general elections of 1953, 1958 (93.8%) and 1976 (93.4%) (Table 4.5).

The most important explanation for these high levels of turnout is commonly attributed to the fact that voting was compulsory by law until 1993<sup>42</sup> (Franklin, 2004).

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<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the vast literature on internal and external efficacy, see Abramson (1983) (See also Gabriel, 1995; Acock and Clarke, 1990; Acock, Clark and Stewart 1985).

<sup>42</sup> D.Lgs. 534. As written in art.48 of the Italian constitution, in Italy voting was considered a "civic duty". Although the vote was not strictly mandatory, a 1947 law introduced a symbolic sanction for people that failed to vote, namely the words "Did not vote" would be stamped on a person's ID (Galli and Prandi, 1970: 28). This may have had negative consequences especially for public workers.

Several studies of turnout in Western democracies showed that the magnitude of the estimated impact of compulsory voting usually increases turnout by 10-15 percentage points (Jackman, 1987; Blais and Dobrzynska, 1998; Franklin, 2004; Blais and Aarts, 2005, Blais, 2006). Yet, unlike other European countries, the fact that abstentionism was punished with a symbolic sanction did not seem to affect significantly the rate of Italian voter turnout. Until the 1990s local elections turnout rate, not regulated by the same symbolic sanctions, was indeed only slightly lower than national elections<sup>43</sup>.

**Table 4.5 – Italians General Elections: % of turnout**

<i>First Republic</i> <sup>44</sup>		<i>Second Republic</i>			
Election Year	%	Election Year	%	Election Year	%
1946	89.1	1972	93.2	1994*	89.5
1948	92.2	1976	93.4	1996	86.4
1953	93.8	1979	92.2	2001**	85.0
1958	93.8	1983	92.2	2006**	83.6
1963	92.9	1987	92.0	2008**	81.5
1968	92.8	1992	90.1		

Source: Ministero dell'Interno. <http://elezionistorico.interno.it> (National elections – Chamber votes)

Note: Data including non valid and blank votes. \* since 1993: voting is no more compulsory; \*\* without Italians living abroad

One other reason for high voter turnout was that in post-war Italy a purely proportional system was in place, a system that usually encourages one to vote (Gallagher, 1991). Moreover, voters were automatically registered on the voting rolls<sup>45</sup>, elections often lasted for more than one day, and were held on a public holiday. Finally, a lot of Italian voters in this period used the ‘vote of belonging’ (*voto di appartenenza*), meaning that through their vote they were reconfirming their belonging to the Communist or Catholic cultural-political sub-culture (Parisi and Pasquino, 1977). The economic boom of the 1960s, modernization of society, consumerism and mass culture started to slowly modify lifestyles and collective behaviours. In the 1970s independent ‘opinion’ vote made its appearance and abstentionism started to be registered, particularly during the general elections of 1979 and 1983, with a turnout of 92.2%, the lowest ever recorded in the history of the republic till then. It is however in 1994 at the start of the *Second Republic* that there is a higher drop. From then on, abstentionism began to increase, reaching the lowest level of turnout in the last elections of 2008 with 81.5%<sup>46</sup>. From post-war since today turnout in national elections in Italy has then decreased by 12.3

<sup>43</sup> With a pick in the administrative elections of 1975 and with a difference of participation between regions of the north - the most participant - and regions of the south, that mirrored national elections patterns.

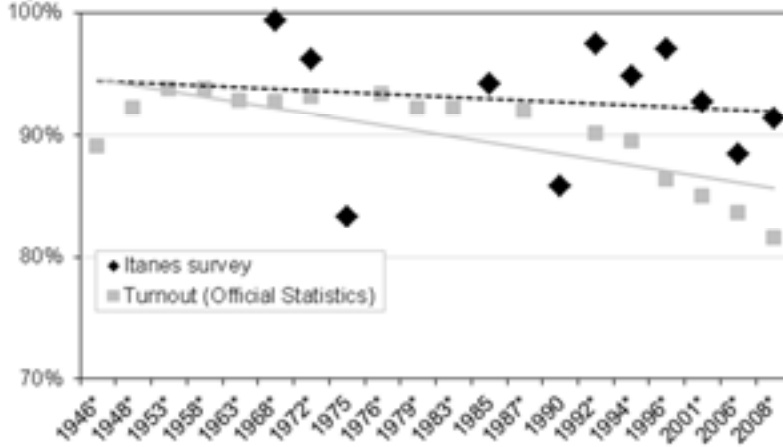
<sup>44</sup> Until 1992 elections

<sup>45</sup> Until 1974 at the age of 21; since the 1974 election at the age of 18

<sup>46</sup> Data without considering Italians living abroad

percentage points, and by 8.6 percentage points since 1993, when a new electoral predominantly majoritarian law was introduced (L. 277/93).

**Figure 4.1 – National Election Turnout**



Source: Ministero dell'Interno. <http://elezionistorico.interno.it> (National elections – Chamber votes). Own elaboration of *Itanes* data. Note: \*elections years. Linear trend line calculated separately for *Itanes* survey data and Official statistics turnout.

If we compare official data with self-reported electoral turnout (*Itanes*)<sup>47</sup>, we notice that the latter gives quite reliable approximation of the level of participation we are dealing with in longitudinal perspective and of the direction of the turnout trend since both indicate very high levels of participation at general elections (Figure 4.1). The trend lines indicate the slow but persistent decrease in time of voter turnout. Yet, survey estimates of electoral turnout are systematically higher than real turnout indicating a tendency, with only few exceptions, for over reporting. If we compare Italy to other countries (Table 4.6) we see that in the period 1945-1999 Italy was at the top of the list of mean voting turnout along with Australia, Belgium and Austria, all countries that in 1999 still had compulsory voting<sup>48</sup>.

**Table 4.6 – Mean of Estimate for Turnout in 22 Countries, 1945-1999**

Country	Mean (turnout)	SD (turnout)*	Country	Mean (turnout)	SD (turnout)*
Malta	88.2	8.7	Luxemburg	89.8	2.0
Sweden	86.1	4.7	United States	55.8	4.0
Australia	94.6	1.8	Canada	74.6	4.2
Denmark	85.6	2.5	<b>Italy</b>	<b>90.6</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Norway	80.6	3.0	New Zealand	88.6	4.1
Belgium	92.6	1.7	Japan	71.3	4.6
Iceland	89.5	2.0	France	76.7	5.9
Germany	85.6	4.4	Finland	75.9	5.8
Israel	80.4	3.1	Austria	92.1	3.9
Ireland	73.2	3.2	Netherlands	87.6	7.5
United Kingdom	76.4	3.6	Switzerland	56.6	11.0
<i>Overall</i>	<i>81.4</i>	<i>4.4</i>			

Source: International IDEA (1997, 2002) in Franklin, 2004. Note: \* SD=Standard Deviation

<sup>47</sup> We did not include ESS even though measures of voting were present, since we had only two waves.

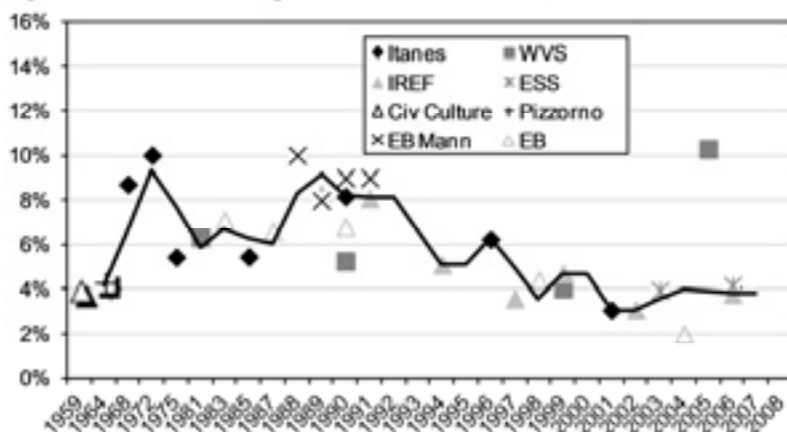
<sup>48</sup> Austria abolished mandatory vote step by step between 1982 and 2004



### 4.3.2 Membership in Political Parties

In Chapter 2 we saw that political parties in the post-war period could be accused of strong partisanship of vertices and detachment from the desires expressed by the voters, but, given the percentage of people voting at national as well as at local elections, it seems that for a long time citizens did not attribute to parties any big political responsibilities. In fact, it was not through a political gesture such as not voting that Italians have thought of penalizing them. We are going to check whether party membership has a different story. We plot the longitudinal trend of self-reported party membership taking eight surveys sources separately, two of which consists in one single-wave study: the *Civic Culture* survey and the study on participation in Milan by Pizzorno (Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2 – Membership in Political Parties (%)**



Source: own elaboration of data *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS*, *The Civic Culture*, *EB* and *EB Mannheim Trend File*. *IREF* and *Pizzorno* Study data are taken by official reports.

Note: Trend line is calculated with the moving average between two points in time, and it excludes the outlier of 2005 *WVS* because very different from similar sources of similar years.

Different types of dots indicate participation rate as registered by each survey at each point in time. Yet, in order to give a better idea of the evolution though the years, we add a trend line to the graph including all the available waves and surveys from different sources calculated with a moving average between two points in time. We clearly see that party members are much less than party voters, rarely reaching one tenth of our sample, but, although there are differences in reported levels of different surveys, all sources show a growth in the 1970s and 1980s, and then a decline from the 1990s until today<sup>49</sup>. *EB Mannheim Trend File* report quite stable and higher measures of

<sup>49</sup> The only exception is represented by the last wave of the *WVS* in which Italy was included (2005) that indicates an increase from 1999 of almost 6 percentage points. Yet, as noted earlier, in this wave people with high education are over-represented and therefore more likely to participate in political parties. Accordingly, data for this wave are likely to be overestimated, so we decided not to

participation than other sources, but they refer to a short period of time. *Itanes*, *Iref*, *WVS* and *EB* indicates all higher levels than measures that *The Civic Culture* and the study by Pizzorno registered in the early 1960s, but they all indicate a decreasing trend across time. *Ess* consists only of two waves and although 2006 as mentioned earlier might have a biased sample, measures of political participation are in line with the low levels of participation in the 2000s indicated by other sources.

**Table 4.7 - Membership in main Political Parties – First Republic (Until 1992)**

	(1) Pci/Pds	(2) Dc	(3) Psi	(4) Liberali	(5) Repubblicani	(6) Radicali	(7) Msi	(8) Psdi	(9) Dp
1945	1,770,896	537,582	700,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
1950	2,112,593	882,674	700,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
1955	2,090,006	1,186,785	770,000	147,000	53,656	-	-	-	-
1960	1,792,974	1,473,789	489,837	-	-	-	191,397	119,167	-
1965	1,615,296	1,656,428	437,458	-	45,492	-	191,029	185,269	-
1970	1,507,047	1,738,996	506,533	-	95,368	-	188,878	-	-
1975	1,730,453	1,732,501	539,339	-	-	1,635	212,120	308,211	-
1980	1,751,323	1,395,584	514,918	44,966	106,536	2,981	165,810	108,470	3,000
1985	1,595,281	1,444,565	583,282	61,818	97,839	2,984	141,623	165,733	6,466
1990	1,264,790	2,109,670	660,195	44,732	72,175	3,150	142,344	--	--

Source: Cattaneo Institute data and notes<sup>50</sup>.

We analyse in more detail which party had the highest number of members by reporting absolute numbers of membership, directly provided by political parties. These data somehow confirm survey information: after the Second World War mass political socialization and partisan political culture got stronger and this was expressed by membership in the three main political parties. The Christian Democrats Party (DC), the

include this estimate in the moving average trend line of our graph reporting measures of political party membership, and to exclude it from other graphs of conventional political participation to avoid confusion.

<sup>50</sup> -: not available data . The members of the Communist Party until 1985 are taken from official statistics published in a special supplement on the Seventeenth Congress, in *L'Unità* on January 26, 1986. For data from 1986 to 1990 see Ignazi P. (1992), *Dal Pci al Pds*, Bologna, Il Mulino, p. 101; for data of 1991: D'Alimonte R., Nelken D. (Ed.), *Politica in Italia 1997* edition, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997, pp. 322-323. 2) Data until 1988: C. Danè C., *La Democrazia cristiana: strutture centrali e organi dirigenti dal 1943 al 1989*, in F. Malgieri (Ed.), *Storia della Democrazia cristiana*, Vol V, Rome, Cinque Lune, 1989; for data from 1989, D'Alimonte R., Nelken D. (Ed.), *Politica in Italia 1997 edition*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997, pp. 322-323. In 1991 the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) was founded. 3) For data up to 1967, see F. Cazzola, *Il partito come organizzazione. Studio di un caso: il PSI*, Roma, Tritone, 1970. The 1966 and 1967 membership data refer to the PSI-PSDI unified, Centro Italiano di Ricerche e Documentazione (eds.), *Annuario dell'economia, della politica e della cultura*, Milano, Etas Kompass, 1967. For data from 1970 to 1979, Katz RS, Mair P, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.479-485. For data from 1980 to 1991, Di Virgilio, A., *Le metamorfosi del centro. Da Craxi ai «cespugli»*. For data up to 1987 L. Bardi, L. Morlino, Italy, in RS Katz, P. Mair, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.479-485. For data from 1988, cf. Ignazi P., Katz R. (Ed.) *Politica in Italia 1995 edition*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995. 5) L. Bardi, L. Morlino, Italy, in RS Katz, P. Mair, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp. 479-485. \*Estimates provided by the Party organization. 6) For data up to 1991 L. Bardi L. and Morlino, Italy, in RS Katz, P. Mair, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.479-485. Since 1992 official figures. 7) For data up to 1963 L. Bardi, L. Morlino, Italy, in RS Katz, P. Mair, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp. 479-485. Data from 1964 were provided by the National Alliance party (AN). All figures include members of the youth associations of Fdg and Fuan. 8) For the years 1953, 1956-1958, see Bizzard E., C. Piazza, *L'organizzazione dei socialdemocratici 1948-1958*, in Vallauri C. (ed.), *L'arcipelago democratico*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1981. For following years, Katz RS, Mair P, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.479-485. 9) Katz RS, Mair P, *Party Organizations*, London: Sage Publications, 1992, pp.479-485

Communist Party (PCI) and the Socialist Party (PSI)<sup>51</sup> could indeed count with 2.5 million members in 1945 and up to 4 million in 1955 (Table 4.8).

In the following decades, due to the ongoing process of secularization, the communist and Christian democrat sub-cultures started to weaken. The Sixties saw indeed an increase in DC membership, but a decrease of membership of the two other main parties. In the mid-Seventies, membership of the three main Italian parties show higher values compared to those of the previous decade, but this period represented only a momentary phase of growth in membership. With the exception of PSI (when Bettino Craxi was Prime Minister) and DC, memberships of almost all parties decrease in the Eighties. Things soon change however also for PSI and DC: as it becomes evident with the 1992 elections, also these parties collapsed after the ‘Bribery City’ scandal (*Tangentopoli*)<sup>52</sup>. Due to the changing international context, also the *Communist Party* (PCI), the other major party, in the same period underwent a crisis: in 1991 PCI changed its name and its logo, becoming the *Party of the Democratic Left* (PDS) and later, in 1994, even changed its leadership. In those years the socio-political scene underwent also other big changes. In the 1992 elections, the *Northern League*, a new protest party that had emerged from the unification of various local autonomist lists, had strong success. Its success increased even more in the 1993 local elections, when the small leftist parties and the far right *Italian Social Movement* (MSI) also saw a rise in their fortune. Moreover, before the legislative elections of March 1994, DC and PSI had split and changed names. Finally, the same elections saw the success of a new party, *Forza Italia* (FI), created and headed by the TV tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. There was also a radical turnover of the ruling political class, and a cabinet composed of parties which had either been formed very recently - such as FI, the *Northern League*, the *Union of the Centre* (UoLC) and the *Christian Democratic Centre* (CCD) - or which had previously always been excluded from governmental coalitions - such as the *Italian Social Movement – National Alliance* (MSI-AN)<sup>53</sup>. Due to these changes, particularly in the two main political parties, after the 1990s traditional political subcultures lost almost completely all their historical power.

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<sup>51</sup> DC's most important governmental party

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 2

<sup>53</sup> Forza Italia was created by Silvio Berlusconi only two months before the 1994 elections. In the same period the Christian Democratic right wing split to create the Democratic Christian Center (CCD) and some liberal and centrist deputies founded the Center Union (UdC). The regionalist movements which federated into the Northern League had already emerged in the early 1990. MSI-AN was an electoral cartel promoted by and mainly composed of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), a neo-fascist party which was in Parliament since 1948.

**Table 4.8 - Membership in main political parties – *Second Republic* (Since 1992)**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	Pds/Ds	Forza Italia	MsI/An	Rif. Comun.	PdCI	Verdi	Psi/Si/Sdi	Ppi	La Margherita	Udc	Lega Nord
1992	769,944	-	181,243	117,511	-	-	51,224	-	-	-	112,400
1995	682,290	5,200	124,123	115,984	-	-	44,485	180,000	-	-	123,031
2000	555,171	312,863	163,864	90,422	25,614	-	59,345	-	-	-	120,897
2003	549,372	249,824	192,191	85,770	30,932	20,000	59,882	-	260,000	171,000	131,423

Source: Cattaneo Institute data and notes<sup>54</sup>

Note: – not available data

As a consequence of this, in the *Second Republic* party memberships dropped dramatically as Table 4.9 shows. Whereas in 1985 membership of the three main political parties of the *First Republic* (DC, PCI, PSI) was still over 3.5 million, in 1995 membership in the three main political parties of the *Second Republic* (PDS, FI, AN) was less than 1.5 million. The most recent period shows a sharp decline in party membership and this further indicates that political party membership in Italy appeared to be, until the early 1990s, an indicator of a particularistic and ‘subcultural’ participation.

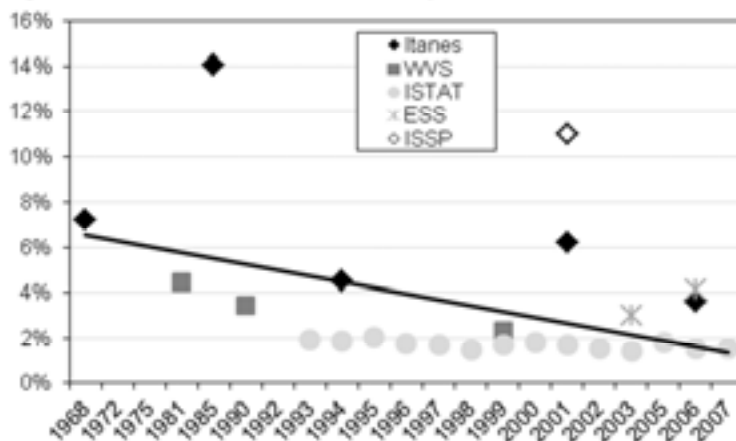
#### 4.3.3 Conventional political participation

Besides voting at elections and membership in political parties, a variety of different conventional political acts linked to parties or institutional politics were registered in surveys. These acts could be distinguished in individual and non-individual acts. Non-individual acts usually require more intensive involvement and more time than individual acts and are therefore generally expected to be less frequent. We report acts

<sup>54</sup> 1) For data between 1992 and 1995, see D’Alimonte R., Nelken D. (Eds), *Politica in Italia edizione 1997*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997, pp. 322-323. On 14/02/1998 Leftist Democrats (Ds) was founded, political party made of Pds, Social Christians, Reformers for Europe, Communist and Labourist. The data from 1996 to 2003 were provided by the DS Affiliation Office. 2) The party was founded in 1994 and the membership of that year amounted to about 5,200 members, after which the registration campaign was locked in a broader view of organizational redefinition. Official data supplied by the Secretariat of Forza Italia. 3) The National Alliance (AN) officially takes place the MSI in 1995. The data from 1992 to 2004 were all provided by the National Alliance (AN), but at different times. The data from 1995 onwards were provided, more recently, by the head office of the party membership. As you can see, there is a considerable gap between the 1994 data and those of 1995, which would signal a significant reduction in membership. It should however be noted that this trend does not appear in other sources, which also is likely to be based on data from the National Alliance (AN). For example, as reported by L. Bardi, *Italian Parties. Change and Functionality*, P. Webb, D. Farrell and I. Holliday (eds.), 2002, p. 55, members of AN, were calculated to be, for the year 1996, 486.911 - even reporting a significant increase in membership since 1994 - and, for the year 1998, 485.657 4) The party was formed in 1991 by a split from PCI(ex-Communist Party), which later became the PDS at the XX Congress of the Communist Party. Official data supplied by the Secretary Office of the Party 5) Office department and organization of the PDCI. 6) Secretary Office of the party. Until 1995 there was no national affiliation. In 2000-2001, the Constituent Assembly was held, and data for 2000 are therefore not available. 7) For the 1992 data, see Di Virgilio A., *Le metamorfosi del centro. Da Craxi ai «cespugli»*. In 1994 the Italian Socialist party was founded (SI). Data from 1994 to 1996 were provided by SI offices. Data from 1997 to 2003 were provided by the affiliation responsible of SDI. In 1998 the Italian Democratic Socialists party is formed (SDI). In 1999-2000 a single membership was made. 8) In 1993 the Constituent Assembly of Democratic Party voted by a large majority the end of the DC and the birth of the Italian Popular Party (PPI). Data from 1995 to 1998 were provided by the affiliation office of La Margherita. 1997 data are not recoverable and 1998 was the last year of membership. 9) La Margherita, born with the Parma Congress in March 2002, incorporates the PPI, the Democrats and the Italian Renewal (Lista Dini). Data provided by the electoral office of La Margherita. 10) Data were provided by UDC Offices. Data from the 1995 and 1996 refer to members of the CDU, while data from 1999 to 2001 are related to the CCD. Since 2002, we report the UDC members, formed on that year. In addition, 2002 data include both the 2001 members of the CCD that had reconfirmed their commitment, and the members of the CDU and European Democracy, which together formed the UDC. 11) Official data were provided by the Organizing Secretary of the Northern League.

of working for a political party (volunteering), attending political meetings and attending political rallies (participating in activities).

**Figure 4.3 – Work for a Political Party (%)**



Source: own elaboration of data *Itanes*, *WVS*, *IMF* and *ESS*. *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.

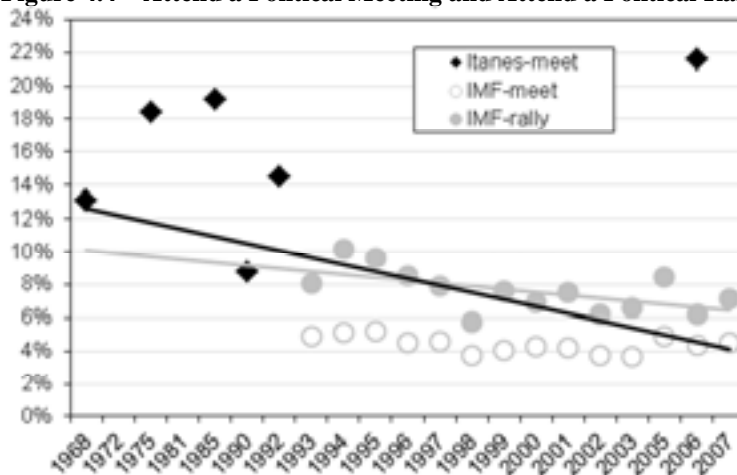
Note: We excluded *WVS* (2005) from the graph because very different from similar sources of similar years. Linear trend line across all measures.

As Figure 4.3 illustrates, *Itanes* data show the highest rate of people working for a party. Excluding the exceptional levels indicated by the 1985 survey (14%), the trend indicated by this source is a slow decrease from 1968 (7%) to 2006 (3.6%). Both the *WVS* and *IMF* indicates lower rates of people working for a political party than *Itanes* that slowly decrease through the years: the *WVS* shows a maximum of participation in 1981 (4.46%) and a minimum of participation in 1999 (2%); while *IMF* data indicate a more stable participation of 1.96% in 1993 and of 1.55% in 2006. The two waves of the *ESS* in the 2000s report a positive difference between 2003 and 2006 of more than 1 percentage point, whereas one survey (*ISSP* 2001) indicates a quite high participation in political parties compared to other sources (11%). Adding a trend line makes us able to see more clearly the evolution of this participation modality across time. We can see that the average level of working for a party membership (volunteering) since the late 1950s has followed the same downward trend of party membership.

This situation is slightly different for participating in political party activities (attending political meetings and political rallies). Figure 4.4 shows that for people attending political meetings, also in this case, *Itanes* data trend report the highest rates. Since *Itanes* surveys are usually run in correspondence to elections, this indicates that people interested in knowing what parties have to say when elections are approaching, are more than the amount of citizens willing to make a formal and permanent

commitment with them through membership. *IMF* surveys measure political meetings in a different way, differentiating between political meetings from political rallies<sup>55</sup>. The latter has higher percentage rates of participation than the former, since it is a phenomenon strictly connected to elections and less to normal party activities and volunteering. While in *Itanes*, except for 2006, measures of political meeting attendance relate to the *First Republic*, *IMF* measures refer to the *Second Republic*. The former does not delineate any clear trend over the years: with 13% in late 1960s (13.1%) and in mid-1980s (19.2%), followed by a decrease in correspondence to elections in the early 1990s (8.8%), and an increase in 2006 elections (21.6%), suggesting that political meetings in the *First Republic* might have been influenced every time by the contingent political context and political subcultures. On the contrary both measures of *IMF* in the *Second Republic* tend to register a downward trend, even though political rallies are somewhat more affected by elections proximity than political meetings.

**Figure 4.4 – Attend a Political Meeting and Attend a Political Rally (%)**



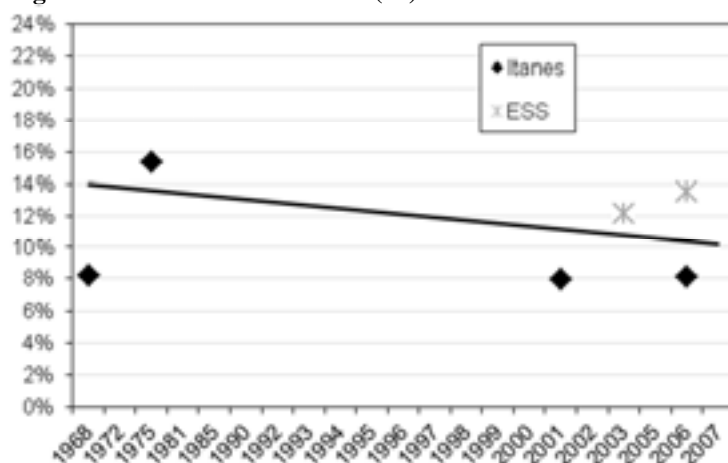
Source: own elaboration of data: *IMF* and *Itanes*

Note: We exclude *WVS* (2005) from the graph because very different from similar sources of similar years. Trend lines are calculated separately between participating at political meetings and participating at political rallies and are linear.

If we consider individual acts linked to parties, we have a different picture. Already in the early Sixties Almond and Verba noted the strong tendency of Italians to individual political actions compared to non-individual actions. The authors were reporting a prevalence of ‘protest’ or pressure on individual politicians, while there was almost no reference to the fact that political parties should intervene, even though the same people were showing very intense attachment to parties (1963). Here, we consider the individual conventional act of contacting politicians (Figure 4.5).

<sup>55</sup> Political meetings are meetings within political parties; Political rallies are public electoral meetings.

Figure 4.5 – Contact Politicians (%)



Source: own elaboration of data: *Itanes* and *ESS*

Note: Linear trend line across all measures.

Not surprisingly, this political behaviour is generally quite a bit higher than formal ties with parties. Both *Itanes* and *ESS* data show that this individual act is quite constant over the years it was measured, with an exceptional pick up in 1975 (15.3%). Yet, while *Itanes* reports that an 8% of population is interested by this phenomenon, *ESS* reports a 12/13% average. Contrarily to all other points in time in which this act was measured, however, 2003 was not an election year, while 2006 data might have biased measures.

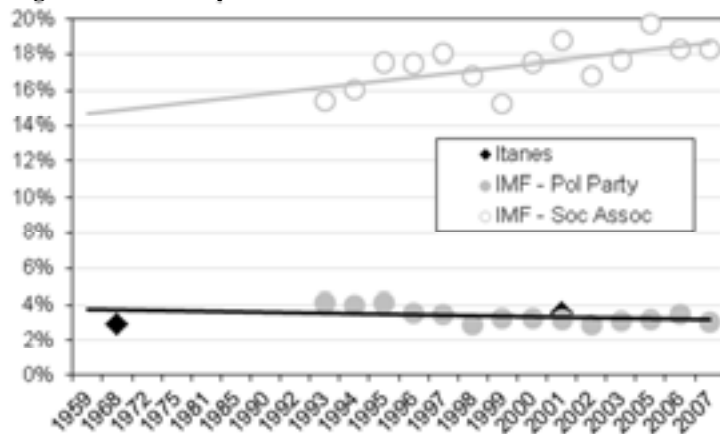
#### 4.3.4 Financing Political Parties

Giving money to parties - or chequebook participation – is different from conventional types of participation described above because is a political act that demands contributions of money, rather than time. This is quite important because for people with higher income it is easier to donate money than time. Yet, as Verba *et al.* (1995: 67) hold “if money were to replace time as the primary medium of citizen input, the consequences for politics would be substantial” in terms of equality, since people with more money would have more power in influencing the political direction of parties.

In Figure 4.6 *IMF* data show a continuous slightly declining trend going from 4.1% in 1993 to 3% in 2007, mirroring the decrease in party membership. It is not instead possible to infer any trend with *Itanes* data since this act was registered only twice in time (2.92% in 1968 and 3.6% in 2001). One might think that while it is possible to give money without giving time, it should be difficult to give time without also being expected to give money. We see however that according to *Itanes* data donations to political parties seem to have generally been lower than formal party membership and party volunteering, but they are similar (and low) to party volunteering

for *IMF*. It is however particularly interesting to compare the percentage of people giving money to political parties with the percentage of people giving money to social associations in the last 20 years, as measured by *IMF*. We can clearly see from trend lines that while the former can count slightly more than 4% of population and tend to decrease, the latter in the early 1990s counted about three times more of the population and tend now to increase, with a pick in 2005 with 19.7%.

**Figure 4.6 – Money to Political Parties and to Social Associations (%)**



Source: own elaboration of data: *Itanes* and *IMF*.  
 Note: Linear trend line across all measures.

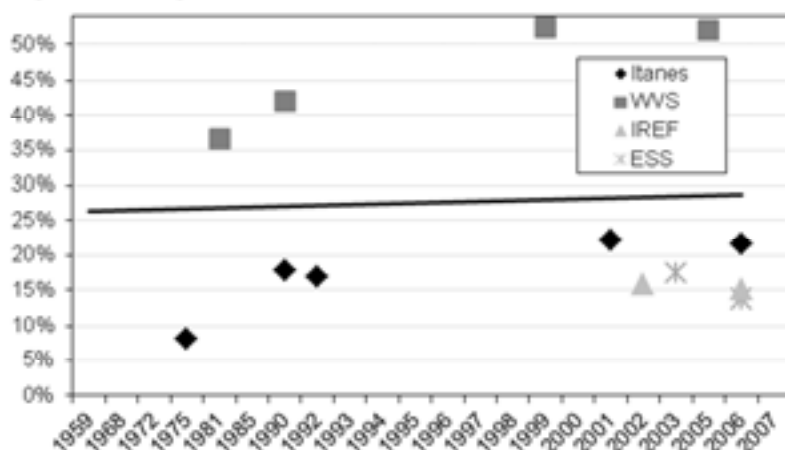
#### 4.3.5 Non-Conventional Political Participation

In the 1980s the vote was still considered by the vast majority of Italians as "the only way to exert some influence over how to govern" (Guidorossi, 1984). Yet, voters' confidence and satisfaction with the mechanism of delegation and representation has always been quite low. If Italians were complaining about their exclusion from decision-making power, we can think that forms of direct democracy, aimed at an immediate decision on very limited issues, should have encountered the favour of citizens since they were likely to contribute to lower this sense of powerlessness. Indeed in the Seventies, as part of a wider international phenomenon, in Italy there was an unprecedented spread of non-conventional, direct modes of participation. Also surveys started to measure these actions only in the Seventies, because these behaviours were not very widespread before and affected only small minorities. These actions can range from collecting signatures for a referendum to take part in nonviolent demonstrations or marches. They are generally less oriented to decisions, and rather more directed to the free expression of a collective will, and within them there is usually a strong element of protest.



Signing petitions was measured relatively few times across years, with a gap in the 1990s. Figure 4.7 shows that both *WVS* and *Itanes* report that since the mid-1970s petition signing has increased of about 15 percentage points. The difference between the two sources regards the amount of population that participates in these acts. The former source indicates that in the early Eighties more than one third of the population (37%) was signing petitions, while in 1999 (and 2005<sup>56</sup>) the phenomenon touched more than half of the population. *Itanes* indicates instead that participation rates in 1975 were 8.2%, while by 2006 it reached one fifth of the population (21.6%). *Iref* and *ESS* data include only measure of two points in time during the 2000s, and both report only slighter lower levels than *Itanes*. *Iref* trend shows that both in 2002 and 2006 this political behaviour interested about one sixth of the population (15%), while according to the *ESS* surveys petition signing interest 14% (2006) to 17% (2003) of the population. Thus, all data sources suggest that this modality of participation has increased since the 1970s, and the linear trend line confirms this trend. Yet, differences in levels of petition signing between different sources might be also due to the fact that questions did not distinguish between offline and online petitions. Online petitioning is a modality of participation that is spreading with the introduction of new technologies and certainly an easier and less involving act than the former. It might be that different people understood the same questions in different ways, sometimes including and sometimes excluding the online modality.

**Figure 4.7 – Sign Petitions (%)**

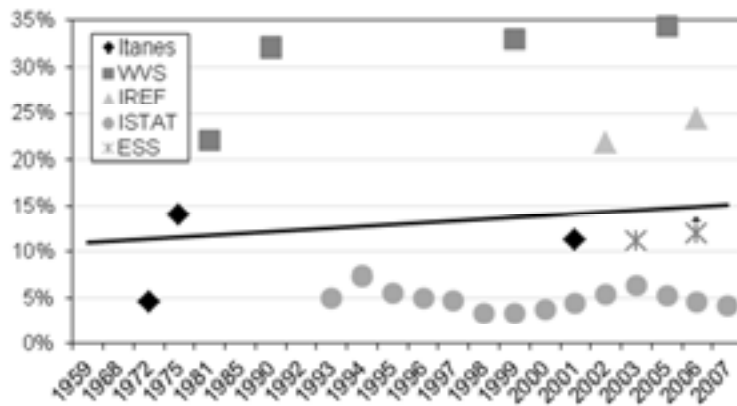


Source: own elaboration of data: *Itanes*, *WVS* and *ESS*. *IREF* data are taken from official reports.  
Note: Linear trend line across all measures.

<sup>56</sup> For unconventional political participation, trade unions and social associations we report also *WVS* 2005, keeping in mind, however, that this wave has biased measures.

Figure 4.8 shows that, according to *WVS*, also attendance at demonstrations has strongly increased since the 1970s from one fifth of the population to more than one third in 1999 (and 2005). *Itanes* shows also a strong increase from 1972 (4.7%) to 1975 (14.1%). Yet, during the 1980s and 1990s this act is not measured by *Itanes* surveys and reappears only in 2001 and 2006, years in which the participation in this type of act is lower than 1975 and have similar values to *ESS* rates (around 12%). It seems that surveys indicate an increase in demonstrations until the early 1990s, while since then the phenomenon has been quite stable. Among all sources, *IMF* surveys register the lowest rate levels and indicate only a small oscillation of the level of participation in demonstrations during the 1990s and 2000s, with a pick in mid-1990s and mid-2000s. Although different surveys report different levels of demonstration attendance, the trend line indicates a general increase of this participatory modality.

**Figure 4.8 – Attend Demonstrations (%)**

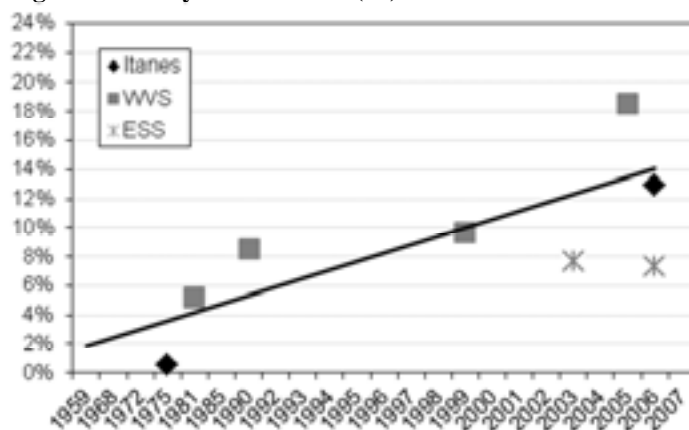


Source: own elaboration of data: *Itanes*, *WVS*, *IMF* and *ESS*. *IREF* data are taken from official reports.  
 Note: Linear trend line across all measures.

As with petition signing and attending demonstrations, the *WVS* indicates a strong increase since the 1970s of boycotting products, a new modality of political action, doubling from 5% in 1981 to 10% in 1999 (and going up to almost one fifth of the population in 2005) (Figure 4.9). Also *Itanes* indicates similar trends. Even though, as for demonstrations, this act was not measured during the 1980s and 1990s, it can be seen that in mid-1970s boycotting products was an almost irrelevant phenomenon, while in mid-2000s about 13% of the sample claimed to have done it. Finally, *ESS* surveys show a quite stable behaviour that interest more than 7% of the sample. As the linear trend line shows, similarly to other unconventional acts of political participation

reported here, we can claim that survey data show an increase after the 1970s of product boycotting.

**Figure 4.9 – Boycott Products (%)**



Source: own elaboration of data: *Itanes*, *WVS* and *ESS*.

Note: Linear trend line across all measures.

#### 4.4 Trade Unions Participation

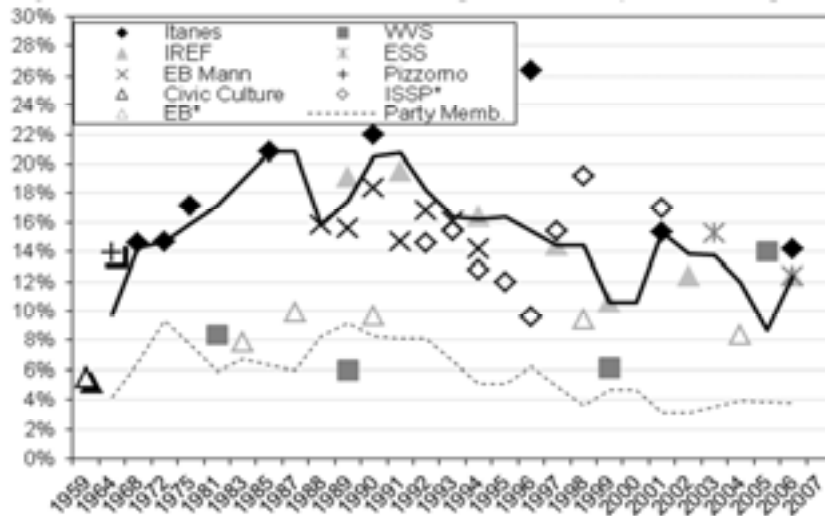
As explained in Chapter 3, although Italian trade unions cannot be considered strictly political organizations, they have however been always strictly connected to and dependent on political parties. Having been brought into being by parties, the unitary trade union (CGIL), founded in 1944, was unable to survive deep political divisions influenced by the Cold War. Thus, CGIL soon divided into three rival unions, undermining the unions' power in collective bargaining for many years: the Communist/Socialist CGIL<sup>57</sup>, the Catholic CISL<sup>58</sup>, and the social Democrat/Republican UIL<sup>59</sup>. When at the end of the 1960s socio-economic change culminated in the 'hot autumn' of workers protest, trade unions membership levels increased quite considerably. Due to this strong dependence on parties, the increase of trade unions membership was not an indicator of the existence of an autonomous civil society but rather of a top-down mobilization and of a subcultural belonging. It is for this reason that in this study, trade unions are considered as a middle category between political and civil society participation.

<sup>57</sup> CGIL: Italian General Confederation of Labour. Founded in 1944 with the "Pact of Rome" after an agreement between communists, socialist and Christian Democrats. In 1950, socialists and Christian democrats split forming two different trade unions. Since then CGIL has been strongly influenced by the Communist Party (PCI).

<sup>58</sup> CISL Italian Confederation of Trade Unions. Founded in 1950 and linked to Christian Democrats.

<sup>59</sup> UIL: Italian Labour Union. Founded in 1950 and linked to Socialists.

Figure 4.10 – Trade Unions Membership (%) vs. Party Membership (%)



Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture*, *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS*, *EB Mannheim Trend File* and *EB*. *IREF*, *Pizzomo* and *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.

Note: \* trade unions and professional organizations measured together (also *Itanes* 1968). The trend line for both trade unions and party membership is calculated with a moving average between two points in time.

In Figure 4.10 we can see the percentage rate of trade unions membership according to different surveys. Our sources indicates different trends, although all data report membership rate at least 5% higher than late 1950s unions levels (*The Civic Culture* data) data. *Itanes* surveys show how the level of trade union members increases from the late 1960s (14.6% in 1968) till mid-1990s (26.4% in 1996), while in the 2000s there is a strong decline. *EB* and *WVS* data report instead a quite constant level of membership around 8-9% with a tendency to decline (with the exception of 14% of *WVS* 2005). *ISSP* data show a reverse tendency with a decline from early to mid-1990s and an increase till early 2000s. However, *ISSP* measures (as *EB*) do not distinguish between trade union and interest groups memberships, making comparison with other sources difficult. The *Mannheim EB Trend File* does not show a clear trend until the 1990s, even though it seems to indicate a decline starting from that period. Finally, *Iref* data indicates a constant decline starting from late 1990s till today, while the two *ESS* waves indicate a slight decline in the 2000s. The moving average trend line, calculated between two points in time across all surveys, summarize our findings clearly showing an increase till the early 1990s (21%), followed by a steep decline.

For comparative purposes in the graph we add also the moving average trend line for party membership. We can see that trade unions and political party membership have followed quite similar trends, increasing during the First Republic and undergoing a deep crisis of participation in the Second Republic. The difference is that after the

1968-69 and during the 1970s the number of subscribers to the main trade unions have had a much larger increase than political parties and, since then, reported rates of the former have always been higher than the latter. It is indeed undeniable that the growth in unionization rate in the Seventies has resulted in the affirmation of stronger unions compared to the previous period. In the Fifties the union member was first a Communist, a Socialist or a Democrat, and only secondarily a union activist. In the Seventies, union membership was less dependent from party preferences and this made unions acquired a greater capacity to act more autonomously in pursuit of political reforms.

**Figure 4.11 - The rate of unionization in Italy, 1950-1997 (%)**



Source: Ebbinghaus and Visser (2000).

Note: The solid line indicates the ratio between the number of members of the three main trade unions - CGIL, CISL and UIL - among active workers (excluding retired people) and the number of employed workers. The dashed line indicates the relationship between the number of trade union members (both active and inactive workers), and the number of persons employed<sup>60</sup>.

It is interesting to see the composition of trade unions membership, distinguishing between active and non-active workers. Figure 10, shows the rate of unionization (trade union membership over all workers) between 1950 and 1997, with membership data provided directly by trade unions (Ebbinghaus and Vissers, 2000). As we can see the solid line (net rate of union membership with only active workers) shows that after the rapid expansion in trade unions membership in the period 1969-1976, this expansion has a rest, and active workers membership begins to decrease. The maximum of union density is reached in 1976, while in 1997 (the last year taken into account in this graph) union density is quite a bit lower. The dashed line in the graph (gross rate of union membership with active and non-active workers), similarly to the trend of Figure 4.11,

<sup>60</sup> Cgil and Cisl until 1967; Cgil, Cisl and Uil from 1968 (Uil data are available only from this year)

indicates instead a growing trend since the 1970s till mid-1990s, showing that new categories of citizens are involved in trade unions compared to the past.

**Table 4.9 – International Perspective of Union density rate (n.of members–excluding non active–over n.of employees), adjusted data, 1950-2003 (%)**

	SP	FR	IT	BE	NL	DE	UK	FI	DK	NO	SE
1950	-	-	43.2	-	-	38.2	44.8	-	-	-	67.3
1960	-	19.6	41.7	41.5	-	34.7	44.9	31.9	-	52.3	70.7
1970	-	21.7	37.0	42.1	36.5	32.0	44.8	51.3	60.3	56.8	67.7
1980	12.9	18.3	49.6	54.1	34.8	34.9	50.7	69.4	78.6	58.3	78.0
1990	12.5	10.1	38.8	53.9	24.3	31.2	39.3	72.5	75.3	58.5	80.8
1991	14.7	9.9	38.7	54.3	24.1	36.0	38.5	75.4	75.8	58.1	80.6
1992	16.5	9.9	38.9	54.3	25.2	33.9	37.2	78.4	75.8	58.1	83.3
1993	18.0	9.6	39.2	55.0	25.9	31.8	36.1	80.7	77.3	58.0	83.9
1994	17.6	9.2	38.7	54.7	25.6	30.4	34.2	80.3	77.5	57.8	83.8
1995	16.3	9.0	38.1	55.7	25.7	29.2	32.6	80.4	77.0	57.3	83.1
1996	16.1	8.3	37.4	55.9	25.1	27.8	31.7	80.4	77.1	56.3	82.7
1997	15.7	8.2	36.2	56.0	25.1	27.0	30.6	79.5	75.3	55.5	82.2
1998	16.4	8.0	35.7	55.4	24.5	25.9	30.1	78.0	75.6	55.5	81.3
1999	16.2	8.1	36.1	55.1	24.6	25.6	29.8	76.3	74.1	54.5	80.6
2000	16.1	8.2	34.9	55.6	23.1	25.0	29.7	75.0	73.3	53.7	79.1
2001	16.1	8.1	34.8	-	22.5	23.5	29.3	74.5	72.5	52.8	78.0
2002	16.2	8.3	34.0	55.4	22.4	23.2	29.2	74.8	-	53.0	78.0
2003	16.3	8.3	33.7	-	22.3	22.6	29.3	74.1	70.4	53.3	78.0

Source: 1950-1960 Ebbinghaus and Visser (2000); 1970-2003 Visser (2006)

Table 4.9 puts the net unionization rate (number of members over number of active employees) in an international perspective. In the 1950s, Italy has quite a high rate of membership (43.2%), with similar levels to the UK, Ireland and Germany. Also in the 1960s it was in an intermediate position compared to other European countries since it was not among the countries with the highest rate (e.g. Sweden), nor between those with the lowest rate (e.g. France, Finland and Germany), and its union density, approached the average of European countries. Yet, whereas in the 1980s, union membership reaches almost half of the workers (49.60%), and the density rate is only few percentage points lower than Belgium, during the 1990s it starts a slow but inexorable decline. We can however see the decreasing rate is part of a bigger phenomenon that include all industrial countries, with the partial exception of Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium, the only countries in which unions gets involved in the administration and execution of unemployment insurance. After the 1980s, union organizing has indeed become progressively worst in most industrial countries<sup>61</sup>. Besides idiosyncratic evolutions of national contexts, this is mainly due to the weakening of the traditional

<sup>61</sup> Except for Spain that acquired organizing rights after the fall of the Franco dictatorship

class structure that has led to a weakening in the close relationship between unions and labour parties (Gray and Caul, 2000).

## 4.5 Civil Society Associational Participation

### 4.5.1 *The Spread of Associations in the Territory*

We move now to the analysis of participation in civil society associations. For this type of participation we dispose not only of individual level but also of meso level data, with the amount and type of associations existing on the Italian territory. Unfortunately the series includes only 8 years, from 1995 to 2003, but it can help us gain some more insights on the evolution of civil society. Comparing the descriptive reports made by *Istat* on the number of voluntary associations registered in regional and provincial books, show an increase from 1995 to the end of 2003 of 152% going from 8.343 to 21.021 unities<sup>62</sup>, while the increase between 2001 and 2003 was of 15% (*Istat*, 2005). In Table 4.10 we can also clearly see that there is a wide territorial gap, with the majority of associations situated in the north, followed by the 'red belt' and by the south, even though in this latter area of the country there has been a substantial increase in the last decades.

**Table 4.10 - Social Associations registered in regional books at the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2003 (%)**

Territory	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2003/1995	2003/2001	2003
						Variation %	Variation %	Associations per 10.000 citizens
North	50.8	48.6	50.4	51	49.5	145.7	11.6	4.7
Red Belt	32.5	31.3	28.2	26.5	26.6	106.1	15.6	5.6
South	16.8	20.3	21.2	22.5	23.8	260	21.7	3
Total (N)	8343	11710	15071	18293	21021	152	14.9	3.6

Source: Le organizzazioni di volontariato in Italia. Anno 2003 (*Istat*, 2005)

**Table 4.11 – Social Associations per main area of activity 1995 - 2003 (%)**

	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003
Activist	4.4	6.1	6	6.2	7.2
Civic	79.3	75.6	72.1	71.5	65.4
Leisure	16.3	18.3	20.3	20.1	19.8
Other	-	-	1.6	2.2	7.6
Total (N)	(8343)	(11710)	(15071)	(18293)	(21021)

Note: Activist=environment, human rights; Civic=health, welfare, civil defence; Leisure= Education, leisure and culture, sport.

Source: Le organizzazioni di volontariato in Italia. Anno 2005 (*Istat*, 2005)

The higher relative percentage of registered social associations existing on the territory is made of civic associations, and particularly on areas of activity such as health and social assistance. The number of both leisure and activist associations are instead

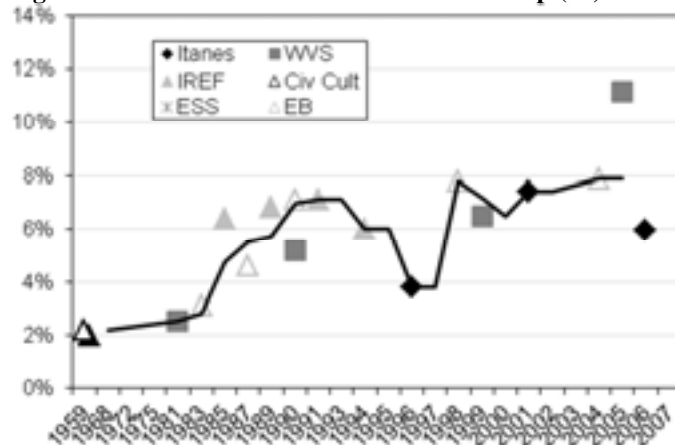
<sup>62</sup> In the number of associations are included both new associations (8530) and pre-existent associations that registered in regional and provincial books (4148).

increasing, even though in 2003 activist associations are only 7% of the total number of registered associations (Table 4.11).

#### 4.5.2 Membership in Activist Associations

Having very briefly explored the offer of social associations, as we did for party and trade unions membership, we now plot in different graphs measures for different civil society association membership from all the survey sources we dispose of. We do not include *IMF* survey data since these surveys do not include membership questions when measuring social participation and are therefore not directly comparable with other sources. We start from activist organizations, and then we go on with professional organizations, religious, civic non-religious and leisure (sport and culture) organizations. In each graph we add a moving average trend line between two points in time calculated across all surveys in order to give us better insights on the longitudinal trend of civil society associational participation.

**Figure 4.12 – Activist Associations Membership (%)**



Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture*, *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS* and *EB*. *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.  
 Note: Moving average between two points in time. We excluded *WVS*(2005) because very different from measures of similar years.

We start by reporting measures for membership in highly politicized activist associations. In Figure 4.12 we can see that all sources (*Itanes*, *WVS*, *Iref*, *EB*) that registered this type of memberships agree on the direction of the longitudinal trend. From the early 1980s indeed membership in these kinds of associations has increased. *WVS* clearly indicates this reporting an increase from 2.5% level in 1981 to 6.5% in 1999 (and up to 11.2% in 2005). *Itanes* data also show an increase (from 3.8% in 1996 to 7.4% in 2001), followed however by a slight decline (5.9%) in 2006. *Iref* reports that between mid 1980s and mid-1990s the percentage of people interviewed that are

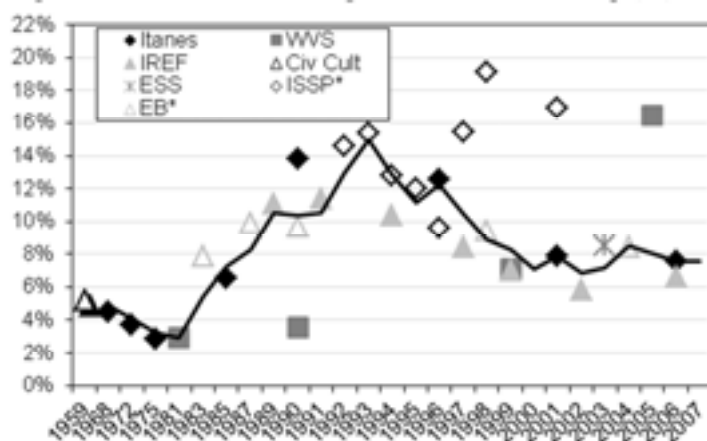


members of some activist groups is around 6%, while *EB* shows an increase up to the 1990s and then a quite stable level during the 2000s. Finally, *ESS* in 2003 indicates the upper point of activist group membership at 14%. If we draw a moving average trend line we can claim that although only less than one tenth of the population join activist associations, this type of membership has certainly increased since the late 1960s, in which only 2% of citizens were interested by this phenomenon.

### 4.5.3 Membership in Professional Associations

The situation is different for professional organizations since different sources indicate different trends in professional organizations memberships (Figure 4.13).

**Figure 4.13 – Professional Organizations Membership (%)**



Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture*, *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS* and *EB*. *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.  
 Note: \* trade unions and professional organizations measured together (also *Itanes* 1968). Moving average between two points in time. We excluded *WVS*(2005) because very different from measures of similar years.

Till the mid-1970s we have only *Itanes* survey data, which show a decline since the late 1950s. However, the 1980s see a strong increase in professional organization membership, while in the 1990s the level of membership drops again, but stays at higher rates than the 1970s and stay constant throughout the 2000s. We have only one *ESS* wave (2003) measuring this type of membership, and the rate is similar to *Itanes* data. The *WVS* and *IREF* registered two opposite trends, while *EB* and *Iref* registered similar declining trends starting from late 1980s/early 1990s till today. *Iref* data indicate a sharper decline than *EB*, but we should note than the measures of *EB* include also trade union memberships and is therefore less comparable. Yet, *ISSP* measures that also include trade union membership show a similar declining trend (although sharper than *EB*) till mid-1990s, and then it shows an increase till early 2000s, with a pick of 19% in

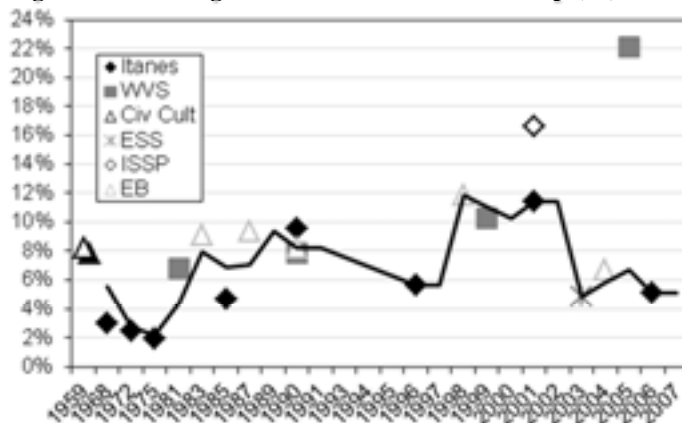
1999. An increasing trend is also captured by *WVS* measures that register a change from 3% in 1981 up to 7% in 1999 (and 16% in 2005).

If we draw a moving average between two points in time across all surveys, we can say that after an increase until the 1990s, professional membership tends to decrease across time. It mirrors then trade unions and party membership trends. This is however not completely certain. *WVS* in 2005 might report inflated measures but it indicates a completely opposite trend. Moreover, *ISSP* measures in the early 2000s report similar level of membership in professional organizations than *WVS*.

#### 4.5.4 Membership in Religious Associations

For what concerns religious associations membership (Figure 4.14), we can say that, as for activist associations, all sources agree that until the early 2000s there is an increase. Yet, while *WVS* indicates a clear increasing trend in religious association memberships from 6% in the early 1980s to 10% in 1999 (and to 22% in 2005), *EB* data show a decline in early 2000s from 11% to 7%. *Itanes* records a trend that is shaped as a wave: there is a slight decrease from late 1960s till mid-1970s, then an increase till the early 1990s that goes back on previous levels on late 1990s, increase again in early 2000s and go back again to 5% in mid-2000s. Finally, one-wave surveys indicate quite different levels of participation: *ISSP* shows that more than 16% of the sample has a membership of religious associations in 2001, while *ESS* record a level of 5% in 2003. *Itanes*, *EB* and *ESS* seems however to record a decrease in religious association memberships during the 2000s.

Figure 4.14 – Religious Associations Membership (%)



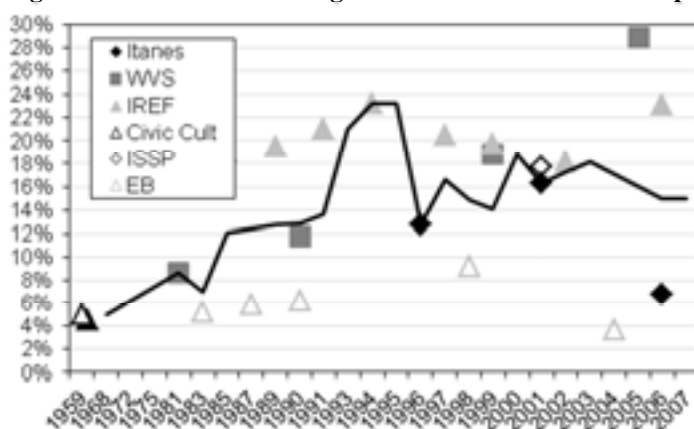
Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture*, *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS* and *EB*. *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.  
 Note: moving average between two points in time. We excluded *WVS*(2005) because very different from measures of similar years.

The moving average shows that, compared to *The Civic Culture* levels, participation in religious associations has increased till late 1990s when it started slowly to decrease during the 2000s. There are however divergent data in different sources for this. Also in this case, *WVS* in 2005 might indeed report inflated measures, but the trend is going completely on the opposite side, toward an increase of this type of membership.

#### 4.5.5 Membership in Civic Non-Religious Associations

Levels of civic non-religious groups are very different for different sources, but the longitudinal trend goes in the same direction for almost all of them (Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15 – Civic Non-Religious Associations Membership (%)



Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture*, *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS* and *EB*. *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.  
Note: moving average between two points in time. We excluded *WVS*(2005) because very different from measures of similar years.

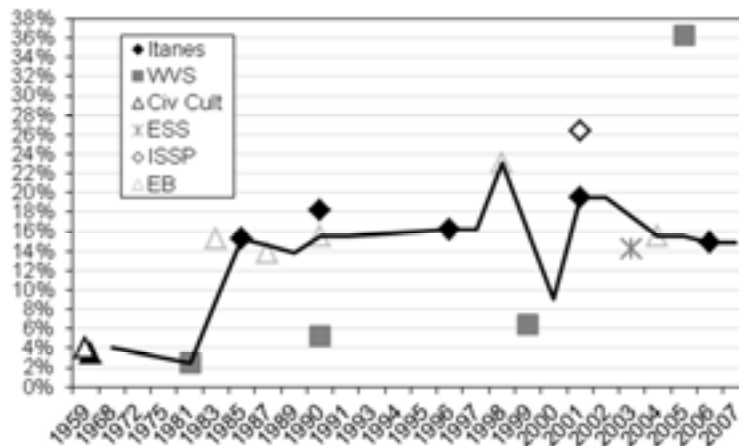
*Iref* data are on the highest level and show a consistent increase from late 1980s (17%) till early 1990s (23%), then a decrease to previous levels (16%) till early 2000s and a strong increase in mid-2000s. The *WVS* indicates a very strong increase in this type of membership starting with 8% in early 1980s and reaching 19% in late 1990s (and 28% in 2005). *Itanes* data register this type of membership only in three waves, starting mid 1990s (12.8%) reaching 16.3% in early 2000s and dropping to 6.7% in mid-2000s. Also *EB* indicates an increase until the late 1990s and then a decrease in mid-2000s, and is the source that registers the lowest levels of memberships. Yet, *ISSP* indicates 17% membership in civic non-religious associations in 2001, a level of participation between *Iref* and *Itanes* data. Until the 1990s there had then been a strong increase in membership of non-religious associations, followed by a slight decrease in the 2000s according to some sources, whereas according to other sources it has kept moving upward. Given this, we trace a moving average trend line between two points in time to

indicate the general pattern and we see that membership in civic-non religious associations has generally been increasing for all sources, with the only exception of *Itanes* in 2006.

#### 4.5.6 Membership in Leisure Associations

Finally, also for leisure associations memberships (that include sport and culture associations) different sources register different levels, but similar evolution across time (Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16 – Leisure Associations Membership (%)



Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture*, *Itanes*, *WVS*, *ESS* and *EB*. *ISSP* data are taken from official reports.  
 Note: moving average between two points in time. We excluded *WVS*(2005) because very different from measures of similar years.

*WVS* data indicates a slow but constant increase till late 1990s from 2.5% to 6.5% (and a strong increase in 2005, from 6% to 36%). *Itanes* surveys indicate that since the early 1980s there are several fluctuations through the years, but levels of leisure membership are much higher than late 50s. After a slight decrease in the 1980s, *EB* shows that during the 1990s there is a strong increase of almost 10 percentage points (13 to 23%), and then in early 2000s, it goes back almost to previous levels (15%). The *ISSP* indicates one of the highest percentages of membership with 26% in 2001, while *ESS* registers 14% in 2003, just slightly lower than *Itanes* and *Iref*. If we draw a moving average trend line it seems then that there was an increase of leisure membership until the late 1990s, after which levels have stayed quite constant.

#### 4.6 Intensity of Political and Social Participation

We move now to the analysis of longitudinal trend of passive membership compared to active membership (volunteer) in different associations types. We use the first three

waves of WVS<sup>63</sup> in order to have more comparable data that overcome differences originated by different sampling and data collecting procedures.

**Table 4.12 – Membership and Voluntary Activity Participation (%)**

WVS		1981	1990	1999
Political Party	member	6.32	5.25	4.05
	volunteer	4.46	3.47	2.30
Trade Union	member	8.33	6.00	6.15
	volunteer	4.01	2.53	2.20
Activist Association	member	2.53	5.20	6.50
	volunteer	1.49	3.02	3.80
Professional Association	member	2.98	3.57	7.10
	volunteer	1.41	1.04	3.20
Religious Association	member	6.84	7.88	10.25
	volunteer	5.50	6.24	6.70
Civic Non-Religious Association	member	3.64	6.29	9.55
	volunteer	2.68	4.91	7.20
Leisure Association	member	5.43	14.87	20.30
	volunteer	4.61	9.86	12.25

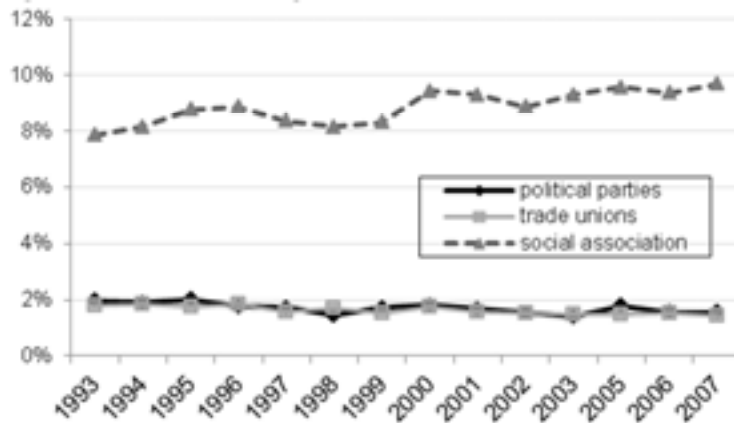
Source: Own elaboration of WVS data.

We see in Table 4.12 that both passive and active participation of political parties and trade unions between the 1980s and 1990s tend to decrease, while participation in all other social associations tends to increase. While in the beginning of the 1980s the most widespread social participation type was religious association membership and/or volunteering, followed by leisure associations, at the end of the 1990s the most relevant civil society participation was in leisure associations, followed by religious and civic non-religious associations.

For measuring the intensity of participation for the period since the early 1990s until 2007, we can analyze also the *IMF* data that include measures of volunteering as well as active participation in associations and, specifically, participation at meetings. Although we can rely only on one source, the sample size is big enough to give us quite precise measures and it is thus interesting to see how these measures evolve across time and how they relate to each other. First of all, if we compare free voluntary active participation in political or semi-political organizations such as political party and trade unions, and the whole set of civil society associations over the last two decades, we can see that while levels of active participation in the former are similar and quite low (less than 2%), for social associations it is 6 percentage points higher (8-10%) and tends to slightly increase across time (Figure 4.17).

<sup>63</sup> We did not include the wave of 2005 because of over-represented data

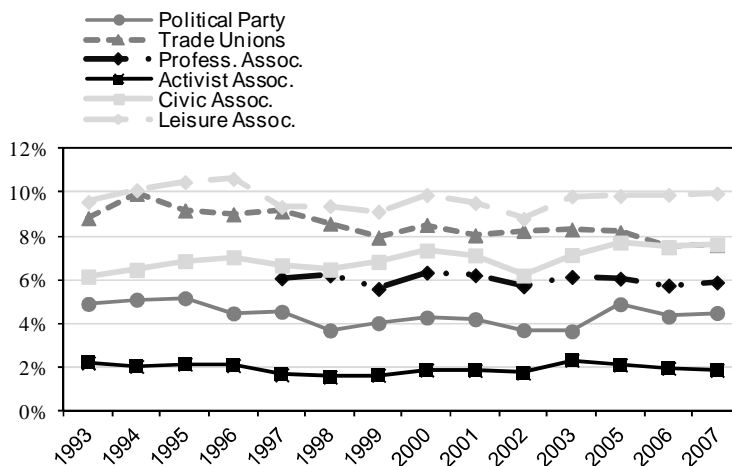
Figure 4.17 – Volunteering in Political Parties, Trade Unions and Social Associations (%)



Source: Own elaboration of IMF data.

If we check instead the amount of people participating in meetings of associations, we see that the trend of different associations hold the same relative position across time (Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18 - Participation at Meetings of Different Associations (%)



Source: IMF. Own elaboration of data.

Note: No data on religious associations are available.

Also these data tell us that Italian citizens participate the most at meetings of leisure associations, followed by trade unions associations. Civic non-religious associations, professional organizations, political parties and activist associations come next, while religious associations are not measured. According to IMF data, participation at meetings of activist associations at the end of the 1990s is, contrarily to data in previous sections, less widespread than participation at meetings of political parties. We can also see that the trend of meetings participation of leisure associations oscillate through the years but remain quite stable. Trade unions attendance at meetings tends instead to

decline, while membership in civic non-religious associations tends to increase over the years. Participation at meetings of professional organizations, political parties and activist associations remains finally lower and quite stable across time.

Finally, we look at where Italian active and passive participatory behaviour places itself in an international perspective, by presenting measures reported by the 2003 wave of ESS including several European countries (Table 4.11).

**Table 4.13 – Active and Passive Participation in Political and Social Association Across Europe (%)**

ESS 2003		FR	ES	IT	BE	NL	DE	UK	FI	DK	NO	SE
N		1503	1729	1207	1899	2364	2919	2052	2000	1506	2036	1999
Political Party	Member	2.1	2.7	<b>3.6</b>	6.4	4.8	3.1	2.9	6.2	6.2	8.8	8.4
	Volunteer	0.9	0.7	0.5	2.0	0.9	2.0	0.6	0.5	1.3	2.4	2.1
	Active Par.	1.7	1.7	1.8	3.2	1.7	3.3	1.0	1.7	2.6	3.3	3.5
Trade Union	Member	8.6	5.3	<b>8.9</b>	27.7	21.9	13.9	15.0	45.9	64.5	47.4	55.6
	Volunteer	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.8	1.2	0.5	0.4	2.0	4.4	2.1
	Active Par.	2.6	1.7	5.1	4.8	2.2	3.4	2.5	3.5	10.6	8.8	6.9
Activist Assoc.	Member	10.5	7.6	<b>10.7</b>	17.9	43.9	33.8	35.2	9.4	32.0	44.5	47.0
	Volunteer	3.3	1.5	1.8	4.8	3.9	3.2	3.7	2.4	4.3	4.6	5.4
	Active Par.	6.7	6.3	4.2	8.7	5.0	6.1	7.1	5.1	5.3	5.4	7.0
Profess. Assoc.	Member	3.5	4.5	<b>8.5</b>	9.0	12.9	7.9	12.7	11.8	14.3	14.1	8.6
	Volunteer	0.5	0.2	0.2	2.1	1.1	1.3	1.5	0.6	1.6	1.7	1.8
	Active Par.	1.8	1.7	3.2	4.7	4.8	3.0	5.3	3.1	5.8	4.7	3.8
Religious Assoc.	Member	4.5	5.9	<b>4.9</b>	6.7	26.2	17.4	14.1	24.8	26.7	13.3	15.2
	Volunteer	2.3	1.2	1.2	2.7	6.9	4.7	6.0	2.4	2.3	5.4	4.3
	Active Par.	5.1	4.1	3.5	5.4	10.0	8.1	12.6	7.1	7.6	7.0	6.8
Leisure Assoc.	Member	35.4	25.1	<b>17.4</b>	52.5	57.8	44.6	45.1	37.1	60.3	56.7	61.1
	Volunteer	13.5	4.0	1.9	18.3	20.5	18.1	14.9	7.1	20.9	29.9	27.1
	Active Par.	33.5	17.1	14.6	42.4	33.4	32.9	38.4	24.7	38.6	37.9	38.7

Source: ESS 2003 (1st wave)

We can see that Italy has participatory levels similar to other southern European countries. According to this source, the less frequent participation registered in southern Europe is participation in political parties, followed by religious association, professional association and trade unions. Participation in activist associations is higher than trade unions and much higher in Italy and France compared to Spain, while participation in leisure associations has without any doubt the highest amount of membership. Scandinavian countries and, to a lesser extent, other Nordic countries have the highest percentage of participants in trade unions and leisure associations. Here, participation in political parties is the least widespread membership among citizens and although Scandinavian countries are heterogeneous, we can say that participation is generally higher for professional, religious and, most of all, activist associations. Membership in both political and social associations is however on higher levels in Nordic countries than in southern European countries. This is only partially true, however, for what it concerns volunteering and active participation. Southern countries

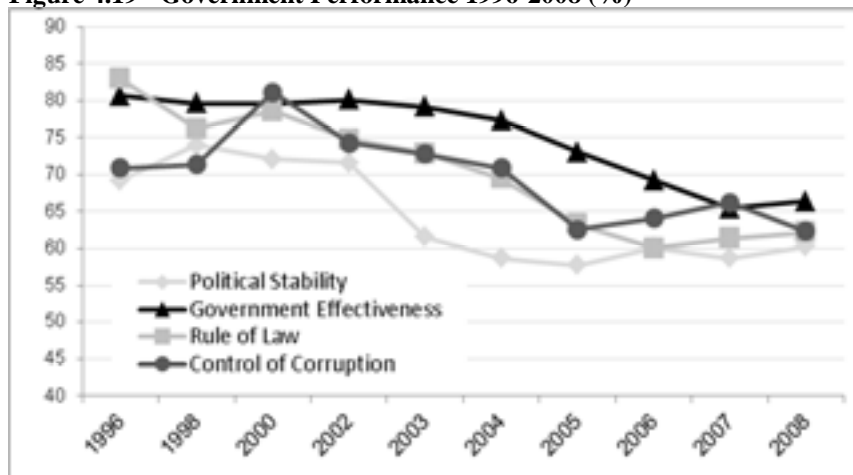
participants are indeed less, but comparatively as much as or even more active than other northern countries. It seems that citizens that join associations in southern Europe are more likely to be active members (see also Morales, 2009; Dekker and Van den Broek, 1998), although volunteers in Italy are only 2% or less for all associations types.

## 4.7 Political Disaffection

### 4.7.1 Government Performance across Time

After the excursus on the evolution of the political and social participation across time, the last concept we are interested in is the longitudinal evolution of political disaffection among Italian population. We saw in Chapter 3 that political efficacy is not only determined by (perceived) individual capacities and skills to influence the government, but also by perceived systemic opportunities and political institutions' responsiveness. Thus, before mapping the subjective individual level of efficacy, we report some objective indicators of the political system performance at a macro level across time that might have partially influenced external feelings of political efficacy. Unfortunately also in this we only dispose of data for a limited time-span related to the *Second Republic*.

**Figure 4.19 - Government Performance 1996-2008 (%)**



Source: *The World Bank* (2011)

*The World Bank*<sup>64</sup> data (2011) report the government performance from 1996 to 2008 and show us that indicators score it quite badly across time (Figure 4.19). Political stability is the indicator that scores the lowest and decreases by more than 10 percentage points in 10 years. After an improvement in 2000, control of corruption has drastically

<sup>64</sup> The World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org/>



dropped from 80 to 63% in 2008. Government effectiveness is scoring also quite bad, whereas the rule of law indicator have the biggest drop, being at almost 85% in 1996 and losing more than 20 percentage points before 2008.

#### 4.7.2 *The Evolution of the Feeling of Political Efficacy*

We move now to the individual evolution of the feeling of political efficacy. We chose to consider only Italian national electoral surveys (*Itanes*) since only in these surveys do we find the most complete measures of this attitude repeated across time (Table 4.13). Almond and Verba (1959) first reported the existence of a high level of inefficacy in late 1950s. The situation has, however, stayed stable or has worsened since then, despite the increase in mass scholarization. Indeed, in the mid-seventies, 83% of Italians, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics or ideological view, shared more or less strongly the idea that "politics is too complicated to understand" and that "people like me have no influence of government". Moreover, 85% of them feel that "members of parliament lose contact with people" and more than 80% believe that "public officials don't care" (81%) or that "parties are only interested in votes" (83%). Finally, about 70% believed that "people like me have no influence on government" (71%). 30 years later the situation appears almost unchanged. These data give us a clear evidence of the persistence of the clash between citizens' needs and the Italian political class over the years.

**Table 4.14 - Political Inefficacy in Italy, 1959-2008 (%)**

	59	68*	72*	75*	85	90	96	01	06	08
1.Politics/Gov. too complicated for me/don't understand <sup>a</sup>	65	80	85	83	79	90	-	89	81	77
2.People like me have no influence on Government <sup>a</sup>	84	-	-	71	-	78	51	85	74	65
3.Mp's lose contact with people <sup>a</sup>	90	54	-	85	-	90	-	94	88	-
4.Public officials/government don't care <sup>a</sup>	-	71	77	81	81	84	-	-	-	-
5.Parties only interested in votes <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	83	-	81	83	89	81	-
Political Disaffected <sup>b</sup>	50	46	71	77	73	78	59	86	76	67
Internal Political Inefficacy	-	80	85	77	79	84	51	87	78	71
External Political Inefficacy	-	61	77	83	81	85	83	92	85	-

Sources: For 1959, *The Civic Culture*; for 1968-1972, Barnes and Sani; for 1975, Political Action Survey; for 1985, Four Nation Study, From 1990 to 2008 *ITANES*. In 2006 we used the pre-electoral wave.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Percentages (strongly/quite) agreeing with the statement <sup>b</sup> Low side of the political efficacy index: percentage of respondents strongly or quite agreeing with all the statements. In 1979 and 1990 we used only the items 1 to 4 to calculate the political efficacy index in order to make the measure more comparable.

\* 2 points scale: agree/disagree. All other years have a 4 points scale: strongly/quite agree; strongly/quite disagree.

From these items we constructed an index in order to have one single measure able to inform us synthetically of the evolution of political disaffection across time. In the lower part of the index we group those who agree, either strongly or not, to all the

statements asked, and we call them inefficacious. We then group all the others respondents in a different category with medium or high sense of political efficacy. In this way we can see that political disaffected tend to grow across time and that about 70%-80% of the population is represented by this negative feeling.

In the same table we also see how the evolution of political disaffection evolves if we were to distinguish between the two dimensions of political efficacy. Internal political efficacy includes the items “politics is too complicated for me to understand” and “people like me have no influence on what government does”, whereas external political efficacy includes the items “members of parliament lose contact with people”, “public officials don’t care about people like me” and “parties are only interested in votes”. Both negative dimensions concern more of the 70% of population. It seems that the former is constant or slightly decreasing, which means that people, in the best-case scenario, might have become slightly more self-confident in their ability to affect the political system. External political efficacy, however, that is the perception of the low responsiveness of the political system to citizens act, has tended to increase. Citizens, in short, believe more and more that politicians are losing touch with the people they are supposed to represent.

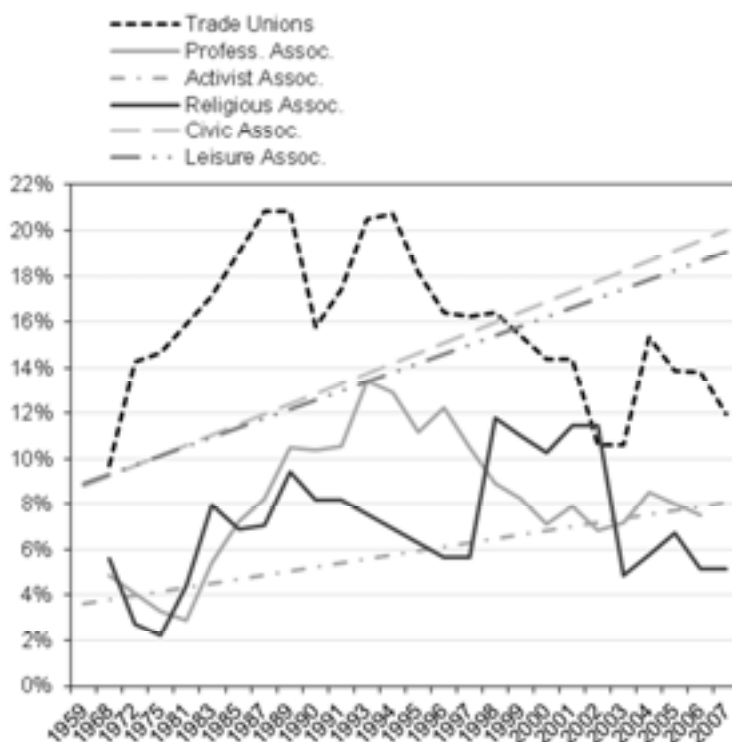
#### **4.8 Conclusions**

Almond and Verba in the fifties had called the Italian political culture "unsuited to a democratic system stable and efficient" (1965: 308-309) because few associational links existed and they were mainly concentrated on political parties and collateral associations, whereas the strictly civil associationism was quite weak. We saw that at the macro level a change did occur in the way Italian citizens participate in politics and in civil society, but the change has gone in different ways than expected.

Summarizing the evolution of social participation according to the triangulation of the multiple surveys we took into account, we found a similar scenario to the one already described in the Italian literature review section in Chapter 2. What we knew was that during the Sixties and early Seventies social participation experienced a burst of growth. Trade unions have increasingly become more autonomous from political parties across time, and new social movement, detached from conventional political organizations, has arisen. In this chapter we organized into several categories data coming from different datasets, and have now a clearer and unitary picture of the

participatory behaviour of citizens, in which areas of civil society they were more involved or which political participatory acts have increasingly been abandoned or have become more successful.

**Figure 4.20 – Trend Lines of Social Participation Membership across Time**



Source: own elaboration of data. *The Civic Culture, Itanes, WVS, ESS and EB. Iref, ISSP* and Pizzorno data from official reports.  
 Note: For trade unions, professional and religious associations we report the moving average trend line between two points in time. For activist, civic and leisure associations we report linear trend lines.

On the one hand we saw that membership in trade unions and professional associations, as well as in religious associations increased until the early 1990s, but then has slightly decreased across time, with a steeper decline for trade unions participation. On the other hand we saw that the number of existing social associations increased substantially from 1993 to 2003 in all areas of the country, and that the increase has particularly concerned civic associations connected to health and social assistance. Moreover, activist associations and particularly civic non-religious and leisure associations have had a slow but persistent increase in the number of citizens that decided to join them. In order to have a unitary visual representation of social association membership, in Figure 4.20 we plot all the moving average trend lines calculated across all surveys already reported in previous graphs. For associations in which the longitudinal trend was more consistent across different surveys, we plot a linear trend line in order to make the graph more

simple and able to communicate information straightforwardly. We summarize the main direction of these longitudinal trends also in Table 4.13.

**Table 4.13 – Longitudinal Trend of Social Participation Membership**

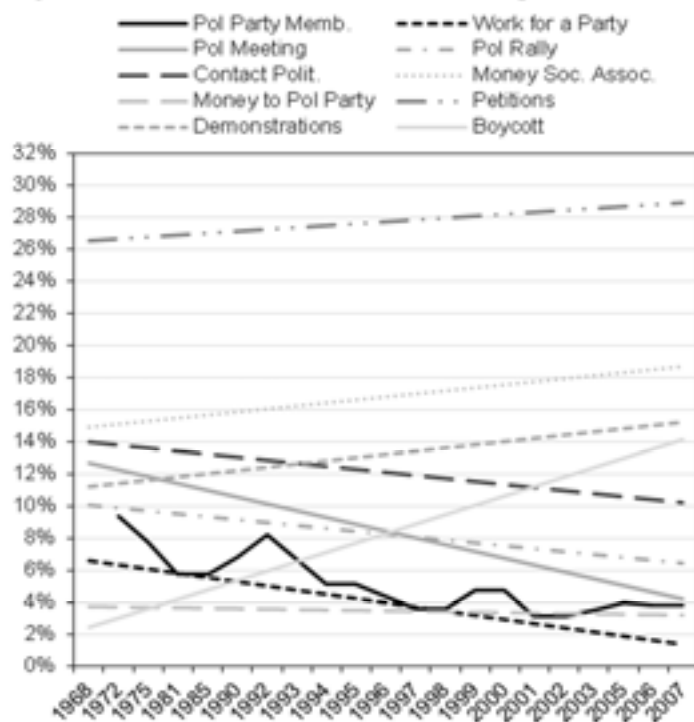
Participation Memberships	Long term trend	
Trade Unions	Increase then decrease	↑↓
Professional Associations	Slight increase	↑↓
Activist Associations	Increase	↑
Religious Associations	Strong Increase	↑↓
Civic Non-Religious Associations	Strong Increase	↑
Leisure Associations	Strong Increase	↑

Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture, Itanes, WVS, ESS and EB. Iref, ISSP* and Pizzorno data from official reports.

This scenario of higher civil society participation should have led to higher levels of political efficacy in society and of higher levels of political participation. We saw however that both political party membership and voting have decreased in the last 50 years, even though the latter has remained at quite high levels, mainly due to compulsory voting in place until 1993. Also other forms of conventional participation such as work for a political party, contacting a politician, attending a political rally and attending a political meeting have decreased, particularly the latter. Giving money to political party has remained quite stable albeit at very low levels, contrary to giving money to social associations that has increased and is at higher levels. Acts of unconventional participation, such as boycotting products, but also attending demonstration and signing petitions have instead increased across time. We summarize these results in Figure 4.21 and in Table 4.14.

Finally, as we saw in the last section, the government performance from 1996 to 2008 evolved quite negatively and this has given objective reasons to citizens not to believe in the accountability of the system despite the increase in mass scholarization and individual skills. Moreover, political inefficacy has been very high since post-war among Italian citizens and it has also slightly increased. If we consider the two dimensions of political efficacy it seems that it is particularly the perception that the system is not responsive to citizens that is increasing (external inefficacy), while the sense of self-inefficacy remains stable, and high, or only slightly decreasing (internal inefficacy).

**Figure 4.21 – Trend Lines of Political Participation across Time**



Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture, Itanes, WVS, ESS and EB. Iref, ISSP* and Pizzorno data from official reports. Note: For political party membership we report the moving average trend line between two points in time. For other acts of conventional and unconventional political participation we report linear trend lines.

**Table 4.14 – Longitudinal Trend of Political Participation Membership**

Political Participation	Long term trend	
Vote	Decrease (very high levels)	↓
Political Party Membership	Increase then Decrease	↑↓
Work for a Political Party	Decrease	↓
Attend a Political Meeting/Rally	Strong Decrease/Decrease	↓/ ↓
Contact Politicians	Decrease	↓
Financing Political Parties	Stable (very low levels)	→
Financing Social Associations	Increase	↑
Sign Petitions	Slight Increase	↑
Attend Demonstrations	Increase	↑
Boycott Products	Strong Increase	↑

Source: own elaboration of data: *The Civic Culture, Itanes, WVS, ESS and EB. Iref, ISSP* and Pizzorno data from official reports.

In short, we were able to confirm with several data sources the macro trends suggested by literature review. With few exceptions, civil society participation has increased, as well as unconventional modalities of participation. At the same time conventional political participation has dropped, whereas political disaffection has remained extremely high. Thus, the macro evolution of the Italian socio-political context has not gone in the directions expected by the neo-Tocquevillian theories. In the next chapters

we move to a more analytical level. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 we indeed construct and test hypotheses on changes in education across time in the Italian context related to the *individual modernization* thesis (Inglehart, 1979 and Dalton, 1984). Besides the macro findings on the longitudinal direction of participatory trends, this chapter has shown some limits of survey research. Different sources often report different measure levels and sometimes they even indicate different longitudinal trends. Since the reliability of measurement is crucial in order to have a valid picture of the evolution of a socio-political context, and most of all if we want to test some hypotheses on data, triangulation between several sources was very useful. Yet, constructing a single pooled dataset with the most reliable sources is going to help us control even more for sources bias, giving us a more usable tool to run our analyses with. In Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 we instead test the individual level relationship between social participation, political efficacy and political participation, using a three-wave *Itanes* panel.

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE 'INDIVIDUAL MODERNIZATION' THESIS

#### 5.1 Introduction

Using of a number of sources and studies, in Chapter 4 we were able to observe the evolution across time of different types of participation. We saw that starting from the 1980s in Italy, as in many other Western countries, the relationship between political actors, political institutions and civil society has begun to come under pressure. The relationships between parties and trade unions with citizens, and, to a different extent, also between professional associations and religious associations with citizens, are indeed now suffering a crisis, while channels of recruitment of political actors are increasingly shrinking. The pessimism of this scenario seems however balanced by the fact that new modalities of civil society participation are increasing. Participation in activist, non-religious and leisure associations is becoming more widespread. The dominant explanation in literature of these trends is the sociological thesis of *individual modernization* or *cognitive mobilization* by Inglehart (1977, 1997) and Dalton (1984, 2002). These authors claim that this is happening because of a change of citizens in society. There are now more educated individuals than the past that mostly belong to younger generations, and these new individuals experience participation in politics and in civil society in different ways because of a different set of values compared to older generations. In this chapter we test this thesis, also because up till today there is not yet an alternative theory able to offer a view of the evolution of the relationship between politics and citizens.

In the theoretical framework on Chapter 1 we saw that we could look at the evolution of the socio-political context of participation from two different points of view. One way to look at it is the change that modernization has brought to the structure of society since the end of the Second World War, mainly with an increase of scholarization and a change in citizens education levels, and incidentally, with a change in citizens' values. Another way is to look at the change in the socio-political organizations supply and in the characteristics of the political system. Our choice in this study is to look at the evolution of participation through dominant existing theories with

a bottom-up perspective. We remind once again that this is a partial view since associations as well as participation modalities have changed considerably over the last 50 years and the political opportunity structure has probably had a great influence on citizens' inclination to participate. The change was particularly strong for social organizations previously linked to Italian political subcultures that have today become more independent from politics and for political party organizations that are no longer the mass parties of before and have evolved into professionalized campaign parties, more interested in raising money and convincing public opinion than in mobilizing citizens for action. Without party-driven mobilization and with less opportunity for organized collective action, individuals are likely to face greater costs to participate in associations than the past. As we mentioned, given that we study one single country, we cannot check whether different evolutions of the socio-political system or different organization structure would have brought to different evolutions of participation. Thus, we test the *individual modernization* thesis on longitudinal trends of participation from a bottom-up perspective, further investigating the evolution of the Italian socio-political context that we presented in Chapter 4. In a counterfactual logic, assuming that no changes had occurred on the supply side, we analyse if changes in educational levels on the demand side are able alone to explain changes in the decision to participate in different types of associations.

In this chapter we first pool into a single dataset data from different time points and survey-sources. A single repeated cross-sections dataset not only allows us to perform a more complete analysis of trends than the previous chapter, but it also allows us to test the effect of structural changes and generational replacement in society on the decision to participate across time (Menard, 2002). In the following sections we then formulate several hypotheses that investigate the relationship between time and education and their influence on becoming (or not) a member of some association. In the next chapter we then test these hypotheses for two main different classes of associations: 'church-like' hierarchical organizations and 'bottom-up' democratic associations. We do not test the *individual modernization* thesis on voting behaviour because in Chapter 4 we saw that, mostly for the influence of compulsory vote, in Italy the decision to go to the polls at election time has been very high and quite stable since post-war, even when it started to decrease in more recent years. Nor do we test this



thesis for political efficacy since at the macro level we found no relevant change across time, this attitude remaining very low<sup>65</sup>. In the interpretation of results in next chapter and in the concluding chapter we do however take into account the importance of the characteristics of the socio-political context in mobilizing people and in offering them opportunities for collective action, that eventually affect the decision to participate.

## 5.2 Repeated Cross-Sections Pooled Dataset Construction

### 5.2.1 Surveys Selection

The first step is the construction a pooled dataset for measuring organizational participation. Among all the sources used in Chapter 4, we choose to use here only repeated cross-sectional surveys.

**Table 5.1 - The main features of the repeated cross-sectional surveys**

Survey Source	Wave (Data Collection)	Extension	Mode of Data Collection	Sampling Design	Number of Surveys	Average Sample Size	% of total aggregate N (N=56,783)
Itanes	1968; 1972; 1985; 1990; 1992; 1994; 1996; 2001; 2006; 2008	National	Face to face / CATI	Multistage / stratified	10	2189	38.56 (N=21,896)
WVS	1981; 1990; 1999; 2005	Internat	Face to face	Stratified	4	1587	11.18 (N=6,349)
ESS	2003; 2006	Internat	Face to face	Stratified, then in clusters	2	1300	4.58 (N=2,601)
Standard EB	1983; 1987; 1990; 1998; 2004	Internat	Face to face	Multistage, random(probability)	5	972	8.56 (N=4,861)
EB Mannheim 1970-2002	1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994	Internat	Face to face	Multistage, random(probability)	7	3011	37.12 (N=21,076)

Note: We exclude 1975 *Itanes* wave for some problems encountered in the dataset. In the *Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File* 1970-2002 the question on membership in political parties and trade unions is available only from 1988 to 1994, while the non-political membership associations is never present. <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/eurotrend/Homepage.html> For this reason we also use five waves of Standard EB that include measures for social participation: 1983 (EB 19); 1987 (EB 28); 1990 (EB 34); 1998 (EB 49); 2004 (EB 62-2). [Http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/)

We make this choice not only because this is the best suited research design to the reconstruction of trends (Duncan and Kalton 1987), but also because repetition of surveys is a good indicator of its overall quality, that is certainly more variable in the case of occasional surveys. We then select five sets of repeated cross-sectional surveys,

<sup>65</sup> Longitudinal studies on the determinants of vote and political efficacy have already been investigated in details for the Italian case somewhere else For voting behaviour we can refer to the book *Votare in Italia: 1968-2008. Dall'appartenenza alla scelta*. by Bellucci, P. and Segatti, P. (2010), and to the book *Voter Turnout and The Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945* by Franklin, M. N. (2004). For political efficacy and political interest we can refer to: *Italy, forty years of political disaffection* by Segatti (2006) and *Quanto conta la gente come me? Il senso di efficacia politica* by Segatti and Vezzoni (2007).

four of which are international and one has a national character<sup>66</sup>: Italian National Election Studies (*Itanes*), World Values Survey (*WVS*); European Social Survey (*ESS*); Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File (from now on *EB Mannheim*); Standard Eurobarometer (from now on *EB*). The main characteristics of the pooled dataset and its structure can be explored in details in Table 5.1 and 5.2.

**Table 5.2 - Pooled Dataset Structure**

	Itanes	WVS/EVS	ESS	EB	EB Mann	Total N
1968	2445	-	-	-	-	2445
1972	1794	-	-	-	-	1794
1981	-	1340	-	-	-	1340
1983	-	-	-	968	-	968
1985	2058	-	-	-	-	2058
1987	-	-	-	978	-	978
1988	-	-	-	-	1961	1961
1989	-	-	-	-	3833	3833
1990	1376	2008	-	995	2910	7289
1991	-	-	-	-	2874	2874
1992	1148	-	-	-	3771	4919
1993	-	-	-	-	2818	2818
1994	2561	-	-	-	2909	5470
1996	2490	-	-	-	-	2490
1998	-	-	-	940	-	940
1999	-	1989	-	-	-	1989
2001	3142	-	-	-	-	3142
2003	-	-	1147	-	-	1147
2004	-	-	-	980	-	980
2005	-	1012	-	-	-	1012
2006	1968	-	1454	-	-	3422
2008	2914	-	-	-	-	2914
<i>Tot</i>	<i>21896</i>	<i>6349</i>	<i>2601</i>	<i>4861</i>	<i>21076</i>	<i>56783</i>

Source: Own Pooled Dataset with data of Itanes, WVS, ESS, Standard EB, Mannheim EB Trend file

Although modes of data collection are similar, if we pool survey data collected in different ways, we should pay attention to the fact that a survey-source dependency can exist and that the structure of the error terms might be heteroskedastic. Each dataset contains indeed observations that were independently sampled not only in a specific year, but also in different modes and with dissimilar questionnaires. Respondents of the same survey-type are then more likely to be similar between them, and residuals might correlate across this dimension. In the descriptive analysis of Chapter 4 we overcame this problem through triangulation of data results and drawing a tendency line among all

<sup>66</sup> *Istat Multiscope* data were not included because of different measures for participation used (see Chapter 4). Moreover, Istat data constitute almost 42% of the available data with an average sample per year of 40.504. If we do not exclude this source, the pooled dataset would be highly unbalanced and mainly reflect the Istat data structure. Moreover no measures for associational membership is included in this dataset.

sources. With the pooled dataset we control for survey-source dependency by correcting the structure of the data, specifying the errors using clustered standard errors<sup>67</sup>.

### **5.2.2 Institutional Membership**

We saw already that the amount of information on different aspects of participation contained in each investigation is highly variable. Some of them include only measures on political party and trade unions membership, some others include items on different types of participation on different sorts of associations. In the construction of a single pooled dataset, we decide to focus only on organizational membership, distinguishing between respondents who claim to be members of political or social organizations and those who do not. Participation in political and social life is a complex concept and, as Morales and Geurts (2007) showed, asking about membership only, might generally underestimate the degree to which citizens are involved in associations, since some nations have a high proportion of citizens who are involved in associations' activities without being member. Yet, the choice of membership to various associations as the only indicator on which to base the reconstruction of the trend of political and social participation is, for practical reasons, an obvious choice if we want to have an extended series with different sources in a pooled dataset. Indeed, the indicator of membership in political parties, trade unions and social organizations is the only one that can be found, although in slightly different formulations, in virtually all sample surveys used for the descriptive longitudinal trend in Chapter 4. For other indicators it was not possible to gather the amount of information available for membership in associations.

Finally, we do not distinguish between active and passive membership. Besides reasons of data availability, there is also a more substantial reason. If we look at literature we find two different views. On the one hand Putnam (1993; 2000) claims the importance of active membership for democracy. According to this author, what really matters for associations to work as 'schools of democracy' is not merely nominal membership, but "active and involved membership" through face-to-face encounters (2000: 58). On the other hand, however, we find the radical different view of Almond and Verba (1963) that attribute a different importance to passive memberships. The authors empirically show that not only also passive members display a significantly greater level of civic competence than non-members across five countries, but they are

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<sup>67</sup> *Itanes, World Value Survey, European Social Survey, Standard Eurobarometer, Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend file*

also more supportive of democratic norms, and they share a higher sense of political efficacy than non-members. Other research also shows that passive membership tends to have a similar effect on political and social trust as active membership does (Wollebaek and Selle, 2002: 54-55; Hooghe, 2003: 52; Hooghe, 2008:573-574). Godwin (1992, cited in Maloney, 1999: 113) emphasizes for instance that even the most passive forms of participation “reduces political alienation, as contributors believe their contributions make a difference. This, in turn, reduces the support for aggressive political participation”, while Wollebaek and Selle (2002) remarks that passive members develop higher trust and higher political efficacy than non-members also because they can network with similar others and can be subjected to recruitment.

Following Almond and Verba view, we consider membership in associations as an important form of participation to our purposes, regardless of the level of activism and commitment that this membership may entail for a given individual (Verba and Nie, 1972; Huntington and Nelson, 1976). After having homogenised response formats and transformed dependent variables of associational participation in dummies, in the next chapter we make use of logistic regression techniques, in order to reconstruct the development of politics and social participation trends and to test our hypotheses on them.

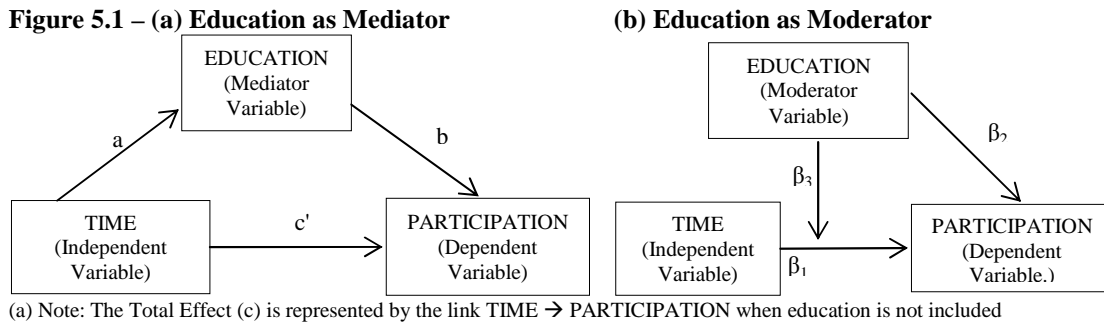
### **5.3 The Relationship Between Education and Time**

Since modernization of Italian society has brought to a process of mass scholarization, after the construction of the pooled dataset our main focus is to formulate hypotheses related to the *individual modernization* thesis that analyse in a longitudinal perspective the influence of education on the decision to participate in different types of social and political organizations for Italian citizens.

Being a longitudinal study, our first interest is *time*. We choose to investigate time in three different aspects: as socio-political context change, expressed as time-period effect, as generational replacement, expressed as political cohort effect, and as a life-cycle phenomena, expressed as age effect. Since social change is seen by this theory as mainly caused by a change in the educational composition of a society, our second interest is *education*. We study the effect of education on participation across time mainly in two ways: first as mediator and then as moderator of time (Figure 5.1a and 5.1b). The Equation of the mediation model is the following (5.1):

$$\text{Total Effect (c)} = \text{Direct Effect (c')} + \text{Indirect Effect (ab)} \quad (\text{Eq. 5.1})$$

A mediation model is then one that seeks to explicate the mechanism that underlies an observed relationship between an independent variable (time) and a dependent variable (participation) via the inclusion on a third explanatory variable (education), which in turn causes the dependent variable (participation) (Kenny, 2012a; Baron and Kenny, 1986; Judd and Kenny, 1981).



The Equation of a moderation model is instead the following:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 (X_1 * X_2) + \varepsilon \quad (\text{Eq. 5.2})$$

Moderation then occurs when the relationship between two variables depends on a third variable, the moderator.

The effect of a moderating variable is characterized statistically as an interaction, that means that levels of a variable (education) affect the direction and/or strength of the relationship between the independent (time) and the dependent variable (participation) (Kenny, 2012b). In other words, when education functions as an intervening variable between time and participation, we assume that the relationship between time and participation is (partially) indirect. We include educational levels only in a second moment and see how the relationship between time and participation changes. When education functions as a moderator between time and participation, we instead assume that the relationship between time and participation changes its strength at different levels of education. Thus, in order to test how different combinations of education levels with time affect participation, we add an interaction to the model.

In the next sections we construct a set of hypotheses connecting education to socio-political change (time-period) and another set of hypothesis connecting education to generational change (cohorts). We want to investigate participation across time and in

different political generations both by assuming that educational levels were constant (mediation effect) and by making them interact with survey years and generations (moderation effect). For life-cycle effect (age) on participation we do not instead make any assumption and we only want to explore how it has evolved the mean age of participation in organizations across time for different levels of education (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 – The Investigated Relationship between Education and Time**

Time	Education		Levels
	Mediation Effect	Moderation Effect	
Time-Period	X	X	
Political Cohort	X	X	
Average Age			X

In our analysis we control also for variables of gender and territory. Along with education and age, these are socio-demographic characteristics that in the past were considered important by most of the literature on political and social participation (Verba and Nie, 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim, 1978; Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Jennings and van Deth, 1989; Kaase 1989; Parry, Moyser and Day, 1992; Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995). Particularly on electoral studies, but also in studies of party and social organization participation, distinctions between younger and older people, men and women, and people living in different geo-political areas have been quite common and their effect has usually been assumed as constant. Yet, socio-political changes, developments and transformation, such as modernization, mass scholarization, secularization and changes in the job market, have affected the influence of all these variables across time (See Bellucci and Segatti, 2010; van Ingen and Dekker, 2010).

### ***5.3.1 The Role of Socio-Structural Change on Participation (Time-period)***

The influence of education on political and social participation has often been given less attention by social research than social class. Yet, even amongst the politically significant individual-level resources of SES model, education is believed to have a direct impact on participation. As we saw in Chapter 1, there is a certain agreement among scholars on the fact that education enhances psychological engagement because it provides citizens with the cultural instruments necessary to orientate themselves in the complex political world (Almond and Verba, 1963; Hyman and Wright, 1979). It does so in two different ways. The 'cognitive' model (van de Werfhorst and de Graaf 2004) holds that through education persons learn the existence of different cultures, and

different views on society as well as on specific questions. In this view, education not only gives to people the necessary resources to understand politics and act politically, but it would also make people better understand the human being. This theory was particularly relevant in Italy before the transition of 1992 elections from the *First* to the *Second Republic*. During the *First Republic* two quite polarized and homogenous big party areas of DC and PCI existed and in this context education was more likely to make the person more 'open' to understand the other. The 'socialization' model (van De Werfhorst and De Graaf, 2004) or 'core values' model (Weakliem, 2002) starts instead from the idea that educational institutions socialize to future occupational roles: along with technical skills they also transmit dominant values such as political attitudes of the social area of destination. This model was also more suited before mass scholarization, when education was an elite privilege in Italy and was leading to dominant social positions. Given these two theories, we would expect that since there has been a progressive increase in educational levels in society, individual resources, on average, have risen, and citizens should tend to participate increasingly more both in political and civil society associations.

The connection between education and politics might have, however, transformed over the last 50 years. The first fact to remark is that the meaning of being lower or higher educated has changed now compared to the past, and the implications of these developments on social and political participation are not very well documented. The elevation of compulsory education from primary to middle school in the early 1960s, as well as the high social and economic significance of the diploma before mass scholarization, question the direct comparability of education levels across time. In fact, due to the low amount of population who held a diploma, before the school reform this title could be considered similar to a post-reform university degree. We control for the change in qualifications meaning by adopting the same classification made by Corbetta and Ceccarini (2010) in analysing the Italian vote. We distinguish between three levels of education and we group them in different ways before and after the application of the school reform law (the school year of 1963-64).

As we see in Table 5.4, the reform has begun to affect the cohort born in 1952, which include those who turned 11 years old in 1963. Low education includes only compulsory education, that for children born until 1951 is equivalent to primary school (from 6 to 11 years old) or less, while for those born from 1952 onwards is equivalent to middle school (from 11 to 14 years old) or less. Intermediate education is equivalent to having completed middle school for those born until 1951 and to having completed the diploma (from 14 to 19 years old) for those born from 1952 onwards, whereas high education is equivalent to having completed at least the diploma for those born up to 1951 and to having completed at least a university degree (from 19 to 23/24 years old) for those born from 1952 onwards<sup>68</sup>.

**Table 5.4 – The Coding of Educational Levels Pre and Post-School Reform**

Education Level	Born Until 1951	Born After 1951
Low	No education/ Primary school (6-11 y.)	No education/ Primary school/Middle school(6-11 y.)
Intermediate	Middle school completed (11-14 y.)	Diploma completed (11-14 y.)
High	At least diploma completed (14-19 y.)	At least university degree (14-19 y.)

Note: Primary school= *Scuola Elementare*; Middle school=*Scuola Media*; Secondary school= *Scuola Superiore*

**Figure 5.2 - Distribution of Educational Levels per Survey Wave**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

In the *The Civic Culture* (1963) the low participation in Italian society was partly attributed to low society levels of education in the 1950s. Over the past 50 years, Italian society has changed significantly in terms of the distribution of educational levels in the

<sup>68</sup> For *Itanes* surveys we recode education according to the last degree obtained at the time of the interview. In the case of the Standard EB, Mannheim EB, ESS and WVS, we calculate instead the last degree obtained based on the age respondents have left education since no question was available on the last degree obtained. Thus, the measurement is inevitably less accurate(see *Appendix III* for education question wording)



population. According to the 1961 census, 70% of the population had completed only elementary schools while more than 8% of Italians were illiterate. 30 years later, in 1991, the ratio between the proportion of citizens that had completed secondary school level or more was 4 to 1 compared to 1961. The change was even 5 to 1 for women. Also in the pooled database it is possible to see the importance of change of educational levels across time in Italian society: the amount of low educated has declined by more than 30 percentage points within our sample since 1968, while the amount of people that have completed high education has increased by 15 percentage points (Figure 5.2).

The second fact is that in the mid-1970s new theories started to spread on the changed relationship between education and politics: the theory of *individual modernization* or *cognitive mobilization* (Inglehart 1977, 1997; Dalton *et al.* 1984, 2002). These theories claim that the effects of education are now going in a different direction compared to the past. The theory of *individual modernization* holds indeed that socio-economic transformations that have occurred in advanced industrial countries during the post-war period have led citizens to change their personal skills and their attitudes in favour of more post-materialist value orientations. Rising living standards, accessibility to information and educational level of the population are thought to be the causes of the substitution of traditional attitudes, more respectful of authority and strongly bonded on social groups, for other attitudes (Inglehart 1977; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995b; Gabriel and van Deth, 1995). The likely consequence is the *cognitive mobilization* that generates concerns regarding new issues (e.g. environmental protection, peace, integration of minorities) as well as new participatory demands. Thus, while in the past education was promoting system support, now it might instead lead to widening the confidence gap.

In this view, citizens are no longer frustrated with the way the system works because they lack the necessary resources to influence socio-political contexts; rather they are more critical because they are now more politically competent (Pharr and Putnam, 2000). According to these theories, there is then a growing number of ‘critical citizens’, characterized by a diffuse support of democratic ideals but with critical attitudes toward ‘church-like associations’, typical of conventional democratic practices, that makes decline in party and trade unions membership more likely. This does not produce political apathy, but translates into a change in political participation forms

with bottom-up politics and with a diffusion of associationism and of volunteering within civil society. The change of participation modalities is the effect of an increased number of citizens interested and competent in politics, and less willing to accept a hierarchic and inclusive relation with politics that big bureaucratic organizations such as parties and trade unions were able to offer them (Inglehart 1990; Dalton 1988; Norris 1999a, 1999b, 2005; Kaase and Newton 1995; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995b; Nye *et al.*, 1997; Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst, 2005).

The change to post-modern values should then be particularly pronounced among well-educated citizens. In this study we believe that since Italian political parties and trade unions have historically been quite hierarchic and authority-based organizations they can be labelled as 'church-like' associations, while all other civil society associations, and particularly activist and social movement organization, can be considered to be bottom-up associations<sup>69</sup>. According to this theory the likely consequence of the fact that Italian society has undergone a process of mass scholarization and that levels of education have risen is that citizens should have become less likely to participate in political parties and trade unions but more likely to engage in other civil society associations.

We want to test the thesis of *individual modernization* with the pooled data we constructed checking for the educational composition of society by constructing three hypotheses. In the first hypothesis we partially repeat the analysis of Chapter 4. This time, however, we use a unified dataset controlling for survey bias through clustered errors, so that we can further check the results of the longitudinal trends of associational participation across time.

*H5.1a: Structural changes in society, expressed as time-period, has led to declining participation in church-like associations (political party and trade unions) and to increasing levels of participation in bottom-up associations (other civil society associations).*

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<sup>69</sup> This is not necessarily the case for all organizations and in order to have more accurate data each of them should be analysed separately. Yet, since this would require a very long and analytical study that is certainly not possible in this context, we rely on average features of these broad categorization types

We then proceed by introducing the role of education in two different ways. The first way is to study education as a mediator between social structure change (expressed as time-period) and participation. We saw that Inglehart talks explicitly about a rejection of church-like organizations, due to increasing levels of education in society, and a general tendency toward joining bottom-up associations. Taking this thesis a bit further, we can say that participation in bottom-up associations is expected to follow exactly the opposite trends than church-like associations. Since we are not able to test directly the effect of changes in social structure across time, we use a counterfactual. We then assume that if no changes in the educational composition of society had happened, participation in hierarchical organizations and participation in different types of bottom-up associations would be constant across time.

*H5.1b: If the individual modernization hypothesis works, controlling structural changes for educational composition of society should lead to constant levels of participation across time.*

Given the empirical trend assumed in the first hypothesis (H5.1a) this hypothesis actually assumes then participation in church-like associations (political parties and trade unions) should decrease less across time, whereas participation in bottom-up association (other social associations) should increase less (H5.1b).

The second way to study the relationship between education and time-period is using education as a moderator of time and participation, assuming that the well-educated changed their behaviour of joining associations. Not only should the well-educated be no longer willing to participate in church-like associations, but in our reading of Inglehart, they should also be more attracted to bottom-up associations (H5.1c).

*H5.1c: Compared to the past, participation of well-educated citizens becomes lower than less educated in church-like organizations (political parties and trade unions) and higher in bottom-up associations (other social associations).*

### 5.3.2 *The Role of Generational Change on Participation (Political Cohorts)*

The *individual modernization* thesis focuses its attention particularly on the change of values that education is likely to produce. How does this happen? Together with citizens' increasing cognitive abilities due to mass scholarization and to more levels of information in society these values get mainly established in Western societies through a process of generational change. Since birth cohorts are socialized in different ideological climates and in dissimilar political circumstances, generational change is indeed one of the most important vehicles of cultural change: the progressive entrance in society life of young citizens that were socialized in social and political context different from the past can lead to changes in traditional power relationships.

“The coming of advanced industrial society leads to a syndrome of intergenerational changes that bring significant further increases in citizen intervention in politics. A long-term rise in educational levels and in mass political skills has characterized all industrial societies. An extension of social mobilization beyond the transformations brought by urbanization and early industrialization, this process has been termed ‘cognitive mobilization’ (Inglehart, 1977). While social mobilization manifested itself in visible changes of location and occupation, cognitive mobilization is based on invisible changes that upgrade individual skills. These changes have momentous political consequences” (Inglehart, 1997: 168).”

Thus, the second set of hypothesis considers the influence of belonging to a particular political generation on the decision whether or not to join an organization. Growing up in a certain historical moment is supposed to influence individual attitudes and orientations through a process of political socialization and makes the analysis of participation in different political generations relevant. People of the same age can become more than just individuals belonging to the same age cohort. If during their youth they went through particularly significant experiences and events that make them share a common ‘worldview’ and they undergo a common socialization process of their public life as citizens, they become a generation in the sociological sense (Mannheim, 1964; Bettin Lattes 1999). Italian research has reported how some political generations more than others have expressed and still share specific political attitudes (Corbetta, 2002). In light of the *individual modernization* thesis, younger generations should be more likely to adopt post-materialist values that put a stronger emphasis on life quality, individual autonomy, independence of thoughts and self-fulfilment than people

socialized in different socio-political contexts. Accordingly, younger generations are more likely to join bottom-up social associations rather than ‘church-like’ organizations (Inglehart 1977; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995b).

Operationalization of political generations is not a simple decision, since there are plenty of historical-political events that could have been significant for citizens when they were young. Yet, few of them can work as dividing line between one generation and the other. We choose to adopt the same classification of political generations made by Corbetta and Ceccarini (2010) in their longitudinal study of Italian voting behaviour, defining the most important political event during their early political socialization, that we set to the age of 18<sup>70</sup>.

**Table 5.6 – The Italian Political Generations**

Year of Birth	Turned 18 (Political Socialization)	Most important political events of political socialization	Age in 2008	Cohort Name
Until 1925	Until 1943	Fascism	+ 82	Fascism
1926-1935	1944-53	Cold War	73-82	Cold War
1936-1945	1954-63	Economic Boom	63-72	Economic Boom
1946-1955	1964-73	Sixty-eight Feminist Movements,	53-62	Sixty-Eight
1956-1965	1974-83	Terrorism, National Solidarity Government	43-52	Terrorism
1966-1975	1984-93	Penta-party, Tangentopoli (Bribery-city), fall of Berlin Wall	33-42	Tangentopoli
1975-1990	1994-2008	Berlusconism	18-32	Berlusconism

Source: Corbetta and Ceccarini (2010)

First of all we identify a very strong historical-political experience for citizens that were growing up during the fascist regime. At the end of this experience, the end of the Second World War, the reconstruction of society and even more the Cold War with the conflict between the Western and the Soviet bloc, strongly influenced another cohort. While the economic boom of the 50s made people socialized in those years part of a transitional political generation, being young between the 60s and the 70s, and having experienced the moment of great contestation of institutions and of wide social and cultural innovations of the Sixty-Eight has led to a definition of a specific and well-defined political generation, that is commonly characterized by strong ideologization. The generation after the Sixty-Eight has been instead characterized by political uncertainty at the institutional level. While they were young they witnessed national

<sup>70</sup> When Italian citizens are legally allowed to vote.

solidarity government, as well as echoes of Sixty-Eight, such as the feminist movement, and in the following years, political extremist terrorism. The following generation experienced the 'pentaparty', the explosion of *the Northern League* phenomenon, and the so-called *Tangentopoli* scandal (Bribery City). The international scenario also influenced the national experience of this generation with the fall of the Berlin wall. The end of the Cold War, and the Bribery City scandal of 1992 led to the end of the *First Republic* and the beginning of the *Second Republic*, with the disappearance of traditional government parties, and a radical change of the political scenario and, accordingly, of citizens' orientations. Finally, the last generation has been politically influenced by the central role of the media tycoon Berlusconi. He entered politics in 1994 and has been four time Prime Minister since then, reaching a certain stability in power, completing the 5-year cabinet term for the first time in the Italian Republic, and making the link between politics and media as strong as ever (Table 5.6).

Citizens belonging to different birth cohorts do not differ only in the context of their political socialization. They also differ in their levels of education. Mass scholarization and the education reform of 1963 affected some generations more than others, so that the generation socialized during 1968 is, on average, much more educated than previous generations because of the recent school reform law that increased mandatory education levels, as well as for higher levels of socio-economic resources in society and for a new value system focusing on equality of opportunities. In Table 5.7 we can see the distribution of education levels per political cohort.

**Table 5.7 - Distribution of Educational Levels per Political Cohort**

	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
Education							
Low	75.1	65.2	51.6	44.2	50.4	39.4	33.5
Intermediate	12.7	17.4	23.0	26.3	31.2	32.2	46.6
High	12.2	17.4	25.4	29.2	18.4	28.5	19.9
(N)	(7221)	(8105)	(9344)	(9790)	(10601)	(8629)	(2720)

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

For this reasons and for the climate of great contestation in which they were politicized, the generation of Sixty-Eight should be the first to have thoroughly interiorized the change of values claimed by the *individual modernization* thesis and people belonging to these birth cohorts should then be more likely to participate in bottom-up associations and less likely to participate in church-like associations (H5.2a):

*H5.2a: The generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate less in church-like associations (political parties and trade unions), and more in other more democratic and bottom-up associations (other civil society associations) than older generations.*

Also in this case we introduce education, first as a mediator and then as a moderator of time, expressed as political cohorts, mirroring the first set of hypothesis (H5.1b and H5.1c). In order to test education as a mediator, we construct a counterfactual hypothesis, claiming that if political cohorts were equally educated, younger generations should participate in social and political associations as much as older generations (H5.2b).

*H5.2b: If the individual modernization hypothesis works, controlling for the distribution of education across political cohorts should lead generation socialized during Sixty-Eight and younger generations to participate as much as older generations both in ‘church-like’ and in ‘bottom-up’ associations.*

Given the assumptions in the previous hypothesis (H5.1a), we expect that participation of younger generations should decrease less in ‘church-like’ associations (political parties and trade unions) and increase less in bottom-up association (other civil society associations).

Considering education as a moderator leads us instead to another hypothesis. According to our reading of the *individual modernization* thesis, higher educated belonging to younger generations should have changed their behaviour for joining associations, not only for ‘church-like’ associations, but also for ‘bottom-up’. Indeed, it is likely that higher levels of education in society has always led to higher levels of membership in civil society associations. Yet, with value changes that new generations have experienced the tendency should have increased compared to older generations (H5.2c).

*H5.2c: Compared to older generations, participation of well-educated individuals belonging to the Sixty-Eight or to younger generations becomes lower than less educated in church-like organizations (political parties and trade unions) and higher in bottom-up associations (other social associations).*

### **5.3.3 *Life-cycle and Participation (Age)***

So far we have constructed a hypothesis measuring time as structural changes of society and as political cohorts, but we can also measure it in a third way using age. Age is one of the main variables of the 'sociological' explanation of political participation, even though its real contribution has been always uncertain, since it interacts with many other characteristics of citizens. Some scholars point in the direction of a limited influence of age and no particular variation in time (Clarke *et al.*, 2004: 47-48), while some others show the link between votes, party choice and age (Abrams and O'Brien, 1981; Mannheim and Sani, 1987; Clarke *et al.* 2004; Maraffi, 2008). Many studies have for instance found that the relationship between age and political activity is quite well-established: "participation rises gradually with age, reaches its peak and levels off in the forties and fifties, and gradually declines above sixty." (Milbrath, 1965: 134). This is due to the fact that people of different age do not differ only in their age in years, but most likely also in their position in their life cycle. When people increase in age they usually tend to move also through different sociological stages of their life: from family and schooling the move to more adult activities and then to roles of the aged. We know indeed that middle-age people tend to participate more in political parties and trade unions than younger people: they enter the job market, they have more economic stability, and they basically become more implicated in society life. Yet, while retired people tend to abandon their political activity, it is not always the case for trade unions activity.

Also in studies about social participation there is a connection between age and participation, but it goes in a different direction. Citizens that enter the life-cycle phase in which they hold a job helps them expand their network and skills on the one hand, with a positive influence on participation, but on the other hand this also limits their free time and time pressure becomes a strongly negative influence on participation (Putnam, 2000; Rotolo and Wilson, 2007). Conversely, pensioners and students have much more



free time at their disposal and are more likely to be involved in local communities (Lin, 2000) and student networks (Crossley, 2008). Moreover, retired people now live longer, are healthier and wealthier compared to the past, and after their job life they are likely to be busier with alternative activities, one of which is volunteering (Einolf, 2009).

In this research we do not hold any specific hypotheses of the evolution across time of participation in different associations for citizens of different age for different levels of education. We are anyhow interested in exploring it in order to make our analysis more complete. People of the same age have experienced different historical environments during their early socialization. Yet, since we do not have any data on the behaviour in their youth of people belonging to the Fascist and Cold War generation, and we do not yet have any data on their behaviour in the adult and elderly life of the cohorts of Tangentopoli and Berlusconiism, age and cohorts effects in our pooled dataset might slightly overlap. For this reason we choose to investigate the evolution of life-cycle across time, rather than across generations, exploring how the mean age of participation of low and highly educated citizens changes across time.

### ***5.3.4 The Methodological Problem of Period, Cohorts and Age***

A common problem in these types of analysis is the fact that we cannot use birth cohort, age and time-period variables in the same model since they are highly correlated with each other. Indeed, the formula with which we calculate one of the three variables makes the problem clear, since one of the three variables is derived from the other two (Period = Age – Birth Cohort). This means that by including all of them in one model, we deal with redundant information. This problem has been solved in several ways in literature, for instance by introducing conceptual substitutes of one or more variables, or by using multilevel modelling (Yang Yang, 2008a, 2008b).

In our data we decide to face this problem in a different way. After having looked at the evolution of different types of participation across time, for each participation type we first check the time-period effect, and we then proceed by analysing cohort effects using the concept of political generation, after having controlled for the variable of age. The choice to adopt a generational perspective allows us to observe the continuity of individuals that shared the same birth period and, accordingly, the same socialization phase, in order to have some indication on the long period trend. This approach is particularly useful for our purposes. If we choose to analyse citizens age per

each year, we would analyse, each time, different groups of youngsters, adults and elderly people. By taking into account birth cohorts, instead, the youngsters of former surveys will be the adults of the following, and so on. Given the structure of our pooled dataset illustrated in previous paragraphs and the purposes of this chapter, we believe that this is the best choice to make.

While investigating the relationship between education and time in its three aspects of time-period, political cohorts and age, we also take into account two important control variables: gender and territory. Both variables have indeed been quite important in explaining the participatory behaviour, but their influence is not constant and is changing across time. Before summarizing the structure of the analysis of next chapter, we explore how gender and territory are thought to affect the participatory behaviour. We then go on to explain our operationalization choice in three macro area of Italian territory, instead of the five most commonly used.

### ***5.3.5 The Influence of Gender and Territory on Association Membership***

#### ***5.3.5.1 Gender***

Sociology has considered gender as a relevant variable for participation for a long time. Several differences between men and women were found regarding political participation (Corbetta and Ceccarini, 2010) as well as volunteering social participation, mainly concerning different types of volunteering (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes, 2007; Popielarz, 1999). During the 50s, 60s and 70s there was great consensus, among scholars in Western democracies, on the fact that the social position of women in the family, their closeness to religion, and their exclusion from the labour market were responsible for their different participation patterns compared to men (Duverger, 1955; Butler and Stokes, 1969; Campbell *et al.* 1960; Lipset, 1960; Inglehart, 1977).

From the 80s, however, things started to change. The process of modernization brought many structural and cultural changes in Western societies and as a consequence the social and normative role of women has been deeply modified. A first big structural change has been the mass inclusion of women in labour market that exposed them to political debate and consciousness, increased their monetary resources and economic autonomy, but meanwhile decreasing their free time, since their familiar engagements have not been reduced accordingly. A second change has been the transformation of the family, with a reduction of dependence and inequalities between women and men, but

with new economical consequences for women due to the introduction of divorce (Holden and Smock, 1991) and consequences for participation due to the influence of maternity on women's values (Ruddick, 1990). Finally, the process of secularization strongly diminished the social influence of religious institutions, which traditionally influenced more women than men, while mass scholarization started to give equal opportunities in education to girls and to boys.

On the cultural side, growing levels of feminist awareness and new socialization models gradually introduced new critical sensibility toward gender inequalities in society. New post-materialist values (Inglehart 1977) moved the focus from primary survival needs towards needs of self-realization and sociability, making male cultural hegemony increasingly weak. All these transformations go in the direction of the reduction of the social gap between men and women, and the reduction in structural and cultural gaps have the plausible consequence of a reduction in the political divide through time. Indeed, with improved resources for women and new awareness, their possibilities to participate have increased and researches started to capture these changes (Van Ingen and Dekker, 2010; Wollebaek and Selle, 2005). Electoral behaviour, for instance, moved from a process of dealignment, toward a disappearance of a relation between gender and vote (Health, Jowell and Curtice, 1985; de Vaus and McAllister, 1989; Jelen *et al.* 1994) and then, in some countries, even led to a process of new realignment (Inglehart and Norris, 2003).

In Italy, however, there is no much longitudinal research available neither on women voting nor on other types of women's participation. In voting and political orientations, gender has never been considered a cleavage as was the case for class, religion, and territory. For a long time, indeed, women's behaviour was associated with the behaviour of family men (father or husband), even after a traditional gender gap had been pointed out by some scholars (Mannheimer and Sani, 1987). An exception to the absence of longitudinal researches is the study made by Corbetta and Ceccarini (2010) that found a consistent decrease in gender gap political orientations from 1968 to 2008. In the next chapter we use gender as a control variable when analysing political cohorts.

### 5.3.5.2 *Territory*

Italian society is marked by profound territorial cleavages. The geo-political areas in which citizens live, defined 'political subculture' in the Italian case (Mannheimer and

Sani, 1987), are quite relevant for participation, since they should represent quite homogenous political traditions at the macro-area level. The need for a more-than-individual level variable in studying participation originated with Columbia University studies (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944) that highlighted how it was necessary to look at the vote not only as an 'individual calculus' but also a 'social calculus', influenced by the political discussion in the citizens' interpersonal environment (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1993; 1995). The *Cattaneo Institute* researches in mid-60s (Galli, 1968) have defined five quite homogenous geo-political areas in Italy respect to electoral results from post-war until mid-Sixties. After that, these areas have become a 'classical' variable in Italian vote models analysis at the individual level (Caciagli, 1988; Cartocci, 1991; 1996): northwest (Piedmont, Val d'Aosta, Liguria, Lombardy), northeast (Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia), the 'red belt' (Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Marche, Umbria), centre (Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Sardinia), and the south (Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily).

In each of these areas there has been great voter stability for long-time particularly for what concern the two dominant political traditions - the 'white belt' in the north east (Christian Democrats - DC) and the 'red belt' (socialist and communist). The reason for this homogeneity is that processes of political socialization and interpersonal influence reproduce through time specific political traditions. Even though changes in the geographical and socio-political contexts have partially modified the homogeneity of these macro-areas (Diamanti, 2003), the geographical substantial continuity of voting has been holding for more than half a century (Shin and Agnew, 2008). The difference is that variance within geo-political areas has increased and some areas have even changed their political colour (Diamanti, 2003; Anderlini, 2007). In the last general elections of 2008, we assisted for instance to penetration phenomena of political parties such as the *Northern League* in areas in which it was previously unthinkable, given the predominance of 'red' subculture (Itanes, 2008).

In our analysis we are only interested in participation levels without checking the political colour of participation. Thus, in civic participatory culture terms we can think of a dividing line between the central-northern areas and the southern areas. While the regions in the centre-north gave birth to modern parties based on ideological mobilization, the south remained characterized by clientelistic behaviour between the

political elite and voters (Putnam, 1993). Participation should then be more prevalent in the former than in the latter. Yet, since the political traditions of the north and of the ‘red belt’ are connected to quite different political colours, in our analysis we choose to distinguish between three macro-areas: the north (north east and north west), the ‘red belt’, and the south (centre and south)<sup>71</sup>. We include territory in our analyses as control variable when investigating the relationship between education and political cohorts.

### **5.4 The structure of the ‘Individual Modernization’ Analysis**

Summarizing, in order to verify whether the process of modernization of Italy has led to the changes expected by the thesis proposed by Inglehart (1977, 1979) and Dalton (1984; 2002), the structure of our analysis is as follows both for ‘church-like’ organizations such as political parties and trade unions, and for ‘bottom-up’ associations such as activist, as well as professional, civic and leisure associations. We start by testing the first set of hypotheses investigating the relationship between time-period and participation and the role of education in it. After having explored longitudinal trends of associational participation (H5.1a), we test the compositional effect of education on participation over the years (H5.1b), and we then predict probabilities of membership levels in different types of associations, by interacting survey years with three levels of education (H5.1c).

We move on by testing the second set of hypotheses on the relationship between political generations and participation, and the role of education. We first explore levels of participation within each cohort (H5.2a). We then run models in which we assume that educational levels have stayed constant across cohorts (H5.2b) and we finally explore levels of participation of well-educated for each cohort (H5.2c). In doing so, we consider also the influence of age, gender and territory. We conclude the analysis of time, education and participation by checking with explorative purposes the evolution across time of the mean age of participation in different associations per education levels. These analyses are to be run in the next chapter for membership of each type of association in the Italian context, using the pooled dataset we constructed using five longitudinal sources of survey data.

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<sup>71</sup> In our analysis we do not consider the WVS of 1981 since no disaggregated data exist on geographical area of residence.



## CHAPTER 6.

### 'CHURCH-LIKE' AND 'BOTTOM-UP' ASSOCIATIONS ACROSS TIME

#### 6.1 Introduction

Using the pooled dataset constructed in Chapter 5, in this chapter we first describe what the main characteristics of members of each association are, and we then test empirically whether the sets of hypothesis based on the *individual modernization* (Inglehart, 1977; 1997) and *cognitive mobilization* theory (Dalton, 1984; 2002) work for 'church-like' organizations as well as for other bottom-up organizations. We investigate the time-period as well as political cohorts' relationship with different types of associational membership, exploring the role of education as mediator and moderator. We finally check the evolution of the mean age of participation across time for different levels of education.

We saw that the thesis of *individual modernization* is based on the fact that characteristics of individuals have transformed across time, mainly due to a change in educational levels. If education had not increased in society, no changing patterns of participation would have occurred. While this theory faces issues such as the modification of values of individuals, and particularly of younger generations, it does not explicitly tackle the problem of the equalizing power of associations. This problem is faced instead by Verba, Schlozman and Verba (1995) talking about how churches and other associations in the US are very important for promoting political equality in society. As Inglehart, we also do not investigate this empirically. Rather we limit ourselves to looking at the characteristics of who participated in different associations across time, and whether it is the change of individuals in society that has brought to changing participation patterns. Yet, we know from past studies that the same equalizing role of US churches has been traditionally performed in Europe by political parties and trade unions. Given that participation in these organizations seems to be in crisis, we limit ourselves to suspecting that a problem of political equality might be emerging for a pluralistic democracy if political parties do not undergo some changes, but we will go back to this only in the conclusions of this chapter.

## 6.2 Who are the Members of Associations?

We start by exploring hierarchical political parties and trade unions, and we then move to civil society participation. First we consider activist associations, the association type which is most likely to be affected by *individual modernization* processes since these associations are often connected to social movements and they are thought to be non-hierarchical and more democratic than political parties and trade unions. We then move to the analysis of other civil society associations. In this chapter we choose to consider civic religious and civic non-religious associations together as one category. This choice is due to their similar level of politicization as defined in Chapter 3. We are then left with three other social association types: professional organizations (highly politicized and with a focus on economic issues), civic associations<sup>72</sup> (semi-political and with a focus on society) and leisure associations (non political and with a focus on the individual). Since we classified them as civil society associations, we assume that they are all bottom-up associations. This is not necessarily true for all cases, most of all for certain professional associations that might be as connected to political parties as trade unions are, or for some religious civic associations that might be strictly connected to hierarchical church elites. However, we cannot control which specific organizations citizens joined. Thus, for the purpose of this research, we assume that all of them are non-hierarchical, but since they are less crucial for proving the *individual modernization* thesis, in the next sections we present findings together for these associations.

The first general impression is that if we consider the 60 year span of our dataset as a single time slot, members of different associations belong all to different worlds. As we already know the practice of joining more than one association is not very widespread among Italian citizens (Almond and Verba, 1963). A Pearson correlation in our pooled dataset tells us that members of different associations partially correlate among themselves across time, but not very strongly. Indeed participants of political parties and of trade unions correlate significantly only at .15. Members of activist and civic associations correlate at .29, while leisure associations members correlate instead at .24 with activist associations members and at .25 with civic associations members. Surely it seems that citizens that participate in church-like associations and people that participate in bottom-up associations are not the same, but also within these two macro

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<sup>72</sup> Including both religious and non-religious associations.



categories there is only a low level of overlapping of participation, particularly for what concerns political parties and semi-political organizations such as trade unions. We leave this issue to the next two chapters in which we consider the causal relationship between civil society and political associations at a specific point in time. We instead move to the descriptive analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of ‘church-like’ members of our longitudinal pooled dataset as reported in Table 6.1. We can see that both political party and trade union members are predominantly low educated males, which belong to the cohorts socialized during the Economic Boom and the Sixty-Eight, and for trade unions members, also during Terrorism. It seems that in our data members of political parties are (a bit surprisingly) predominantly from the south, while members of trade unions are predominantly from the north. Finally, participants of the former type of associations are between 25 and 54 years old, while participants of the latter type of organization are predominantly between 35 and 44 years old.

**Table 6.1 - Characteristics of Member of Church-Like Associations (Column %)**

	Political Party	Trade Union		Political Party	Trade Union
Education			Territory		
Low	<b>47</b>	<b>49</b>	North	34	<b>42</b>
Intermediate	24	27	Red Belt	23	24
High	29	24	South	<b>43</b>	35
(N)	(2523)	(6497)	(N)	(2458)	(6417)
Political Cohort			Age		
Fascism	15	10	18-24	7	4
Cold War	15	15	25-34	<b>21</b>	18
Econ Boom	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	35-44	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>
Sixty-Eight	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	45-54	<b>21</b>	25
Terrorism	17	<b>20</b>	55-64	17	17
Tangentopoli	9	8	65+	13	10
Berlusconism	2	1			
(N)	(2544)	(6522)	(N)	(2544)	(6522)
Gender					
Female	27	33			
Male	<b>73</b>	<b>67</b>			
(N)	(2544)	(6522)			

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

Socio-demographic characteristics of bottom-up associations are instead summarized in Table 6.2. Activist association members are mostly highly educated males as well as females. They belong to the generation socialized during Terrorism, they are from the north and they are predominantly between 25 and 44 years old. Professional association organizations are also mostly high educated, belonging to the cohorts socialized during the Sixty-Eight and Terrorism. They are males from the north and they are between 35

and 44 years old. Civic associations’ members, a category that includes both religious and non-religious associations, are instead mostly low educated, female from the south and they belong predominantly to the generation socialized during the Economic Boom, Sixty-Eight, Terrorism as well as Tangentopoli. They are between 25 and 54 years old. Finally, leisure association members, which include sport and culture association, are mostly males from the north with an intermediate level of education, that were socialized during Terrorism and Tangentopoli, and that are between 18 and 44 years old.

**Table 6.2 - Characteristics of Member of Bottom-Up Associations (Column %)**

	Activist Associations	Professional Organizations	Civic Associations	Leisure Associations
<b>Education</b>				
Low	31	31	<b>36</b>	29
Intermediate	32	29	32	<b>38</b>
High	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	32	34
(N)	(1067)	(1808)	(2990)	(3619)
<b>Political Cohort</b>				
Fascism	4	11	8	5
Cold War	10	10	13	8
Econ Boom	14	15	<b>17</b>	15
Sixty-Eight	17	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	17
Terrorism	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>
Tangentopoli	21	15	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>
Berlusconism	10	3	8	11
(N)	(1083)	(1825)	(3036)	(3656)
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	<b>50</b>	31	<b>55</b>	36
Male	<b>50</b>	<b>69</b>	45	<b>65</b>
(N)	(1083)	(1825)	(3036)	(3656)
<b>Territory</b>				
North	<b>47</b>	<b>42</b>	39	<b>46</b>
Red Belt	17	22	18	21
South	36	36	<b>43</b>	33
(N)	(1094)	(1788)	(2929)	(3576)
<b>Age</b>				
18-24	15	4	12	<b>20</b>
25-34	<b>23</b>	21	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>
35-44	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
45-54	16	23	<b>18</b>	16
55-64	12	15	16	11
65+	11	10	15	8
(N)	(1083)	(1825)	(3036)	(3656)

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

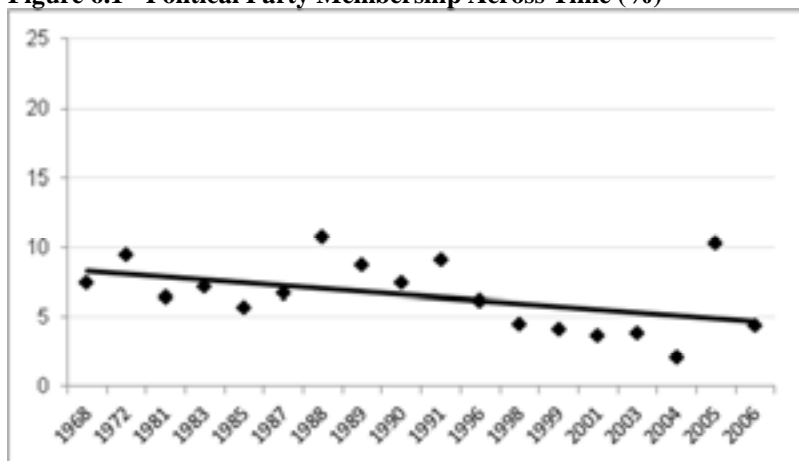
### 6.3 The ‘Individual Modernization’ Thesis And ‘Church-Like’ Organizations

#### 6.3.1 Political Party Membership

##### 6.3.1.1 Society Structural Change and Education

We now move to the analysis that explores whether the *individual modernization* thesis is at work in Italy, by testing the first set of macro hypothesis on longitudinal patterns of political party membership. The thesis we want to test claims, first of all, that socio-structural changes in society has brought to a declining participation in political parties across time (H5.1a). We test this by running a bivariate relation between time-period, measured in survey years and used as a proxy for structural change, and membership in political parties. For the first set of hypotheses survey years were recoded so that the first available year (1968) is set at value 0 and the following years are coded as an interval variable from that year<sup>73</sup>. If we plot time-period and the dummy variable of party membership (1=member; 0=not member) (Figure 6.1), our data show that there is indeed a declining participation in political organizations since the late 1960s till today and thus this first hypothesis is verified. This is however a first general picture of the participatory phenomenon that does not tell us anything of the mechanisms at work in this downward trend.

**Figure 6.1 - Political Party Membership Across Time (%)**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

We explore then whether the mechanisms that are thought to be responsible according to the *individual modernization* of this downward trend can find an empirical proof in our dataset. We saw that increasing levels of education in society are indeed thought to be responsible for it. In a counterfactual logic, if the *individual modernization*

<sup>73</sup> Year 1972 is then coded as 4, 1981 is coded as 13, and so on.

hypothesis worked, controlling structural changes (time-period) for the educational composition of society should bring to constant participation in political parties across time. Given that the empirical trend is downward, this means that participation should decrease less (H5.1b). The reasoning behind is that according to this thesis socio-structural changes of society have led to a decrease of political parties because, after mass scholarization, the composition of education in society has changed and there are now more educated people than in the past. Since education is thought to have negative effects on the decision to join hierarchical political organizations, the increase in educational levels should be responsible for the downward trend we observed.

In order to test this we run two logistic regressions using party membership as dependent variable. In the first one we use *survey waves* as independent variable. In the second one we also add the variable *education* (0=low education; 1=intermediate education; 2=high education). In this way, we first measure the relationship between time-period and party membership and we explore how this relationship changes when we assume that educational levels have stayed constant over the years<sup>74</sup>. Figure 6.2 indicates how data should look like according to our formal model: the effect of social change on party membership decreases (black line), but decreases less when assuming that the average levels of education across time (grey line)<sup>75</sup>. In Figure 6.3 we plot the b coefficients of the variable time-period of the two logistic regressions. The year 1968 is used as the reference category (0 line), the black dots indicates the b coefficients of time-period on party membership while the grey dots indicates the b coefficients after controlling for the average levels of education in our sample<sup>76</sup>. If the hypothesis works, in our data we should find similar trends to the trends shown in the formal model. We have, however, a very different picture since we do not find any statistically significant difference between the two b coefficients before and after controlling for education. This suggests that the downward trend in political party membership is most likely caused by something different than education, even more if we consider that the influence of average levels of education on party participation when time is kept constant is positive and significant.

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<sup>74</sup> In all our surveys.

<sup>75</sup> If we suppose that education is the only factor influencing participation we would actually have a flat horizontal grey line, meaning that participation stays constant and the effect of time-period is equal to zero. Yet, we believe this to be an unlikely scenario since education, although very important, is only one of the resources influencing participation that have increased with society modernization.

<sup>76</sup> Only statistically significant b coefficients are plotted, that is b coefficients different from the reference category of 1968.

Figure 6.2 - Formal Model (H5.1b)

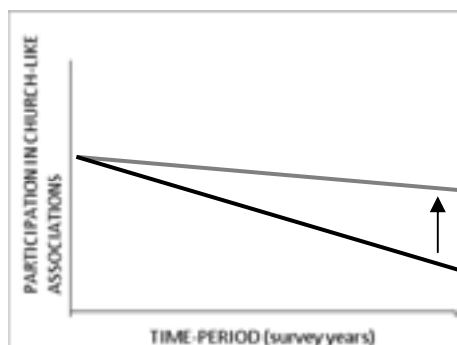
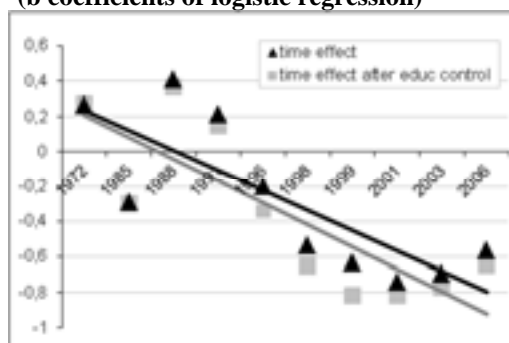


Figure 6.3 - Time-Period on Political Party Membership (b coefficients of logistic regression)



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note for Figure 6.2: Black line – time-period effect on party membership. Grey line – time period effect on party membership after controlling for education.

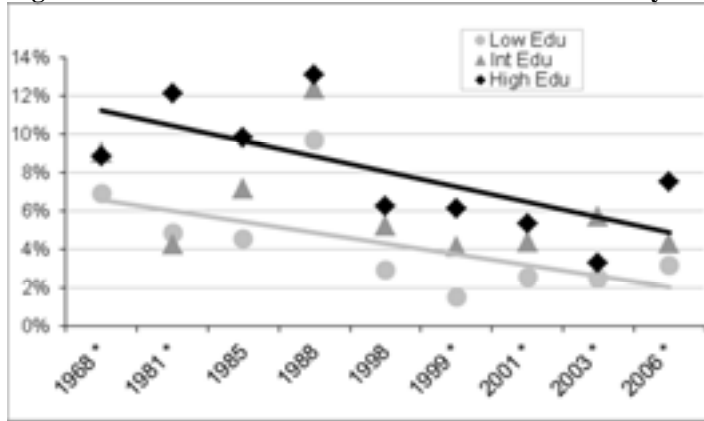
Note for Figure 6.3: Effect of time (1968-2006) on party membership expressed in b coefficients (logistic regression). Only statistically significant b coefficients (different from 1968) were plotted. Black dots - b coefficients for time-period effect on party membership; Grey dots – b coefficients after controlling for education

We investigate in more details the role of education by assuming, as Inglehart and colleagues propose, that with *individual modernization* participation in political parties of higher educated becomes lower than less educated (H5.1c). In order to test this hypothesis, we run a logistic regression using the dummy party membership as dependent variable and adding an interaction between survey years and educational levels. In Figure 6.4 we plot the predicted probabilities on the decision to join a party for different levels of education over the years. Only in years marked by an asterisk we register significantly different probabilities to participate for different education levels<sup>77</sup>. These results suggest an interesting phenomenon that goes in the same direction of what we found in the previous hypothesis: well-educated citizens keep having, on average, higher probabilities to participate in political parties than lower educated. It is true that average predicted probabilities to participate in political parties tend to decrease across time for all levels of education<sup>78</sup>. Yet, citizens with lower education tend to decrease more than citizens with higher education. This means that education is probably not responsible for declining participation and there must be some other force at work that pushes party membership down.

<sup>77</sup> 1968,1981,1999,2001,2003,2006

<sup>78</sup> Even though in 2006 there we register higher levels of the past

**Figure 6.4 – Predicted Probabilities to be a Political Party Member**



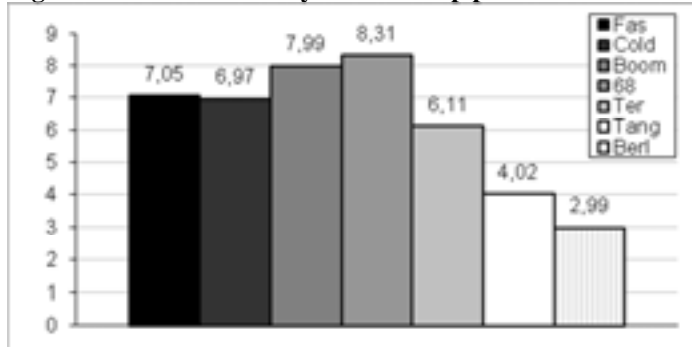
Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Predicted probabilities from logistic regression model with interaction between years and education levels: only significant years (when no control for education) are reported. The black tendency line is calculated with high education data, while the grey one is calculated with low education data. 2004 was significant, but it has been excluded because of too few cases in the sample  
\* Significant difference between levels of education.

**6.3.1.2 Political Generations and Education**

We now move to a greater level of detail by considering the composition of population in terms of political cohorts. In accordance with the thesis of Inglehart (1977; 1997) and Dalton (1984; 2002), the transformation of values is established through a process of generational change and is most likely to be found in younger generations. For this reason, the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations, which are on average much more educated than previous generations should participate less in hierarchical political parties (H5.2a).

**Figure 6.5 – Political Party Membership per Political Generations (%)**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

We test this hypothesis first of all by running a simple bivariate cross tabulation between different types of organizations membership and political generations. Figure 6.5 shows that this holds true for generations that comes after Sixty-Eight, since they join political organizations increasingly less. While the hypothesis is substantially

confirmed, surprisingly, it does not hold true for the generation of Sixty-Eight that is supposed to embody, more than any other generation, this value-transformation.

We know, however, that citizens of different birth cohorts also differ in their level of education. As for time-period, in a counterfactual logic, if the *individual modernization* thesis is at work, the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate in political parties as much as previous generations when we keep educational levels constant across cohorts (H5.2b). In order to test this hypothesis, we run three logistic regressions models using the dummy party membership as dependent variable with robust standard error, using the five survey sources as cluster variable<sup>79</sup>. We check the relationship with age, gender and territory as control variables (Model 1). Then we add political cohorts (Model 2) and education levels (Model 3).

**Table 6.3 – The Distribution of Cohorts per Survey Years**

Wave	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
1968	53.3	21.6	21.1	4.0	-	-	-
1972	49.7	20.2	19.5	10.7	-	-	-
1981	22.2	14.7	14.8	18.0	30.3	-	-
1983	23.7	18.1	18.5	18.8	21.0	-	-
1985	20.7	16.6	18.9	19.1	23.0	2.0	-
1987	17.0	18.8	17.5	18.0	19.2	9.5	-
1988	16.3	17.6	16.0	18.4	21.4	10.3	-
1989	13.9	16.9	16.5	17.9	21.2	13.6	-
1990	12.3	16.1	17.1	17.9	20.6	16.0	-
1991	13.0	15.3	16.7	17.9	19.2	17.8	-
1992	11.7	16.1	16.7	18.3	18.8	18.4	-
1993	12.1	14.2	16.0	18.6	17.4	21.7	-
1994	10.2	14.5	15.7	18.7	18.8	20.5	1.7
1996	3.1	6.8	13.0	23.0	28.4	20.5	5.3
1998	5.6	14.7	15.2	16.2	16.7	20.4	11.2
1999	4.4	13.9	15.8	16.0	18.0	22.7	9.2
2001	3.4	11.7	16.0	16.9	19.1	21.4	11.4
2003	1.2	9.9	13.8	20.3	22.0	17.0	15.9
2004	0.8	6.8	11.3	15.5	21.1	23.7	20.7
2005	-	7.0	16.3	19.2	17.1	21.3	19.1
2006	-	9.8	15.6	16.4	20.5	18.5	19.2
2008	-	7.9	18.5	18.5	18.6	15.0	21.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>14.3</i>	<i>16.6</i>	<i>17.3</i>	<i>18.8</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>4.8</i>
(N)	(7254)	(8143)	(9395)	(9847)	(10693)	(8716)	(2735)

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

In these models we use the generation of *economic boom* as a reference category for political cohorts. In this way, we are able to better detect if any difference exist between the reference generation and other generations, and particularly with the *generation of 68*. We choose the generation of *economic boom* also for technical reasons. It is indeed

<sup>79</sup> *Itanes, ESS, WVS, Standard EB, EB Mannheim Trend File*

the one of which we dispose the most data, since citizens of these generations participated in all the surveys we included in our pooled dataset, with a full range of age within respondents (Table 6.3 and 6.4). Cohorts socialized during Cold War, Economic Boom and Sixty-Eight participated in all the waves of the surveys that we consider in this study, while the highest number of respondents over years was taken from people socialized during Terrorism, followed by generation of Sixty-Eight and Economic Boom.

**Table 6.4 – The Distribution of Age Strata per Political Generations**

Age	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
18-24	-	-	1.1	2.1	9.5	52.1	66.4
25-34	-	-	7.3	7.9	51.0	35.8	33.6
35-44	1.5	8.9	8.1	50.0	29.4	12.1	-
45-54	10.2	9.3	48.2	29.4	10.1	-	-
55-64	17.8	50.5	25.4	10.5	-	-	-
65+	70.5	30.1	10.0	-	-	-	-
(N)	(7254)	(8143)	(9395)	(9847)	(10693)	(8716)	(2735)

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

In order to facilitate the interpretation of parameters we recode *age* using 18 as reference value<sup>80</sup>: technically we simply subtracted 18 from each individual age<sup>81</sup>. Age is also divided by 10, so as to increase the value of beta parameters that otherwise would be very low, referring to the effect on the dependent variable of a change of a single year of age. Finally, to allow for the non-linear relationship between age and social or political membership, we include also squared (transformed) age in all models (Agresti and Finlay, 1997). Table 6.5 reports the odds ratio<sup>82</sup> estimates of these three logistic regressions, run with clustered standard errors per survey type<sup>83</sup>.

Model 1 shows that age, gender and territory (excluding ‘north’) have a significant effect on the dependent variable (party membership). As expected, males and people living in the ‘red belt’ area on average have higher odds of becoming party member relative to females and to people living in the south. A bit more surprisingly, living in the north, according to our data, is instead not statistically different than living in the south across political generations<sup>84</sup>. Whereas males are 3 times more likely than females to participate (odds=3.053, CI = [2.678, 3.481],  $p \leq .001$ ), people that live in the

<sup>80</sup> Reference range: 18-80 years, coded 0-62

<sup>81</sup> Without this transformation, the intercept was referring to the unrealistic situation of individuals to 0 years.

<sup>82</sup> Odds=ratio of probability of becoming party member to the probability of not becoming party member; Odds Ratio= ratio of becoming party member of one group to the odds of it in the reference group.

<sup>83</sup> Itanes, ESS, WVS, Standard EB, EB Mannheim Trend File

<sup>84</sup> The Wald-test between living in the Red Belt and in the North indicates that the two variables are not equal to each other, confirming that in the Red Belt area people on average tend to participate more also than the North



‘red belt’ are one third more likely to participate than the south (odds higher of about 26 percentage points: odds=1.258, CI = [1.184, 1.335],  $p \leq .001$ ). The bell-shaped relationship of age for participation in political parties is also significant<sup>85</sup>. These results largely hold in Model 2 and 3 where main variables are considered, with one exception: net of the effect of cohorts and education, age has on average much lower odds than Model 1.

**Table 6.5 - Political Party Membership Models Estimates (Odds Ratio)**

	Model 1 (37241)	Model 2 (37241)	Model 3 (36958)
Control Variables			
Geo-Political Area (ref = South)			
Red Belt	1.258***	1.239***	1.255***
North	.836	.826	.832
Male	3.053***	3.060***	2.990***
Age	1.735***	1.125*	1.117*
Age Squared	.915***	.955***	.954***
Political Cohort (ref = Economic Boom)			
Fascism		1.201*	1.330*
Cold War		1.052	1.111
Sixty-Eight		.943	.925
Terrorism		.641***	.641***
Tangentopoli		.395***	.376***
Berlusconi		.289***	.283***
Education (ref: Low)			
Intermediate			1.132
High			1.441***
Goodness of Fit			
Log likelihood	-8660.934	-8598.541	-8500.237
BIC <sup>a</sup>	-758.624	-883.410	-930.101

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Year 1981 has been excluded from the analysis because geo-political areas could not be identified correctly. Intercepts are omitted.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (two-tailed tests)

<sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

In Model 2 we introduce political generations as an independent variable. We can see that people socialized during Fascism participate more compared to the cohort socialized during the Economic Boom (odds of participation of 20 percentage points higher: odds=1.201, CI = [1.012, 1.425],  $p \leq .05$ ). On the contrary, the generation socialized during the Cold War and, also in this case, during Sixty-Eight generation tend to participate in political parties similarly to the reference category, whereas younger generations participate less (lower odds of about 36, 60 and 81 percentage points respectively). When we keep constant education levels across cohorts (Model 3), we see

<sup>85</sup> The odds of becoming a party member increase of 74 percentage points with every 10 years of age (odds=1.735, CI = [1.552, 1.939],  $p \leq .001$ ) but the increase declines at the rate of 8 percent every decade over the life course (odds=.915, CI = [.897, .933],  $p \leq .001$ )

that education also in this case does not seem to be the main responsible for the decreasing participation of younger generations. Younger generations do participate less than older cohorts. Yet, while for the generation of Sixty-Eight and Terrorism there is no change after controlling for education, younger generations of Tangentopoli and Berlusconiism do participate even less in political parties than previous generations<sup>86</sup>. The fact that if the two younger generations had an education level similar to those of older generations (and they have a much higher one), their party participation would be even lower suggests that the relationship between educational and party participation has not become negative. This is also proved by the fact that, when keeping political generations constant, higher education increases the odds of participating by 44 percent (odds=1.441, CI = [1.160, 1.789],  $p \leq .001$ ). Once again our results suggest that the *individual modernization* thesis seems not to be working for political participation. How to explain then the lower participation of these generations? It seems that there is something different than education that pushes participation of younger generations down. In this respect, it is interesting to note that when we control for education, also people socialized during Fascism change their likelihood of participation, but in the opposite direction, becoming even more likely to participate in parties than Economic Boom generation (increase their odds of participation from 20 to 33 percentage points: odds=1.330, CI = [1.062, 1.666],  $p \leq .05$ ).

We further investigate the relationship between education and political cohorts in the probability of joining a political party. According to the *individual modernization* thesis, higher educated citizens belonging to the cohort of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate less in political organizations than lower educated (H5.2c). In order to test this hypothesis we should add an interaction term to Model 3 between education and political cohorts. Yet, since we assume that gender, geo-political areas and age might have changed their influence over time and might affect political cohorts in different ways, not only education but also all control variables should be interacted for each cohort. For the sake of clarity, and since sample size allows us to do it, we run seven separate (identical) models, one for each cohort. In this way we are able to see the effect of education after controlling, within each cohort, the effect of other covariates in accordance with effects of modernization also on territory, gender and age.

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<sup>86</sup> Wald test shows that also coefficients of the generation of Sixty-Eight are different from generation of fascism and terrorism and that the generation of Tangentopoli is statistically different from Terrorism and Berlusconiism generation.

In Table 6.6 we report the odds derived from the seven logistic regression models. We can see that, on average, males tend to participate more than females in all cohorts. The gender influence is, however, slightly declining going toward a more equal participation between males and females across generations. Until the generation of Sixty-Eight, living in the ‘red belt’ favoured participation compared to other parts of the country. After Sixty-Eight, however, this is not a relevant determinant of participation. People of the youngest generation that live in the north are more likely to participate, whereas people belonging to the generation of Economic Boom and Terrorism that live in this part of the country are less likely. Age does not seem to be a determinant for participation for any of the political generations.

**Table 6.6 – Political Party Membership Estimates per Political Cohorts (Odds Ratio)**

	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
N (member)	5119 (384)	5379 (391)	6149 (511)	6190 (539)	6757 (442)	5371 (217)	1993 (60)
Red Belt	1.481**	1.405*	1.155***	1.232**	1.073	1.053	1.188
North	0.703	0.863	0.702*	0.923	0.800***	1.036	1.350*
Male	3.765***	4.167***	3.646***	2.744***	2.250***	2.081***	2.194***
Age	1.763	1.412	1.610	1.695	2.004	1.608	2.369
Age Squared	0.920	0.928	0.885 <sup>a</sup>	0.859	0.765	0.838	2.750
Education							
Intermediate	0.744***	1.123	1.053	1.358***	1.356	1.055	1.714***
High	0.935	1.186	1.257*	1.917***	1.567***	1.639***	2.750***
BIC'	-135.45	-155.254	-195.598	-151.876	-71.338	-11.719	-11.775

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: \* p ≤ .05; \*\* p ≤ .01; \*\*\* p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

After having controlled for covariates, we see that higher education levels lead to more participation in political parties for all generations starting from the individuals socialized during the Economic Boom<sup>87</sup>. We can better check the impact of this trend by calculating average marginal effects of high levels of education, within each cohort in our sample<sup>88</sup> (Table 6.7). Marginal effects indicates the proportion by which predicted probabilities of party membership (dependent variable) change when education

<sup>87</sup> We also tested this with a unique model by adding an interaction term (a+b+ab) between political cohorts and education to Model 3. Setting the cohort, the level of education, and the dummy of each combination between them equal to 1 for each interaction, only the youngest generation (Berlusconism) had a significant difference between low and high education in the predicted probabilities to become a party member. We found that within this cohort higher levels of education have a positive effect on the decision to join a party. Different levels of education within other cohorts were not changing the propensity to join a political organization. The difference with running seven separate models is due to the fact that gender, age and geo-political areas were not included in the interaction. Indeed, gender and geo-political areas were set to their means and age was set to 48 (We divided age by 10 in order to increase the value of beta parameters that otherwise would have been very low. Age was then set equal to 48 years old - coded as 3 -, since interviewees minimum age was 18 - coded as 0).

<sup>88</sup> In our sample. This specification is important since the marginal effects are not computed over an average individual, but represent the mean of the marginal effects over each individual in the sample.

(independent variable) increases by one unit, that is when it changes from low to intermediate, and from intermediate to high levels.

**Table 6.7 – Marginal Effects of Education on Political Party Membership per Political Cohort**

Political Cohort	Low Education – Interm Education	Interm Education – High Education	Political Cohort	Low Education – Interm Education	Interm Education – High Education
Fascism	-.017**	-.004	Terrorism	.017*	.0265***
Cold War	.007	.0110	Tangentopoli	.002	.0200***
Economic Boom	.003	.0170*	Berlusconism	.0123***	.0294***
Sixty-Eight	.020***	.050***			

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: \* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests)

We see that marginal effect of moving from intermediate to high education is of 2 or 3 percent for younger generations after the Economic Boom, with an exceptional effect for the generation of Sixty-Eight that reaches 5 percent. Education seems then to be even more important than before in making people join political associations. This leads us to clearly reject the *individual modernization* hypothesis (H5.2c rejected). Not only do the higher educated of young cohorts participate more in political parties than lower educated, but the effect of education is particularly strong for the generation of Sixty-Eight, which more than other generations, should display postmodern values and rejection of hierarchical organizations. Furthermore, we can see that, interestingly, higher levels of education had a negative effect for people socialized during Fascism.

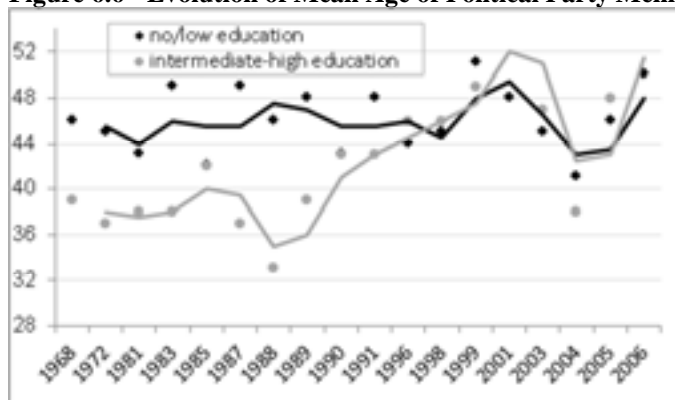
### 6.3.1.3 Age and Education

Finally, we investigate the evolution of the relationship between age and participation across time for two different levels of education of low and high education<sup>89</sup>. The relationship between age and political activity represents a well-established bell-shaped relationship in political behaviour studies. As Milbrath (1965) summarizes participation in political parties “rises gradually with age, reaches its peak and levels off in the forties and fifties, and gradually declines above sixty”. We saw that we do not have a specific expectation about the trend of evolution of mean age of political party membership across time for testing the *individual modernization* thesis. In Figure 6.6 we can see the average age of participation in political parties across time for less and higher educated. We add a moving average trend line between two points in time in order to have a clearer picture of the longitudinal trend. While for less educated the average age of participation remains quite stable at 45 years old, it steadily grows for higher educated

<sup>89</sup> No/low educated and Intermediate/Highly educated

going from about 38 years old in late 1960s/early 1970s and reaches about 50 years old in mid 2000s. While political parties once attracted young educated citizens, it seems that they are now not able to attract them as before.

**Figure 6.6 - Evolution of Mean Age of Political Party Membership Across Time**



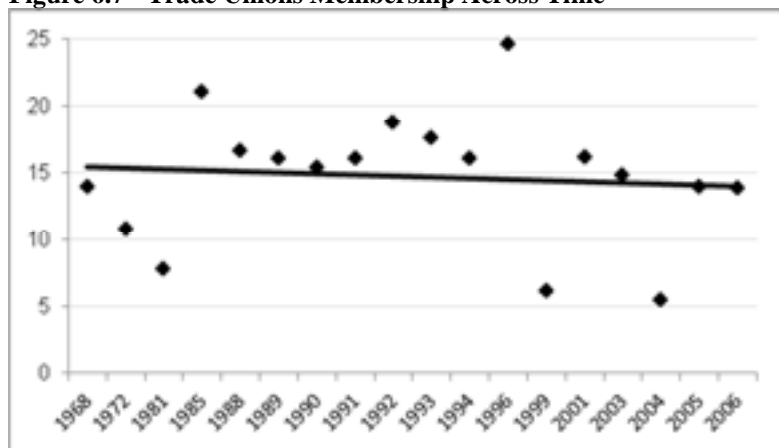
Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

### 6.3.2 Trade Union Membership

#### 6.3.2.1 Society Structural Change and Education

We move now to the analysis of a different type of church-like organization: trade unions. Also in this case we test the first set of hypotheses on longitudinal patterns in the same way as we did for political party membership. We check whether structural changes in society have led to a declining trend of membership in ‘church-like’ trade unions (H5.1a).

**Figure 6.7 - Trade Unions Membership Across Time**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

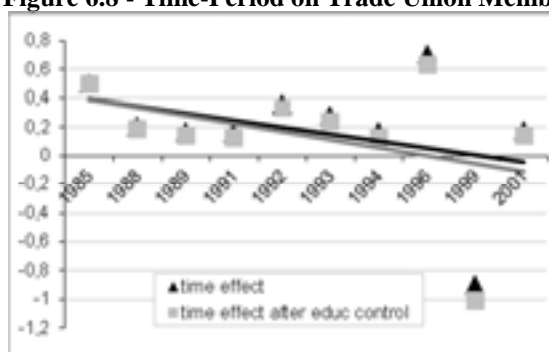
Note: 1968 survey and EB (1983, 1987, 1990, 1998, 2004): labour union and professional organizations are measured together.

Our data show that there is a longitudinal declining trend in this type of organizations that is, however, less steep and clear than political party membership (Figure 6.7). This difference is probably due to the fact that there is first an increase and then a decrease in

unions’ participation since the end of the 1960s, as we saw in more details in Chapter 5, so we accept the hypothesis.

If the *individual modernization* hypothesis works, as the formal model showed in the previous section (Figure 6.8), controlling structural changes for the educational composition of society should lead to significantly less empirical decreasing of participation across time (H5.1b)<sup>90</sup>. Our data show that the forecasted positive effect of educational composition does not work. It is true that the downward line might be pulled down by results of 1999 participation. Yet, also in this case we do not find any significant negative difference between the ‘b’ coefficients of the two regressions before and after controlling for education. Moreover, the influence of average levels of education on trade union membership when time-period is kept constant is positive and significant. It seems then that the (slight) downward trend of union membership cannot be explained by changes in educational levels of society.

**Figure 6.8 - Time-Period on Trade Union Membership (b coefficients of logistic regression)**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Effect of time (1968-2006) on trade unions membership expressed in b coefficients (logistic regression). Only statistically significant b coefficients (different from 1968) were plotted. Black dots - b coefficients for time-period effect on trade union membership; Grey dots - b coefficients after controlling for education. In order to have cleaner measures of the downward trend, we exclude survey results of 1972 and 1981 in accordance with results of Chapter 4. 1968 survey and standard EB (1983, 1987, 1990, 1998, 2004): labour union and professional organizations measured together.

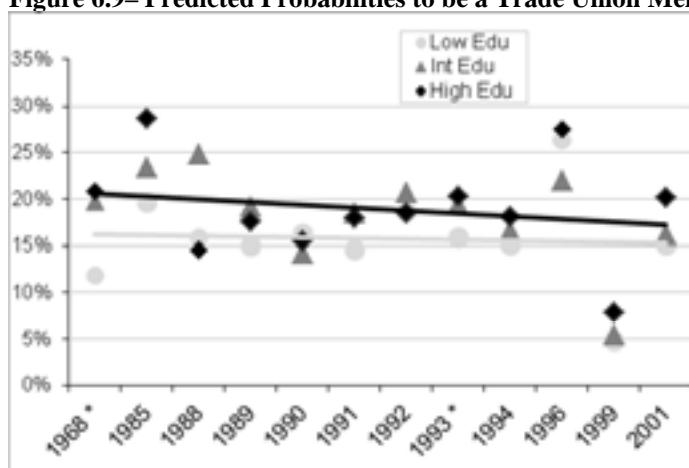
We investigate the relationship between structural changes in society and education by also testing whether the well educated participate less than lower educated in trade unions (H5.1c). After moderating education with time, by taking educational levels per each year, we see that levels of education leads to significantly different likelihood of participation only in 1968 and 1993<sup>91</sup>, while participation in trade unions for both higher and lower educated citizens have a tendency to remain stable or to slightly decrease across time (Figure 6.9). This leads up to mostly reject our hypothesis. Even

<sup>90</sup> Since in Chapter 4 we saw that until mid-80s there has been an increase in trade union membership, in order to have cleaner measures of the downward trend, we exclude survey results of 1972 and 1981

<sup>91</sup> Years marked by asterisks.

though findings are not as clear as for political party membership, we could still say that higher educational levels do not really affect predicted probabilities to participate in trade unions in any direction. One possibility is that the *individual modernization* transition is in process and whereas higher educated citizens now participate as much as lower educated, in the future the on-going transformation of values will lead them to participate less than lower educated. A different possibility is that trade unions have always tried to mobilize low educated working class and thus it could simply be an organization as attractive for lower as much as for higher educated citizens. In this latter case, however, this would mean that the discriminant factors for participation lay on characteristics of the supply, that is of organizations that are either more attractive or better able to mobilize all sectors of population, rather than on individual characteristics of citizens.

**Figure 6.9– Predicted Probabilities to be a Trade Union Member**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

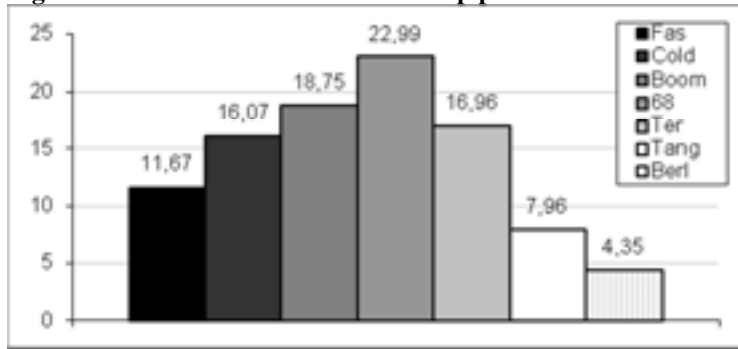
Note: Predicted probabilities from logistic regression model with interaction between years and education levels: only significant years (when no control for education) are reported. The tendency line is calculated with high education data. 1968 survey and *EB* (1983, 1987, 1990, 1998, 2004): labour union and professional organizations measured together. 2004 was significant, but it has been excluded because of too few cases in the sample.

\* Significant difference between levels of education.

### 6.3.2.2 Political Generations and Education

We introduce in our analysis how different political generations behave. As seen for political parties, according to the *individual modernization* thesis the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate less in trade unions than previous generations (H5.2a). Also in this case younger generations actually participate much less than older generations, with the relevant exception of the generation of Sixty-Eight, that is the generation that participate the most (Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10 – Trade Unions Membership per Political Generations (%)



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

Once again, in a counterfactual logic, if the *individual modernization* hypothesis works, Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate as much as previous generations after we assume that educational levels have been constant across generations (H5.2b). We run three logistic regression models testing control variables (Model 1), political generations (Model 2) and education (Model 3) (Table 6.8). Model 1 shows that all the control variables are statistically significant. Males, people living in the ‘red belt’ and in the north on average participate more in trade unions than females and people living in the south, and participation is bell-shaped with respect to age<sup>92</sup>.

After adding birth cohorts to the model (Model 2), results suggest that cohorts socialized during Fascism, Cold War and Terrorism are not statistically different from cohorts socialized during the Economic Boom. People socialized during Sixty-Eight have a higher probability to participate in trade unions (increase in odds to participate in trade unions of 28 percent; odds=1.288, CI = [1.128, 1.471],  $p \leq .001$ ), while the two youngest generations participate increasingly less than older generations<sup>93</sup>. Controlling participation of birth cohorts for levels of education does not change substantively either the odds of control variables, or those of political generations. Moreover, when keeping political generations constant, education is very poorly statistically significant ( $p \leq .01$ ). Also BIC’ statistics of the models indicates a better model fit for Model 2, confirming that education does not play an important role in predicting trade unions

<sup>92</sup> Males are 2 times and a half more likely than females to participate (odds=2.630, CI = [2.400, 2.881],  $p \leq .001$ ). Living in the Red Belt increases the odds of participating of 77 percent (odds=1.771, CI = [1.639, 1.913],  $p \leq .001$ ) and living in the North increases the odds of 38 percent relative to the South (odds=1.378, CI = [1.355, 1.401],  $p \leq .001$ ). The Wald test shows that the coefficients of living in the Red Belt and in the North are different, and that living in the former area increases the probabilities of participating in trade unions also compared to the North. Moreover, the odds of becoming a trade union member increase by 3 times and a half every ten years of age (odds=3.517, CI = [3.170, 3.902],  $p \leq .001$ ) but the increase declines at the rate of 19 percent every decade over the life course (odds=.812, CI = [.793, .831],  $p \leq .001$ ).

<sup>93</sup> Decrease in odds of 36 percent for Tangentopoli: odds=.644, CI = [.498, .833],  $p \leq .001$ ; and decrease in odds of 59 percent for Berlusconi: odds=.419, CI = [.306, .573],  $p \leq .001$ . The Wald test shows also that the generation of Berlusconi participates statistically less than the generation of Sixty-Eight.



membership. For this reason, our second possibility seems more likely: trade unions have always attracted people of all educational levels and the *individual modernization* thesis does not seem to work. While we have a further proof that, interestingly, the generation of Sixty-Eight participate more than any other generations in ‘church-like’ trade unions, another interesting finding is that younger generations seem to participate less than older generations for some reason different than education.

**Table 6.8 - Trade Union Membership Models Estimates (Odds Ratio)**

	Model 1 (40795)	Model 2 (40795)	Model 3 (40564)
<b>N</b>			
<b>Control Variables</b>			
<b>Geo-Political Area (ref = South)</b>			
Red Belt	1.771***	1.760***	1.767***
North	1.378***	1.375***	1.373***
Male	2.630***	2.640***	2.623***
Age	3.517***	2.456***	2.449***
Age <sup>2</sup>	.812***	.860***	.860***
<b>Political Cohort (ref = Economic Boom)</b>			
Fascism		.867	.886
Cold War		1.002	1.011
Sixty-Eight		1.288***	1.277***
Terrorism		1.118	1.112
Tangentopoli		.644***	.634***
Berlusconism		.419***	.411***
<b>Education (ref: Low)</b>			
Intermediate			1.081
High			1.077 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Goodness of Fit</b>			
Log likelihood	-16472.90	-16379.82	-16298.650
BIC <sup>*</sup>	-2527.32	-2713.49	-2702.21

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Year 1981 has been excluded from the analysis because geo-political areas could not be identified correctly. Intercepts are omitted.

\* p ≤ .05; \*\* p ≤ .01; \*\*\* p ≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

We continue by exploring the role of education in the relationship with political cohorts. For the *individual modernization* thesis, higher educated of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate less than lower educated (H5.2c). As for political parties, we investigate this by running the model for each cohort and reporting odds of participation (Table 6.9). We see that males are more likely to participate than female, but the difference strongly decreases across generations and the gap disappears in Berlusconi generation. Living in the ‘red belt’ or in the north leads all generations to participate more in trade unions respect to the south. This is particularly true for the generation socialized during Fascism and Tangentopoli living in the ‘red belt’, and for the two youngest generations living in the north. With the exception of the oldest (Fascism) and the youngest (Berlusconism) generations, also the bell-shaped relationship between age and participation is statistically significant.

**Table 6.9 – Trade Unions Membership Estimates per Political Cohorts (Odds Ratio)**

	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
N (member)	5312 (657)	5878 (982)	6714 (1301)	6898 (1649)	7391 (1332)	6454 (517)	1917 (84)
Red Belt	2.780***	1.734***	1.712***	1.311***	1.683***	2.619***	1.722 <sup>a</sup>
North	1.631*	1.337***	1.224***	1.105 <sup>a</sup>	1.599***	1.848***	2.020***
Male	3.822***	2.988***	3.469***	2.665***	2.106***	1.385***	1.325
Age	.659	4.502***	3.510***	3.427***	7.081**	8.030***	5.284
Age Squared	1.015	.797***	.802***	.784***	.606**	.533***	1.743
<b>Education</b>							
Intermediate	.868***	.959	1.244**	1.298**	1.020	.825	.702*
High	.968	1.189	1.150	1.481***	.898	.455**	.605*
<i>BIC</i> '	-306.933	-296.254	-471.138	-370.734	-250.814	-208.353	-40.195

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Ianes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: \* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

Contrary to previous results, odds ratios of the seven models show us a very interesting phenomenon. We see that education has positive effects until the generation of Sixty-Eight, and then it starts to have a negative effect as the theory of *individual modernization* claims<sup>94</sup>. We double-check this by calculating the average marginal effect of education (Table 6.10) so that we are able to see these effects even better. We find that education has a strong negative effect for the generation of Berlusconism and, most of all, for the generation of Tangentopoli. Contrary to findings of political parties, this goes in the direction of proving the *individual modernization* hypothesis for trade unions. Yet, it remains surprising that data for the generation of Sixty-Eight does not dovetail with this apparent change in the direction of effects of education, since higher educated belonging to this cohort with post-modern values participate much more in trade unions than lower educated.

**Table 6.10 - Marginal Effects of Education on Trade Union Membership per Political Cohort**

Political Generation	Low Education- Interm Education	Interm Education- High Education	Political Generation	Low Education- Interm Education	Interm Education- High Education
Fascism	-.0136	-.003	Terrorism	.003	-.015
Cold War	-.005	.023	Tangentopoli	-.015	-.050**
Economic Boom	.031*	.020	Berlusconism	-.015 <sup>a</sup>	-.021*
Sixty-Eight	.043*	.067***			

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Ianes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: \* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

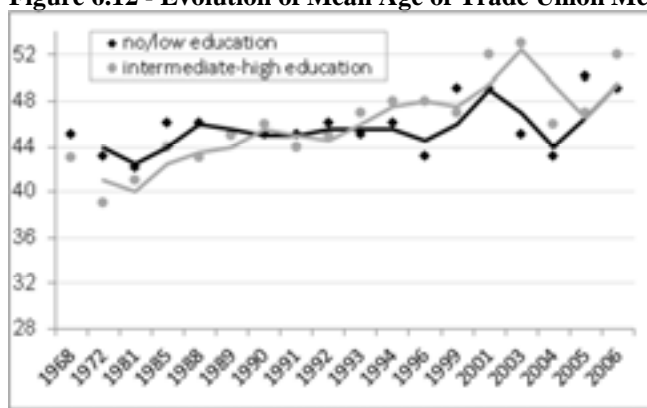
### 6.3.2.3 Age and Education

The evolution of mean age of participation within trade unions is less clear than for party members. Yet, from the moving average between two points in time we can see that also in this case the mean age of participation is increasing across time for both levels of education, but particularly for well educated. Indeed, while in late 1960s/early

<sup>94</sup> Only adding an interaction term with educational levels to Model 3 is not significant for any of the political cohort.

1970s they on average participated the most at 40 years old, in mid 2000s they mostly participate at 50 years old. Low educated move instead from an average age of 44 to 48 (Figure 6.12).

**Figure 6.12 - Evolution of Mean Age of Trade Union Members Across Time**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

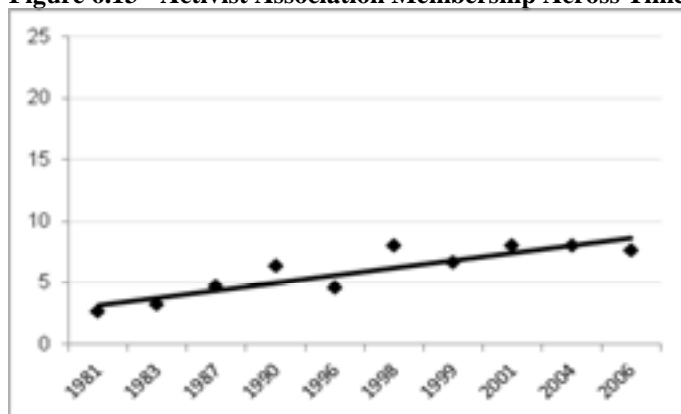
## 6.4 The ‘Individual Modernization’ Thesis and Civil Society, Bottom-Up Associations

### 6.4.1 Membership in Activist Organizations

#### 6.4.1.1 Socio-Structural Change and Education

We move to the analysis of bottom-up associations. Since activists associations are supposed to be the bottom-up and non-hierarchical association type par excellence we analyse them as first, testing the set of hypothesis specular to the hypothesis tested for church-like associations. Accordingly, contrary to the assumed effect on political parties and trade unions, socio-structural changes of society, expressed as time-period, should have brought to higher levels of participation within activist organizations (H5.1a).

**Figure 6.13 - Activist Association Membership Across Time**

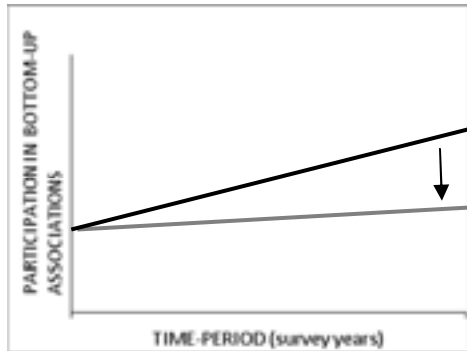


Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

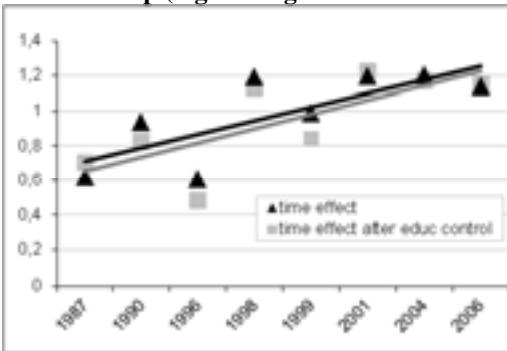
Even though the increase has not been dramatic, if we plot time-period and activist associations’ membership (Figure 6.13), we can see that the trend has certainly gone in this direction as expected by the *individual modernization* thesis.

We saw that extending the thesis of Inglehart and Dalton, education should have opposite effects on bottom-up associations participation than participation in church-like associations. We then check for the role of education in the increasing participatory trend.

**Figure 6.14 – Formal Model (H5.1b) Associations**



**Figure 6.15 – Time-Period Effect on Activist Membership (logistic regression b coefficients)**



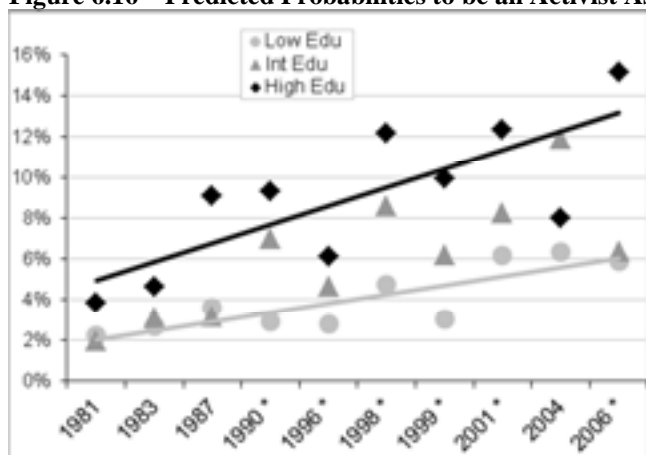
Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

Note for Figure 6.15: Black line – time-period effect on activist organizations membership. Grey line – time period effect on party membership after controlling for educational composition of society

Note for Figure 6.16: Effect of time (1981-2006) on activist organization membership expressed in b coefficients (logistic regression). Only statistically significant b coefficients (different from 1981) were plotted. Black dots - b coefficients for time-period effect on activist organizations membership; Grey dots – b coefficients after controlling for education

In a counterfactual logic, if the modernization thesis worked, we should have a significant difference between the b coefficients of the regression between structural changes of society (expressed as time-period) and activist association membership, and those of the regression that control for education composition of society<sup>95</sup>. Contrary to church-like organizations, however, b coefficients of the latter regression should be significantly lower than coefficients of the former (H5.1b) as shown in the formal model of Figure 6.14, since participation of more recent years should resemble participation of past years. Our data show, however, that while the effect of structural changes of society on participation is positive as the trend lines show, the difference between the two b coefficients before and after controlling for education is not significant (Figure 6.15). This suggests that the increase in activist association membership is probably not caused by changes in educational composition of society but by something else.

<sup>95</sup> Assuming that educational levels have been constant in society across time.

**Figure 6.16 – Predicted Probabilities to be an Activist Association member**

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Predicted probabilities from logistic regression model with interaction between years and education levels: only significant years (when no control for education) are reported. The tendency line is calculated with high education data. 2004 was significant, but it has been excluded because of too few cases in the sample

\* Significant difference between levels of education.

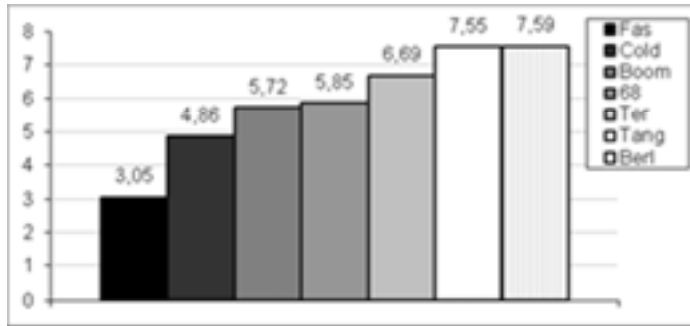
We move now to investigate whether well-educated citizens participate in this type of association more than lower educated citizens compared to older generations, as should occur according to our readings of Inglehart's thesis (H5.1c). The years in which the difference between different levels of education is significant are marked by an asterisk. We see that higher educated participate increasingly more in these activities across time and the hypothesis seems to hold going toward the direction of proving the thesis of *individual modernization* (Figure 6.16). Moreover, while in the 1980s the difference between educational levels is not significant, since the early 1990s it starts to be, with well-educated participating more than lower educated. Yet, after the 1990s, despite the constant increase of education, the difference between higher and lower educated does not significantly change across time. Well-educated participate in these types of associations more than the past, but also lower educated participate more. And this somewhat falsify the thesis, suggesting once again, that there is probably some force different than education at work that makes high as well as poorly educated citizens more likely to participate than the past.

#### 6.4.1.2 Political Generations and Education

We introduce now political cohorts. While the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate less in church-like organizations, they should be more likely than older generations to join activist associations since they should have new post-modern values (H5.2a). According to our data the trend of participation is going in

this direction also in Italy (Figure 6.17). We must note that the increasing trend of joining activists associations begins earlier, and that the generation of Sixty-Eight does not participate much more than the previous generation of Economic Boom. Still, the trend is certainly in the direction of younger generations participating more in activist associations than previous generations.

**Figure 6.17 – Activist Association Membership per Political Generations (%)**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Since citizens of different birth cohorts differ in their level of education, in a counterfactual logic, if the young-cohort effect existed, after controlling the relationship between political cohorts and participation for educational levels, the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate as much as previous generations, that is their participation should be less high (H5.2b). In Table 6.11 odds ratio of the three logistic regression models, constructed as for church-like organizations, are reported.

Contrary to models of church-like associations none of the control variables – sex, geo-political areas and age – are statistically significant for becoming a member of some activist association. This means that females, on average, participate as much as males, that people from the south participate as much as people from other geo-political areas of Italy, and that age is not a relevant determinant for participation. Also the Wald test confirms that the amount of participation of people living in the north and in the ‘red belt’ is not statistically different (Model 1). Compared to the cohort socialized during the Economic Boom, people socialized during the Cold War participate on average in the same way, while belonging to the cohort of Fascism decreases the odds of participation by 65 percentage points (odds=.352). Younger cohorts increase instead progressively their odds to be up to 2 and a half times more likely to participate in the case of people socialized during the Berlusconi era (odds=2.513) (Model 2). When in

Model 3 we assume that educational levels are constant across cohorts, we see that only the generation of Sixty-Eight participate slightly less in activist organizations. While, contrary to what expected, the generation socialized during Terrorism and younger generations have even higher probabilities to join these associations than before (H5.2b rejected). This also means that younger generations do participate more than older generations, but they apparently do so for different reasons than the fact that they are better educated.

**Table 6.11 - Activist Associations Membership Model Estimates (Odds Ratio)**

	Model 1 (16403)	Model 2 (16403)	Model 3 (16245)
<b>Control Variables</b>			
Geo-Political Area (ref=South)			
Red Belt	1.227	1.244	1.233
North	1.557	1.571 <sup>a</sup>	1.562 <sup>a</sup>
Male	1.024	1.027	.989
Age	.956	1.059	1.158
Age squared	.993	1.027	1.018
<b>Political Cohort (ref = Economic Boom)</b>			
Fascism		.352**	.400 <sup>a</sup>
Cold War		.692	.769
Sixty-Eight		1.367***	1.356***
Terrorism		1.963***	2.257***
Tangentopoli		2.329***	2.659***
Berlusconi		2.513***	3.026***
<b>Education (ref: Low)</b>			
Intermediate			1.418**
High			2.311***
<b>Goodness of Fit</b>			
Log likelihood	-3871.427	-3849.128	-3741.126
BIC'	-45.595	-90.193	-199.414

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Year 1981 has been excluded from the analysis because geo-political areas could not be identified correctly. Intercepts are omitted.

\* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

We now investigate education as a moderator, checking the effect of educational levels within each cohort. According to our reading of Inglehart thesis, higher educated individuals socialized during Sixty-Eight, as well as younger generations, should participate more in bottom-up social associations than lower educated compared to older generations (H5.2c). In order to test this hypothesis we run separate logistic regression models per each political cohort, taking into account also difference in cohort participation for gender, territory and age (Table 6.12).

We find that in any of the cohorts control variables are not discriminating factors for participation, with the only exception of living in the north for the two oldest and the youngest generation, as well as for the generation of Sixty-Eight. Yet, after controlling for territory, gender and age within each generation, we see that high education more

than double the likelihood to participate in activist associations for all generations<sup>96</sup>. If we calculate the marginal effect we can check whether the positive average marginal effect is increasing after the generation of Sixty-Eight (Table 6.13).

**Table 6.12 – Activist Associations Membership per Political Cohort (Odds Ratio)**

	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
N (Member)	1027 (41)	1964 (106)	2497 (156)	2923 (187)	3461 (261)	3020 (229)	1353 (103)
Red Belt	1.998	1.430	.928	1.272	1.269	1.317	1.009
North	2.457***	2.365***	1.362	1.557***	1.362	1.665	1.373***
Male	1.334	1.286 <sup>a</sup>	1.082	.816	1.095	.856	.902
Age	.127	.098	.646	1.187	1.609	1.363	1.177
Age Squared	1.208	1.351	1.112	.993	.919	.989	1.555*
Education							
Intermediate	1.978*	1.042	1.188	1.485**	1.572 <sup>a</sup>	1.469***	.333
High	2.220***	2.621***	2.631***	2.532***	1.956***	2.589***	2.744**
BIC'	-3.432	-38.427	-30.651	-25.043	-15.807	-34.896	.0672

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

\* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

**Table 6.13 – Marginal Effects of Education on Activist Membership per Political Cohort**

Political Cohort	Low Education – Intern Education	Intern Education – High Education	Political Cohort	Low Education – Intern Education	Intern Education – High Education
Fascism	.022*	.028*	Terrorism	.028 <sup>a</sup>	.045***
Cold War	.002	.056***	Tangentopoli	.022***	.069***
Economic Boom	.007	.057***	Berlusconism	.010	.032**
Sixty-Eight	.018***	.054***			

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

\* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

We see, however, that with the exception of the cohort socialized during Tangentopoli this is not the case. This leads us to wonder whether what is happening is that the *individual modernization* thesis does not work, or whether in Italy the change to post-modern values simply happens at a later stage for younger generations. While the latter interpretation is appealing, we must still remark that the youngest generation, the one socialized during Berlusconi, has one of the lowest marginal effect for education, only slightly higher than the marginal effect of the generation of Fascism. It is for this reason that we must only partially accept this hypothesis.

#### 6.4.1.3 Age and Education

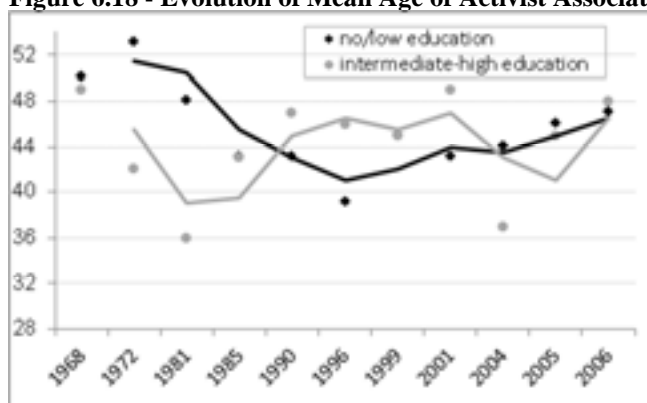
We finally investigate how the average age of members in this type of associations has evolved across time for different educational levels. Also for bottom-up associations we

<sup>96</sup> If we add an interaction between political cohorts and education to Model 3 we find a statistically significant difference between education levels for generations of Economic Boom, Sixty-Eight and Terrorism. Younger generations have higher predicted probabilities to participate and in these cohorts well-educated participate significantly more than lower educated.



do not have any precise hypothesis related to the *individual modernization* thesis. We can see in Figure 6.18 that the average participation age increases for all educational levels going from 40 years old in early 1980s to an average of 46 years old in mid-2000s. Still, no clear pattern can be found for higher and lower educated. In 1996, 2001 and 2006, higher educated mean age is particularly higher than lower educated, while in 1990 and 2004 mean age is particularly lower. It seems that education and mean age of participation do not follow a clear pattern but this might also be due to the heterogeneity of different issue-based activist associations measured in different surveys.

**Figure 6.18 - Evolution of Mean Age of Activist Associations Members Across Time**



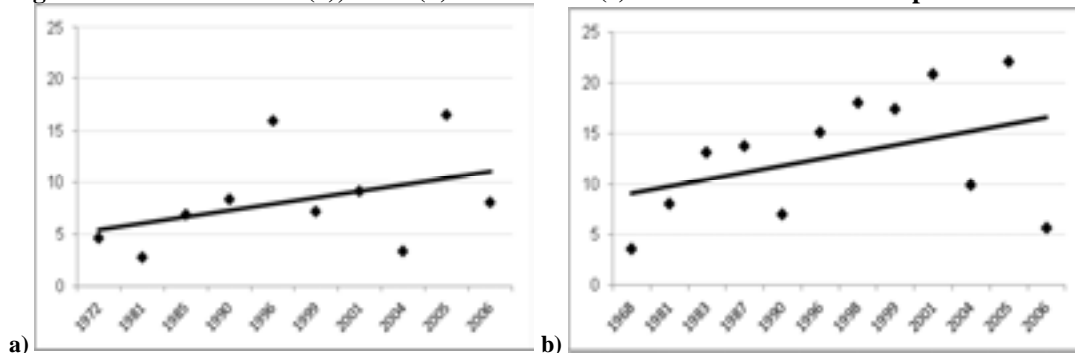
Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

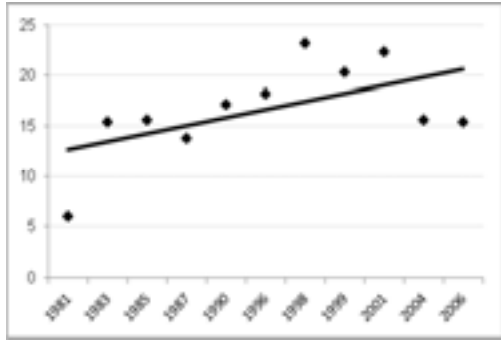
### 6.4.2 Membership in Professional, Civic and Leisure Associations

#### 6.4.2.1 Socio-Structural Change and Education

As for activist associations, membership of other bottom-up organizations such as professional, civic and leisure associations should also have increased with structural changes in society (H5.1a), and Figure 6.19 shows us that this has actually happened also in Italy. The level of membership is higher for leisure associations, followed by civic and finally by professional organizations.

**Figure 6.19 - Professional (a), Civic (b) and Leisure (c) Associations Membership across Time (%)**





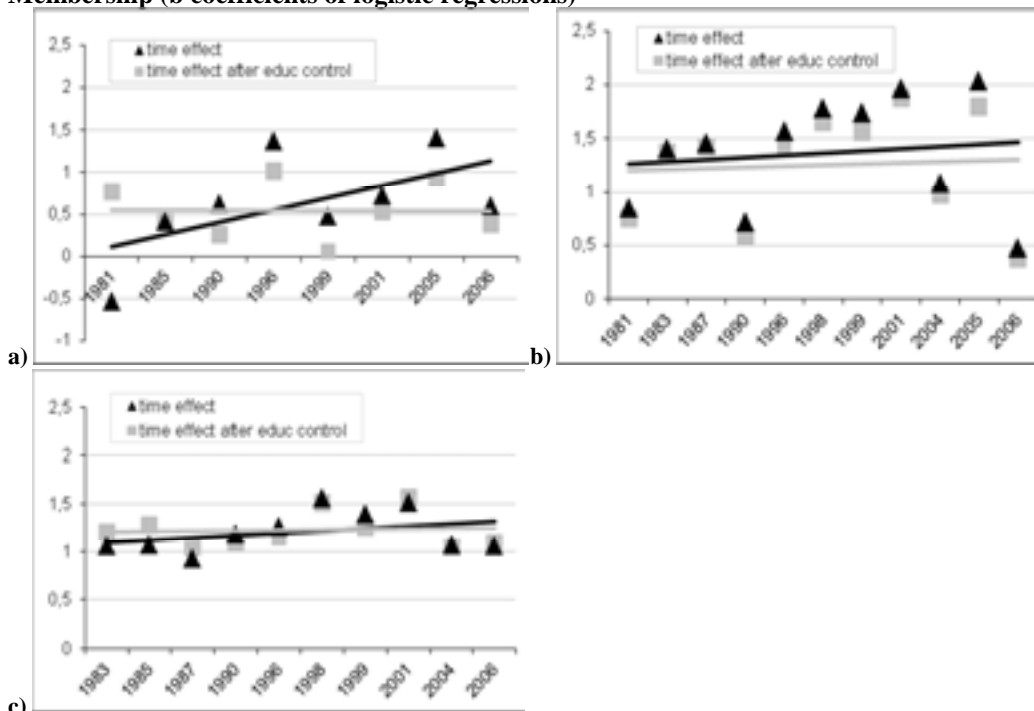
c)

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: For professional organizations 1968 survey has been excluded since labour union and professional organizations measured together.

In a counterfactual logic, if the *individual modernization* thesis works, b coefficients of the logistic regression between time-period and associations membership in which we control for education should be significantly lower than b coefficients in which we do not control for it showing a constant participation across time (H5.1b) as in the formal model of previous section (Figure 6.14).

**Figure 6.20 - Time-Period Effects on Professional (a) , Civic (b) and Leisure (c) Associations Membership (b coefficients of logistic regressions)**

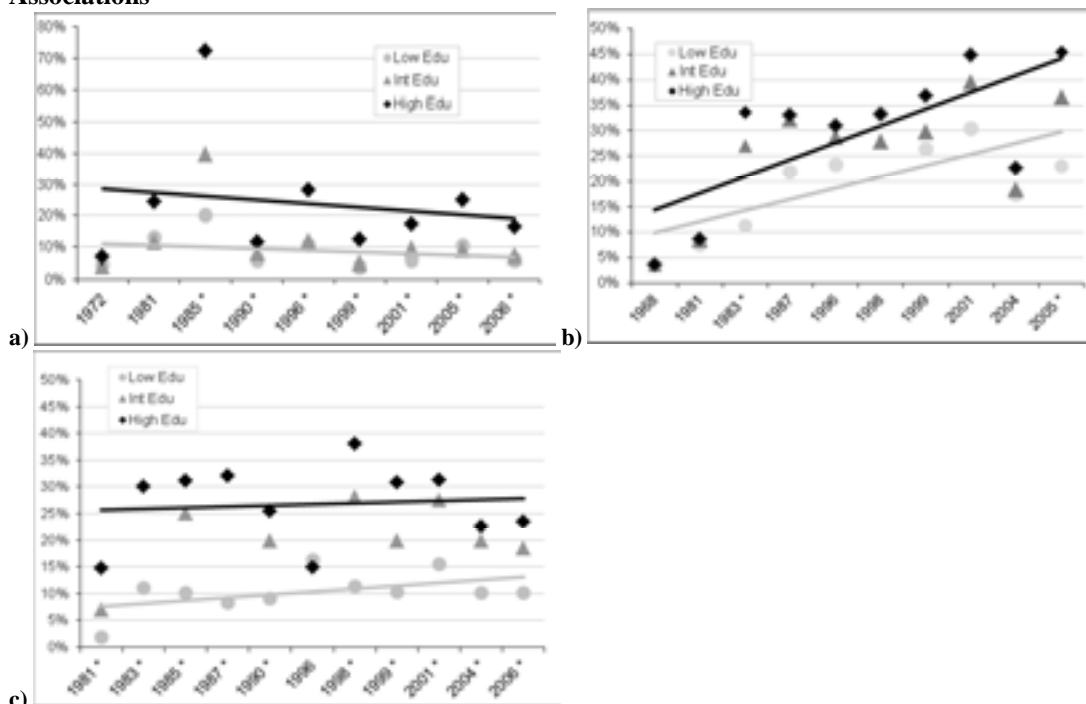


Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Effect of time (1972-2006 for professional organizations, 1968-2006 for civic organizations, 1981-2006 for leisure organizations) on organization membership expressed in b coefficients (logistic regression). Only statistically significant b coefficients (different from reference year) were plotted. For professional organizations 1968 was not included because labour union and professional organizations are measured together and measure is biased. Black dots - b coefficients for time-period effect on profession organizations membership (black trend line); Grey dots – b coefficients after controlling for education (grey trend line).

Although professional association is the one that gets closest to the formal model, b coefficients are not significantly different for any of the association type (Figure 6.20). Also the increase of these three civil society associations seems to be caused by something else than educational composition of society.

**Figure 6.21 – Predicted Probabilities of Joining Professional (a) , Civic (b) and Leisure (c) Associations**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Predicted probabilities from logistic regression model with interaction between years and education levels: only significant years (when no control for education) are reported. The tendency line is calculated with high education data. 2004 was significant, but it has been excluded because of too few cases in the sample for all association types. 2006 is not shown in the graph for civic associations for clearness of graph.

\* Significant difference between levels of education.

When we move to explore whether highly educated citizens participate in these civil society associations more than lower educated compared to previous generations, we find different results for each specific association type (H5.1c). We see in Figure 6.21 that for professional organizations and leisure associations, well educated participate more than lower educated for almost all years, while for civic associations this is almost never true since well-educated seems to participate as much as lower educated<sup>97</sup>. While it seems that for the former types of associations the amount of membership for all levels of education is fluctuating across time and slightly increasing for leisure associations, we see that both lower and highly educated are increasingly joining civic associations across time. These results show us in different ways that differences in

<sup>97</sup> Asterisks indicate when the difference between education levels is significant for that year

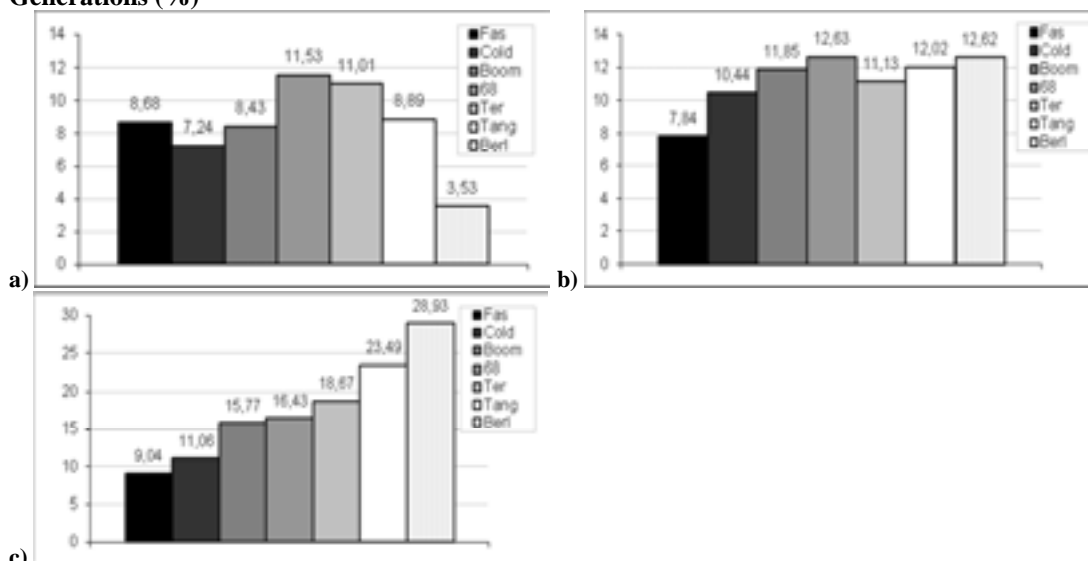
levels of education do not seem to be responsible for the increase in bottom-up associations since the difference between educational levels is quite constant across time or not significant for all three association types.

6.4.2.2 Political Generations and Education

According to our main hypothesis younger generations should participate more in civil society associations than older generations (H5.2a). In Figure 6.22 this is clearly true only for leisure associations even though the generation of Sixty-Eight participates as much as the generation of Economic Boom. It seems, however, that younger generations participate as much as older generations in civic associations, while for professional associations, after a burst in the generation of Sixty-Eight, there is a decreasing participation of younger generations.

After controlling for the educational levels, younger cohorts should increase their participation in these types of associations and reach levels of participation of older generations (H5.2b). In Table 6.14 first of all we see that for professional and leisure associations’ participation of males and of people living in the Red belt and in the north is more likely than participation of females and of people living in the south. The bell-shaped relationship between age and membership, however, holds only for the former type of association. Control variables for civic associations are instead not significant, suggesting that participation is more equal in terms of gender, geo-political area and age.

Figure 6.22 –Professional (a), Civic (b) and Leisure (c) Associations Membership per Political Generations (%)



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB)

Secondly, we see that the hypothesis of *individual modernization* seems to be holding only for leisure associations. Generations socialized during Tangentopoli and Berlusconi do participate more than older generations, but when we assume that educational levels have stayed constant across time, they participate as much as them. For professional associations the situation is different: the generation of Sixty-Eight and of Terrorism indeed participates more than the generation of Economic Boom, but also Fascist generation is, while the two youngest generations participate at the same level. When controlling for education, the generation of Fascism and Cold War participate much more than the reference category, whereas younger generations participate more or less in the same way. Only the generation of Sixty-Eight seems to prudently follow the direction of our hypothesis. For civic associations we can see instead that the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations participate as much as the Economic Boom generation, while generation of Fascism and Cold War participate less.

**Table 6.14 - Professional, Civic and Leisure Associations Membership Models Estimates (Odds Ratio)**

	Professional Organizations			Civic Associations			Leisure Associations		
	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 1	M 2	M 3	M 1	M 2	M 3
N	(18769)	(18769)	(18599)	(21290)	(21290)	(21040)	(19813)	(19813)	(19638)
Control Variables									
Geo-Political Area (ref=South)									
Red Belt	1.569***	1.583***	1.635***	1.029	1.041	1.055	1.705***	1.728***	1.767***
North	1.291***	1.299***	1.312***	1.034	1.036	1.038	1.723***	1.735***	1.746***
Male	2.573***	2.590***	2.495***	.848	.850	.820	2.161***	2.167***	2.092***
Age	2.988***	3.212***	3.062***	1.013	1.116	1.121	.716***	.765	.729***
Age squared	.825***	.822***	.820***	1.001	1.029	1.027	1.020***	1.032	1.036*
Political Cohort (ref = Economic Boom)									
Fascism		1.699***	2.300***		.361***	.418***		.578	.674
Cold War		1.094	1.246***		.688***	.746***		.702	.768
Sixty-Eight		1.302**	1.230*		1.400	1.352		1.014	.9
Terrorism		1.656*	1.739*		1.589 <sup>a</sup>	1.589		1.092	1.116
Tangentopoli		1.656	1.553		1.920 <sup>a</sup>	1.845		1.231*	1.123
Berlusconi		1.027	.914		2.140	2.010		1.503***	1.322 <sup>a</sup>
Education (ref: Low)									
Interm			1.275**			1.423***			1.966***
High			2.867***			1.799***			2.691***
Goodness of Fit									
Log Likelihood	-5583.6	-5553.1	-5353.8	-8517.4	-8401.2	-8212.0	-8888.5	-8867.3	-8555.5
BIC <sup>c</sup>	-630.4	-691.5	-979.5	-10.2	-242.6	-377.9	-921.9	-964.1	-1406.3

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: Year 1981 has been excluded from the analysis because geo-political areas could not be identified correctly. Intercepts are omitted.

\* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

When we explore the effect of educational levels within each cohort, expecting that well-educated of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should participate more in bottom-up associations than lower educated compared to older generations (H5.2c).

**Table 6.15 – Professional, Civic and Leisure Associations Estimates (Odds Ratio)**

	Fascism	Cold War	Economic Boom	Sixty-Eight	Terrorism	Tangentopoli	Berlusconism
<b>Professional Organizations</b>							
N	2037	2369	3005	3240	3557	2959	1432
(Member)	(204)	(188)	(272)	(405)	(440)	(265)	(51)
Red Belt	2.031***	1.231***	1.834**	1.423 <sup>a</sup>	1.667**	1.730***	2.330*
North	1.342***	1.595***	1.377*	1.140	1.145	1.601***	1.580*
Male	4.004***	3.695***	2.862***	2.460***	2.103***	1.904***	2.273
Age	.240***	.332	1.836	8.486 <sup>a</sup>	4.846**	20.403***	1.660
Age2	1.092***	1.101	.901	.670	.709 <sup>a</sup>	.392***	5.217 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Education</b>							
Intermediate	.794***	1.597***	1.820***	1.040	1.371***	1.521***	.597
High	1.723***	3.522***	3.135***	2.142***	3.653***	3.736***	1.936*
<i>BIC'</i>	-130.42	-126.40	-133.74	-147.07	-188.59	-151.55	-49.05
<b>Civic Associations</b>							
N	2548	2844	3437	3439	3582	3376	1544
(Member)	(253)	(384)	(522)	(566)	(579)	(501)	(231)
Red Belt	.671	.877	1.200*	1.272***	.982	1.208***	.874
North	.709	.125	1.261**	1.114***	.974	.961	.980
Male	.674***	.750	.928	.868	.840	.846	.710
Age	3.332	4.156*	2.756*	3.932***	1.376**	1.638	.804
Age Squared	.915	.882	.898	.800***	.930**	.811	.769
<b>Education</b>							
Intermediate	1.767***	.897	1.067	1.406**	1.599**	1.587***	1.506***
High	2.274***	1.716	1.625*	1.557***	1.870***	1.972***	1.640
<i>BIC'</i>	-62.62	-94.67	-88.32	-88.32	-41.34	-29.81	-10.77
<b>Leisure Associations</b>							
N	1656	2584	3148	3545	4149	3205	1351
(Member)	(179)	(310)	(533)	(628)	(858)	(756)	(392)
Red Belt	1.722	1.600**	2.011***	2.014***	1.831***	1.829**	1.035
North	1.395	1.963***	1.939***	2.122***	1.685***	1.592***	1.485***
Male	2.302	1.869***	2.826***	2.318***	1.968***	1.972***	1.560***
Age	6.142	.637	.346 <sup>a</sup>	.661*	.708*	.978	.453
Age Squared	.830	1.061	1.133	1.07	1.080*	.883	.597
<b>Education</b>							
Intermediate	3.463***	1.898**	1.901***	1.742***	1.976***	2.000***	1.526***
High	5.139***	3.166***	2.652***	2.209***	2.971***	2.475***	1.937***
<i>BIC'</i>	-103.78	-112.95	-228.35	-192.76	-226.44	-185.78	-65.95

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note \* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests) <sup>a</sup> Significant at .10

Running separate logistic regression models controlling for gender, territory and age, first of all we notice that males participate more in professional and leisure associations for almost all cohorts, but the gap is getting smaller across generations, while males participate as much as female or less for civic associations. Moreover, people living in the north and in the ‘red belt’ participate more than people living in the south for professional organizations and leisure associations, but different cohorts participate in

different ways. With the exception of the generation of Sixty-Eight and Economic Boom, this is not true for membership in civic associations. Moreover, after controlling for territory, gender and age within each cohort, we see that education has positive effects for all associations types and for all cohorts (Table 6.15)<sup>98</sup>.

If we calculate marginal effects of education, we see that for professional organizations it is increasingly stronger until the generation of Terrorism, and then it decreases. For civic associations is instead quite constant across generations, and the same is true for leisure associations with the exception of the generation of Fascism, and the younger generations of Terrorism, and Tangentopoli, for which the effect is higher (Table 6.16). This result once again suggests us that well-educated socialized during the Sixty-Eight and younger generations do not participate more than lower educated in these types of civil society associations compared to older generations (H5.2c partially rejected).

**Table 6.16 – Marginal Effects of Education on Professional, Civic and Leisure Associations Membership per Political Cohort**

Political Cohort	Professional Organizations		Civic Associations		Leisure Associations	
	Low Educ – Interm Educ	Interm Educ – High Educ	Low Educ – Interm Educ	Interm Educ – High Educ	Low Educ – Interm Educ	Interm Educ – High Educ
Fascism	-.017***	.051***	.044***	.079***	.105***	.162***
Cold War	.026***	.096***	-.011	.066	.057***	.125***
Economic Boom	.036***	.088**	.007	.061**	.073***	.124***
Sixty-Eight	.003	.083***	.042**	.057***	.069***	.106***
Terrorism	.027**	.159***	.054**	.077***	.097***	.174***
Tangentopoli	.025***	.113***	.052***	.083***	.109***	.151***
Berlusconism	-.014	.028***	.047***	.059	.078***	.128***

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note \* p≤ .05; \*\* p≤ .01; \*\*\* p≤ .001 (two-tailed tests)

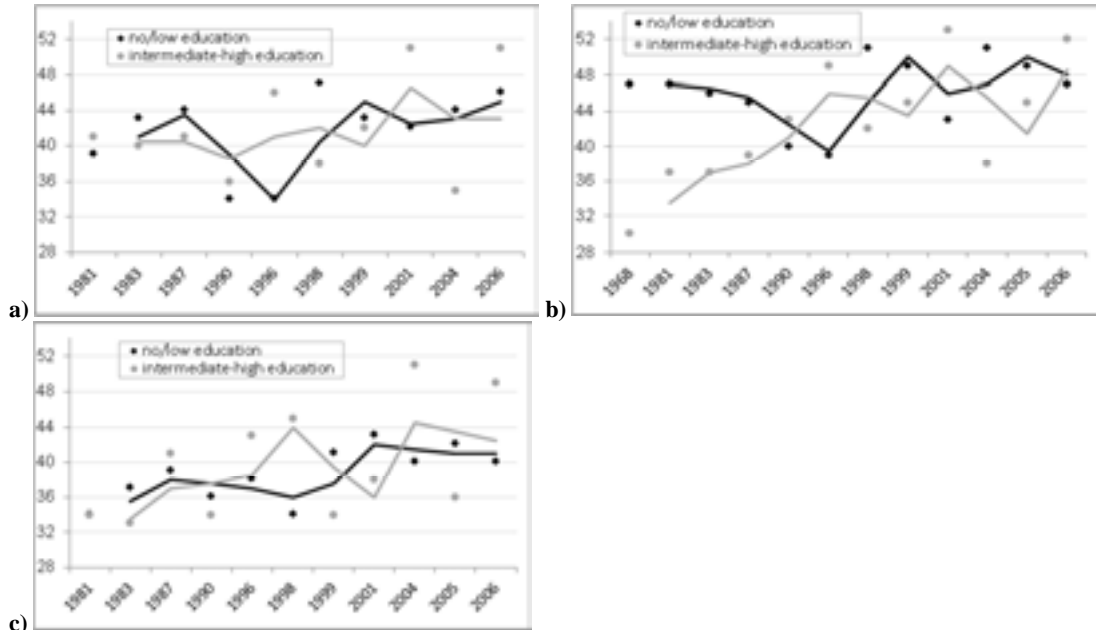
#### 6.4.2.3 Age and Education

The last step is to investigate once again the relationship between average age of participation and education (Figure 6.23). While the well educated participating in professional associations display a fluctuating average age across time, lower educated participate at an increasingly younger age (from 50 to 38) until the mid-1990s, and then participate at older age until mid-2000s. For civic associations we see a similar pattern to the one noticed for political party participation. In late 1970s members were much younger (30) than lower educated (46). Average age of higher educated however steeply

<sup>98</sup> If we add an interaction to Model 3, we discover that education has positive effects for participation in professional and leisure associations for all generations with the exception of Berlusconi for the former and of Fascism for both. Education is instead not significant for any of the cohorts participating in civic associations. Whereas for professional associations the gap between educational levels is increasing in younger generations, it is staying quite constant for leisure associations. Educational levels are instead not significant within all generations for civic associations' membership.

increases, reaching 50 years old in mid-2000s while average age of lower educated has a less clear pattern and stays, on the whole, quite stable.

**Figure 6.23 - Evolution of Mean Age of Professional (a), Civic (b), Leisure (c) Association Members Across Time**



Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Finally, the average age of participation of members of leisure associations for both educational levels increases. Yet, from an average participation age of 34 during the early 1980s, higher educated average age increases more, reaching 48 years old, than lower educated, that reach only 38 years old. It seems that younger people participate less in civic and leisure associations, and more in professional associations.

### 6.5 Conclusions

If we summarize the findings of this chapter we can say first of all that not only is membership of parties increasingly uncommon but that participation in trade unions as well as other civil society associations is the concern of a small share of activists. It seems also that in Italy the relationship between political parties and civil society participation across time is not very developed. The second important finding is that the *individual modernization* theory is only partially able to explain the socio-political context evolution in Italy. Table 6.15 summarizes which hypothesis we were able to confirm (✓) and which we had to reject (X) per each association type. While we find, as in chapter 4, that participation in church-like associations has decreased and participation in bottom-up associations has increased, particularly for younger



generations, in no occasion can we completely accept any hypothesis concerning the mechanism at work.

**Table 6.15 – Hypotheses Between Education and Time per Association Type**

Time	Church-Like Associations		Bottom-Up Associations				
	Political Party	Trade Unions	Activist Associations	Professional Associations	Civic Associations	Leisure Associations	
Structural Change	H1a	Decrease across time √	√	Increase across time √		√	
	H1b	Constant Effect of Education across time X	X	Constant Effect of Education across time X		X	
	H1c	Well-educated start to participate less than lower educated X	X (mostly rejected) <sup>a</sup>	√ (partially) <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>c</sup>	X <sup>d</sup>	X <sup>e</sup>
Political Cohorts	H2a	Younger generations participate less √ (partially) <sup>e</sup>	√ (partially) <sup>e</sup>	√ (partially) <sup>e</sup>	X	X	√ (partially) <sup>e</sup>
	H2b	Constant effect of education across cohorts X	X	X	X	X (mostly rejected) <sup>f</sup>	√
	H2c	Well-educated of younger generations participate less than poorly educated X	√ (partially) <sup>e</sup>	√ (partially) <sup>g</sup>	X (partially) <sup>h</sup>	X (partially) <sup>h</sup>	X (partially) <sup>h</sup>
Life-Cycle	Low Edu	=	=	+	+	=	+
	High Edu	++	+	+	=	++	+

Source: Own Pooled Dataset (*Itanes, WVS, ESS, EB-Mann, EB*)

Note: √ accepted hypothesis; X rejected hypothesis; + increase; - decrease; = constant

<sup>a</sup> No difference for educational levels <sup>b</sup> Well-educated higher across time but not higher educational gap than the past <sup>c</sup> Well-educated on constant levels and constant educational gap across time <sup>d</sup> Well-educated higher across time, but educational gap not significant <sup>e</sup> Not working for Sixty-Eight generation <sup>f</sup> Working for Sixty-Eight generation <sup>g</sup> Constant across time, increase with Tangentopoli generation but decrease with Berlusconi generation <sup>h</sup> Except for Terrorism generation

### 6.5.1 Longitudinal Trends of Participation in Hierarchical Associations

For what concern Italian hierarchical associations, structural changes in society, expressed in time-period, should have led to declining participation in church-like associations (H5.1a), and if the *individual modernization* hypothesis worked, controlling structural changes for educational composition of society should have led to constant levels of participation across time (H5.1b). Moreover, participation of well educated should have become lower than less educated compared to the past in these types of organization (H5.1c). We have however seen that the changing effect of

education seems not to be much in place for political parties and to be only partially in place for trade unions. First of all, we found that the negative effects of socio-structural changes on church-like associations (H5.1a) are not caused by a change in the educational composition of society (H5.1b). Participation in political parties is decreasing for all educational levels, but is decreasing more for lower educated than for higher educated and thus education does not seem to be the cause (H5.1c). For trade unions, instead, the situation is a bit different since participation is only slightly declining and there is no difference between well educated and lower educated (H5.1c). Thus, education does not have any negative effects for union participation but it probably does not have an effect of any sort.

The generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should have also started to participate less in political parties and trade unions than older generations (H5.2a), and if the mechanism hypothesized by the *individual modernization* hypothesis worked, controlling for the distribution of education across political cohorts should lead them to participate in these associations as much as older generations (H5.2b). Moreover, compared to older generations, participation in these associations by well-educated individuals belonging to the Sixty-Eight or younger generations should have become lower than less educated (H5.2c).

We found that younger cohorts do indeed participate less than older cohorts in political parties and trade unions, but the generation of Sixty-Eight, the one expected to have experienced a deep transformation in values, participates in these associations even more than older generations (H5.2a). Even in this case, the downward trend does not seem to be caused simply by a change in educational levels of younger cohorts because when we control for it, younger cohorts participate even less (H5.2b). Still, we have different results for parties and trade unions when we moderate the effect of political cohorts for educational levels. It is then true that political parties are becoming weaker “parties without partisans” as Dalton and Wattenberg were claiming (2000). Yet, well-educated citizens of younger generations, and particularly citizens socialized during Sixty-Eight, participate in political parties more than less educated and this gap has increased compared to the past. For trade unions we find instead that well-educated participate less in trade unions, with the only exception, once again, of Sixty-Eight generation (H5.2c). Thus, while for Italian political parties the thesis of *individual*

*modernization* seems not to work, for trade unions we have mixed results. We wonder whether the finding of the last hypothesis proves the theory, or, given the results found in other hypothesis it calls into question a totally different point of view, such as the characteristics of the people that trade unions has traditionally mobilized, being more oriented toward lower educated working class. Finally, average age of members of both political parties and trade unions increases across time, particularly for well educated, although this finding is much clearer for political parties.

### **6.5.2 Longitudinal Trends of Participation in Bottom-Up Associations**

The *individual modernization* thesis seems only partially to work also for activist associations and for other bottom-up civil society associations. We were expecting that structural changes in society, expressed in time-period, should have led to higher levels of participation in these associations (H5.1a), and if the mechanism hypothesized by the *individual modernization* hypothesis works, controlling structural changes for educational composition of society should have led to constant levels of participation across time (H5.1b). Moreover, participation in these types of organizations by well educated should have become higher than less educated compared to the past (H5.1c). We have found that there has been a positive trend for joining activist, professional, civic and leisure associations across time (H5.1a), but the positive effect of socio-structural transformation does not seem to have been caused by a change in the educational composition of society (H5.1b). Moreover, high education has for some associations (activists) led to higher participation but not to a wider gap with less educated than the past. For civic associations there is no participatory gap at all between different levels of education. Considering that this category includes religious associations, as for the case of trade unions, it might be that mobilization strategies of these associations are more oriented toward people with less resources. Yet, also in this case, the increasing trend of participation in activist and civic associations and the almost constant trend in professional and leisure associations is not caused by an increasing difference between lower and well-educated, but rather by some other force that we cannot control for (H5.1c).

When we take into account different political cohorts, the generation of Sixty-Eight and younger generations should have also started to participate more in bottom-up associations unions than older generations (H5.2a), and if the mechanism hypothesized

by the *individual modernization* hypothesis worked, controlling for the distribution of education across political cohorts should lead them to participate in these associations as much as older generations (H5.2b). Moreover, compared to older generations, participation in these associations by well-educated individuals belonging to the Sixty-Eight or younger generations should have become higher than less educated (H5.2c).

We found that younger generations participate more than older generations in this type of associations, even though, with the exception of professional associations, this is surprisingly not particularly true for the generation of Sixty-Eight that is virtually participating as much as the Economic Boom generation (H5.2a). Also for bottom-up associations, however, we saw that, with the exception for leisure associations, higher participation of younger cohorts is not influenced by a different average level of education of political cohorts (H5.2b). We have then seen that while higher educated join bottom-up associations more than lower educated, the average marginal effect of education is not getting stronger for younger generations. It is just stronger for specific generations within each association type (H5.2c).

Finally, also the average age of participation does not seem to be related in a clear way with education. Age tends to increase in all civil society associations, with the exception for professional associations and education seems to be clearly relevant only for civic associations since average participant age of well educated is increasingly higher. As for church-like organizations, also in this case if the *individual modernization* thesis does not seem to work, we must look somewhere else in order to explain the general trend of younger generations participating more in bottom-up associations than older generations.

### **6.5.3 Participation and Equality**

From the findings summarized above we can say that with the exception of trade unions and civic associations, both political parties and social associations attract more well-educated people (than lower educated people), but while in the first case this tendency has increased with modernization of society and mass scholarization, participation in social associations has not undergone many changes. We saw in the introduction of the chapter that the *individual modernization* thesis is a sociological theory that focuses on the changes of characteristics of citizens as a cause for different patterns of participations. According to Inglehart (1977; 1997) and Dalton (1984; 2002) it is then

the spread of education in society that has an equalizing power, not the organizational experience. Yet, these authors did not tackle directly the issue of whether participation in political and social associations promotes political equality. We have said how Verba et al. (1995) have instead investigated this issue studying the important role of some organizations and particularly of churches in American society in providing skills to people without resources. In European societies, the same role of US churches has traditionally been performed by big political parties and organizations like trade unions that have been the main constructors of political equality conditions. In areas in which parties have successfully deeply penetrated in society, political participation was able to partially overcome social inequalities. They indeed gave to people with lower education and resources, equal political opportunities. In this chapter we did not investigate the equalizing power of different associations. Studying this would have required us to research whether people with low resources and less education are provided during their organizational experience of the same amount of political opportunities of higher educated. Instead, we only investigated the characteristics of participants. Yet, we wonder whether with the crisis of political parties and trade unions membership, a problem of political equality arises.

For a long time in the past, Italian social associations were connected to mass political parties, predominantly the PCI and DC, that constructed their own civil society associations in order to encapsulate citizens from the cradle to the grave in subcultures independent from the state. People participated in politics because they were mobilized by political parties and they felt part of a particular subculture, and not necessarily because they identified themselves as informed citizen. While the sub-cultural participation of Italian post-war society is a different kind of mobilization to the one described by Verba and colleagues, it is quite a common idea that we do not consider the limits of citizens encapsulation that made them isolated and parochial, also in the Italian case political parties have historically allowed more equal access to political participation (Pizzorno, 1966; Alberoni et al. 1968, Barbagli and Maccelli, 1985). The existence of mobilization agencies able to inclusively attract the identification of citizens and to organize them made political equality easier by reducing traditional political apathy caused by low economic and cultural resources. Since we know that democracy is based on the principle of citizens' equality (Dahl, 2006), for citizenship to

become real and not just remain a formality, mobilization agencies of this type are necessary. The paradox is that political parties assured political equality, while at the same time they implied a strong a-democratic concentration at the top (Sartori, cit. in Linz, 1966). Changes that have occurred in Italy in the last 50 years, such as the crisis of international ideologies on which important parties were based on, as well as an increase of educational levels in society, have gone in the direction of a process of disencapsulation of citizens from these monistic subcultures toward a more independent citizenry. This process ended with the deep crisis of political parties in 1992.

In this chapter and in Chapter 4 we saw that participation in conventional politics has strongly decreased across time. Accordingly, if Italian political parties are today no more able to fulfil their political equalizer role because of a lack of members, particularly among younger generations, it is necessary to ask who and in what ways is able to substitute these organizations in the equalizer task, crucial for a high quality pluralistic democracy. We saw that the decrease in political party membership has been balanced by an increase of membership in independent social participation. The interesting question is whether these new forms of bottom-up social participation are able to assure the same levels of political equality that hierarchical political parties used to assure. Since we cannot offer any empirical answer to this, we leave the question open and we will go back to this issue in the concluding chapter.

#### ***6.5.4 How to explain changing participatory trends?***

We now go back to our results tackling another very important issue. If education has been proved not to be largely responsible for the declining levels of membership in political parties and trade unions, as well as increasing levels in other civil society associations, particularly among young citizens, what is responsible? We know that the meaning of similar education titles has changed across time and we took the operationalization of educational levels into account for it. This was not enough, however, to cancel out the difference between different time-period and political generations. Since the generation of Sixty-Eight is not affected by these downward trends in hierarchical organizations and only partially interested by increasing trends in bottom-up associations, we first hypothesized that a possible scenario could have been that mass education actually leads to a change to more post-modern and anti-authoritarian values that makes participation in certain associations more likely than

others, but its effects simply started to become visible in associational behaviour after the Sixty-Eight, that is a generation later than expected. Yet, also this scenario has not found much empirical support. Thus, the answer is to be searched for somewhere else.

Also Segatti (2007) in a study in which he investigated whether the interest in politics in Italy had been affected by the *individual modernization* hypothesis found similar results. It is only a minority of Italian citizens that is interested in politics and these citizens are on average also more competent than other citizens. Yet, interest in politics has not dramatically increased as *individual modernization* thesis expected and younger generations are less interested in politics (strictly defined) than older generations. It is then the general level of interest that is declining, not the individual effect of education within each generation. But why is it so?

In the theoretical model presented in Chapter 1 we saw that political participation behaviour is influenced both by the demand and the supply side. Since we came to the conclusion that the *individual modernization* thesis is not able alone to explain changes in associational membership during the process of Italian modernization, it seems that the explanation cannot be found only in the demand side and must be found also in the supply side. Until now we have assumed the political offer to be constant across time, but instead of looking at the negative effects of education we could wonder whether it is church-like organizations that have for some reason become less attractive to all citizens.

What could be possible causes for the evolution of the Italian socio-political context? One possible reason is the evolution of the characteristics of the socio-political supply across time. With modernization of political parties, organizations have become increasingly professional and centralized, and, consequently, their penetration of society has decreased. There are not many studies that investigate the penetration of political parties in the territory. However, anecdotal evidence leads us to think that parties are not as deeply rooted in Italian society as they used to be in the past. Although we do not dispose of data on the existent amount of political local branches per 10.000 citizens in a longitudinal perspective, we can say that in municipalities with less than 15.000 citizens, civic lists without a clear political colour identifiable from the outside are more and more common. We saw in Chapter 4, however, that the offer of social associations in which citizens can participate has instead deeply increased across time. The change

of the presence in the territory of social and political associations is surely one important explanation for understanding the evolution of individual participation. It is however legitimate to ask whether this is the only factor to look at in the supply side. Can lower participation in political parties be explained only by their minor penetration in society? And have bottom-up associations become more attractive to younger generations than in the past, or have they simply increased in number? We know indeed that also levels of disaffection have remained very high across time. Once again, we are not able to answer these questions here because we did not investigate it empirically and we will come back to the reasons as to how the supply side of political participation might have influenced changing participatory patterns in the concluding chapter.

In the next chapter we are however going to investigate in more detail the causal relationship between all these trends. The goal of Chapter 7 and 8 is indeed to disentangle the problem of how participation in social associations, political participation and political efficacy are related at the individual analytical level. Using panel data we are able to measure them at different moments of individuals’ life. Although the panel data we use is not spread along a very long time span, it still allows us to explore the causal mechanism at work and to investigate, whether in Italy, participation in social associations is able to increase levels of political efficacy and to spur political participation. At the aggregate level it seems that these three concepts are not related to each other, but after discussing the main existing theories and constructing several hypotheses (Chapter 7) we want to verify whether this is also what is happening at the individual level (Chapter 8).



## CHAPTER 7.

### THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFICACY & PARTICIPATION

#### 7.1 Introduction

Although there is not agreement on what is the desirable amount of participation, within the framework of democratic theory there is a high consensus around the fact that democratic citizens should participate in political parties and that the quality of a democracy is strongly affected by the robustness of associational life. Apart from studies claiming that successful democratic governance and associationism are interdependent and correlated with high levels of political participation, however, not much has been done in testing empirically these theories in order to assert the direction of the causal relationship between different types of participation at the individual level. In literature we find two main opposing lines of theory that have tried to explain this relationship. As we saw in Chapter 1 and 2, the theory which has dominated the stage in recent years has been partially inspired by the writings of Toqueville in *Democracy in America* (2000 [1835-1840]) which paid great attention to the positive relationship existing between participation in social associations and political activity. The famous ‘social capital’ theory by Putnam (1993, 2000) is loosely based on this text, while the *civic voluntarism model* (CVM) by Verba and colleagues (1995) disentangled the problem at the micro level. On the contrary, according to the main alternative hypothesis, the correlation between organisational membership and political participation is not causal, but spurious. Associations are self-selective because the same individual characteristics that promote non-political association involvement also promote political participation. Other two theses exist with a bottom-up point of view. One takes into account reciprocal effects between political efficacy and political participation, and another suggests that involvement in associations is not at all related to political efficacy and political participation (van Deth, 1997).

We saw how the evolution across time of the Italian socio-political context is somewhat paradoxical in the perspective of associations as ‘schools of democracy’. In Chapter 4, 5 and 6 we saw how the evolution of different types of participation has

followed quite independent trends across time. According to the neo-Tocquevillian literature of social capital, indeed, more participation in non-political, civil associations independent from political parties should lead people to increase their feelings of political efficacy and eventually to participate more in politics. Italian former parochial citizens should now have become participatory citizens, characterized by higher civic skills and less partisan views, and closer to the ideal model of citizenship drawn by Almond and Verba (1963).

In this chapter and in the next, we want to disentangle the Italian paradox by addressing at the analytical longitudinal level the causal relationship that connects social and political participation with efficacy. We want to verify whether the independent patterns between these variables at the macro level can be also found at the individual level. Since empirical results in research of the mechanism at work is contrasting and the literature is far from clear cut, after testing the two main contrasting thesis of *political socialization* and *self-selection*, our goal is to investigate in what ways different types of participation are related to feelings of political efficacy and to each other. In order to do this we interchange participation and political efficacy as dependent variables, testing endogenous causal links at first, that is to say, links between social associations membership, political participation and political efficacy, and controlling at a later stage also for the role played by pre-political resources of education and family political tradition.

## **7.2 The Relationship between Political and Civil Society Participation**

### ***7.2.1 The Political Socialization Model***

Tocquevillian theory has been at the centre of the debate of the relationship between voluntary associations and political participation in recent years. Following this tradition, associations function as ‘learning schools for democracy’. The main cause of the revival of attention for group membership and to its connection to democracy has been the social capital literature, made popular by Putnam’s work (1993, 2000), in which associations have an important mediating role in democratic society, since they usually embrace principles of egalitarian and voluntary participation and perform essential integrative tasks for a society. The underlying mechanism that lies at the core of ‘neo-Toquevillian’ theories is the process of political socialisation triggered by participating in civic organizations. Associations should help to create and enhance

social capital among their members, thanks to democratic attitudes, civic skills and cooperative values imparted to the individual in the course of interaction with the organisation (Putnam, 1993: 167). Associations of cooperation should socialize people with habit, with necessary practical skills for public life, and with civic virtues (Putnam, 2000: 338-339).

Conceptually similar to Putnam's ideas but working on a different level of analysis Verba *et al.* (1995) were pioneers in opening the 'black box' that contains the mechanism of how social participation intervenes at the individual level, acting between resources and political participation by proposing the CVM. The CVM model expands on previous SES<sup>99</sup> models by adding time, money, and civic skills as necessary resources for political participation, in particular in more demanding types of participation. The acquisition of civic skills (such as talking in public or writing official letters) is crucial since according to the theory these skills originate in non-political settings, such as citizens' involvement in work, church and non-political voluntary organisations<sup>100</sup>. Civic skills might enhance their capacity to act competently. Moreover, associations extend the social network of its members, provide access to politically relevant resources and information, and increase their perceptions of being able to influence politics (see also Granovetter 1973; Wollebaek and Selle, 2002). In their work they then stress the importance of voluntary associations by showing that these types of institutions along with helping to develop motivations to participate also increase individual politically relevant resources, as well as enhancing feelings of psychological engagement with politics such as feelings of political efficacy.

Authors differ on their views of the role given to different types of participation and association. In his work Putnam (2000) holds that it does not matter which type of association one participates in as long as involvement is active and goes beyond passive membership (interest organizations and sports club have similar civic effects on their members). The role given to active membership radically differs from the importance attributed to passive membership by Almond and Verba (1963) in *The Civic Culture*, where they show that not only passive members displayed a significantly greater level of civic competence than non-members across five countries, but they were also more supportive of democratic norms, and they shared a higher sense of political efficacy

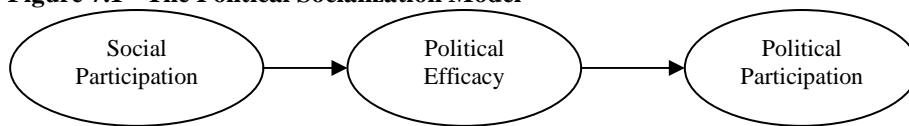
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<sup>99</sup> Social economic status

<sup>100</sup> As well as early in life in the family and at school

than non-members (see also Wollebaek and Selle, 2002; Hooghe, 2003; Teorell, 2003). Furthermore, Warren (2000:11) contends that there cannot be any generalization about the fact that associations enhance democracy, without taking into account their different characteristics. In sum, we can say that the direction of causality foreseen by supporters of neo-Tocquevillian thesis goes from involvement in non-political social organizations to political participation, through the mediation of individual political efficacy (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1 - The Political Socialization Model**



### **7.2.2 The self-selection model**

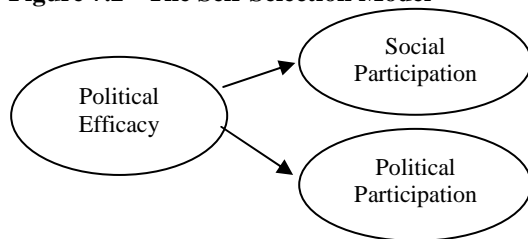
The main hypothesis competing with the *political socialization* model contends that individual attributes which promote participation in non-political associations also favour political participation (Erbe, 1964; Newton 1997, 1999a; Verba and Nie, 1972; Uslaner, 2002; Hooghe and Stolle, 2003; Armingeon, 2007). According to the ‘selection model’, it is thought that not everyone will have the same will to join voluntary organizations, but those that have certain characteristics and attitude will tend to participate in political affairs (Erbe, 1964). Along with socioeconomic characteristics, political efficacy is thought to be a predisposing attitude, which may stimulate personal political activity. The amount of influence that citizens feel they exercise on politics seems indeed to be very important to foster their will to participate in the political life (Nie *et al.* 1969). These characteristics, however, are not seen as predisposing citizens to participate only in political affairs, but also to participate in civil society associations (Hooghe, 2003, Armingeon 2007). Given the strong relationship between civil society organisation involvement and political participation that has been often found in research (van Deth 1997), it is not surprising that the same characteristics promoting one type of participation are found to also favour the other.

There is an extensive literature investigating which are the relevant individual characteristics that promote the two types of participation. The social centrality thesis already claimed that individuals with high socio-economical status “have more skills, more resources, more awareness of political themes, are more exposed to

communication flows concerning politics”<sup>101</sup> and are therefore more inclined to participate (Pizzorno, 1966; see also Milbrath and Goel 1977; Kohn and Schooler 1982; van Deth and Kreuter 1998). Causes of participation might vary with modes of participation, but generalizing we can say that the most important structural characteristics found in literature that affect participation are, along with socio-economic status, educational levels and the political tradition of the family.

Both types of participation are, however, also promoted by politically relevant psychological predispositions and attitudes such as high levels of political efficacy<sup>102</sup> (see Stolle 1998; Newton 1999b). Individuals who think they are able to interact with politicians and that think that they have high chances to make them take into account their opinion, are considered to be high in political efficacy and to be more likely to be involved in politics and participate (Badescu and Neller, 2007). According to this thesis, citizens with high resources and high efficacy are overrepresented in organisations, and participants of political organisations are not affected by their interaction with non-political associations. They hold that the correlation between social and political associations is not a causal link from one kind of participation to the other, but a spurious relationship (Figure 7.2).

**Figure 7.2 - The Self-Selection Model**



### ***7.2.3 Reversal Causation effects of political participation on political efficacy***

The two main alternative theories illustrated above set the following question of direction of causality concerning social associations and political participation: is it participation in non-political associations that enhances political efficacy and then political participation (*political socialization* model), or rather is it that people who feel more efficacious are more likely to participate in civil society as well as in politics (*self-selection* model)?

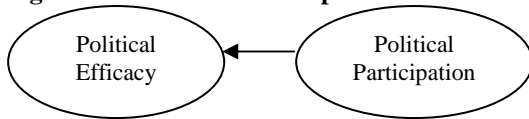
<sup>101</sup> Translation by the author

<sup>102</sup> Other characteristics are civil status, income, as well as political interest, civic duty, social trust, ideology, party identification, church attendance and skills (see Armingeon, 2007).

Despite the different direction of the link connecting efficacy and social participation, both rival theses state a causal link that goes from efficacy to political participation and neither of them addresses, at least explicitly, the possibility of reversal or reciprocal causation between political participation and efficacy. On the contrary, one of the basic assumptions in the participatory democracy literature is that not only a sense of political efficacy should lead to political activity but, presumably, participating in politics also enhances and cultivates feelings of political efficacy. Classic authors such as Rousseau and John Stuart Mill or more recent authors like Pateman (1970) and Thompson (1970) had claimed the positive effects of political participation on individuals. Political participation, according to them, should lead to higher levels of political skills and of perceptions of self-competence (internal efficacy). On the other hand, 'mobilization of support' theorists such as Ginsberg (1982), Weissberg (1975), and Wright (1976) believed that not only higher levels of internal efficacy leads to participation, but the citizen who participates develops external efficacy and makes further participation in the system more likely.

In general, then, there is a causal link going from political participation to political efficacy (Figure 7.3). Unfortunately, also in this case, empirical tests at the individual level have been few and mainly report the strong relationship between efficacy and participation, only suggesting that the relationship might involve some measures of reciprocal causation (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Bennet 1975). A relevant exception is constituted by Finkel (1985, 1987), whose studies find a reciprocal causal mechanism linking political efficacy to political participation in the US and in Germany. Using structural equation modelling he tested different models on *American National Election Studies* data, and showed that in the US both internal and external efficacy have an impact on electoral and campaign activity, while these political activities have an impact on external efficacy. Moreover, he suggests that different, more time-consuming and involving modes of participation might have an effect also on internal efficacy or on other political attitudes (Finkel, 1985). He finds that also in Germany voting influences external efficacy in a positive way, while campaign activities influence feelings of internal political efficacy. Peaceful protest has little effect on either attitude, and aggressive behaviour has strong negative effects on external efficacy (Finkel, 1987). These studies, however, do not take into account the link with social participation.

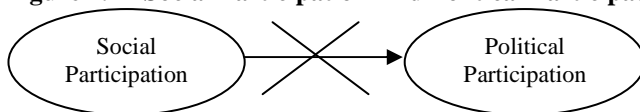
**Figure 7.3 - Political Participation Fosters Political Efficacy**



**7.2.4 No Causal Link between Civil Society and Political Participation**

A fourth answer to the causal relationship between social associations, political efficacy and political participation is also available in literature that however denies the very core of the approach. It claims that involvement in social associations is not at all related with political participation (Figure 7.4). Reasons to believe this lie in different factors. One explanation is simple and pragmatic: limited resources of time in contemporary society oblige people to select in which way to participate in public life, or to shift from one kind of activity to the other for frustration with the current one (van Deth, 1997). Other explanations are more substantial. There is a possibility that people might belong to organizations that actively discourage conventional political activity (Smith and Freedman, 1972). Moreover, multiple memberships in organizations with competitive interests may experience a lower desire to become politically active (Milbrath, 1965). Finally, according to van Deth (2000), higher social capital in society and participation in social associations on the one hand should contribute to higher levels of political interest but on the other should simultaneously lead to a lower level of political saliency. Resources, higher skills and abilities facilitate interest in politics, but at the same time politics become less important because it has to compete with plenty of other non-political interests. Since it is logical to assume that political saliency is the first step for deciding to join political organizations, a lower level of political saliency makes participation less likely. According to this view, the saliency of politics does not seem to come from participating in social associations, which can rather be considered responsible for making it less salient. It probably comes instead either from contingent political scenarios, which makes politics salient only in certain occasions, or from strongly politicized family or origins.

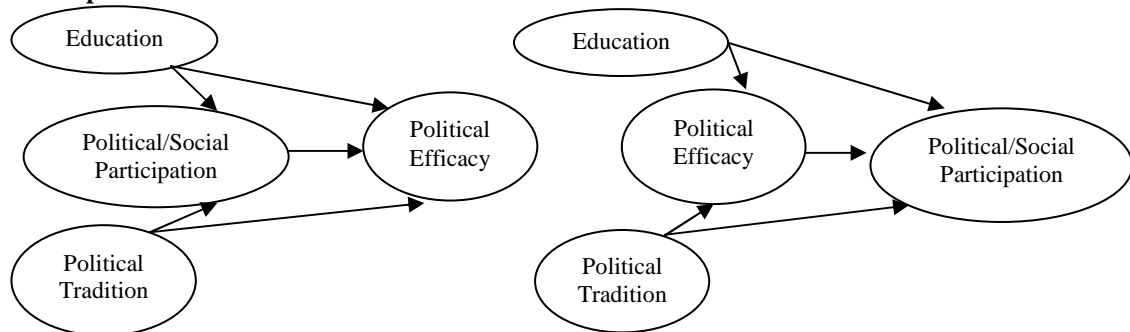
**Figure 7.4 - Social Participation And Political Participation Are Separated From Each Other**



**7.2.5 Pre-political Resources: the role of education and family political tradition**

Almost taking for granted the great influence of ascribed characteristics such as gender, age and territory both on participation (Armingeon, 2007; Corbetta and Ceccarini, 2010) and on political efficacy (Segatti and Vezzoni, 2007), in Chapter 1 we saw how a crucial role in affecting both political efficacy and participation is played by the pre-political agencies of *political socialization*, and particularly by educational institutions and by families. In general, we can say that people tend to participate in associations and to have higher political efficacy when they are highly educated or when they come from a family with a strong political tradition (Figure 7.5).

**Figure 7.5 - The Role of Education and Family Political Tradition on Political Efficacy and Participation**



This happens on the one hand because both education and strong family political traditions help to increase feelings of political efficacy by helping citizens to better understand, evaluate and handle frustrations originated by politics. It is well known in literature that individuals with these pre-political resources are also more inclined to participate both socially and politically. Education as well as family political traditions provide citizens with the necessary cultural instruments to orientate themselves in the political world. On the other hand, educational institutions and families also transmit dominant values of democratic societies, including political orientations, political attitudes and behavioural norms. Education enhances political interest by providing cognitive skills to citizens, and to a certain extent strong family political traditions could function as substitute of education because they are likely to encourage disadvantaged sections of society in getting involved in organizations. Among those who participate in some kind of associations and also have high political efficacy, it is then likely to find highly educated individuals, whose parents were interested in politics when they were



adolescents (Pizzorno, 1966; Almond and Verba, 1963; Schlozman *et al.*, 1999; Corbetta and Ceccarini, 2010, Verba, Nie *et al.* 1978, Blais 2000).

### 7.3 Dataset description

A requirement for testing empirically the causal links hypothesised at the theoretical level is a longitudinal research design that (partly) reduces the risks of endogeneity of cross-sectional data. Endogeneity is a problem of social research in which a relationship between variables exist but it is not possible to detect the direction of the causal path since causes and consequences are so close to each other that they can be confused. In particular, we then need panel data, in which a representative sample of citizens are interviewed more than once at different points in time. We decide to use a three-wave national election panel (*Itanes*) because it is the only dataset of this kind available at the national level that suits our interests. The surveys were conducted by an Italian research centre institute (*Doxa*) through computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) in the first two waves of 2001 and 2004, and through computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in the third wave of 2006<sup>103</sup>. In 2001, 3209 people were interviewed. The second wave (2004) involved 1882 respondents, representing the 58.6 percent of 2001, whereas the wave of 2006 involved 1048 respondents, representing the 32.7 percent of the respondents in 2001 and the 55.6 percent of 2004 (see *Appendix IV* for questions wording).

#### 7.3.1 Measurement and Methodology

As for testing the *individual modernization* thesis, also in this case we use membership measures for each type of political and social participation, without making any distinction between active or passive membership<sup>104</sup>. We encountered some problems in the data coding and we thus decided to exclude some cases. Although in this way we might have excluded some of the most interesting cases, we preferred to run our analyses excluding biased cases (see *Appendix V* for the methodological note on excluded cases and *Appendix VI* for respondents characteristics).

We see in Table 7.1 that besides voting, political party and trade unions membership, we have also measures for professional organizations, activist associations, civic associations and leisure associations. For measuring the feeling of

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<sup>103</sup> Held from May 18 to June 20 in 2001; from April 3 to June 30 in 2004; from May 5 to June 1 in 2006.

<sup>104</sup> 1=member; 0=non-member

political efficacy, we used once again the most common indicators introduced during the 50s in US elections studies. Political efficacy has been measured with four questions in both 2001 and 2004, while only two with 2006.

A dummy efficacy index has also been constructed as in Chapter 5, distinguishing between medium/high efficacy and low/no efficacy. We use this index only for the descriptive analysis of next chapter, while for the hypothesis testing we use confirmatory factor analysis, as we explain better later on. Also for pre-political resources we use only two levels for distinguishing between no/low and medium/high education and no/low and medium/high family political tradition, recoding measures in dummy variables<sup>105</sup>.

**Table 7.1 - Variables in Panel**

Latent variables	Observed Variables	2001	2004	2006	Measure
<b>Endogenous Variables</b>					
Political Participation	Voting	X	X	X	Yes/No
	Political Party Membership	X	X		Yes/No
Trade Union Participation	Membership	X	X		Yes/No
Social Association Participation	Professional Membership	X	X		Yes/No
	Activist Membership	X	X		Yes/No
	Civic Membership	X	X		Yes/No
	Leisure Membership	X	X		Yes/No
Internal Political Efficacy	People like me have no say	X	X	X	No-Low/ Medium-High
	Politics is too complex	X	X		No-Low/ Medium-High
External Political Efficacy	Politicians soon lose contact	X	X	X	No-Low/ Medium-High
	Parties only interested in votes	X	X		No-Low/ Medium-High
(Index of Political Efficacy)	(Variable Constructed)	X	X	X	No-Low/ Medium-High
<b>Covariates</b>					
Education	Education degree obtained	X	X	X	No-Low/ Medium-High
Family Political Tradition	Interest in politics of father when 14	X			No-Low/ Medium-High
Age	Age	X	X	X	Years
Gender	Gender	X			Male/Female
Territory	Geo-political area	X			North/RedBelt/South

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Voting in 2004 is a measure for voting recall.

In accordance with what we found at the beginning of Chapter 6, also panel data show us that different types of political and social associations do not seem to be much correlated. In Table 7.2 we report results from Pearson's correlations. Overall, it seems that in Italy the relationship between parties and civil society associations does not

<sup>105</sup> Education: No education, Elementary and Mid School=0; High School and University=1. Family political tradition: father when respondent was 14 was 'not interested' or 'only a little' interested in politics=0; father was 'quite' or 'very interested' in politics=1.

exist, and only a handful of people participate in more than one civil society association. Interestingly, panel data do not even report an overlapping membership between political parties and trade unions<sup>106</sup>.

**Table 7.2 - Strength of the link between different types of organizational participation**

2001	Political Party	Trade Union	Professional	Activist	Civic	Leisure
Political Party	1.0000					
Trade Union	0.1061	1.0000				
Professional	0.0829	0.0011	1.0000			
Activist	-0.0472	-0.0068	-0.0118	1.0000		
Civic	0.0656	-0.0929	-0.0874	0.0919*	1.0000	
Leisure	0.0280	-0.0335	-0.0487	0.0461	0.1161*	1.0000
2004	Political Party	Trade Union	Professional	Activist	Civic	Leisure
Political Party	1.0000					
Trade Union	-0.0232	1.0000				
Professional	-0.0174	-0.0106	1.0000			
Activist	-0.0130	0.0347	-0.0250	1.0000		
Civic	-0.0850*	-0.0771	-0.1838*	0.1174*	1.0000	
Leisure	0.0119	0.0216	-0.0591	-0.0489	-0.1291*	1.0000

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Two-tailed Pearson's correlation. \*p<.005

In 2001 only civic associations report significant links with activist and with leisure associations, while in 2004 a significant correlation exists only between civic associations and all other associations with the exception of trade unions. Other correlations are not significant, quite low, and sometimes even negative, giving us a first hint that also at the analytical level members of political and social associations in Italy are quite different persons.

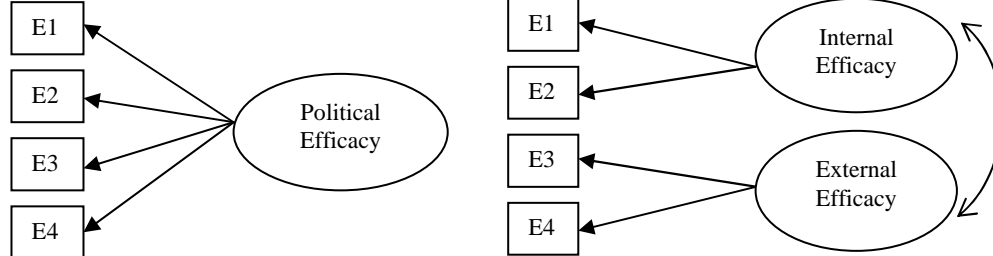
After constructing our hypothesis based on the main existing theories, we are analyse data with structural equation modelling (SEM), using the programme *LISREL*<sup>107</sup>. SEM provides a synthesis of several types of linear analysis, such as factor analysis, multiple regressions and path analysis: through a correlation matrix of variables included in a specific model it is possible to estimate parameters that correspond to the strength and direction of relationship that the researcher wants to test. SEM is quite useful when using panel data since it is possible to measure the causality

<sup>106</sup> Since we are dealing with dummies tetrachoric correlations would be more appropriate, since using Pearson correlations method might lead to an underestimation of the correlation. Tetrachoric correlation is a special case of the polychoric correlation that can be applied when two variables are dichotomous. Polychoric correlation is an estimation technique for the correlation of normally distributed continuous latent variables. Also in our case tetrachoric correlations are stronger but membership in parties is still not significantly correlated with social associations, with the only exceptions of trade unions (.15) and professional associations (.20) in 2001<sup>106</sup>. Yet, since the change between the two correlations is not dramatic and since tetrachoric correlations assume that the variable underlying each dichotomous measure is normally distributed, we prefer to stick to Pearson's correlations.

<sup>107</sup> See Bollen (1989), Jöreskog and Sörbom (1989).

of a relationship while at the same time to reduce measurement error by controlling prior levels of a variable<sup>108</sup>.

**Figure 7.6 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis Models for the Observed Variables of Political Efficacy**



The first step is to run two confirmatory factor analyses of the four political efficacy items used in the first and second panel waves, in order to decide whether one or two latent factors exist, as we see in Figure 7.6.

**Table 7.3 - Fitting parameters of data to the two models in 2001 and 2004**

	Chi2	Degree of Freedom	RMSEA
2001			
Model a: only 1 latent dimension	19.13	2	.053
Model b: 2 latent dimensions a	41.48	3	.065
2004			
Model a: only 1 latent dimension	18.59	2	.068
Model b: 2 latent dimensions a	117.33	3	.145

Source: Itanes panel data 2001-04-06. Own elaboration of data.

<sup>a</sup>Restrictions: q1=q2 and q3=q4

We clearly find that the two latent factors of internal and external efficacy are very highly correlated both in 2001 and in 2004, and in Table 7.3 we see that the model with one single latent factor for political efficacy score much better than the model with two latent factors. This suggests that in Italy only one factor of political efficacy exists, and it is not possible to distinguish between internal and external dimensions (see also Segatti and Vezzoni, 2007). In the structural model of the analyses we then include the four observed variables as relating to one single latent variable.

<sup>108</sup> Since we are dealing with dummies and we are using correlation matrix when running our models in LISREL, we should use tetrachoric correlations. Yet, running models with these correlations does not dramatically improve results. Thus, we decided to use Pearson's correlations so to avoid problems connected to tetrachoric measures. A complete descriptive analysis of data clarifies how these data behave in the panel. Moreover, we further analyze our results with the programme Latent Gold, performing a latent class analysis.

#### **7.4 The Structural Model and Our Hypotheses**

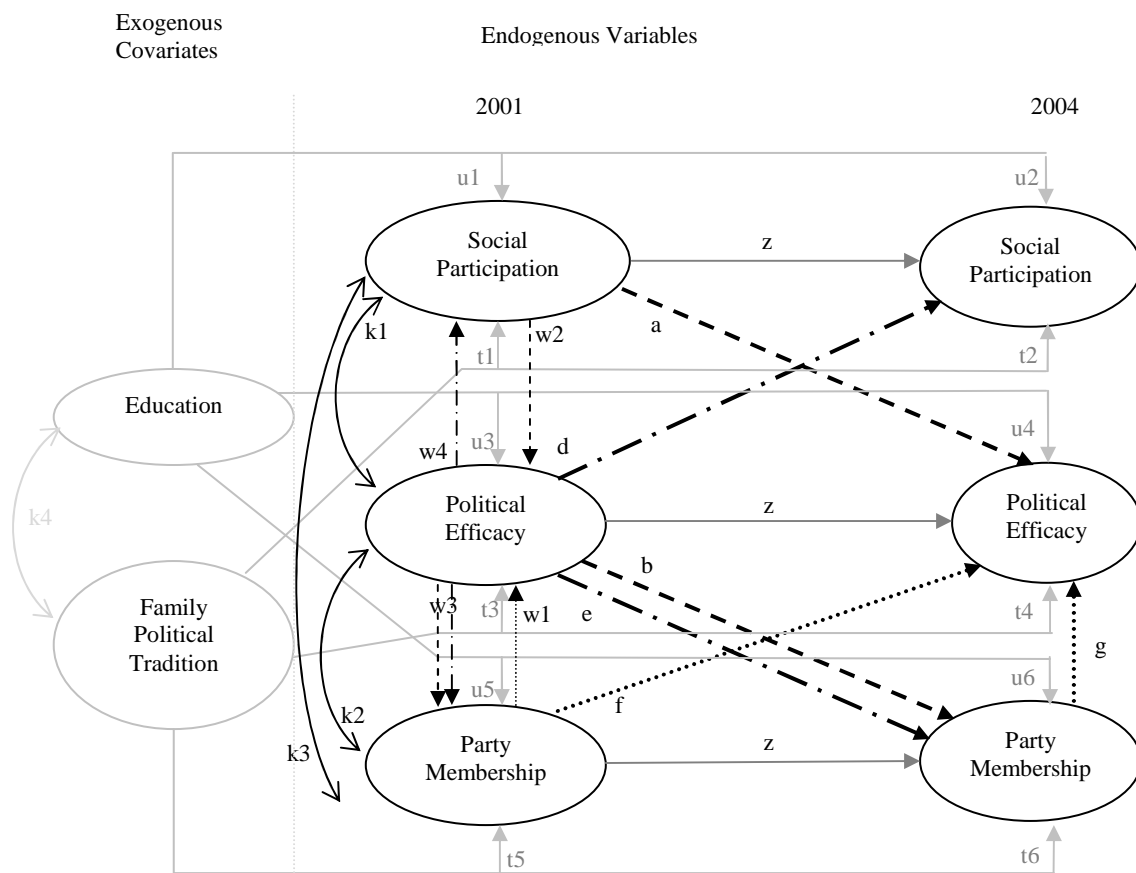
We now proceed in defining the hypothesis in order to test different theories with the Italian panel dataset. As mentioned earlier, since literature has not always been very clear in establishing the direction of causality at work at the individual level, and since causal empirical investigations are few and do not solve doubts, we decide to construct a series of hypotheses in which the dependent variable changes. Indeed, not always the variable to explain is political participation, but we alternatively consider also social participation and political efficacy as the last ring of the causal chain. For social participation we mean participation in civil society associations, namely activist, professional, civic and leisure associations. Although in Chapter 3 we defined trade union as a category half-way between political and civil society organizations, having to choose in this chapter where to place this type of participation in the causal chain, we decide to treat it as the most politicized of social associations and not as a form of political participation. Indeed, since trade unions have no official representation in government, participation in these associations cannot be considered as political as parties. Finally, for political participation we mean being a member of a political party as well as going to vote at national elections.

We start by describing the general structural model for political party membership represented in Figure 7.7. This model includes the endogenous variables of social participation, political party membership, and political efficacy, along with exogenous covariates variables of educational levels and family political traditions. An exogenous variable is an independent variable that affects a model without being affected by it, while an endogenous variable is a dependent variable generated within a model, whose value is affected by a relationship in that model. In the model we show only latent variables, while we choose not to show observed variables and structural disturbances for having a more parsimonious and clear picture. We should however note that for both types of participation each latent variable is connected to one observed variable, while political efficacy is connected through confirmatory factor analysis to four observed variables for each of the first two panel waves (2001 and 2004) and to two observed variables in the third panel wave (2006).

In the model we can see that links between variables are all labelled with an alphabetical letter. Correlations between the three endogenous variables in 2001 are

labelled with the letter *k*, as well as the correlations between the two covariates (exogenous). Stability effects, namely the link between a variable at time2 and its previous variable at time1, are indicated with the letter *z*. Finally, cross-lagged effects, namely a variable at time 2 being predicted by the other variable of interest at time 1<sup>109</sup>, are indicated by different alphabetical letters and constitute the main relationships we are interested to test.

**Figure 7.7 - The General Structural Model for Political Party Membership**



Note: z=stability links; k=correlations; different types of dashed arrows=cross-lagged effects referring to different theories.

The hypothesized effect between the three endogenous variables of 2001 when we introduce the two covariates variables in the model are indicated with the letter *w*. Links between exogenous variables and endogenous variables are labelled with light grey arrows, stability effects are indicated with dark grey arrows, while cross-lagged effects between endogenous variables are labelled with different dashed black arrows. In the next paragraphs we describe each of these effects indicating which causal link we

<sup>109</sup> With few exceptions of indirect link between variables measured at Time 2 and other variables measured at Time 2 that can be found both in Figure 7 as well as in the identical figure for voting behaviour (Figure 8).

decide to use in our models in order to test the hypothesis connected to the theories we presented above.

Our first concern is to test the two complete theoretical models of *political socialization* and *self-selection* that establish different causal links between social participation and political participation. According to the model of *political socialization*, participation in social associations should lead to higher skills and to higher political efficacy as a consequence of the participatory experience. For this reason we believe that social participation in 2001 should influence the amount of political efficacy of 2004 (*a*). Then, increasing levels of political efficacy should lead to political participation across time. We then include a link going from political efficacy in 2001 to political party membership of 2004 (*b*). If we had a party membership measure in the third panel wave we could draw a link from political efficacy 2004 to political party membership 2006.

According to the model of *self-selection*, people with higher levels of trust and political efficacy are more likely to join both social and political associations. For this reason we include a link that goes from political efficacy 2001 to social participation 2004 (*d*) and one that goes from political efficacy 2001 to political party membership 2006 (*e*). This latter link that has already been tested in the socialization hypothesis, but we gave a different letter to it in order to avoid confusion. We then construct the first set of hypothesis as follows.

If the dominant thesis on *political socialization* is correct, there should be a positive effect going from involvement through membership in (different types of) social associations to political party membership, through an increase of levels of political efficacy.

*H7.1a: Membership in social associations has a positive effect on political efficacy (a) and political efficacy has a positive effect on political party membership (b)*

If the opposite thesis of *self-selection* is correct, involvement through membership in political parties, as well as in (different types of) civil society associations should be due to resources of efficacy that members already had before joining the organisations.

*H7.1b: Political efficacy has a positive effect both on the decision to join social associations (d) and political parties (e)*

Following the dominant view in literature, we finally hypothesize that the *political socialization* model fits our data better than the *self-selection* model.

*H7.1c: The political socialization model (a-b) fits our data better than the self-selection model (d-e)*

After testing the two complete alternative models, we proceed by testing separately the two parts of the *political socialization* and the *self-selection* models, investigating single links between variables in separate models, for each of the social association types. The sets of hypotheses that follow disentangle then the mechanism linking endogenous variables to each other by exploring causal links between two latent variables at a time and estimating the strength of relationships in different directions between efficacy and political, as well as social participation.

Thus, we first assume that political efficacy has an effect on different types of participation. If somebody has high political efficacy, s/he feels capable of influencing ‘society’ or ‘politics’, and is more likely to get involved in any type of civil society organisation or political party. As we saw before, the link from political efficacy to political party membership is presented both by the *political socialization* (b) and the *self-selection* theory (e), while the link from political efficacy to social participation belongs exclusively to the *self-selection* thesis.

*H7.2a: Political efficacy has a positive effect on political party membership (Political socialization thesis=b; Self-Selection thesis= e)*

*H7.2b: Political efficacy has a positive effect on social participation (Self-selection thesis=d)*



However, we also consider the *reverse causation* of the links tested with Hypothesis 7.2a and 7.2b. We saw that on the one hand *political socialization* assumes that participation in civil society associations provides citizens with higher political efficacy (a). On the other hand, several other theories of participatory democracy and mobilization of support assume that participation in politics also lead to higher levels of political efficacy. As tested by Finkel (1985; 1987) we then draw a link from political party membership 2001 to political efficacy 2004 (f), as well as from political party membership 2004 to political efficacy 2006 (g). In both cases participation in associations should lead to higher levels of efficacy since on the one hand it enhances politically relevant skills and perceptions of self-competence, and on the other it enhances level of (political) trust and system responsiveness.

*H7.3a: Social participation has a positive effect on political efficacy  
(Political socialization thesis=a)*

*H7.3b: Political party membership has a positive effect on political efficacy  
(Reversal causation theory=f/g)*

We finally know that pre-political resources of education and family political tradition are the most important determinants of political participation, political efficacy and social capital (Almond and Verba, 1963; Schlozman *et al*, 1999; Corbetta and Ceccarini, 2010). If we include covariates in our models we are able to explain the correlation between the latent variables in 2001 that we could not test in previous hypotheses. We want to test the role of education and political tradition on the different causal hypotheses presented above. We then introduce links that from education (*u*) and from family political tradition (*t*) go to positively influence social participation in 2001 (*u1-t1*) and 2004 (*u2-t2*), political efficacy in 2001 (*u3-t3*) and 2006 (*u4-t4*), as well as political party membership in 2001 (*u5-t5*) and 2004 (*u6-t6*). On the basis of previous hypotheses we then assume that:

*H7.4a/b: Education and political traditions have a positive effect, mediated  
by political party membership (H4a – Reverse causation thesis: f/g) or*

*social participation (H4b – Political socialization theory a), on political efficacy.*

*H7.4.c/d: Education and political traditions have a positive effect, mediated by political efficacy, on political party membership (H4c – Political Socialization thesis: b; Self-selection thesis: e) and on membership in social associations (H4d – Self-selection thesis: d).*

Finally, the last set of hypotheses relates to the strength of the link between efficacy and different types of social and political associations. As seen in previous chapters, civil society associations are not all the same (Warren, 2001). Some of them have for instance a politicised dimension (Donovan *et al.* 2004) even if they are not political in the strict sense. They indeed do not have any legal representation in parliament like political parties, but they frequently solicit the change of some laws. These associations are notable labour unions, that we have treated so far as a category of associations half way between political parties and civil associations, but, to a lesser extent also other associations such as professional and activist organizations (such as environmental groups or civil rights associations). Civic associations are instead thought to have a lower degree of politicization, while leisure associations are usually apolitical. Within the two main alternative hypotheses it is possible to see two perspectives in this respect.

According to the majority of *political socialization* thesis supporters, the level of politicization of associations does not matter. All types of social voluntary associations, even the more remote to politics, will be able to provide pre-political skills. Accordingly, all types of associations will have the same relation strength with political efficacy. Although the relationship goes in a different direction, this should also be true if we follow the reasoning of the *self-selection* thesis: if one has certain individual characteristics, such as high socioeconomic status and high political efficacy, one will be more likely to be a participatory citizen and will participate in all types of associations, regardless of their level of politicization. In both cases we should then find the same relationship strength between political efficacy and any type of social associations.

*H7.5a: Regardless of the direction of causation, the link between social participation and political efficacy is positive and has similar strength for all types of voluntary associations.*

The alternative point of view sees instead a difference in different types of associations. Once again, although they theorize a different causal direction, this view is in line with both *self-selection* and *political socialization* theories. If we follow the reasoning of the *self-selection* thesis, one might think that citizens join the most politicized type of organizations (professional, activist) if they are in line with their main goals and therefore in order to defend an individual or societal cause (Newton, 1990). In this respect, prior characteristics of individuals are important to self-select themselves into certain forms of associations. And if they join an association that has been constituted to defend a cause, it is also likely that their levels of political efficacy is high because they know that this cause will be hardly brought forward without any pressure of the organization on government and on the political system (van der Meer and van Ingen, 2009). At the same time, however, it is possible that people join the most politicized types of associations for different reasons than pursuing a cause, such as finding meaning in life, expressing their social identity, or contributing to the well being of others (Almond and Verba, 1963; Putnam, 2000).

According to the *political socialization* thesis, associations provide individuals with politically relevant skills. And if it is true that all associations should be able to foster them, it is certainly more likely in politicized associations. This is so because these associations, in order to pursue their political goals, might directly teach individuals the skills to deal with politics. Moreover, in these associations it is more likely to meet other individuals that have politically relevant skills and the mindset to pursue political goals. Accordingly, their sense of political efficacy is likely to increase more than joining associations with no political cause to pursue. In both cases, we should find that the most politicized civil society organizations have stronger links with political efficacy than less politicized organizations. Thus:

*H7.5b: Regardless of the direction of causation, the link between civil society participation and efficacy is positive and stronger for associations with higher levels of politicization.*

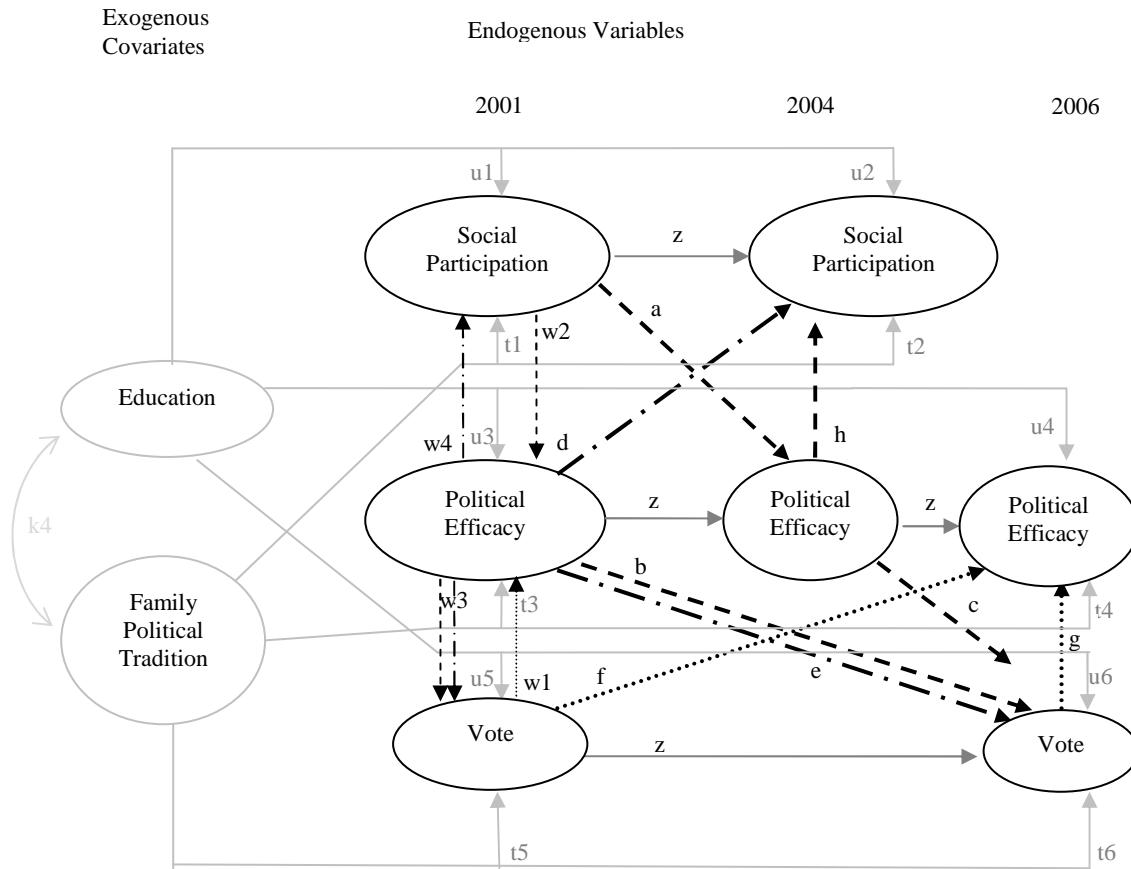
In Chapter 3 we placed associations on a continuum of politicization in which political parties are the political organization per excellence, while trade unions are organizations half way between properly political organizations and civil society associations. Then, the most politicized social associations are thought to be activist and professional associations, followed by associations with less explicit political goals such as civic organizations, and finally followed by non-political leisure associations.

Finally, we can say that both *self-selection* thesis and the reversal causation thesis by Finkel claim a strong link between political efficacy and political participation. Indeed, political efficacy is one of the most important predisposing variables to political activity (*self-selection* thesis) and thanks to participation in political activities an individual acquires more political efficacy (reversal causation thesis). For these reasons, regardless of the direction of the relationship, we construct a final hypothesis that holds that the connection between political efficacy and political parties is stronger than the connection between political efficacy and other civil society associations:

*H7.5c: Regardless of the direction of causation, the link between political party membership and political efficacy is positive and stronger than the link between participation in civil society associations and political efficacy.*

The exact same sets of hypotheses that we have just constructed for political party membership can be also constructed for electoral turnout, substituting ‘political party membership’ with ‘voting’. The hypotheses relate to the structural model that we find in Figure 7.8, which is formally identical to the structural model for party membership, but that it has been adapted to the different panel waves in which voting behaviour was measured (2001 and 2006). Moreover, we add a link for testing the *political socialization* model that goes from political efficacy in 2004 to voting behaviour in 2006 (c).

**Figure 7.8 - The General Structural Model for Voting Behaviour**



Note: z=stability links; k=correlations; different types of dashed arrows=cross-lagged effects referring to different theories.

A summary of the alphabetical letters used to describe causal links in the model of Figure 7.7 and 7.8 can be found in the Table below, along with the theories and to the hypothesis 1 to 4 to which they refer (Table 7.4). The importance of different levels of politicization of associations is instead summarized in Table 7.5, indicating with the symbol ‘+’ the strength of connection with political efficacy compared to other association types, per each of the formulated hypothesis.

In sum, in order to shed light on the causal relationship between political and social participation in Italy, as well as with political efficacy at the individual level the structure of the analysis is as follows. We understand political participation as being a member of a political party and as voting, while social participation is for us membership in any type of civil society associations, namely trade unions, activist, professional, civic and leisure organizations.

## The Causal Relationship Between Efficacy & Participation

**Table 7.4 - Causal Links Description of the Structural Model for Party Membership and Voting Behaviour (H7.1-H7.4)**

Theories	Latent Variables (Endogenous)		Covariates (Exogenous)
		Social Participation, Political Efficacy, Political Participation	Education, Political Tradition
Political Socialization (H7.2a, H7.3a, H7.4b, H7.4c)	Political Party Membership	<b>a</b> = Social Participation 2001 → Political Efficacy 2004 (H7.3a) <b>b</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Party Membership 2004 (H7.2a) <b>w2</b> = Social Participation 2001 → Political Efficacy 2001 (H7.3a) <b>w3</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Party Membership 2001 (H7.2a)	Education: u1-u6 Political Tradition: t1-t6 (H7.4b, H7.4c)
	Voting	<b>a</b> = Social Participation 2001 → Political Efficacy 2004 (H7.3a) <b>b</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Voting 2006 (H7.2a) <b>c</b> = Political Efficacy 2004 → Voting 2006 (H7.2a) <b>w2</b> = Social Participation 2001 → Political Efficacy 2001 (H7.3a) <b>w3</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Voting 2001 (H7.2a)	Education: u1-u6 Political Tradition: t1-t6 (H7.4b, H7.4c)
Self-Selection (H7.2a, H7.2b, H7.4c, H7.4d)	Political Party Membership	<b>d</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Social Participation 2004 (H7.2b) <b>e</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Party Membership 2004 (H7.2a) <b>w3</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Party Membership 2001 (H7.2a) <b>w4</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Social Participation 2001 (H7.2b)	Education: u1-u6 Political Tradition: t1-t6 (H7.4c, H7.4d)
	Voting	<b>d</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Social Participation 2004 (H7.2b) <b>e</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Voting 2006 (7.H2a) <b>w3</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Voting 2001 (H7.2a) <b>w4</b> = Political Efficacy 2001 → Social Participation 2001 (H7.2b)	Education: u1-u6 Political Tradition: t1-t6 (H7.4c, H7.4d)
Reversal Causation (H7.3b, H7.4a)	Political Party Membership	<b>f</b> = Party Membership 2001 → Political Efficacy 2004 (H7.3b) <b>g</b> = Party Membership 2004 → Political Efficacy 2006 (H7.3b) <b>w1</b> = Party Membership 2001 → Political Efficacy 2001 (H7.3b)	Education: u1-u6 Political Tradition: t1-t6 (H7.4a)
	Voting	<b>f</b> = Party Membership 2001 → Political Efficacy 2006 (H7.3b) <b>g</b> = Voting 2006 → Political Efficacy 2006 (H7.3b) <b>w1</b> = Voting 2001 → Political Efficacy 2001 (H7.3b)	Education: u1-u6 Political Tradition: t1-t6 (H7.4a)

Note: Alphabetical letters refers to the arrows of Figures 7.7 and 7.8

**Table 7.5 – The importance of the politicization level of associations (H5)**

Link Political Efficacy - Participation in Associations	Political Party	Trade Union	Activist Association	Professional Association	Civic Association	Leisure Association
Civil associations have the same link with political efficacy (H5a)		++	++	++	++	++
Politicized civil society associations have stronger links than less politicized associations (H5b)		++++	+++	+++	++	+
Political associations have stronger links than civil society associations (H5c)	+++++					

We want to test the first sets of hypothesis investigating the *political socialization* thesis (H7.1a), the *self-selection* thesis (H7.1b), and then to investigate whether the former model is better than the latter (H7.1c). The second set of hypotheses deals with the link between social participation and political efficacy, investigating the two reversal causal directions (H7.2a and H7.2b). The third set of hypotheses investigates the link between political participation and political efficacy, also investigating both causal directions (H7.3a and H7.3b). The fourth set of hypothesis controls for the role of education and political tradition in the second and third set of hypotheses (H7.4a, H7.4b, H7.4c, H7.4d). Finally, the fifth set of hypothesis deals with the importance (or not) of levels of politicization of associations.

According to a certain point of view the link between political efficacy and civil society associations should be of the same strength for all associations (H7.5a). According to the alternative point of view, the link should be stronger for the most politicized associations such as trade unions, professional and activist associations (H7.5b). Finally, according to a third point of view, the link between political efficacy and political party membership should be stronger than the link between political efficacy and participation in any other social association (H7.5c). In the next chapter we run these analyses using structural equation modelling with the three-wave national elections panel data.





## CHAPTER 8.

### THE POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION VS. THE SELF-SELECTION THESIS

#### 8.1 Introduction

After having constructed the hypothesis to investigate the causal relationship between political participation (understood both as party membership and voting), membership in social associations and political efficacy, in this chapter we first present a short descriptive analysis of the values of interest measured in different panel waves. We then run our five sets of hypothesis as presented in the previous chapter through structural equation modelling. Finally, as last step of the analysis, we integrate and support the structural equation model analysis with a latent class analysis, investigating different profiles of participatory behaviour across the population.

#### 8.2 Panel Descriptive Analysis

We start our analysis by reporting univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics of the Italian national election panel measures after the exclusion of bias cases. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in this section the measure of political efficacy is reported as an index that distinguishes between no/low political efficacy and medium/high political efficacy.

**Table 8.1 – Frequency of Efficacy and Participation (% over N)**

	Medium/High Efficacy	Vote	Political Parties	Trade Unions	Professional Associations	Activist Associations	Civic Associations	Leisure Associations
2001	16	94	9	22	33	2	4	7
(N)	(3022)	(3198)	(580)	(331)	(328)	(581)	(581)	(581)
2004	19		6	13	27	10	23	15
(N)	(1817)		(583)	(343)	(343)	(583)	(583)	(583)
2006	34	94						
(N)	(984)	(1044)						

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Table 8.1 shows that aggregated political efficacy increased from 2001 to 2004 (from 16% to 19%) and increased even more in 2006 (reaching 34%<sup>110</sup>), while (self-reported) voting at national elections stayed at constant (high) levels between 2001 and 2006 (94%). Concerning organization participation, we can see that political and economic organization (trade unions and professional associations) membership in our sample has

<sup>110</sup> Even though in 2006 measures are less reliable since they are based only on two indicators instead of four

decreased from the first wave (2001) to the second, while on the contrary other social organizations have increased their membership rate.

Somehow contradicting the stability of aggregated data across time that we found in Chapter 4, we find that at the individual level, changes between waves in the efficacy index are quite consistent, around 20 and 30 percent (Table 8.2). Measures of participation are slightly more stable; the majority of interviewees in political and social participation did not change their membership status from 2001 to 2004, while between 7 and 8 percent of our sample moved from one condition to the other, with the exception of activist association memberships which only changed by less than 4 percentage points, and trade unions and professional organizations for which about 19 and 20 percent changed status. It seems that, in the short period, participation is a more stable variable at the individual level than political efficacy is.

**Table 8.2 - Change of variables in the three panel waves (Column %)**

	Efficacy Index		Vote	Political Party	Trade Union	Professional Association	Activist Association	Civic Association	Leisure Association
	01-04	01-06	01-06	01-04	01-04	01-04	01-04	01-04	01-04
Stable	82	67	92	93	81	80	96	91	92
Not-Stable	18	33	8	7	19	20	4	9	8
(N)	(1719)	(959)	(1041)	(580)	(296)	(299)	(1869)	(1867)	(1871)

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Percentages agreeing (more or less strongly) with all the statements for efficacy, and percentage of membership for participation

**Table 8.3 - Political Efficacy Among Participant and Non Participant (Column %)**

Efficacy	Political Party				Trade Union				Professional Association				Activist Association			
	2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2004	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No/Low	82	60	82	48	80	77	78	77	79	78	77	83	80	77	81	72
Med/High	18	40	18	52	20	23	22	23	21	22	23	<u>17</u>	20	23	19	28
(N)	(549)		(552)		(309)		(323)		(312)		(323)		(550)		(552)	
	Civic Association				Leisure Association				Vote							
	2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2006					
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes				
No/Low	80	90	79	83	81	66	81	73	92	84	80	65				
Med/High	20	<u>10</u>	21	<u>17</u>	19	34	19	27	8	16	20	35				
(N)	(550)		(552)		(550)		(552)		(3013)		(981)					

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: underlined numbers are those in which non-members have more efficacy than members

From bivariate crossing we can see that a connection between efficacy and participation exists in our data. We find that people who vote and belong (even passively) to some political or social organization are more efficacious than non-members (with the exception of civic associations in both years, and for professional associations in 2004).

This is particularly true for people belonging to political party organizations, and to a lesser extent to leisure associations (Table 8.3).

Moreover, the majority of citizens that participate in either civil or political life in our sample have higher education and stronger political tradition compared to non-participants (See *Appendix VI*). For education, this seems not to be true for members of political parties and of leisure associations (in 2004), since the percentage of highly educated members is similar to that of non-members. It is also not true for members of trade unions and for civic organizations (in 2001), since the percentages of highly educated members is smaller than that of non-members. This is in line with what we found in Chapter 6, that trade unions are still able to attract more poorly educated people than well educated. Moreover, people that decided to join trade unions in 2001, as well as those who joined professional and civic associations in 2004 do not differ in the level of political tradition of their family or origin compared to non-members.

### 8.3 Testing Theories and Hypotheses

#### 8.3.1 *The Political Socialization thesis vs. The Self-Selection thesis*

We turn now to test the first set of hypotheses. We begin by exploring whether the *political socialization* model works, that is if being a member of a social association fosters levels of political efficacy and, as a consequence, spurs participation in political affairs (H7.1a).

**Table 8.4 – Political Socialization Model for Party Membership (H7.1a)**

	Trade Unions <sup>111</sup> b(SE) <sup>112</sup>	Professional Organizations b(SE)	Activist Associations b(SE)	Civic Associations b(SE)	Leisure Associations b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects					
Social particip. → Efficacy (a)	.02(.04)	.03(.04)	.02(.03)	-.00(.03)	.01(.03)
Efficacy → Party memb. (b)	.16(.08)	.16(.09)	.16(.07)*	.16(.07)*	.16(.07)*
Stability effects (z) <sup>113</sup>	*	*	*	* <sup>(a)</sup>	*
Correlations					
Social particip./efficacy (k1)	*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*
Efficacy/party memb. (k2)	*	*	*	*	*
Social particip./party m.(k3)	n.s.	*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<i>Model fit</i>					
N	(272)	(275)	(531)	(531)	(531)
Chi-Square	96.7	88.16	142.17	146.4	154.7
Df	50	50	50	50	50

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: (\*) stability effect is not significant for participation in civic associations 2001-2004.

\*: Significant at .05; N.s.: not significant

<sup>111</sup> Factor analysis loadings for Trade Unions are. Eff01: contac01 (.68), comple01 (.44), intvot01 (.72), noinfl01(.61). Eff04: contac04 (.59), comple04 (.48), intvot04 (.71), noinfl04(.60). Factor analysis loadings for other association types are very similar to these.

<sup>112</sup> Unstandardized coefficients

<sup>113</sup> Party membership 2001-2004; Efficacy 2001-2004; Social association membership 2001-2004.

In Table 8.4 we can see the estimates for the models we tested for the chances to become a party member after participating in different types of civil society associations. We decide to report only the values of cross-lagged effects since they are the most relevant in order to test our hypotheses. We indicate also whether stability effects and correlations are significant or not, as well as reporting the model fit per each organization type.

Since our main focus here is not on the level of variance explained but on the theoretical relevance of the variables included in the models estimated, we are more interested in getting more information about the direction and strength of the cross-lagged effects tested in the models and the estimated coefficients reveal a few clear patterns. According to our theoretical model of *political socialization*, there should be a positive effect on political efficacy from participating in social associations (*a*). This effect, however, does not exist in our data since estimates are very small and not significant. There should be also a positive effect that from political efficacy goes toward becoming a member of a political party (*b*). In this case, for all models of different types of associations we register a positive effect of .16. The size of the estimates is the same also in models tested for membership in trade unions and professional organizations, but it is not significant. This might be due to the fact that the sample we are left with after having excluded biased cases is very small. Since for models tested with membership in activist, civic and leisure associations, for which we have a bigger sample size, the effect from political efficacy to political participation is of about the same size as it is for economic associations but is significant; we are left with the doubt that if sample size were big enough results might have been significant also for these associations. The important conclusion that can be derived from these results is that the relevant link for testing the *political socialization* thesis, that is the socialization task of associations, does not seem to be working in Italy towards fostering party membership (H7.1a rejected).

In Table 8.5 we can find the estimates for the model of *political socialization* run for voting behaviour. We see that in this case the fit of the model is better (from .03 to .06). Yet, since electoral years were in 2001 and 2006, we have to use the third wave of the panel that count with fewer cases than the second wave, and we are then left with an extremely small sample size to run our models. It might be also for this reason that none

of the coefficients estimated are significant. If we however suppose that this might be due to sample size and we look only at the size of coefficients, we see that also in this case the effect that goes from social participation to efficacy is much weaker than the link that goes from efficacy to voting. Indeed, even considering that we have two effects of opposite sign between efficacy and voting, if we calculate the total effect (negative direct effect plus positive indirect effect), we are left with a larger coefficient, particularly in the case of professional organizations and trade unions. In any case, also findings for models of voting behaviour suggests that the socialization role of Italian civil society associations is not fulfilled, while the link between political efficacy and voting, if it was found to be significant with a wider sample, it would be stronger (H7.1a rejected).

**Table 8.5 – Political Socialization Model for Voting Behaviour (H7.1a)**

	Trade Unions <sup>114</sup> b(SE) <sup>115</sup>	Professional Organizations b(SE)	Activist Associations b(SE)	Civic Associations b(SE)	Leisure Associations b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects					
Social particip. → efficacy ( <i>a</i> )	.03(.04)	.01(.04)	.04(.04)	-.01(.04)	.00(.03)
Efficacy → voting ( <i>b</i> )	-0.14(.16)	-0.13(.16)	-0.10(.13)	-0.10(.13)	-.11(.11)
Efficacy → voting ( <i>c</i> )	.26(.18)	.25(.18)	.15(.11)	.15(.11)	.15(.09)
Stability effects ( <i>z</i> ) <sup>116</sup>	*	*	*	* <sup>(a)</sup>	*
Correlations					
Social particip./efficacy ( <i>k1</i> )	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Efficacy/vote ( <i>k2</i> )	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*
Social particip./vote ( <i>k3</i> )	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<i>Model fit</i>					
N	(183)	(185)	(351)	(351)	(351)
Chi-Square	65.25	61.96	99.61	96.64	150.11
Df	49	49	49	49	49

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: (a) stability effect is not significant for participation in civic associations 2001-2004.

\*: Significant at .05; N.s.: not significant

We now test the *self-selection* model (H7.1b) that claims that characteristics of individuals, such as high levels of political efficacy, spur the decision to join both political and social associations. In Table 8.6 we report the estimates of our models, using party membership as measure for political participation. As we see, the effect from high levels of political efficacy to membership in social associations (*d*) is positive only in the case of trade unions and leisure associations, while for other associations it is negative or virtually inexistent. It is however not significant for any of the models.

<sup>114</sup> Factor analysis loadings for Trade Unions are. Eff01: contac01 (.68), comple01 (.44), intvot01 (.72), noinfl01(.61). Eff04: contac04 (.59), comple04 (.48), intvot04 (.71), noinfl04(.60). Factor analysis loadings for other association types are very similar to these.

<sup>115</sup> Unstandardized coefficients

<sup>116</sup> Party membership 2001-2004; Efficacy 2001-2004; Social association membership 2001-2004.

The effect that goes from efficacy to the decision to join a political party (*e*) is instead significant for all associations with the exception of trade unions and professional associations, and the size of the effect is much larger (.16). As for the *political socialization* models, also in this case, we find no relationship between political efficacy and membership in social associations. The hypothesis of *self-selection* then only partially works, in the sense that if people with certain characteristics self-select themselves to participate, they do it only for participating in political parties, and not for social associations.

**Table 8.6 - Self-selection Model for party membership (H7.1b)**

	Trade Unions b(SE)	Professional Organizations b(SE)	Activist Associations b(SE)	Civic Associations b(SE)	Leisure Associations b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects					
Efficacy→social particip. (d)	.04(.08)	-.07(.10)	-0.01(.08)	-.03(.04)	.13(.08)
Efficacy→party memb. (e)	.16(.09)	.16(.09)	.16(.07)*	.16(.07)*	.17(.03)*
Stability effects (z) <sup>117</sup>	*	*	*	*	*
Correlations					
Social particip./efficacy (k1)	*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*
Efficacy/party memb. (k2)	*	*	*	*	*
Social particip./party m.(k3)	n.s.	*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<i>Model fit</i>					
N	(272)	(275)	(531)	(531)	(531)
χ <sup>2</sup>	96.8	87.85	142.63	146.28	152.49
Df	50	50	50	50	50

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: (\*) stability effect is not significant for participation in civic associations 2001-2004.

\*: Significant at .05; N.s.: not significant

We run the *self-selection* model also for voting behaviour and we report the estimated coefficients in Table 8.7. Also in this case we are left with a very small sample size in each of the models, particularly for trade unions and professional organizations, and none of the coefficients are significant. If we look only at coefficient size, however, we notice that the direct link between efficacy and social participation is always positive and is bigger for trade unions and leisure associations (.16), whereas the indirect link is negative and is stronger for the two associations linked to economic issues. The total effect from political efficacy to social participation is then negative for all associations, with the exception of membership in leisure association, which has a positive link (.17<sup>118</sup>). We have the opposite situation for the effect that from political efficacy goes towards voting. While the direct link from 2001 to 2006 is negative, the direct link from 2004 to 2006 is positive. The total effect calculated with the trade-off between the two

<sup>117</sup> Party membership 2001-2004; Efficacy 2001-2004; Social association membership 2001-2004.

<sup>118</sup> Direct Effect: .16 + Indirect Effect:.01 = Total effect: .17

effects leaves us with a positive link between these two variables, which is stronger in the case of economic associations.

**Table 8.7 - Self-selection Model for Voting (H7.1b)**

	Trade Unions b(SE)	Professional Organizations b(SE)	Activist Associations b(SE)	Civic Associations b(SE)	Leisure Associations b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects					
Efficacy→social particip. (d)	0.16(.13)	0.03(.15)	0.05(.13)	0.05(.14)	0.16 (.11)
Efficacy→social particip. (h)	-0.22(.15)	-0.18(.17)	-0.12(.11)	-0.10(.12)	0.01(.09)
Efficacy→voting (e)	-0.13(.16)	-0.13(.16)	-0.10(.13)	-0.10(.13)	-0.11(.11)
Efficacy→voting (c)	.23(.18)	.25(.18)	.14(.11)	.15(.11)	.15(.09)
Stability effects (z) <sup>119</sup>	*	*	*	*	*
Correlations					
Social particip./efficacy (k1)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Efficacy/vote (k2)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*
Social particip./vote (k3)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<i>Model fit</i>					
N	(183)	(185)	(351)	(351)	(351)
χ <sup>2</sup>	63.02	61.15	99.33	93.76	146.53
Df	48	48	48	48	48

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: (\*) stability effect is not significant for participation in civic associations 2001-2004.

\*: Significant at .05; N.s.: not significant

We now proceed by comparing *political socialization* and *self-selection* models, testing whether the first one fits our panel data better than the second one on different types of associational participation (H7.1c).

**Table 8.8 - Political Socialization (m1) vs. Self-Selection models (m2) for Party Membership (7.H1c)**

	Trade Unions <sup>120</sup>		Professional Organizations		Activist Associations		Civic Associations		Leisure Associations	
	m1 b(SE) <sub>121</sub>	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects										
(a)	.02 (.04)	-	.03 (.04)	-	.02 (.03)	-	-.0 (.03)	-	.01 (.03)	-
(b/e)	.16 (.08)	.16 (.09)	.16 (.09)	.16 (.09)	.16 (.07)*	.16 (.07)*	.16 (.07)*	.16 (.07)*	.16 (.07)*	.17 (.03)*
(d)	-	.04 (.08)	-	-.07 (.1)	-	-.01 (.08)	-	-.03 (.04)	-	.13 (.08)
Model fit										
N	(272)	(272)	(275)	(275)	(531)	(531)	(531)	(531)	(531)	(531)
χ <sup>2</sup>	96.7	96.8	88.16	87.85	142.17	142.63	146.4	146.28	154.7	152.49
Df	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
RMSEA	.059 <sup>122</sup>	.059	.053	.053	.059	.059	.060	.060	.063	0.062
RMR	.057	.057	.054	.054	.047	.047	.048	.047	.050	0.048

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: n.s. = not significant; - = relationship not in the model

<sup>119</sup> Party membership 2001-2004; Efficacy 2001-2004; Social association membership 2001-2004.

<sup>120</sup> Factor analysis loadings for Trade Unions are. Eff01: contac01 (.68), comple01 (.44), intvot01 (.72), noinfl01(.61). Eff04: contac04 (.59), comple04 (.48), intvot04 (.71), noinfl04(.60). Factor analysis loadings for other association types are very similar to these.

<sup>121</sup> Unstandardized coefficients

<sup>122</sup> Adding a cross loading between the observed variable of efficacy 'politicians are only interested in votes' and party membership lower the RMSEA by .003 in the socialization model and in the self-selection model for all non-political organizations. Yet the change is so small that we decided to omit the link for more parsimonious models.

According to the dominant theory, the most likely mechanism at work is that social associations provide skills and positive attitudes to citizens and are likely to enhance their levels of political efficacy, that then leads to be more likely to join political party associations or to vote. The opposite theory claims that it is rather the fact that certain citizens are more likely than others to join both civil society and political associations, as well as vote, since they have higher levels of political efficacy. We report the cross-lagged effects and measures of model fit for *political socialization* and *self-selection* models in separate tables for party membership (Table 8.8) and voting measures (Table 8.9).

**Table 8.9 - Political Socialization (m1) vs. Self-Selection models (m2) for Voting (H7.1c)**

	Trade Unions		Professional Organizations		Activist Associations		Civic Associations		Leisure Associations	
	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)	m1 b(SE)	m2 b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects										
(a)	.03(.04)	-	.01 (.04)	-	.04 (.04)	-	-.01 (.04)	-	.00 (.03)	-
(b/e)	-.14 (.16)	-.13 (.16)	-.13 (.16)	-.13 (.16)	-.1 (.13)	-.1 (.13)	-.1 (.13)	-.1 (.13)	-.11 (.11)	-.11 (.11)
(c)	.26 (.18)	.23 (.18)	.25 (.18)	.25 (.18)	.15 (.11)	.14 (.11)	.15 (.11)	.15 (.11)	.15 (.09)	.15 (.09)
(d)	-	.16 (.13)	-	.03 (.15)	-	.05 (.13)	-	.05 (.14)	-	.16 (.11)
(h)	-	-.22 (.15)	-	-.18 (.17)	-	-.12 (.11)	-	-.1 (.12)	-	.01 (.09)
<i>Model fit</i>										
N	(183)	(183)	(185)	(185)	(351)	(351)	(351)	(351)	(351)	(351)
$\chi^2$	65.25	63.02	61.96	61.15	99.61	99.33	96.64	93.76	150.11	146.53
RMSEA	.043 <sup>123</sup>	.041	.038	.039	.054	.055	.052	.052	.062	.062
RMR	.057	.054	.055	.053	.046	.046	.044	.044	.048	.046

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: n.s. = not significant; - = relationship not in the model

General evaluation of a SEM is based first of all on the Chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), so that the best model is the conceptually relevant model that has the lowest  $\chi^2$  value. Since  $\chi^2$  is influenced largely by the sample size and the number of parameters in the model, however, we use also two other measures for data fitting: RMSEA and RMR. In both cases, good models are considered to have a model fit of .05 or less<sup>124</sup>. In spite of generally relatively modest fit of the models when party membership is used (about .05-.06 RMSEA and RMR), and slightly better fit of the models when voting behaviour is

<sup>123</sup> Adding a cross loading between the observed variable of efficacy 'politicians are only interested in votes' and party membership lower the RMSEA by .003 in the socialization model and in the self-selection model for all non-political organizations. Yet the change is so small that we decided to omit the link for more parsimonious models.

<sup>124</sup> RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation); RMR (Root Mean Square Residual). An RMSEA or RMR of zero indicates a perfect fit, while models whose RMSEA or RMR is .1 or more have a poor fit.



used (about .04-.06 RMSEA and RMR), we can see that the fit of *political socialization* models and *self-selection* models per each association type is almost identical, only slightly leaning on the direction of *self-selection* as better models. Yet, as we saw above, with our sample size only the link between political party membership and political efficacy was significant in both *political socialization* and *self-selection* models (H7.1c rejected).

### 8.3.2 The relationship between Political Efficacy and Political Participation

Since we want to investigate in more details the direction of the causal link between our main variables, we analyse only the relationship of two variables at a time. In this way we can focus only on single parts of the model at a time, test simultaneously more than one effect going in the same direction and we can also have wider sample sizes for voting models. We start by investigating the existent relationship between levels of political efficacy and political participation (party membership and voting), with the first part of Hypothesis 2 (H7.2a) and the second part of Hypothesis 3 (H7.3b) that state opposite causal directions links (Table 8.10).

**Table 8.10 -Political Socialization & Self-Selection thesis (H7.2a); Reversal Causation thesis (H7.3b)**

	H7.2a) Political Socialization & Self-Selection: Efficacy → Political Participation		H7.3b) Reversal Causation: Political Participation → Efficacy			
	Party 2001-2004	Voting 2001-2006 <sup>125</sup>	Party 2001-2004	Party 2001-2004	Voting 2001-2006	Voting 2001-2006
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
Cross-lagged effects						
Efficacy → Party Membership (b/e)	.16(.07)*	.15(.06)*	-	-	-	-
Political Participation → Efficacy (f)	-	-	.11(.03)*	.11(.04)*	.01(.05)	-.01(.05)
Political Participation → Efficacy (g)	-	-	-	-.00(.04)*	-	.10(.05)*
Stability effects (z) <sup>126</sup>	*	*	*	*	*	*
Correlations (k1, k2, k3)	*	*	*	*	*	*
<i>Model fit</i>						
N	(533)	(935)	(533)	(340)	(935)	(935)
χ <sup>2</sup>	125.51	31.46	117.99	117.99	38.14	34.25
Df	33	19	33	32	19	18
χ <sup>2</sup> /df	3.80	1.66	3.58	3.69	2.01	1.90
RMSEA	.073	.026	.070	.071	.033	.031
RMR	.052	.026	.049	.049	.033	.030

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: n.s. = not significant; - = relationship not in the model

<sup>125</sup> Election years: 2001-2006

<sup>126</sup> 2001-2004 and 2001-2006.

The positive causal effect, that claims that people who are high in political efficacy tend to join political party or to vote more than individuals low on this attitude (*H2a*), has been already explored in previous analysis for both *political socialization* and *self-selection* models. And even if we test the models without including measures for social participation, we obtain similar coefficient sizes of what obtained in previous models (.15-.16). However, as we hypothesized above, since the sample size is now much bigger for voting behaviour, estimates are significant for both types of participation. The opposite hypothesis causal effect (*H3b*), that is joining a political party or voting has positive effects on the belief that it is possible to make one's own voice heard to the government and that the government will be responsive to it, refers to the reversal causation theory by Finkel. We test different models including the first one (the direct link) and then two of these links (adding the indirect link) and we find a similar positive and statistically significant effect size (.10-11) for both party membership and for voting. It seems then that a reciprocal causal effect exists between political efficacy and political participation, but that the effect from efficacy to participation is stronger than the reverse effect.

### ***8.3.3. The relationship between Political Efficacy and Social Participation***

We move now to investigating the relationship between political efficacy and social participation, by testing the second part of H7.2 (*H7.2b*) and the first part of H7.3 (*H7.3a*). The former, as part of the *self-selection* thesis, predicts that people with high levels of political efficacy are more likely to join a civil society association, while the latter, as part of the *political socialization* thesis, predicts that a reverse positive effect exist. It is then being a member in social associations that fosters higher levels of political efficacy. We see, however, that none of the types of association have significant connection with political efficacy in any direction (Table 8.11).

If we go beyond statistical significance, for the same doubt we mentioned above about small sample size, we can compare the coefficient size of the two opposite causal directions in order to investigate which direction is stronger and more likely. The only clear result is found for membership in leisure associations. The relationship between political efficacy and the decision to join this organization is indeed positive in both directions, but the link that goes from efficacy to association membership (*self-selection*) is much stronger (.12) than the opposite link (*political socialization*: .02). The

same is true for the decision to join trade unions, although the coefficient that goes in the direction of confirming the *self-selection* thesis (.03) is only slightly higher than the coefficient testing the *political socialization* thesis (.02). For professional associations we find opposite effects in the two directions, positive from efficacy to social participation (.03), and negative from membership in social associations to feelings of political efficacy (-.06). In this case, the *political socialization* hypothesis seems to be stronger, but with an opposite sign of what expected, since the relationship is negative. Thus, if a person participates in professional associations, s/he will be more likely to be disaffected by the political system and have lower belief that s/he is able to affect the government or that the government is going to be responsive to her/his own needs. The link between political efficacy and being a member of activist as well as civic associations is instead extremely low and virtually nonexistent in both directions.

**Table 8.11 – Self-Selection thesis: Political Efficacy → Social Participation (H7.2b)**

Self-selection: Political Efficacy → Social Participation (H7.2b)					
	Trade Union	Professional Associations	Activist Associations	Civic Associations	Leisure Associations
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Cross-lagged effects					
Efficacy→Social Part ( <i>d</i> )	.03(.08)	.03(.04)	-.01 (.08)	-.02(.08)	.12(.08)
Social Part→Efficacy( <i>a</i> )	.02(.04)	-.06(.10)	.02(.03)	-.00(.03)	.02(.03)
Stability effects ( <i>z</i> )	*	*	*	* <sup>a</sup>	*
Correlations ( <i>k1,k2,k3</i> )	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*
<i>Model fit</i>					
N	(274)	(277)	(534)	(534)	(534)
$\chi^2$	70.45	62.90	110.65	109.39	118.26
Df	33	33	33	33	33
$\chi^2/df$	2.13	1.91	3.35	3.31	3.58
RMSEA	.064	.057	.066	.066	.070
RMR	.054	.050	.045	.044	.047

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: <sup>a</sup> stability link of half-political organizations is not significant.

n.s. = not significant; - = relationship not in the model

### 8.3.4 The role of Education and Family Political Tradition on Political Efficacy and Participation

We turn now to test our fourth set of hypotheses, checking for the role of the covariates of education and family political tradition in the relationship between political efficacy and civil society as well as political participation. If we add them to the *reverse causation* thesis we should find that political participation (H7.4a) mediates their positive effects on political efficacy, while if we add them to the *political socialization* thesis, social participation (H7.4b) should be the mediation variable.

**Table 8.12 – Reversal Causation (H7.4a) and Political Socialization (H7.4b) with education and political tradition**

	<i>H7.4a</i> ) Reversal Causation : Political Participation → Efficacy		<i>H7.4b</i> ) Political Socialization: Social Participation → Efficacy				
	Voting	Political Party	Trade Unions	Profess Assoc.	Activist Assoc.	Civic Assoc.	Leisure Assoc.
	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )
Education → Efficacy							
( <i>u3</i> )	.16(.03)*	.16(.03)*	.06(.05)	.07(.05)	.16(.03)*	.16(.03)*	.16(.03)*
( <i>u4</i> )	.09(.05)	.08(.03)*	.06(.04)	.05(.04)	.07(.03)*	.07(.03)*	.07(.03)*
Education → Participation							
( <i>u5</i> )	.02(.04)	.01(.05)	.03(.06)	.07(.06)	.08(.05)	.01(.05)	.04(.05)
( <i>u6</i> )	.12(.04)*	-.00(.04)	-.05(.05)	-	.08(.05)	.04(.05)	-.00(.05)
				.01(.06)			
Political Tradition → Efficacy							
( <i>t3</i> )	-.06(.03)*	.03(.03)	.05(.05)	.04(.05)	.04(.03)	.04(.03)	.04(.03)
( <i>t4</i> )	-.03(.05)	-.03(.03)	-.01(.04)	-	-.02(.03)	-.02(.03)	-.02(.03)
				.01(.04)			
Political Tradition → Participation							
( <i>t5</i> )	-.01(.04)	.05(.05)	-.04(.06)	.02(.06)	.05(.05)	.05(.05)	.02(.05)
( <i>t6</i> )	-.03(.04)	.04(.04)	.13(.05)*	.01(.06)	-.02(.05)	-.03(.05)	.07(.05)
Participation 2001 → Efficacy							
( <i>w1/w2</i> )	.06(.03)*	.13(.03)*	.01(.04)	-	.01(.03)	.01(.03)	.07(.03)*
				.06(.05)			
( <i>f</i> )	.06(.05)	.10(.03)*	.02(.05)	.03(.04)	.03(.03)	-.00(.03)	.00(.03)
Stability effects ( <i>z</i> )	*	*	*	*	*	* <sup>a</sup>	*
Correlations ( <i>k4</i> )	*	*	*		*	*	*
<i>Model fit</i>							
N	(815)	(487)	(257)	(259)	(488)	(488)	(488)
Chi-square	64.89	153.59	90.22	81.98	142.57	144.09	152.88
Df	27	45	45	45	45	45	45
RMSEA	.042	.070	.063	.056	.067	.067	.070
RMR	.031	.050	.054	.051	.047	.045	.048

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: <sup>a</sup> stability link of half-political organizations is not significant

n.s. = not significant; - = relationship not in the model

In Table 8.12 we see that education has a positive significant effect (.16 in 2001 and .07/.08 in 2004) on political efficacy for all participation types with the exclusion of trade unions and professional associations, and on voting, but not on membership in any other type of association. The size of estimated effects when highly educated is stronger for the decision to join an activist or professional association than for other associations, but coefficients are not significant. The political tradition of the family of origin has instead a significant slightly negative effect on voting and a positive effect for participation in trade unions. It seems, however, not to have any significant effect on either efficacy or other kind of participation. When we control for education and political tradition, joining political associations or voting has still a positive effect on the levels of political efficacy as the reversal causation thesis claims (H7.4a): .06 for

voting and .13 or .10 for party membership. On the contrary, there is still no effect from joining civil society associations to this attitude with the exception for membership in culture and sport associations (.07) (*Political socialization* thesis – H7.4b).

Investigating the role of educational levels and family political tradition on *self-selection* thesis allows us to better test this thesis that hypothesize a positive link from individuals with certain characteristics such as high political efficacy toward participation in political (H7.4c) and social (H7.4d) associations (Table 8.13).

**Table 8.13 – Self-Selection (H7.4c; H7.4d) with education and political tradition**

	Self-Selection thesis (H7.4c): Efficacy→Political Participation			Self-Selection thesis (H7.4d): Efficacy→Social Participation			
	Voting	Political Party	Trade Unions	Profess Assoc.	Activist Assoc.	Civic Assoc.	Leisure Assoc.
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
Education →Efficacy							
(u3)	.16(.03)*	.16(.03)*	.06(.05)	.07(.05)	.17(.03)*	.16(.03)*	.16(.03)*
(u4)	.09(.06)	.07(.03)	.06(.04)	.05(.04)	.07(.03)*	.07(.03)*	.07(.03)*
Education →Participation <sup>127</sup>							
(u5)	-.00(.04)	-.07(.04)	-.03(.06)	.08(.06)	.07(.05)	.01(.05)	.00(.05)
(u6)	.11(.04)*	-.04(.05)	-.05(.05)	-.01(.06)	.08(.05)	.04(.05)	-.02(.05)
Political Tradition →Efficacy							
(u3)	-.06(.03)*	.04(.03)	.04(.05)	- .01(.05)	.04(.03)	.04(.03)	.04(.03)
(u4)	-.03(.05)	-.02(.03)	-.01(.04)	.04(.04)	-.02(.03)	-.02(.03)	-.02(.03)
Political Tradition →Participation							
(u5)	.00(.04)	.03(.05)	-.04(.06)	.03(.06)	.04(.05)	.05(.05)	.02(.05)
(u6)	-.03(.03)	.03(.04)	.13(.05)*	.01(.06)	-.02(.05)	-.03(.05)	.06(.05)
Efficacy →Participation							
(w3/w4)	.16(.07)*	.44(.04)*	.02(.11)	- .08(.11)	.04(.09)	.03(.09)	.19(.09)*
(d/b/e)	.09(.08)	.20(.08)*	.02(.09)	- .07(.10)	-.00(.09)	-.02(.09)	.12(.09)
Stability Effects (z)	*	*	*	*	*	* <sup>a</sup>	*
Correlations (k4)	*	*			*	*	*
<i>Model fit</i>							
N	(796)	(487)	(257)	(259)	(488)	(488)	(488)
Chi-square	64.30	159.15	90.70	81.31	142.95	144.09	151.43
Df	27	45	45	45	45	45	45
RMSEA	.041	.072	.063	.056	.067	.067	.070
RMR	.031	.051	.054	.050	.047	.045	.047

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: <sup>a</sup> stability link of civic organizations is not significant  
n.s. = not significant; - = relationship not in the model

We find the same results as before for the relationship between education and political efficacy, while the link between political efficacy and participation is statistically significant only for political participation (both party membership and voting). The link

<sup>127</sup> Different types of participation, defined by columns in the table.

from political efficacy to membership of social associations is, instead, not significant with the exception of membership of leisure organizations. The effects are however much stronger for the *self-selection* hypothesis than for the reversal causation hypotheses and the *political socialization*. Higher political efficacy has indeed an effect of .16 on voting, while on party membership has an effect of .44 on the same year and an effect of .20 on 2004. It has instead an effect of .19 on leisure associations.

In sum we can say that when testing the fourth set of hypotheses we find that, after controlling for educational levels and for the political tradition of individuals' families, once again the *self-selection* thesis seems to work better than the *political socialization* thesis and the reversal causation thesis. For what it concerns the link between political participation and political efficacy we indeed find that although a positive effect in both directions exist, it is the people that have already high levels of political efficacy that tend to join political associations and to vote (*self-selection*), rather than people that participate in political parties or vote at elections that increase their levels of efficacy (*reversal causation* theory). Moreover, higher levels of education are likely to increase feelings of being able to affect the government and that the government is responsive to our needs and to make people go to polls, while it has no effects on the decision to join a political party membership. When we run the relationship between political efficacy and voting behaviour in both causal directions, we find that having a highly politicized family is instead more likely to make people disaffected, while this effect disappears when we run the model for political party membership.

The link between civil society participation and political efficacy is less clear. Also in this case it seems that when there is a connection between these two variables, the *self-selection* model works better than the *political socialization* model, but for most associations this link simply does not exist. It seems indeed that only members of leisure associations are positively connected to feelings of political efficacy and the direction of the causal link is stronger when it goes from having a positive attitude toward the political system to the decision to participate in this type of association, than the other way around. For all the other association types not only is the connection not significant but the size of estimates is also very low, with the exception of the decision to join activist associations, which seems to be lower when people are highly

efficacious. Accordingly, this would also mean that the more disaffected people become with the political system, the more they tend to join activist organizations (but it is not significant). Moreover, education makes people more likely to participate in activist, civic and leisure associations (the link between education and economic associations is also positive but not significant), while having a highly politicized family makes people more likely to join trade unions.

### ***8.3.5 The Importance of Politicization Levels of Associations***

We are finally left with the fifth set of hypotheses related to the importance of politicization levels of associations in determining their link with the political efficacy orientations. Regardless of the direction of causation, the link between membership in civil society associations and political efficacy is thought to be positive and of similar strength for all types of voluntary associations (H7.5a), or, alternatively, positive and stronger for associations with higher levels of politicization. Since in Chapter 3 we placed them on a politicization continuum we should then expect to find stronger relationship for trade unions, followed by professional and activist associations, then by civic associations, and, in the last place, by non-political leisure associations (H7.5b). Finally, members of political parties are thought to have higher feelings of political efficacy than members of other civil society associations (H7.5c). In order to see which of these hypotheses hold we need to summarize our findings on the relationship between political efficacy and membership in political and social associations. In Table 8.14 we report these findings, indicating also the theory and hypothesis to which each link refers to, the size of the estimates, and whether it was found to be significant or not.

If we take into account the statistical significance of relationship when we test models without covariates we see that the link between leisure associations and political efficacy is the same for all kind of civil associations, because it simply does not exist. If we add covariates in the model, we find, surprisingly, that the higher the level of political efficacy, the more likely an individual is to join leisure associations, the least politicized types of associations (H7.5a confirmed with exception of leisure associations). The hypothesis of importance of the level of politicization of civil society associations must then be rejected (H7.5b rejected). The connection between political efficacy and political participation should finally be higher than the connection with other civil society associations, and this is what we find in our data. The only exception

relates, however, to leisure associations that are more strongly connected to political efficacy than voting (H7.5c accepted with exception of leisure associations).

**Table 8.14 - Summary table of link between Participation and Political Efficacy**

Theory	H7.1-4	Relations	Vote	Political Party	Trade Unions	Profess Assoc.	Activist Assoc.	Civic Assoc.	Leisure Assoc.
H7.2-3 Model with only Endogenous variables									
<i>Self-Selection/ Political Socialization</i>	H7.2a	Efficacy → Political Part.(b/e)	.15*	.16*					
<i>Self-Selection</i>	H7.2b	Efficacy → Social Part.(d)			.03 n.r.	.03 n.r.	-.01 n.r.	.02n.r.	.12 n.r.
<i>Reversal Effects</i>	H7.3b	Political Part. →Efficacy (f)	.01 n.r.	.11*					
<i>Political Socialization</i>	H7.3a	Social Part. → Efficacy(a)			.02 n.r.	-.06n.r.	.02 n.r.	.00n.r.	.02 n.r.
H7.4 Model with covariates									
<i>Self-Selection/ Political Socialization</i>	H7.4c	Efficacy → Political Part. (w3)	.16*	.44*					
<i>Self-Selection</i>	H7.4d	Efficacy → Social Part.(w4)			.02 n.r.	-.08 n.r.	.04 n.r.	.03 n.r.	.19*
<i>Reversal Effects</i>	H7.4a	Political Part. → Efficacy (w1)	.06*	.13*					
<i>Political Socialization</i>	H7.4b	Social Part. → Efficacy (w2)			.01 n.r.	-.06 n.r.	.01 n.r.	.01 n.r.	.07*

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: \*=significant at .05 n.r.= no significant relation is existent.

### 8.4 Profiles of Participation of Italian Citizens

Since both the *political socialization* model and the *self-selection* model have found only partial verification in our data, we explore the possibility that more mechanisms might be at work at the same time in the same population. With the same data used for running the structural equation models, we then run a latent class analysis using the software *Latent Gold*. With this analysis we want to identify different typologies of citizens in society with respect to feelings of political efficacy and participatory behaviour, controlling for educational levels and political tradition of the family of origin.

Latent class analysis is a good technique to use with our data because it relates observed discrete variables to latent variables and is used to find likely existent latent classes, namely groups characterized by a pattern of conditional probabilities that indicate the chance of being part of that group. If we set the number of latent class to five, and we run the analysis including the three variables of social participation, political efficacy and party membership per each type of social association in different



years, controlling also for education and political tradition, we find that the five most common profiles among Italian citizens are those indicated in Table 8.15 that we labelled ‘apathetic’, ‘not interested’, ‘civil society engaged’, ‘politically engaged’, ‘completely engaged’.

‘Apathetic citizens’ are those that are low in political efficacy and low in both political and social participation. This profile of citizen is the most diffuse, since when introducing measures for participation in activist, civic and leisure associations, people in our sample have a 60% chance of being part of this group when they have low to intermediate education, while for professional associations it reaches even the 80% for individuals with intermediate to high education. If we consider participation in trade unions, citizens have instead lower chances (but still high) of being part of this profile than with other associations (42%).

**Table 8.15 – Profiles of Citizens’ Participation**

		Party Membership			
		Yes		No	
Political Efficacy	High	Completely engaged	Politically engaged		Not interested
	Low			Civil society engaged	Apathetic
		Social Participation		Yes	No
		Yes	No	Yes	No

Note: Latent Class Analysis with Itanes panel dataset 2001-04-06

The profiles of ‘politically engaged’, ‘completely engaged’ and ‘not interested’ are instead all characterized by having high political efficacy. The first profile type is characterized by membership in political parties, but by no membership in civil society associations. Only 6-8% of individuals with medium to high education have the chance of being part of this profile group for all social association types with the exception of trade unions. Indeed, 5-7% of participants of trade unions and with high education have the chance of being also party members and belonging then to the profile labelled as ‘completely engaged’. The third type of profile, however, is the most interesting one. Although people who are likely to belong to it are characterized by having high levels of political efficacy, they are also likely not to participate in any type of association, either social or political. And this is particularly interesting since their level of education is generally intermediate to high. The chances of being part of this profile are quite high and are between 20 and 32% of our sample.

Finally, the last profile is the one labelled as ‘civil society engaged’, which is characterized by people with low political efficacy, that participate in social associations but do not join political parties. This is a relevant profile particularly for the most politicized civil society associations, namely trade unions (37 to 50% of intermediate to high educated people), professional organizations (13 to 15% of intermediate to high educated people) and activist associations (8-9% of high educated people).

If we connect these results to our previous findings we can list three main points. First of all, once again we find that the great majority of people in Italian society (in our sample) do not participate either in civil society or in political affairs. Second, people that decide to join political parties are a small minority of the population (4-8%), and the same is true for people joining civil society associations (8-15%). Third, in the analysis of structural equation modelling of previous paragraph we found no relationship between being member in civil associations and feelings of political efficacy. Not only is this confirmed with latent class analysis, but our results lead us even further: people that join civil society associations do not join also political organizations and vice-versa. The only exception is constituted by trade unions. On the one hand, unions seems to be the most common association for people with no efficacy that choose to participate in civil society (37-50%). On the other hand, if union members are well educated they often tend to join also political parties, but they are only a small minority of political activists (5-7%). Finally, in this analysis, we did not find the connection between political efficacy and leisure associations that we found through structural equation modelling analysis, but we did find a connection, as expected by the second hypothesis of set 5 (H5b) between membership in the most politicized of civil society associations (trade unions), political efficacy and political party membership.

## **8.5 Conclusions**

### ***8.5.1 Findings of Causal Hypotheses***

In Chapter 4, 5 and 6 we saw that at the macro level engagement in civil society and in political affairs, as well as political efficacy have followed unrelated trends across time. Since the Second World War and the descriptive account made of Italy in the early 1960s by Almond and Verba (1963) participation in social associations has grown. According to the dominant thesis existing in literature, increase in party-independent

associationism and social capital should have led to increasing levels of attitudes of political efficacy in society, which have been extremely low in this country for a very long time. Accordingly, also political participation should have grown. We saw several times in this volume, however, that this has not happened and that political disaffection have stayed extremely high (i.e. very low political efficacy), while voting has started to decrease from high turnout and political party membership have undergone a deep crisis since the 1980s.

The goal of Chapter 7 and 8 was to investigate whether the inexistent relationship between civil society and political life found at the macro level, also existed at the micro level. Accordingly, we investigated this causal relationship testing the well-known model of *political socialization*, along with other possible alternative causal relationship. The most important alternative model is the *self-selection* model. While the *political socialization* model claims that participating in civil society associations decreases disaffection in the political system (i.e. increases levels of political efficacy) and, accordingly, makes the decision to join political parties and voting more likely, the *self-selection* thesis claims that the relationship between efficacy and participation is spurious. People with high political efficacy tend indeed to participate more in both political and social associations. Other two important theories exist on the relationship between these three variables. One claims that there is a reverse link going from political participation to political efficacy, in the sense that by the experience of participating in political affairs, individuals tend to have more confidence that they are more able to affect the political system and that their needs will be taken into account. One other theory claims that, for several reasons, there might not be any relationship at all between participation in civil society and participation in political participation.

The descriptive analysis of the three-waves panel dataset of *Itanes* shows that, with few exceptions, members of any type of associations in both 2001 and 2004 tend to have higher feelings of political efficacy than non members. Moreover, members tend to be more educated and to have a family with stronger political tradition than non-members. We then tested the hypothesis connected to the main alternative causal thesis existing in literature through structural equation modelling.

Summarizing the results in Table 8.16 and Table 8.17 we have a few relevant, main findings. First, we find scarce results for establishing which of the two alternative

models of socialization and *self-selection* work better on different types of individual engagement. Indeed, neither the *political socialization* thesis (H7.1a) nor the *self-selection* thesis (H7.1b) seem to work in the Italian context when we test them as complete models. Moreover, we had hypothesized that the models of *political socialization* did fit our data better than the *self-selection* model (H7.1c), but this did not happen since they have almost identical fits, only with slightly better fit for the latter.

**Table 8.16 - The test of the Main Causal Theories linking Social and Political Participation with Efficacy**

Models	Hypothesis		Confirmed	Exceptions
Political Socialization thesis	H7.1a	Social Participation → Efficacy → Political Participation	X	
Self-Selection thesis	H7.1b	Efficacy → Social Participation Efficacy → Political Participation	X	
Political Socialization better than Self-Selection thesis	H7.1c		X	
<b>Model with only endogenous variables</b>				
Political Socialization thesis	H7.3a	Social Participation → Efficacy	X	
	H7.2a	Efficacy → Political Participation	√	
Self-Selection thesis	H7.2b	Efficacy → Social Participation	X	
	H7.2a	Efficacy → Political Participation	√	
Reversal Causation thesis	H7.3b	Political Participation → Efficacy	√	
<b>Model with covariates</b>				
Political Socialization thesis	H7.4b	Social Participation → Efficacy	X	Leisure Association: √
	H7.4c	Efficacy → Political Participation	√	
Self-Selection thesis	H7.4d	Efficacy → Social Participation	X	Leisure Association: √
	H7.4c	Efficacy → Political Participation	√	
Reversal Causation thesis	H7.4a	Political Participation → Efficacy	√	

Source: Itanes panel dataset 2001-04-06

Second, when we investigate the relationship between two variables at a time, we find that there is a relationship between political efficacy and political participation in both causal directions (from efficacy to political participation: H7.2a *political socialization* & *self-selection*; from political participation to efficacy: H7.3b *reversal causation*), while there is no link between being a member of civil society associations and political efficacy as we expected, regardless of the direction of causation (from social participation to political efficacy: H7.3a *political socialization*; from political efficacy to social participation: H7.2b *self-selection*). We find the same results when we control for the role of educational levels and of family political tradition of individuals (H7.4a,

H7.4b, H7.4c, H7.4d). The only difference is that when we introduce the two covariates in our models as exogenous variables that affect all the endogenous variables also the relationship between leisure associations and political efficacy becomes significant. The most relevant finding is then that no relationship has been found between social participation and political efficacy: being a member of a social organization does not lead to any increase in efficacy, and high efficacy does not lead to social participation.

Third, when links between feelings of efficacy and participation do exist (for political participation and leisure associations), we find that the effect that moves from having higher feelings of political efficacy to the decision to become a member of an association is stronger than the reverse relationship. This implies that in these cases the *self-selection* thesis works better than the *political socialization* thesis. It is indeed true that voting, being a member of a political as well as leisure organization increase levels of individuals' empowerment. Yet, it is more true that higher level of political efficacy leads to voting, joining a party or an association connected to leisure.

**Table 8.17 - Politicization levels of associations and political efficacy**

Politicization levels of associations and political efficacy		
Civil associations have the same link with political efficacy	H7.5a	√
Politicized civil society associations have stronger links than less politicized associations	H7.5b	X
Political participation have stronger links than civil society associations	H7.5c	√

No link between civil society associations and political efficacy, with exception for leisure association

Political party membership and voting have stronger links with political efficacy than civil society associations, with exception of leisure associations that has stronger links than voting

Source: Itanes panel dataset 2001-04-06

Fourth, in the results of structural equation modelling, the level of politicization of civil associations does not seem to be important in determining the strength of the link with feelings of political efficacy as expected by H7.5a, and contrary to H7.5b. Indeed, again, no link between civil associations and political efficacy is found. The only exception is represented by members of non politicized leisure associations that are highly efficacious. Since civil society seems not related to attitudes of efficacy while political life is, we also accepted the last hypothesis that claims that political participation has stronger link with political efficacy than civil society associations (H7.5c accepted). The exception is one more time represented by members of leisure associations that are more strongly connected to this attitude than people who decided to go to the polls.

When we run the latent class analysis we find that it is only a small minority of people that participate in political organizations, as well as it is a small minority of people that participate in social associations. Indeed, the majority of people do not participate at all and have low levels of political efficacy. Yet, while participants of political affairs have a high level of political efficacy, in line with previous findings we find that participants of civil society have low levels of political efficacy. Moreover, we find also that people that participate in social associations do not overlap with people participating in political organizations, with the exception of members of the most politicized of civil society association: trade union members.

### **8.5.2 Discussion**

Having found these results, there are two possible ways of summarizing and interpreting our findings. The first interpretation is the most pessimistic one, and is that we cannot make much out of our data since we have encountered problems with both measures and dataset coding errors and to get rid of these biases we had to exclude the potentially most interesting cases from the analysis. Yet, at the same time we are also fully aware that dealing with dataset problems is somehow unavoidable when using survey data and we have here a great opportunity to make the best use of these data believing that ‘not very good’ data are better than no data at all, most of all since causal analysis of this type are rarely tested with panel data, and have never been tested before for studying the Italian paradoxical socio-political context. Thus, the second interpretation presents us with a much more optimistic scenario. Our results could be improved if better data were available but they still point to very relevant and substantive insights. Although we should be very cautious in drawing conclusions about causation issues, we have three main findings.

#### *8.5.2.1 The Relationship between Political Participation, Social Participation and Political Efficacy*

The first finding is about to the relationship between political participation, social participation and political efficacy. On the one hand, scholars that have tried to challenge the socialization hypothesis have found mixed (empirical) results. Some have ascertained that *self-selection* and socialization are not mutually exclusive and work together (Hooghe, 2003; Stolle and Hooghe, 2003; Dayican, Denters and Van der Kolk, 2010). Some others have discovered that the *self-selection* mechanism is at work

without any socialization effect (van der Meer and van Ingen, 2009, Armingeon, 2007). We found that for political party membership and voting, *self-selection* and *reverse causation* mechanisms in Italy seems to work together in a process of reciprocal causation, as Finkel had shown already in the US and in Germany (1985, 1987).

On the other hand, we have found that in the Italian context there is no causal relationship between political efficacy and membership in civil society associations. In the beginning of previous chapter we saw that also according to some other scholars involvement in social associations is not at all related with political participation. Limited resources of time were reported as a possible cause that makes people selecting whether to participate in political or non-political associations (van Deth, 1997). It might also be that certain organizations actively discourage conventional political activity (Smith and Freedman, 1972). Finally, higher participation in social associations on the one hand should contribute to enhance levels of political interest but on the other should simultaneously lead to a lower level of political saliency that make people participate only when the political situation requires it or when people have been socialized in a highly politicized family environment (Van Deth, 2000). We leave for the concluding chapter speculations on the reasons why this could be the case in Italy.

### 8.5.2.2 *A Tocquevillian Democracy?*

The third and most important finding is then that we can conclude by saying that the picture already suggested at macro levels in Chapter 4 and 6 has been confirmed at the micro level. The type of democracy that Tocqueville was talking about, characterized by a link between a lively bottom-up and pluralistic associationism and political parties does not seem to be at work in Italy even after an increase of participation in associations over the last 50 years. At the macro level we have indeed seen that social and political participation have followed quite independent evolutions across time and they are not at all related to low feelings of political efficacy. These findings are also corroborated by the absence of a relationship at the individual level. Indeed, results show us that the two most important bottom-up theses we tested are not able alone to explain neither political participation nor political efficacy in the Italian context: neither the social capital/civic voluntarism model nor the *self-selection* models are strongly at work. If we had to claim which model is more likely it would be the model of *self-selection*, rather than the *political socialization* model, since we found that the link that

goes from political efficacy to political participation and to leisure association is stronger than the reversal link. Moreover, among those (few) who participate, people with a strong family political tradition are likely to participate in politicized trade unions more than others, and people with high education are more likely to vote. It is however the thesis of no connection between political and social participation that finds more support. The 'political' in Italy seems simply to be separated from 'civil society', and this is validated also by the fact that almost no correlations seem to exist between different types of political and social association membership. They are almost two different worlds without much communication between each other and this makes us conclude that even if civil society participation is becoming more common among people, Italy has still a long way to go before to become the pluralistic democracy described by Tocqueville.

#### *8.5.2.3 About the Two Dimensions of Political Disaffection*

Finally, attention should be focused also on a fourth finding. Macro level data showed that levels of political efficacy have been constant in Italian society across time, suggesting that it is a feeling that cannot be easily changed. Yet, our data revealed that this is not completely true at the individual level. If we separate the concept of efficacy into its two analytical dimensions of internal and external efficacy we could further investigate the existing causal link between them.

Efficacy could be low on the one hand because internal efficacy does not grow and on the other because external efficacy depresses the internal dimension of the attitude. Literature traditionally proposes a causal relationship that goes from internal efficacy to external efficacy, namely feeling personally efficacious determines the feeling that the government is responsive to ones own requests. Indeed, many people do not act in politics mainly because they perceive they do not have the skills or abilities to do so. The process of modernization of societies should increase levels of economic resources and educational levels of citizens and should therefore eventually increase levels of internal efficacy across populations. Education is indeed often one of the strongest predictor of internal political efficacy and this should lead us also to expect a slow, but persistent, upward movement in internal efficacy levels. Since individual resources are never distributed at random across society, social groups (political and social organizations) have then the potential of reducing this inequality by providing



individuals with motivations and resources to act, which should then encourage also more trust in system responsiveness. Yet, political disaffection persists in Italy even after a process of mass scholarization, increased resources in society and increased levels of associationism. It might be that political reality has become more complex due to a weaker link between the social structure and party choice, to the transformation of old parties and the emergence of new parties. Individuals might feel less able to understand the more complex political environment and feel disaffected. Contrary to the US (Abramson, 1983), however, Segatti and Vezzoni (2007) illustrated that in Italy internal efficacy at the individual level is much less stable than external efficacy is and is influenced by education, but if even well-educated people that have the necessary skills to act (internal efficacy) decide to withdraw from politics because they do not believe the political system to be responsive to their needs (external efficacy), we argue that the problem might lie somewhere else. External efficacy might be low mainly for two reasons connected to the structure of political alternatives. One is that citizens are unsatisfied with the responses that the government gives to their requests, either because these are objectively non-satisfactory, or because they have too high expectations. Another one is that people perceive unfairness of treatment and believe they are not treated in equal ways. In both cases the causal link would run from external to internal efficacy, and not the other way around. Levels of political efficacy would then stay low because external efficacy does not grow when there is an increase of individual skills (Segatti and Vezzoni, 2007). We return to this issue again in the next and concluding chapter.



## CHAPTER 9.

### DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 9.1 The Italian Puzzle

The characteristics of the historical relationship between civil society, political parties and the state made Italy an interesting case to study. In the early 1960s the comparative study *The Civic Culture* (1963) described Italy as a country very disaffected and poor in associational links, divided between a partisan minority and people that did not participate; a very different democracy than Anglo-Saxon, participatory democracies. Yet, despite a modernization of society, mass scholarization and increasing social participation in the last 50 years, at the macro level the Italian situation did not seem to be in line with the neo-Tocquevillian expectations on the politicization of societies. Increasing in social participation should have led to more political efficacy (more individual abilities and more trust that the political system is accountable to citizens needs), and to more political participation. Relevant literature, however, reported an opposite evolution of the Italian socio-political system. Political efficacy stayed constant and very low, while political parties had a crisis of participation. Even turnout that had remained very high (over 90%) for many years, has started to decline. In this study we wanted to investigate empirically to what extent these macro trends were in place and whether this situation was also verified at the individual level. In few words, we wanted to know whether we could claim that a Tocquevillian pluralistic democracy, characterized by a lively independent civil society and a positive connection between civil society participation and political party participation, is today in place, contrary to the past.

In Part I we started by building a theoretical analytical model including all the most known theories existent in literature that explain the decision to participate in political actions, taking into account the determinants of the demand as well as of the supply that have an influence on the decision to participate in politics (Chapter 1). We then explored the origin of attitudes and behaviours through a literature review of the relationship between civil society participation (social capital) and political inefficacy (political disaffection), distinguishing between bottom-up and top-down, as well as

between endogenous and exogenous explanations (Chapter 2). In the same chapter we presented a literature review on the evolution of social participation, political efficacy and political participation in Italy since post-war, before defining the use we were to make in this text of the three relevant concepts (Chapter 3).

In Part II, the analytical part of the volume, first reported the evolution of the Italian socio-political participatory behaviour, along with the evolution of political efficacy attitudes, comparing a large amount of national and internal survey datasets (Chapter 4). We then assembled several surveys into a single pooled dataset, constructed hypotheses on the existing relationship between education and time (as time-period, political generations and age) (Chapter 5) and we finally tested whether the *individual modernization* or *cognitive mobilization* by Inglehart (1979; 1999) and Dalton (1984) was able to explain the evolution of participation in hierarchical associations, such as political parties and trade unions, as well as bottom-up civil society associations in the Italian context, particularly activist associations (Chapter 6). Finally, using a three-wave Italian national elections panel dataset we moved to the core of the paradox we wanted to explore, constructing hypotheses on possible causal relationships between social participation, political efficacy and political participation (Chapter 7). We then tested through structural equation modelling and latent class analysis whether the neo-Tocquevillian theory of participatory culture (Almond and Verba, 1963) and of *political socialization* (Putnam, 1993, 2000) theory was fitting our data better than other causal models, such as *self-selection* (Erbe, 1964; Hooghe, 2003) or *reverse causation* theory (Finkel, 1985, 1987) (Chapter 8).

## 9.2 What Did We Discover?

### 9.2.1 *How Has the Socio-Political Context Evolved in Italy Across Time?*

In Chapter 4 we were able to prove the evolution of the Italian socio-political context described by relevant literature and, organizing participation modalities in several categories in order to better map longitudinal trends. We saw that on the one hand membership in trade unions, professional organizations and, to a lesser extent, membership in religious organizations increased until the early 1990s and then started to decrease. On the other hand the number of associations existing on the territory have been substantially increasing, particularly those connected to health and social assistance, whereas membership in activist, civic non-religious and leisure associations

have increased across time (*Istat*, 2005). Financing of social associations has also increased, along with unconventional modalities of political participation, such as attending demonstrations, signing petitions and boycotting/boycotting products. At the same time conventional political participation, such as working for a political party, attending political meetings or rallies and contacting politicians, has dropped. Membership in political parties increased until the late 1980s/early 1990s, and then dramatically dropped, while financing political parties has remained constant across time but extremely low. Also turnout, that had always been very high both at national and local elections, started to drop, particularly after the abolition of compulsory voting in 1993.

Finally, political disaffection has remained extremely high (over 70%), with a tendency for external political efficacy - the perception that the system is going to be responsive to citizens needs -, to increase, while for internal efficacy - the perception of self-efficacy to affect the government - has stayed stable across time, with a very mild tendency to increase, despite mass scholarization of Italian society of the 1960s. Thus, in Chapter 4 we were able to prove that, at the macro level, evolution of the Italian socio-political context did not go in the directions expected by the Neo-Tocquevillian theories.

### ***9.2.2 Has the Thesis of 'Individual Modernization' Worked in Italy?***

The *individual modernization* or *cognitive mobilization* theory (Inglehart 1977, 1997; Dalton *et al.* 1984, 2002) assumes that, since there is a failure of politicians to meet the new demands of younger generations and that this new public feel at odds with the 'church-like' rituals of traditional participation these citizens, now called *critical* (Norris, 1999), participate less in conventional political participation becoming less deferent towards traditional hierarchical authorities. This happens on the one hand because of structural changes of modernization of society that bring more resources and particularly higher educational levels that contribute to the spread of new post-modern values. On the other hand this change happens through a process of generational replacement. Younger generations are indeed more likely to experience these values and, accordingly, to abandon participation in 'church-like' hierarchical organizations such as political parties and trade unions, while participating more in bottom-up democratic social associations.

In Chapter 5 we constructed several hypotheses in order to investigate the relationship between education and time in its three aspects of time-period, political cohorts and life-cycle. We also constructed a pooled dataset with five repeated national and international survey datasets. In Chapter 6 we tested empirically these hypotheses. We found that while it is true that participation in political parties and trade unions is decreasing across time, particularly among younger generations, whereas participation in bottom-up associations is increasing and younger generations participate more in activist and leisure associations than older generations, we found mixed results on the reasons why this is happening. Education seems only occasionally and partially to be the cause of these changing participatory patterns. In the conclusions of the chapter we raised two issues.

The first one is that changing participatory patterns in Italy cannot be satisfactorily explained only with a bottom-up sociological thesis such as the *individual modernization* thesis and the evolution of the characteristics of the supply side should also be taken into account as a very likely source of explanation. We saw that there has been a change in the supply of associations on the territory. Social associations have increased in number, while political organizations have decreased their local penetration. The relevant question is whether Italian changing participatory trends are only a matter of different number of associations available to the citizen, or should we also look at the functioning and structure of party organizations, along with the type of relationship in place between civil society, political parties and the state?

The second issue is that although in the chapter we investigated the characteristics of the participants and we saw that social associations and, increasingly more, political parties attract more well educated than less educated citizens. The focus of our investigation was not the political equalizer role of associations. Yet, we wonder whether a problem of political inequality has arisen with the new socio-political system. We saw that although political parties in Italy were not able to promote a plurality of opinions, they were able to assure a high level of political equality (Pizzorno, 1966; Alberoni *et al.*, 1968; Barbagli and Maccelli, 1985). If participation in political parties has strongly decreased their support across time, they are probably not likely anymore to perform this role. Is participation in social associations in Italy able to substitute them in their old equalizer role?

*9.2.2.1 Changing Participatory Behaviour and the Issue of Political Equality*

New forms of social participation are often seen as complementary to old forms of participation. Indeed, the idea of democracy behind Inglehart's view seems to be a representative democracy less directed by the élites, rather than a pure direct democracy. Yet, according to him participation in these new forms goes together with a change of values that implies a delegitimation of hierarchical, but essential structures of democracy such as political parties and trade unions. If the post-modern values were to perform this delegitimation role, participation in new forms of social participation, particularly in activist associations, might then ideally become an alternative to participation in political parties and trade unions rather than complementary. We might even think that this might be a good evolution for democracy since, at least in principle, civil society associations have a less-hierarchical structure, more open to society, usually having as one of their main goal to reform the a-democratic aspects of traditional political agencies. Thus, it might be that the problem of a decline of political party membership is not as problematic as it is claimed because we are in the process of a transition between two different modes of participation (Inglehart, 1988; Dalton 1988; Kaas 1984).

We wonder, however, whether these new social associations in Italy are able to fulfil the equalizer role once performed by political parties and trade unions. This is an open question, since we have not investigated this. We can however make two remarks. First, we saw that this type of participation, as well as (increasingly more) participation in political parties, is strongly spurred on by education. Moreover, participation in parties is decreasing. The consequence of the weakening of mass parties in a situation in which participation in social associations is quite influenced by resources availability makes political participation of popular sectors with low economic and educational resources much more uncertain than the past. If people who participate in social associations are mostly those with high social position, the effects of participation may end up in promoting mainly their interests, strengthening their positions and thereby increasing social inequalities, rather than decreasing them. Despite the fact that education is more widespread today than ever before, it is certainly still a resource that is unequally distributed. But if people do not have the same access to power as

everybody else because access to education is unequal and even more unequal are the consequences that this brings for participation, then there is a problem of political equality (Dahl, 2006).

Secondly, bottom-up participation is likely to be found in social movements. Although very important for democracy, participation in social movements is usually cyclical and based on specific issues. It can help the democratic system in many ways, but it cannot substitute the role of participation in political parties. Thus, however useful and important it might be for pluralism of opinions that different forms of political action and social associations proliferate in society, we should remember that political parties are those who hold the power and that form governments and parliaments. Since pluralistic representative democracies cannot even be thought of without political parties, parties will not be eliminated and they will continue to operate and to hold the power even if only few people join them. Thus, the low level of representativeness that hierarchical political parties have reached today is surely a relevant concern for high quality democracy that should be thought of.

Although they are often seen in a negative light, the function of political parties should be to adapt to social transformations as well as to enable the society to manage its divisions and internal conflict in a peaceful way. Parties should indeed be able to reflect the concerns and needs of the society, identifying the cleavages found in the population, offering competing resolutions of problems and policy programs reflecting the core interests of their base. Once in office, they should address the needs of the relatively like-minded people they are representing, adapting to changing demands of society. It is for the very fact that a democracy cannot operate properly without representative, competitive, and responsive party system that it is crucial to study political parties. And if they are today in the process of a crisis, perhaps new party structures should be thought of (Schattschneider, 1942; 1960; Dalton, 2002; Hofstadter, 1969; Aldrich, 1995; Coleman, 1996; Crotty 2006).

### ***9.2.3 Has Italy become a Bottom-Up Tocquevillian Pluralistic Democracy?***

The dominant neo-Tocquevillian theory of social associations as ‘schools of democracy’, or *political socialization* model (Almond and Verba, 1963; Putnam, 1993, 2000; Verba *et al.*, 1995) assumes that participation in social associations leads to enhance individual levels of political efficacy and, accordingly, promote political



participation from below. In Chapter 7 and 8 we moved to investigate this model at the analytical level. We first constructed a structural model and several hypotheses (Chapter 7) to test also alternative causal models existing in literature such as the *self-selection* model (Erbe, 1964; Hooghe, 2003, Armingeon 2007), which assumes that the relationship between social and political participation is spurious since both depend on higher levels of political efficacy held by individuals, and the *reversal causation* model (Finkel, 1985, 1987), which assumes that political participation has a positive effect on the levels of political efficacy of individuals. We then tested these hypotheses with a three-wave national election study panel dataset, first through structural equation modelling and then through latent class analysis (Chapter 8).

First of all, we found that it is only a small minority of people that participate in politics and/or in civil society, while the majority of people is non-participant and has low or very low levels of political efficacy. We then found scarce results for supporting the *political socialization* model, as we found, however, scarce results to support the *self-selection* thesis. On the one hand, we observed a relationship between political efficacy and political participation in both causal directions (from efficacy to political participation: *political socialization & self-selection*; from political participation to efficacy: *reversal causation*), while on the other hand we found no link between being a member of civil society associations and political efficacy, regardless of the direction of causation, with the only partial exception for leisure associations (from social participation to political efficacy: *political socialization*; from political efficacy to social participation: *self-selection*). Although neither model seems to work well with our data, when we found a relationship, the *self-selection* model seemed to work slightly better than the *political socialization* model since the causal link that goes from political efficacy to political participation and to leisure association is stronger than the reversal link. Moreover, among the minority that participates, people with a strong political tradition in the family of origin are likely to participate in trade unions more than others, while well-educated people are more likely to vote.

It is however the thesis of no relationship between political and civil society participation that finds more support. Firstly, people that participate in social associations have generally low levels of political efficacy, with the exception for non-politicized leisure associations. Secondly, there is no correlation between political and

social association membership, and the only exception of people that are active both in political and civil society associations is represented by members of highly politicized trade unions. In short, it seems that Italian people with high levels of political efficacy decide to join either trade unions, political parties or, more rarely, both, in line with the historical relation between these two types of (semi) political organizations.

Whereas people with low political efficacy do not participate in any type of organization, if they do, they tend to join highly politicized activist and professional associations. This suggests once again that political parties are not much connected to civil society. Indeed, even assuming that civil society associations in Italy not only have become independent from political subcultures but have also become truly bottom-up and open to society (which is something that we did not investigate in this volume), this participatory force from below does not seem to flow in a connection or at least in positive attitudes toward organizations that should represent their needs.

As we claimed already in previous chapter, from the scenario we found from our analyses we have two possibilities. One is pointing the finger at problematic data that might have biased our results. Yet, it seems more likely that, although our results could be improved if we had better data, Italy has still a long way to go before becoming the pluralistic democracy that Tocqueville admired more than a century ago, characterized by decentralized power and by a relationship between a lively bottom-up and pluralistic associationism with open political parties. The picture of independent trends of social participation, political associations and political efficacy already suggested at macro levels in Chapter 4 and 6 has been indeed confirmed at the micro level in Chapter 7 and 8, and civil associations does not seem to foster either political efficacy or political participation. How can we then explain the evolution of participation and political efficacy in Italy across time?

### **9.3 Is this ‘typically Italian’ ?**

The findings of this research showed a failed positive relationship between joining civil society and participating in political action. Is this a ‘typically Italian’ phenomenon or is Italy part of a wider European picture? Are the characteristics of the Italian socio-political structure and historical evolution that make this relationship peculiar, or is it something more deep-rooted in the way a wide part of European continental countries have historically been politicized?

### ***9.3.1 Importance of Politics, Pluralistic Democracy and Politicization Modalities***

We started this volume talking about three main themes. The first one was the debate about the importance of politics and the different amounts of participation considered normatively good for a society. We saw how classic authors such as Aristotele and Pericle considered political participation as a moral obligation for a citizen, while authors such as Adam John thought that an individual should be free to realize his social being outside of politics. According to Benjamin Constant ([1819] 1986), however, while the ancients had a participatory and republican liberty in which a restricted circle of citizens could and had to participate in politics in small and homogenous societies, the moderns are free in a liberal sense, that is they try to become free from excessive state power, through elected representatives of citizens. It is in this line that Tocqueville (2000 [1835–1840]) sees XIX century American associations: as an antidote to the power of the state, particularly strong when equality of social conditions is created by a democratic system.

The second theme was the idea of democracy presented by Tocqueville. His idea of democracy was not an idea of participatory democracy but of a pluralistic representative democracy that gave importance to a lively civil society and to the representative role performed by political parties. Pluralistic democracy is understood by the French historian as a sort of public forum that needs to be politicized in a way that assures both equality of political participation and pluralism of opinion.

The third theme dealt with the different modalities through which a participatory culture can be introduced in a society with different consequences for the levels of equality and pluralism that it creates. One way is by increasing resources in society, but since resources are unequally distributed these are not able to assure political equality among citizens. The dominant view for spreading participatory culture as well as equality and pluralism in a society is through the spread of associationism, a view partially inspired by the writings of Tocqueville, that sees civil society associations as ‘schools of democracy’ because they are able to produce social capital, as well as civic-ness, but most of all are thought to produce participatory citizens in an equal and pluralistic society, providing them with pre-political skills that enhance political activity. Historically, however, participatory culture has been fostered also in a third way, that is as the result of top-down political forces. This is for instance the case of Fascism and of post-war Communist and, to a less extent of Christian Democrats Italian

mass parties, which created their own subcultures, mobilizing millions of citizens in their political organizations as well as in party-related secondary associations, as if they were proper states within the state. Also this modality has been able to create political equality, because it has been able to make participate in politics also people with fewer resources. At the same time, however, this modality fostered quite a monistic idea of democracy, rather than a pluralistic one.

We saw that in Italy, a participatory culture was historically introduced in society with the third modality rather than with the second. Since the neo-Tocquevillian bottom-up social capital idea that growth of independent civil associationism should have brought to higher political participation has not worked neither at the macro nor at the micro level, in order to understand the evolution of the socio-political context, we should consider another explanation possibility. If looking at the demand did not give us enough insights to understand what has happened, then we should try to look at the supply side of politics and try to hypothesize what could have happened.

### ***9.3.2 Italy: Changed Party Structure but Unchanged Norms of Participation***

The prevailing normative idea on politics held by Italian political parties has historically been one of strong importance of political participation, and this idea has been in line with the structure of political parties for long time. During the totalitarian Fascist regime there was a strong mobilization of people in order to make them participate in the PNF (National Fascist Party) or related organizations. Direct membership party in Italian fascism produced a political culture of party membership that served as a basis for high levels of political mobilization in the democracy that followed. Highly ‘participatory’ democracy, mass party mobilizing structures, and a strong sense of political belonging were quite clearly a heritage of the fascist period (Scoppola 1997: 168-178). The conception of political participation as a party channelled *obligation* was indeed a point of continuity between the fascist and non-fascist periods, and suggests that high levels of political participation in Italy were caused by party mobilization, rather than by citizens’ bottom-up mobilization. The mass parties of the *First Republic* were surely much more democratic than the non-democratic PNF and party ideologies were completely different. However, the structure of democratic parties and the participatory culture conveyed was very similar to the PNF. The PCI and, to a less extent, the DC were mobilizing people to participate in ‘red’ Communist (PCI) or

‘white’ Christian Democrat (DC) subcultures with low propensity for pluralism in the political struggle. Modernization of society, crisis of ideologies and evolution of the international context have caused a decrease of top-down citizens mobilization in mass parties. We hypothesize that the drop of political participation and particularly of political party membership has been due in great part to this, and not only to a change in society and in citizens’ values. In the *Second Republic* (starting in 1993), the change of the entire political system, characterized by a decrease of political local branches and by a sort of depoliticization of society, has made this decrease even more clear. Why then did parties change their strategies?

We saw that studies have observed how democracies in which most parties were created and institutionalized at the beginning of the XX century party model were based on mass cleavages, as also happened in Italy (Gunther, Puhle, and Diamandouros, 1995, Pasquino, 2001, and Morlino, 1995). One reason is that in 1945, when Italian mass-parties were created, television was virtually non-existent in Italian households, and therefore a consistent part of communications between parties and citizens, and between centre and periphery had to depend upon local branches of political parties that were deep-rooted in the territory. This contributed to creating parties with a very thick and strong structure. Parties created ‘from scratch’ in the late XX century, are instead more likely to be structured in different ways and to take on the organizational form of catch-all parties, characterized by personalization of politics, broad programmatic appeal, and direct communication to citizens through mass media rather than through mass membership (see Kirchheimer 1966; Gunther and Diamond 2003). In the early 1990s, when older Italian parties disappeared and new parties appeared on the scene, the context was much different to the one of 1945, since the majority of Italian households could count at least one television in their house. In the *Second Republic* new parties were then created in a highly mediatised environment. Since they could communicate with potential voters directly through mass media, this implied that they were indeed less institutionally constrained and less in need to create communication channels of their own and therefore new parties had a much weaker structure than the past (see Linz, 2002). The decrease of political participation in Italy is then very likely due to the fact that since the 1970s parties gradually abandoned their old mobilization strategies, ending up with changing party models in the early 1990s. For this reason, however, they

also lack close relations with civil society associations and with society organized groups.

The autonomist party *Northern League* might be thought as a partial exception to this changing structure, since it is the political party that most resembles the structure of older parties, and that has been trying to create its own separate subculture, on the old model of a state (*Padania*) within the State, with apparently low propensity for accepting pluralism of political opinions. Indeed, adopted first by PNF, then by PCI and DC, this party structure and politicization modality from above does not seem to be influenced by the political colour of the party. It does not even seem to be a characteristic feature of parties based on strong ideologies. Besides the autonomist/federalist goal of the *Northern League*, indeed, this party, like other parties of the *Second Republic*, does not have a clearly defined strong ideology. It seems then that the modality of party structure and relation with citizens is more a matter of a deep-rooted modality of participatory culture. Indeed, whereas other parties created after 1992 are based on a very different party structure than older parties, and despite the fact that they are today generally much less focused than in the past on fostering mass membership and citizens participation from above, their normative ideas of politicization and political participation seem somehow still influenced by normative old logic.

On the one hand this often leads party leaders to pretend to represent the whole territory of (north) Italy, and not just some of the people that live in the country, seeing, more or less implicitly, different political opinions as illegitimate. Indeed, they seem to be often characterized by a demonization of the political adversary. On the other hand, politicians and political parties make claim for a need of high citizens involvement and participation in politics as they used to do in the past. Yet, this seems to clash with the new structure they adopted. In fact, while claiming for citizen participation, they act as closed and inaccessible parties without much connection to civil society. This fact might have in turn contributed to three phenomena: the creation of a *political élite* disconnected from society (*casta*), the increase of highly conflictual social movements, activist organizations and protest politics, the enhancement of feelings of frustration and of political disaffection among citizens.

9.3.2.1 *Why does a Political Élite Disconnected from Society Exist?*

The cause of the non communication between political parties and civic associations might lay on the fact that although with the process of modernization there has been in Italy an increase of economic and educational resources in society, and that political parties and civil society associations have become increasingly more independent across time, there has not been a corresponding development of the political system and of the national political culture. A modernizing élite has been missed, preventing the cultural and political integration of Italian society. The Italian political system of the *First Republic* has first become a party government (*partitocrazia*) (Pasquino, 1982), in which decision were taken by parties instead of by parliament. Parties moved then from the institutional to the structural level of the State, developing an 'administrative' democracy, characterized by an expansion of a particularistic welfare state. This was quite easy to do until economic development provided all the necessary resources, or until it has been possible to increase the public deficit to get them. At the end of the 1980s the number of politicians had reached 150-200.000 unities (Paci, 1991), but most of all it was the ability of the party system to reproduce itself that had increased, creating a *casta* or political class separated from society.

The result of the process of modernization left half way is that social conflict is not channelled, as in other Western democracies, into a shared value system and common rules. There is indeed a structural difficulty in the Italian political system to produce a set of shared 'rules of the game' that would allow a non-traumatic electoral conflict (Paci, 1994; Ginsborg, 1989; Lanaro, 1992; Lepre, 1993; Salvadori, 1994). This might be due to the fact that either channels of access to politics do not work or they are inadequate. First of all, since participants of political parties and civil society associations are different people, it seems indeed logical to assume that politicians do not come from the world of associationism and from the experience of civil society, and a separation of these two spheres implies that the recruitment channels of the political world are not rooted in society. Since political parties should in principle be the main representatives of the society that produces them, this is a highly problematic issue. A competitive and responsive party system that adapts to social transformation is indeed crucial for democracy to work and for managing internal divisions and conflict in a peaceful way (Shattschneider, 1960; 1942; Dalton, 2002; Hofstadter, 1969; Aldrich, 1995; Coleman, 1996; Crotty 2001a, 2001b).

Secondly, it is the separation of the political class from society that has probably also given origin to practices of consociationalism and *lottizzazione*<sup>128</sup> of government parties, as well as between government and opposition, and that finally gives birth to corruption. Political corruption is a phenomenon that has always existed in Italy, but it is in the 1980s that it becomes a real system, creating extensive opportunities for particularistic behaviour combined with strong ideological battles. Parliaments have then been unable to produce independent governments with ‘high’ political mediation throughout the whole *First Republic* (Paci, 1996; Sani and Segatti 2001). As the *World Bank* data have shown, however, also the *Second Republic* seems characterized by a steep decrease in the rule of law and of control of corruption.

#### 9.3.2.2 *Why Has Social Participation and Social Protest Increased?*

We believe that increases in social participation has not led to a pluralistic democratic society, as expected, mainly for two reasons. On the one hand, participation in social associations has grown due to increase resources in society, multiplication of interests of citizens, progressive independence of associations by political subcultures as well as exponential growth of the number of associations available in the territory. At the same time, however, the legal environment within which Italian associations operate as well as the pattern of financial support are not coherent (Perlmutter, 1991: 178) with the consequence that social organizations cannot be autonomously effective actors in the public sphere.

On the other hand, the increase of social participation, particularly in the most politicized type of social associations such as activist associations, might also be the consequence of a closed party system. A political system is said to be open if political institutions incorporate citizens’ associations and new demands for influence and if they are able to respond to citizens’ demands. In this way citizens reduce the cost of political action and increase the benefits of joining political parties. If parties are open to new demands they are more legitimated among citizens and individuals are more likely to participate in collective action through group associations. In the opposite case of a closed system, citizens are more likely to participate in collective action through forms of protest (Hardin, 1991: 370; Rochon, 1998: 202). The result of a closed party system

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<sup>128</sup> Appointing personnel, and dividing media power as well as resources according to political affiliations



is then that bottom-up initiatives do not find space in the political world, hindering also a lively pluralistic civil society.

Not only this. Given the nature of the historical relationship between political parties and civil society, the legacy of anti-state subcultures as well as the high levels of disaffection in Italian society, it might be that not only disaffected citizens are frustrated by the participation in extremely bureaucratic political parties, but that certain social organizations, such as those more highly politicized, might actively discourage conventional activity (Smith and Freedman, 1972) in state-integrated political parties. It is likely that the type of historical, top-down, low-pluralistic politicization of society has been interiorized also by new social movements. Anti-party politics is for instance a characteristic still deeply rooted in the Italian leftist culture of social movements.

#### *9.3.2.3 Why Has Political Disaffection Stayed High?*

A deep disaffection syndrome is on the one hand a legacy from the past, but on the other there are also characteristics of the present political system that keep political disaffection in Italian society quite stable and very high. The causes for having widespread low levels of political efficacy could be twofold. On the one hand it might be that internal efficacy, strongly influenced by education, does not grow, while on the other it might be that external efficacy, strongly influenced by the structure of political opportunities, depress the internal dimension of this attitude. If a process of mass scholarization has enhanced levels of education in society but disaffection has not diminished, also the cause for low efficacy might lay on the characteristics of the political structure and its relationship with civil society.

The participatory experience offered by traditional political organizations appears a flat one-dimensional experience in a bureaucratic context which does not allow for a real participation of citizens. Rather than political apathy understood as low levels of citizens' political interest, it might be that participation of citizens in highly politicized but less formalized social associations along with feelings of low political efficacy might represent the answer to the inhibiting participatory experience of bureaucratic mass parties. On the one hand citizens might not be satisfied with the responsiveness of the political system to their requests, either for objective reasons or because they have too high expectations. On the other hand, people might perceive that citizens are not treated in equal ways. Levels of political efficacy would then stay low because external

efficacy not only does not grow when there is an increase of individual skills, but finally ends up in depressing also feelings of internal efficacy (Segatti and Vezzoni, 2007).

If the political system is a closed one, then, politics is responsible for pushing down citizens' political efficacy and impeding bottom-up participation. One reason for political disaffection might be that politics is for some reason less relevant or less attractive than the past. Reasons might be that parties are not based on clear ideologies anymore, or that the type of conflict existing in society is not relevant for citizens since politicians do not explain how individuals daily life is going to change if they vote for different parties. It is certainly true that, up to a certain level, disaffection is endemic in politics since citizens pose very different and conflicting requests to politics and political parties (e.g. parties should hold strong and clear positions on issues when facing political opposition, but at the same time they are required to be democratic). Yet, too high expectations inevitably lead to higher levels of this attitude.

The tensions deriving from the perceived gap between reality and the idealized notion of how the political system should work are particularly common in political cultures influenced by Catholicism, but as we explained they were reinforced in Italy by the legacy of non-democratic Fascism, which attempted to develop partisanship while suppressing political conflict. The party-driven subcultural contexts of post-war Italy made, to a lower degree and in a democratic context, this situation continue. Political élites of DC and PCI, the major parties of the *First Republic* democracy, developed from Catholic and Socialist traditions that had minor roles in the building processes of the Italian state and nation, constructed well-anchored party systems (with related secondary associations) in which competition was, to different degrees, very much reduced (Segatti and Sani, 2001).

If citizens do not accept that politics in democracies must necessarily be conflictual in order to guarantee the responsiveness of parties to voters and to defend specific groups' interests, and no top-down mobilization is at work anymore, only ideologized people willing to struggle in a partisan way would participate in politics. Yet, a democratic society is supposed to be made by voluntary participation of citizens living in a pluralist context, rather than by a minority of partisan individuals living in a society with low propensity for pluralism. Moreover, in such highly ideologized context, on the one hand less politicized associations promoting 'peace' are not the

proper place to learn skills or to motivate citizens to face conflict, and finally to improve their political efficacy (Mutz, 2006; Theiss-Morse and Hibbing, 2005). On the other hand, politicized associations perhaps are a place in which is possible to learn conflict, but it might be that, due to historical legacies of struggles and protests rather than debate, it is pluralism that is not learnt in a proper way.

Finally, the belief in the non-responsiveness of political system (external efficacy) might be fostered by the closed character of the recruitment channels of political parties and by their inequality of access. At the same time, however, political disaffection might also originate by the perception of inequality of treatment of citizens. In a pluralistic democracy citizens need to (perceive to) be treated as legal subjects by authorities, that means in a fair and not arbitrary way, but the existence of a society-detached political élite, high levels of corruptions, as well as not shared 'rules of the game' this does not seem to be the case. Citizens seem indeed to constantly wonder whether politicians are honest, and most of the time their answer is not positive. As Sani and Segatti (2001) suggest, in order to survive in a political system which seems not to assure equality of treatment, it is necessary to accept arbitrary rules with the consequence that pressure from above and feelings of being in a subaltern position not only depress external efficacy, but end up with crushing feelings of internal political efficacy, producing extremely disaffected citizens.

### ***9.3.3 Or Is It a Wider European Phenomenon?***

We have presented so far some speculative reasons of why the Italian context could have developed in the way it did, that can be mostly related to the peculiar structural and historical characteristics of this state. We have talked about the legacy of non-democratic fascism as well as of democratic subcultural party mobilization from above on current Italian socio-political context that might possibly be regarded as the cause for dropping political participation, the creation of a political *casta*, the existence of highly politicized and partisan secondary associations, as well as of deep-rooted political disaffection. But how is the scenario in other countries? Does this type of top-down politicization characterize only the history of the Italian political system?

Classical authors such as Tocqueville (writing in the 1830s) and Weber (writing in early-1920s) give us evidence of a longstanding profound difference between North American and European parties, associations and political systems. The discovery that

Tocqueville made, observing the North American society of XIX century, was indeed that the relationship between political parties, civil society and the state could be different to the monistic and close one he had experienced until that moment in France. Yet, he described the French political structure as part as a more general continental European structure of states.

When Tocqueville was writing, political parties in continental Europe, where restricted suffrage existed, were parliamentary groups, not yet organized in society, like American parties that were instead present in society in order to organize public opinions before elections. The American political structure was instead pluralistic and open, social power was disseminated in a plurality of centres and political parties had weak organization and internal discipline. Moreover they were not separated from civil society but represented it in front of the state that had reduced to a referee among different groups. In this context, according to Tocqueville, also the right of associationism was understood in different ways, carrying advantages and prosperity in America, while creating a perverted system, carried to excesses not only in France, but also in the rest of Europe.

“The difference that exists in this respect between Americans and Europeans depends on several causes. In Europe there are parties which differ so much from the majority that they can never hope to acquire its support, and yet they think they are strong enough in themselves to contend against it. When a party of this kind forms an association, its object is not to convince, but to fight. In America the individuals who hold opinions much opposed to those of the majority can do nothing against it, and all other parties hope to win it over to their own principles. The exercise of the right of association becomes dangerous, then, in proportion as great parties find themselves wholly unable to acquire the majority. In a country like the United States, in which the differences of opinion are mere differences of hue, the right of association may remain unrestrained without evil consequences. Our inexperience of liberty leads us to regard the liberty of association only as a right of attacking the government. The first notion that presents itself to a party, as well as to an individual, when it has acquired a consciousness of its own strength is that of violence; the notion of persuasion arises at a later period, and is derived from experience. The English, who are divided into parties which differ essentially from each other, rarely abuse the right of association because they have long been accustomed to exercise it. In France the passion for war is so intense that there is no undertaking so mad, or so injurious to the welfare of the state that a man does not consider himself honored in defending it at the risk of his life.”  
(Tocqueville, 2000 [1835–1840], Volume I, Chapter 12)

## Chapter 9

While American and, to a less extent, British political parties and associations were trying to convince people to join them in order to subtract tasks to the state and to limit its power, in continental Europe (politicized) associations were fighting, acting and commanding as if they were military organizations, centralizing their direction in the hands of a small minority and understanding the liberty of association only as a right to attack the government.

“Thus it is, in the vast complication of human laws, that extreme liberty sometimes corrects the abuses of liberty, and that extreme democracy obviates the dangers of democracy. In Europe associations consider themselves, in some degree, as the legislative and executive council of the people, who are unable to speak for themselves; moved by this belief, they act and they command. In America, where they represent in the eyes of all only a minority of the nation, they argue and petition. The means that associations in Europe employ are in accordance with the end which they propose to obtain. As the principal aim of these bodies is to act and not to debate, to fight rather than to convince, they are naturally led to adopt an organization which is not civic and peaceable, but partakes of the habits and maxims of military life. They also centralize the direction of their forces as much as possible and entrust the power of the whole party to a small number of leaders. [...] The Americans have also established a government in their associations, but it is invariably borrowed from the forms of the civil administration. The independence of each individual is recognized; as in society, all the members advance at the same time towards the same end, but they are not all obliged to follow the same track. No one abjures the exercise of his reason and free will, but everyone exerts that reason and will to promote a common undertaking.” (Tocqueville, 2000 [1835–1840], Volume I, Chapter 12).

It is for this reason that at the beginning of this volume we speculated that if Tocqueville had travelled from France to mid-XX century Italy, instead of XIX century North America he would have come to the conclusion that associations were not ‘schools of democracy’ but rather ‘schools of partisanship’. The mobilizing forces of Communist (PCI) and Christian Democrats (DC) mass parties of the 1950s, that had been shaped with a similar structure of the Fascist political party (PNF), dominated the Italian socio-political system and had a big role in fostering a highly participatory culture as well as mobilizing citizens with fewer resources. Thus, mobilization in Italy has been made in an equal but not truly pluralistic way.

Also the German sociologist Max Weber, almost a century later than Tocqueville, wrote in *Economy and Society* (1922) that the different type of politicization of

continental Europe and America had generated a different relationship between political party, civil society and the State. He focused particularly on the different political party structures, characterizing the two continents. In Europe, political parties were based on the structure and organization of the centralized state, having interiorized its discipline and bureaucracy, ending up being as states within the state. They had a strong, bureaucratic and centralized organization that were leading them to become organs of the powerful state while trying to use civil society associations to their needs, instead of representing civil society. In the US, political parties were instead decentralized and open without the need to create a structure. He also suggested that the difference was mostly due to the fact that in the US there was an almost universal suffrage in which the vote of every citizen was important, while in most of continental Europe suffrage was still restricted.

According to Weber the difference between Anglo-Saxon and European countries was the existence of a democracy with leaders or a democracy without leaders. Anglo-Saxon, but most of all, American political parties were described as electoral ‘machines’ without a specific political content with the goal of placing the party leader in the national office to allocate federal public offices to his followers. This system led to corruption, but at least until unlimited economic resources were available, it did not lead to a bureaucratic political élite detached from society. European political parties, such as the German SPD or Catholic party, were instead described as political organizations based on political ideals that were, however, also very interested in the political patronage of public offices. In these countries no importance was given to Parliament, while great importance was given to specialized bureaucratic public officials, that finally led, however, to creating a political élite detached from society.

The analytical perspective that both Tocqueville and Weber propose is relevant not because of a preference of the American or the European model of party structure and state organization, but for the very fact that they give importance to how different for a society the effects of different party and state structures could be. Indeed, according to them, political attitudes and behaviour are not much influenced by the characteristics of the demand side of politics, such as individual characteristics (e.g. income, education, social status), individual ideological orientations, or individual experiences of participation. They are not even much influenced by the structural

conditions of a society. They are instead deeply influenced by the institutional context in which citizens live, that gives them the frame within which they can act. In order to understand different levels of political participation in different countries and specific socio-political context, it is then very relevant in future research to undertake a deep reflection on the structure of political parties, on the importance given by the traditional 'political culture' to political participation, as well as on channels of recruitment and communication of parties. It is crucial also to study the historical legacy of the political systems, as well as the causal relationship between political parties, the state and civil society associations. A change toward a higher quality democracy might be realized if different organizational models are thought of.

#### ***9.3.4 What are the Implications for Future Research?***

Although in this study we were only able to proceed in an *ex-negativo* way, proving that some bottom-up mechanisms are not strongly at work in Italy, we have interpreted findings keeping in mind the existence of both bottom-up and top-down, radically different modalities that lead citizens to join political parties or to vote. With a single country study it is not possible to generalize the degree to which civic associationism (or social capital) is able or not to produce participatory citizens and a pluralistic democracy. We saw that in Italy, political parties have been responsible for having introduced a participatory culture in society, rather than civil society associations. And now that civil society associations have become more independent from political parties, it seems that channels of recruitment of political parties do not come from the associationism world. From what classical authors report, this seems however also be similar to some historical characteristics of the socio-political context in the rest of continental Europe.

We saw that an increase in politicized mass-membership organizations may in some cases be more an indicator of polarization within a vulnerable democratic system in transition or in crisis than of a healthy democracy, and this was true for post-war Italy, as well as it was for Weimar Germany (see Allen 1965; Linz and Stepan 1978). A similar remark can be made on social associationism. Whether we talk of the 'dark side' of social capital in specific cases such as mafia organizations or the militia movements in the US (Fiorina, 1999), or the secondary organizations belonging to Italian political subcultures of the 1950s, the spread of civil society associations might not always be

good. As some authors have suggested, perhaps, *per se*, political participation and associationism are neither good nor bad for democracy, but are simply neutral (Bellucci, Maraffi and Segatti, 2007; Berman, 1997b). The evaluations of the effects of an increase of social associationism or of political participation might rather be path-dependent and relate to the characteristics of political institutions and of the wider political context.

If this were the case, the thesis of social capital might have to be rethought as being context-dependent. And this is why a longitudinal comparative study including countries with different political contexts, historical background and origins of participatory culture is needed. Given the long-term difference of the nature of parties and associations in the two continents, Italian socio-political context should be compared to other European contexts and to the Anglo-Saxons ones. Only after such a study would we be able to answer the question of how we should frame the Italian scenario. Is Italy an exceptional case in which neo-Tocquevillean theories of social capital do not work due to its peculiar historical background of long democratic transition characterized by very ideologized mass parties that have now almost completely lost contact with society leading to a very bureaucratized political system headed, very often, by a corrupt political élite? Or is Italy instead just an example, maybe an extreme one, of a wider scenario originated by a top-down modality of politicization that has characterized many continental European countries, and that is radically different to the bottom-up politicization through social associationism experienced in the United States?



## Appendix I.

### Surveys Question Wording (Chap. 4)

#### I.1 Surveys Question Wording

We report here the original questions for *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba, 1963) survey, the Study on 5 areas of Milan by Pizzorno (1964), the Standard EB, The Mannheim EB Trend File, ISSP, WVS, ESS, IMF-Istat, Iref and Itanes series.

##### *I.1.1 The Civic Culture Survey (Almond and Verba, 1959)*

Are you a member of any organization now – trade or labor unions, business organizations, social groups, professional or farm organizations, cooperatives, fraternal or veterans' groups, athletic clubs, political, charitable, civic or religious organizations, or any other organized group? Which ones?

##### *I.1.2 Political Participation in Five Sections of Milan: Baggio, Barona, Comasine, Forlanini, Perrucchetti. (Alessandro Pizzorno, 1964)*

Membership:

- Political party
- Trade unions, professional categories
- None

##### *I.1.3 The Standard EB (1983, 1987, 1990, 1998, 2004)*

###### *I.1.3.1 Survey EB 19 – 1983*

1) Which, if any, of the following groups do you belong to?

- community or social action groups
- churches or religious organizations
- education or arts group
- trade union or professional associations
- political parties or groups
- organizations concerned with human rights (in your country) and abroad
- conservation of nature environmentalist, or animal welfare groups, ecologists
- youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.)
- consumer groups
- associations or societies of any kind for women
- sporting club
- none of these

2) And do you currently do any unpaid voluntary work for any of them?

- community or social action groups
- churches or religious organizations
- education or arts group
- trade union or professional associations
- political parties or groups
- organizations concerned with human rights (in your country) and abroad

- conservation of nature environmentalist, or animal welfare groups, ecologists
- youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.)
- consumer groups
- associations or societies of any kind for women
- sporting club
- none of these

*I.1.3.2 Survey EB 28 – 1987*

1) Which, if any, of the following groups do you belong to?

- community or social action groups
- churches or religious organizations
- education or arts group
- trade union or professional associations
- political parties or groups
- organizations concerned with human rights (in your country) and abroad
- conservation of nature environmentalist, or animal welfare groups, ecologists
- youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.)
- consumer groups
- sporting club
- none of these

*I.1.3.3 Survey EB 34 – 1990*

1) Are you yourself or is anyone else in your household a member of a political party?

Yes, respondent/Yes, someone else in the household/Nobody in the household

2) Are you yourself or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union?

Yes, respondent/Yes, someone else in the household/Nobody in the household

3) Which, if any, of the following groups do you belong to?

- charities and social action groups
- church or religious organizations
- cultural or arts groups
- trade unions or professional associations
- political parties or movements
- organizations concerned with any abuse of human rights taking place in Italy or abroad
- nature conservation, animal welfare or ecology groups
- youth organizations (e.g. scouts, youth clubs, etc.)

*I.1.3.4 Survey EB 49 – 1998*

1) From the following list, could you tell me, which organizations you are a member of or whose activities you participate in?

- Social welfare or charitable organizations
- Religious or parish organizations
- Cultural or artistic associations
- Political parties
- Trade unions, professional organizations, employer associations
- Human rights movements or organizations

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- Organisations for the protection of nature, animals, the environment
- Youth organizations (scouts, youth clubs, etc.)
- Consumer organizations
- Sports clubs, associations
- Hobby or special interest clubs/associations (collectors, 'fan-clubs', computer clubs, etc.)
- Other clubs or organizations

### *1.1.3.5 Survey EB 62.2 – 2004*

1) Now, I would like you to look carefully at the following list of organizations and activities. Please, say in which, if any, you are a member.

- A sports club or club for outdoor activities (recreation organization)
- Education, arts, music or cultural association
- A trade union
- A business or professional organization
- A consumer organization
- An international organization such as development aid organization or human rights organization
- An organization of the environmental protection, animal rights, etc.
- A charity organization or social aid organization
- A leisure association for the elderly
- An organization of the defence of elderly rights
- Religious or church organization
- Political party or organization
- Organization defending the interest of patients and/or disabled
- Other interest groups for specific causes such as women, people with specific sexual orientation or local issues
- None of these

### ***1.1.4 The Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File (1988-1994):***

1) Political Party Membership: 1988-1991

Are you yourself or is someone in your household a member of a political party?

Yes, respondent is party member/Yes, another one in the household is party member/Nobody in the household is party member

2) Trade Unions Membership: 1988-1994

Are you yourself or is someone in your household a member of a trade union?

Yes, respondent is union member/ Yes, another one in the household is union member/Nobody in the household is union member

### ***1.1.5 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)***

#### *1.1.5.1 ISSP 1992-1998*

1) Are you a member in a trade union at present?

Member/No member

*1.1.5.2 ISSP 2001*

1) People sometimes belong to different kinds of groups or associations. The list below contains different types of groups. For each type of group, please tick a box to say whether you have participated in the activities of this group in the past 12 months. (Please tick one box on each line)

- A political party, club or association
- A trade union or professional association
- A church or other religious organization
- A sports group, hobby or leisure club
- A charitable organisation or group

Not available/ Not asked/I have participated more than twice/I have participated once or twice/I belong to such a group, but never participate/I do not belong to such a group/Don't know/Na, refused

*1.1.6 World Value Study/European Value Study*

*1.1.6.1 WVS/EVS 1981 - First Round*

1) Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done these thing, whether you would do it, might do it or would not, under any circumstances, do any of them.

(Mark an answer for each)

- Signing a petition
- Joining in boycotts
- Attending lawful demonstrations
- Joining unofficial strikes
- Occupying buildings or factories
- Damaging things like breaking windows, removing roads signs, etc
- Using personal violence like fighting with other demonstrators or the police

Have done/might do/would never do/don't know

2) Which, if any, of the following do you belong to?

And do you currently do any unpaid work for any of them?

- Charities concerned with the welfare of people
- Churches and religious organisations
- Education or art groups
- Trade unions
- Political parties or groups
- Organisations concerned with human rights at home and abroad
- Conservation, environmentalist or animal welfare groups
- Youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.)
- Consumer groups
- Professional associations
- None of these

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3) Do you (or your spouse) belong to a trade union?

Yes, self/Yes, spouse/No

### *I.1.6.2 WVS/EVS 1990 – Second Round*

1) Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done these thing, whether you would do it, might do it or would not, under any circumstances, do any of them.

*(Mark an answer for each)*

- Signing a petition
- Joining in boycotts
- Attending lawful demonstrations
- Joining unofficial strikes
- Occupying buildings or factories

have done/might do/would never do/don't know

2) Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say...

a) which, if any, do you belong to?

b) which, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work for?

- Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people
- Religious or church organisations
- Education, arts, music or cultural activities
- Trade unions
- Political parties or groups
- Local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality
- Third world development or human rights
- Conservation, the environment, ecology
- Professional associations
- Youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc.)
- Sports or recreation
- Women's groups
- Peace movement
- Animal rights
- Voluntary organisations concerned with health
- Other groups
- None
- Don't know

### *I.1.6.3 WVS-EVS 1999 – Third Round*

1) Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you

have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.

- Signing a petition

- Joining in boycotts
- Attending lawful demonstrations
- Joining unofficial strikes
- Occupying buildings or factories

have done/might do/would never do/don't know

2) Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say

a) which, if any, do you belong to?

b) which, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work for?

- Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people
- Religious or church organisations
- Education, arts, music or cultural activities
- Trade unions
- Political parties or groups
- Local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality
- Third world development or human rights
- Conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights
- Professional associations
- Youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc.)
- Sports or recreation
- Women's groups
- Peace movement
- Voluntary organisations concerned with health
- Other groups
- None
- Don't know
- No answer

Mentioned/Not mentioned

#### *1.1.6.4 WVS/EVS 2005 – Fourth Round*

1) Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.

- Signing a petition
- Joining in boycotts
- Attending lawful demonstrations
- Joining unofficial strikes
- Occupying buildings or factories

have done/might do/would never do/don't know

2) Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say ...

a) which, if any, do you belong to?

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b) which, if any, are you currently doing unpaid voluntary work for?

- Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people
- Religious or church organizations
- Education, arts, music or cultural activities
- Trade unions
- Political parties or groups
- Local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality
- Third world development or human rights
- Conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights
- Professional associations
- Youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc.)
- Sports or recreation
- Women's groups
- Peace movement
- Voluntary organisations concerned with health
- Other groups
- None (spontaneous)

Mentioned/Not mentioned

### ***1.1.7 European Social Survey: 2003; 2006***

#### *1.1.7.1 ESS 2003*

1) There are different ways of trying to improve things in Italy or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

Firstly...

- contacted a politician, government or local government official
- worked in political party or action group
- worked in another organization or association
- worn or display campaign badge/stickers
- signed petition
- taken part in lawful demonstration
- boycotted certain products
- deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons
- donated money to a political organization or group
- participated in illegal protest activities

2) Are you a member of any political party?

3) Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organization?

Yes, currently/Yes, previously/No/Dk

4) For each of the voluntary organizations I will now mention, please use this card to tell me whether any of these things apply to you now or in the last 12 months, and, if so, which.

- ...Firstly, a sports club or club for outdoor activities?
- ...an organization for cultural or hobby activities?
- ...a trade union?

- ...a business, professional or farmers' organization?
- ...a consumer, or automobile organization?
- ...an organization for humanitarian aid, human rights, minorities, or immigrants?
- ...an organization for environmental protection, peace or animal rights?
- ...a religious or church organization?
- ...a political party?
- ...an organization for science, education, or teachers and parents?
- ...a social club, club for the young, the retired/elderly women, or friendly societies?
- ...any other voluntary organization such as the ones I've just mentioned?

None/Member, last 12 months/Participated, last 12 months/Donated money, last 12 months/Voluntary activity, last 12 months

#### *1.1.7.2 ESS 2006*

1) There are different ways of trying to improve things in Italy or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

- Firstly...contacted a politician, government or local government official
- ...worked in political party or action group
- ...worked in another organization or association
- ...worn or display campaign badge/stickers
- ...signed petition
- ...taken part in lawful demonstration
- ...boycotted certain products

Yes/No/Dk

2) Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation? IF YES, is that currently or previously?

Yes, currently/Yes, previously/No/(Don't know)

3) Are you a member of any political party?

Yes/No/(Don't know)

#### ***1.1.8 Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) - Multiscope Surveys Family***

##### *1.1.8.1 Survey 1993-2003; 2005-2007*

- Participation to political party meetings
- Participation to political rallies (in the last 12 months)
- Giving money to political parties (membership, support) (in the last 12 months)
- Free activity for a political party (in the last 12 months)
- Participation to trade union meetings (in the last 12 months)
- Participation to civic associations meetings (in the last 12 months)
- Participation to meetings of environment, human rights or peace associations (in the last 12 months)
- Participation to cultural associations, leisure or other types (in the last 12 months)
- Money to a social association (in the last 12 months)
- Free activity for a civic association (in the last 12 months)



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- Free activity for a non civic association (in the last 12 months)
- Free activity for a trade union (in the last 12 months)

### ***1.1.9 Istituto di Ricerche Educative e Formative (IREF): 1983, 1985, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2006***

Participate in activities/Volunteering:

- Associations or groups for social service assistance for elder, handicapped, poor
- Religious or ecclesial organization or group
- Educational, artistic, musical or cultural activity associations
- Trade unions
- Political parties or groups
- Committee, groups or associations of local community for problems like poverty, unemployment, housing, racial equality
- Third World development or human rights
- Associations or groups for nature, environment protection, ecology, animal rights
- Professional associations
- Work with young people (e.g. scouts, guide, youth groups, etc.)
- Sport associations or leisure groups
- Feminist groups
- Peace movements
- Voluntary organization on health problems
- Other groups
- Does not participate to any type of association
- Don't know, no answer

### ***1.1.10 ITANES***

Language: Italian

Provinces with large linguistic minorities (aosta and bozen) are usually excluded when the survey have a multistage design, also because the political parties in those regions are rather different from the rest of the country.

#### *1.1.10.1 1968 - Italian National Election Study. Samuel H. Barnes.*

Face-to-face interviews. 2500 cases (83,3%). Ciser (Centro italiano di studi e ricerche, Roma).

#### *1) Vote*

Since you first became eligible to vote, have you voted in every legislative election, most of them, in some, or never?

every election/most of them/some of them/none/no answer, doesn't know

#### *2) Party Membership*

Are you a member ('iscritto') of a political party? Which  
(Simplify R's Party Membership)

No answer/PCI/PSIUP/PSU/PRI/DC/PLI/Monarchists/MSI/Not a member

#### *3) Conventional Political Participation*

During the electoral campaign, did you do any of the things I shall now read?

Did you work for any political party or candidate?

Yes/No/no answer

Did you take part in any political gathering or election rallies ('comizio elettorale')?

Yes/No/no answer

*4) Financing Parties*

During the electoral campaign, did you do any of the things I shall now read?

Did you contribute financially to aid any political party?

Yes/no/no answer

*5) Unconventional Political Participation*

Have you taken part in any strike or demonstration?

Yes/no/doesn't remember/no answer

*6) Trade Unions Membership/Professional Organizations*

Are you a member of any labour union or professional organization? Which one(s)?

CISL/CGIL/UIL/CISNAL/Independent (labor) union/Agricultural organization/Not a member of a union/Non-classifiable answer/No answer

Of what other organization are you a member?

*(Professional organizations and associations, labour unions other than CGIL, CISL, UIL, CISNAL, and agricultural organizations)*

Yes/No/Ought not to have answered/No answer

*7) Social Associations Membership*

Of what other organization are you a member?

*-Catholic Organizations*

Catholic Action/Other Catholic Organizations/Catholic Action AND other Catholic Organizations/Non Catholic organization/Ought not to have answered/No answer

*- Other organizations*

Yes/No/Ought not to have answered/No answer

*8) Political Efficacy*

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

-“I don't think that the government worries much about what people like me think”

-“Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that people like me can't really understand what's going on”

-“ In general, the deputies we elect quickly lose contact with the people”

Agreee/Disagree/Don't know/No answer

## Appendix I

*I.1.10.2 1972 – Italian National Election Studies. Samuel Barnes and Giacomo Sani.*  
Face-to-face interviews. 1841 cases. Field Work (Milan)

### *1) Vote*

Since you first became eligible to vote, have you voted in every legislative election or not?

Every election/no/no answer

During the last elections of 7<sup>th</sup> of May of 1972 did you vote for the same party you voted in 1968?

Yes/No/I did not vote in 68 or 72/blank ballot/no answer

### *2) Political Party Membership*

Have you ever been a member of a political party?

Yes/No

Are you a member now?

Yes/No

### *3) Trade Unions and Social Associations Membership*

Now I will show you a list of organizations, could you please tell me if you are a member of some of these organizations at the moment? (Show card)

(If yes), which?

-Trade unions and category associations (Cgil, Uil, Cisl, Cisnail, Coldiretti, Alleanza, Contadina)

-Youth associations

-Cooperatives (Lega delle cooperative)

-Associations of “combattenti e partigiani”

-Catholic associations

-Professional Associations

-Sport and leisure associations (Arci)

-Other associations and organizations

### *4) Political Efficacy*

Do you agree with the following expression?

“I don’t believe that the government worries about what people like me might think”

Agree/Disagree/Don’t know/No Answer

Do you agree with the following expression?

“Politics and government sometimes they seem so complicated that people like me can not truly understand what is going on”

Agree/not agree/no opinion/no answer

*1.1.10.3 1975 – Eight Nations Study. Giacomo Sani, Giovanni Sartori, Alberto Marradi.*

Face-to-face interviews. 1779 cases. Fieldwork (Milan).

*1) Vote*

Did you vote in the national political elections of 1972?

Yes/No/Don't know/refuse to answer

*2) Trade Unions/Professional Membership*

Are you member of a trade union or a professional organization?

Not applicable/Yes/No/Don't know

*3) Political and Social Associations Membership*

(Show card) This is a list that includes several associations of which people are member of. Are you a member of any of these associations that you see in the list? And in what measure do you actively participate in it?

- Farmer associations
- Religious Associations
- Cooperatives
- Political parties
- Other political movement
- Trade Unions
- Leisure and alter-work associations (Casa del Popolo, ARCI, ENAL)
- Other associations
- No associations

*4) Political Efficacy*

I would like to read you now, synthetically, some sentences that are currently said. I would like to know if you agree or not. As I read, I kindly ask you to tell me if you agree completely, if you agree, if you disagree, if you strongly disagree.

- People like me has no influence on what the government does
- Sometimes politics seems so complicated that it is not possible to understand what is going on
- I don't think that public officials care much about what people like me think
- Generally speaking, those we elect to parliament lose touch with the people pretty quickly.
- Parties are interested only in people's vote, not in their opinions

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Don't understand the question/Don't know

*1.1.10.4 1985 - The Political Culture of Southern Europe, Four Nations Study. Giacomo Sani, José Santamaria, Renato Mannheimer.*

Face-to-face interviews. 2074 cases. Doxa (Milan)

*1) Vote*

## Appendix I

Did you vote in the political elections of 1983?

Yes/No/Don't remember

### 2) *Political and Social Association Membership*

Are you member of some of these associations?

- Leisure or sport associations
- Cultural associations
- Religious associations
- Some political Party
- Professional organizations

### 3) *Trade Unions Membership*

Are you member of a trade union?

Yes/No/No answer

### 4) *Political Efficacy*

Do you agree or disagree with the following opinions? Much or fairly (agree/disagree)?

- Politicians do not care much of what people like me thinks
- Politics is so complicated that it is not possible to understand what is going on.
- Those in power, always pursue their personal interests

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/Don't know

*I.1.10.5 ITANES 1990 – Regional elections study. Arturo Parisi and Hans Schadee.*

Face-to-face interviews. 1500 cases (48,6%). Isvet (Roma).

#### 1) *Vote*

I would like to ask you some questions on the last political elections, that is the elections for the Parliament that have been held on June 1987.

Did you go to vote?

Yes/No (I was old enough, but I did not vote)/No because I was not old enough/Don't remember/No answer

#### 2) *Political Party Membership*

Are you member of a political party at the moment (or to some youth party federation)?

Yes/No/No answer

#### 3) *Trade Unions/Social Associations Membership*

I will now make you a list of associations and organizations. For each of these you should tell me if you are a member.

- Trade Unions
- Professional/Category Associations
- Cultural and leisure associations
- Sport Associations
- Religious Associations

Member/No member

*4) Political Efficacy*

I will read you some common opinions. As I read these sentences could you please tell me if you agree?

- People like me has no say on what the government does
- Sometimes politics seems so complicated that people like me can't really understand what is going on
- I don't think that public officials care much about what people like me think
- In general, people we elect to parliament quickly lose touch with the people.

Strongly agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly disagree/No answer

*1.1.10.6 ITANES 1992 - Political Elections Survey. Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi*

Telephone interview. 1181 cases (61,2%). Swg (Trieste).

*1) Vote*

Can you tell me if you went to vote at the elections of few days ago?

No/Yes/No answer

*2) Conventional Political Participation*

Now I will read you some activities that people can do during election times. Could you tell me if you have done each of them them during these elections?

- Listen to some political meeting or debate

I did it/I did not do it

*1.1.10.7 ITANES 1994 - Political Elections Survey. Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi*

Telephone interview. 2600 cases. Swg (Trieste).

*1) Vote*

Did you vote during the national elections which took place last March 27th and 28th?

No/Yes/No response

*2) Conventional Political Participation*

Now I'm going to read a list of things that some people did during the last election campaign. For each of them please tell me whether you did them during the national elections of March 28th.

Did you attend any political speeches or rallies or any political debates: often, occasionally or never?

Often/Occasionally/Never

*1.1.10.8 ITANES 1996 - Political Elections Survey. Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi*

## Appendix I

Telephone interviews. 2502 (59,9%). Swg (Trieste).

### *1) Vote*

Did you vote during the national elections held last April 21st?

Yes/No

### *2) Trade Unions membership*

I shall now read a list of associations. For each type of association could you tell me whether or not you are a member. Let's start with trade unions: are you a member of a trade union?

Member/Not a member

### *3) Professional Associations membership*

Are you a member of a professional association?

Member/Not a member

### *4) Social and Political Associations Membership*

Are you a member of...

- ... a religious association
- ... a party or political movement
- ... a sports clubs or association
- ... a youth association
- ... an environmentalist association
- ... a voluntary association
- ... other associations

Yes/ No

### *5) Political Efficacy*

I shall now read you some things that people sometimes say. As I read them would you please tell me how much you agree with them?

- People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
- In general, people we elect to parliament quickly lose touch with the people.
- People like me has no say on what the government does

Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Don't know

*I.1.10.9 ITANES 2001 - Political Elections Survey. Mario Caciagli and Piergiorgio Corbetta.*

Face-to-face interviews. 3209 cases. Doxa (Milan).

### *1) Political Party Membership*

Are you currently or have you been in the past a member of a party or a political movement?

I am currently a member/Not anymore, but I was in the past/I never was a member/No answer

*2) Political Participation*

I shall now read a list of things people sometimes do to participate in political life. Please, tell me whether you happened to make any of these things in the last 4-5 years  
[CAPI: randomise]

- Sending letters or complains to public authority (including collective letters or petitions)
- Participating in a demonstration
- Donating money to a candidate, a party or a party's paper
- Spending time or work for a party

Yes/No/Don't remember/No answer

*3) Trade Unions Membership*

Are you currently or have you been in the past a trade union member?

I am currently a member/Not anymore, but I was a member in the past  
I never was a member/No answer

*4) Professional Association Membership*

Are you currently or have you been in the past a member of a business/professional association?

I am currently a member/Not anymore, but I was in the past/I never was a member/No answer

*5) Social Associations Membership*

I am going to read now a list of different associations. For each of them, please tell me whether you are a member or not and whether you participate in their activities:

- Voluntary associations
- Environmental associations
- Youth associations
- Sports associations
- Religious associations
- Cultural and leisure associations

Not a member and not a participant/Member but never participating/Participating in their activities/No answer

*6) Political Efficacy*

Now, I am going to read some opinions on politics that people sometimes articulate. Could you please tell me how much do you agree with each of them? According to you, is it true, somewhat true, somewhat false or false?

[CAPI: randomise]

- People like me has no say on what the government does



## Appendix I

- Sometimes politics seems so complicated that people like me can't really understand what is going on
- In general, people we elect to parliament quickly lose touch with the people
- Parties are interested in votes, not in people's opinions

True/Somewhat true/Somewhat false/False/Don't know/No answer

*I.1.10.10 ITANES 2006. Political Elections Survey. Post elections wave (part of short panel: pre-post-new). Paolo Bellucci and Paolo Segatti.*

Face-to-face interviews. Doxa (Milan).

### *1) Vote*

Did you vote in the elections held the last 9th and 10th April?

*INTERVIEWER: READ ALL THE ANSWERS)*

No, I did not go/Yes I did go to vote/Yes I did go but I renounced to vote, blank or invalid vote/No answer

### *2) Political Participation*

I am going to read now a list of things people sometimes do in order to participate in political life. Please, tell me whether it happened to you to do any of these things in the last 4-5 years (*CAPI: randomize*)

- Signing for law proposals or referenda (*INTERVIEWER: signatures collection NOT voting in referenda*)
- Sending letters or complains to public authority (including collective letters or petitions) or writing letters to a newspaper
- Attending to a political debate
- Participating in a demonstration
- Buying or not buying a product due to ethical, political or ecological reasons

Yes/No/Don't remember/No answer

### *3) Political Party membership*

Are you currently or have you been in the past a member of a party or a political movement?

I am currently a member/Not anymore, but I was a member/I never was a member/No answer

### *4) Trade Unions Membership*

Are you currently or have you been in the past a trade union member?

I am currently a member/Not anymore, but I was a member/I never was a member/No answer

### *5) Professional Association membership*

Are you currently or have you been in the past a member of a professional association?

I am currently a member/Not anymore, but I was a member/I never was a member/No answer

*6) Social Associations Membership*

I am going to read now a list of different associations. For each of them, please tell me whether in the last two years you are a member or not and whether you participate in their activities. (*INTERVIEWER: SHOW THE CARD*)

- Voluntary associations
- Religious associations
- Sport associations
- Cultural Associations
- Environmental associations
- Third-World and Human Rights associations

Not a member and not a participant/Not a member but participating in their activities/member but not participating/member and participating in their activities/no answer

*7) Political Efficacy*

*Could you please tell me how much you agree with each of these statements?*

(*INTERVIEWER: READ THE FIRST SENTENCE THEN SAY: TELL ME WHETHER YOU AGREE COMPLETELY, FAIRLY, A LITTLE OR DISAGREE COMPLETELY*) (CAPI: randomize)

- People like me has no say on what the government does
- Sometimes politics seems so complicated that people like me can't really understand what is going on
- To vote or not to vote is the same thing, because in the end nothing changes.

Disagree completely/Agree a little/Agree fairly/Agree completely/Don't know/No answer

Could you please tell me how much do you agree with each of these opinions?  
(*INTERVIEWER: READ THE FIRST SENTENCE THEN SAY: PLEASE TELL ME WHETHER YOU COMPLETELY DISAGREE, AGREE A LITTLE, AGREE FAIRLY, AGREE COMPLETELY*) (CAPI: randomize)

- People we elect in Parliament lose touch with their voters pretty quickly
- Parties are interested in votes, not in people's opinions.

Disagree completely/Agree a little/Agree fairly/Agree completely/Don't know/No answer

*1.1.10.11 ITANES 2008. Political Elections Survey. Paolo Bellucci and Paolo Segatti*  
Telephone interviews (CATI). 3000 cases. Medec (Bologna).

*1) Vote*

Did you vote to the political elections of the last 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April?

## Appendix I

No, I did not vote/Yes, I did vote/No answer

### 2) *Political Participation*

Have you done some of the following during the last electoral campaign?

Participate to public rallies/meetings on elections

Yes/No/No answer

### 3) *Political Efficacy*

-People like me has no say on what the government does

-Sometimes politics seems so complicated that people like me can't really understand what is going on

Disagree completely/Agree a little/Agree fairly/Agree completely/Don't know/No answer

**Table I.1 – Surveys per Year**

Survey	Year																																
	59	64	68	70	72	75	81	83	85	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08		
Civic	X																																
Culture																																	
Pizzorno		X																															
Pol.Action						X																											
Survey																																	
Itanes			X		X	X							X		X		X							X					X			X	
4 Nation																																	
Study																																	
WVS							X						X																				X
ESS																										X						X	
Stand EB													X																				X
EB-Mann													X																				X
Iref								X	X				X		X		X																X
Istat														X																			X
Issp															X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

## Appendix II.

## Associations Included in Each Category per Survey

Table II.1. Categories Included in Each Association Type I (1959-2007)

		Civic Culture 1959	Pizzorno Study 1964	Barnes 1968	Barnes & Sani 1972	Pol.Action Study 1975	4Nat. Study 1985	Itanes 1990	Itanes 1996	Itanes 2001
Political Party	Political parties or groups/political movement/political association	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trade Union	Trade unions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional Association	Professional associations	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Religious Association	Churches or religious organizations	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Civic-Non Religious Association	Voluntary associations Voluntary organizations concerned with health Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people Local community action (concerning poverty, employment, housing, and racial equality) Social groups								X	X
Activist Association	Human rights or third world development Civil and human rights 'Centri sociali' <sup>129</sup> Conservation, environment, or ecology Peace movement Animal rights Consumers and users defence Women's groups Patriots & Partisans		X							
Leisure Association	Youth work <sup>130</sup> Education/arts/ music/cultural/leisure activities Recreation/touristic Sports Sports (fan) After-work <sup>131</sup> Meditation, yoga				X				X	X
					X	X	X	X	X	X
		X			X	X	X	X	X	X
					X	X	X	X	X	X
					X	X	X	X	X	X

<sup>129</sup> Squatted cultural centres<sup>130</sup> Scouts, guides, youth clubs, student associations<sup>131</sup> Casa del Popolo, ARCI, ENAL

Associations Included In Each Category Per Survey

**Table II.2. Categories Included in Each Association Type II (1959-2008)**

		Itanes 2006	Itanes 2008	WVS 1981; 1990; 1999; 2005	ESS 2003; 2006	Stand EB 1983;87; 90;98;04	EB- Mannh Trend File 1970- 00	Iref 1983- 2006	Istat 1993- 2007
Political Party	Political parties or groups/political movement/political association	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trade Union	Trade unions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional Association	Professional associations	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Religious Association	Churches or religious organizations	X	X	X	X				
Civic Non-Religious Associations	Voluntary associations	X							X
	Voluntary organizations concerned with health		X	X					
	Social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people		X	X					
	Local community action (concerning poverty, employment, housing, and racial equality)			X					
	Social groups						X		
Activist Associations	Human rights or third world development	X	X	X	X			X	
	Civil and human rights 'Centri sociali'	X			X				X
	Conservation, environment, or ecology	X	X	X	X				X
	Peace movement			X	X				X
	Animal rights			X	X				
	Consumers and users defence				X				
	Women's groups			X	X				
	Patriots & Partisans								
Leisure Associations	Youth work			X	X				
	Education/arts/music/cultural/leisure activities	X	X	X	X				X
	Recreation/touristic		X		X				
	Sports	X	X	X	X				
	Sports (fan)								
	After-work Meditation, yoga								

## Appendix III.

### Pooled Dataset Questions Wording: Education (Chap.5&6)

#### III.1 Italian National Election Studies Series

##### *III.1.1 Samuel Barnes, 1968*

To what grade of school did you go?

- Did not attend school
- Elementary
- Lower Middle
- Technical
- Lyceum
- University
- University graduate
- Post-graduate study
- No answer

##### *III.1.2 Samuel Barnes and Giacomo Sani, 1972*

To what education level did you get?

- never went to school
- elementary school
- middle school
- technical school
- teaching school
- lyceum
- attending university
- university degree
- post-university studies
- no answer

##### *III.1.3 Giacomo Sani, Giovanni Sartori, Alberto Marradi, 1975 – Eight Nations Study*

Which is your study title, or the last year of school you attended?

- some elementary school
- elementary licence
- middle school (including *Avviamento*, Technical School)
- high school
- some university
- university degree
- other

##### *III.1.4 Giacomo Sani, José Santamaria, Renato Mannheimer, 1985 - The Political Culture of Southern Europe, Four Nations Study.*

What is your study level?

- illiterate
- elementary school without licence
- elementary licence

- middle school
- classic or scientific high school degree
- other high school degree
- some university
- university degree
- (no answer)

**III.1.5 Arturo Parisi and Hans Schadee, 1990, Itanes**

What is your study title?

- never went to school
- elementary school without licence
- elementary licence
- middle school licence
- professional diploma
- high school diploma
- university degree
- no answer

**III.1.6 Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi, 1992, Itanes**

What is your level of education?

- Never went to school
- Elementary school with no diploma
- Elementary school diploma
- Middle school diploma
- Professional school diploma
- High school diploma
- University degree or University diploma
- Does not answer

**III.1.7 Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi, 1994, Itanes**

- Never attended school
- Attended but didn't complete elementary school
- Completed elementary school (at least 5 years)
- Completed middle school (at least 8 years)
- Professional diploma (at least 10 years)
- Secondary school diploma (at least 12/13 years)
- University degree

**III.1.8 Piergiorgio Corbetta and Arturo Parisi, 1996, Itanes**

- Respondent's level of education
- Never attended school
- Attended but didn't complete elementary school
- Completed elementary school (at least 5 years)
- Completed middle school (at least 8 years)
- Professional diploma (at least 10 years)
- Secondary school diploma (at least 12/13 years)
- University degree



**III.1.9 Mario Caciagli and Piergiorgio Corbetta, 2001, Itanes**

What is your level of education?

- Never attended school
- Not completed elementary school
- Completed elementary school
- Middle school
- Professional diploma
- Secondary school diploma
- University degree or diploma
- Don't know
- No answer

**III.1.10 Paolo Bellucci and Paolo Segatti, 2006, Itanes. Post elections wave (part of short panel: pre-post-new).**

What is your level of education? And your father's? And your mother's?

- Never attended school
- Completed elementary school
- Middle school
- Professional diploma (2-3 years)
- Secondary school professional diploma (Institute of Art included)
- Secondary School Technical diploma
- Secondary School Scientific or Classical diploma
- Other secondary school diploma (Magisterial Institute, Linguistic, Artistic, Socio-psycho-pedagogic schools)
- University degree (Scientific degree: 4-5 years, 3 years, specialist degree 2 years) (medicine, biology and economy included)
- Humanistic University degree (4-5 years, 3 years, specialist degree 2 years) (Psychology, sociology and political science included)
- Don't know
- No answer

**III.1.11 Paolo Bellucci and Paolo Segatti, 2008, Itanes.**

What is your study title?

- no title
- elementary licence
- middle school licence
- professional diploma (2-3 years)
- Secondary school professional diploma (Institute of Art included)
- Secondary School Technical diploma/Secondary School Scientific or Classical diploma
- Other secondary school diploma (Magisterial Institute, Linguistic, Artistic, Socio-psycho-pedagogic schools)
- University degree (Scientific degree: 4-5 years, 3 years, specialist degree 2 years) (medicine, biology and economy included)
- Humanistic University degree (4-5 years, 3 years, specialist degree 2 years) (Psychology, sociology and political science included)
- Don't know

### **III.2 The World Value Survey/The European Value Survey**

#### ***III.2.1 WVS/EVS 1981***

And what age did you (will you) complete your full-time education?  
12 or under/13/14/15/16/17/18/19/20/21 or over

#### ***III.2.2 WVS 1990/1999/2005***

At what age did you (or will you) complete your full time education, either at school or at an institution of higher education? Please exclude apprenticeships:  
(Write in age) ....

### **III.3 Standard EB (1983, 1987, 1990, 1998, 2004)**

How old were you when you finished your full-time education?  
Up to 14 years/15 years/16 years/17 years/18 years/19 years/20 years/21 years/22 years  
or older/still studying

### **III.4 EB Mannheim Trend File (1988-1994)**

How old were you when you finished your full-time education?  
Up to 14 years/15 years/16 years/17 years/18 years/19 years/20 years/21 years/22 years  
or older/still studying

### **III.5 ESS (2003,2006)**

How many years of full-time education have you completed?  
[To be reported in full-time equivalents, including compulsory/mandatory years of schooling]

## Appendix IV.

### ITANES Panel Questions Wording (Chap. 7 & 8)

#### IV.1 Vote

2001: Did you vote to political elections held on the past 13th of May?

“no, I didn’t go to vote”, “yes, I went to vote”, “I went but I renounced”, n.a.

2006: Did you vote to political elections held on the past 9th – 10th of April?

“no, I didn’t go to vote”, “yes, I went to vote”, “I went but I renounced, I voted blank or null voting paper”

#### IV.2 Political and economic participation

2001: In 3 separate questions:

Are you a member or you have been a member in the past of a trade union/ professional organization/ political party or movement?

“Now member”, “not now but in the past”, “never a member”, “no response”.

#### IV.3 Social participation

2001: I will list you some association and organization types. For each of them tell me if you are a member or if you participate to activities.

Matrix with columns:

“not a member and no participation”, “only a member but never participate”, “participate to activities”, “no response”.

List of 6 categories: civic associations, environment associations, youth associations, sport associations, religious associations, cultural/leisure associations.

#### IV.4 Political, economic and social participation

2004: Do you participate, are you a member or did you donate money to some group, association or movement in the last two years?

A) do you participate in activities of some association, group or movement?

B) Are you a member of some association even if you never participate to the activities of that association?

C) In the last two years, have you donated money (a part from membership fee) to some group, association or movement?

*[INT: if the interviewee has answered NO to Q34a and to Q34b, that means that he does not participate and is not a member of any associations, go to question Q44]*

D) Which, among those you indicated, is the most important association for you?

Matrix with columns:

Participate to activities, member (even if never participates), in the last two years have donated money (apart from membership fee), most important association for you.

List of 14 categories: charity/socio-medical association, religious association, sport/leisure association, cultural association, peace association, environment

association, cooperation/third world solidarity, civil/human rights defence, consumer rights defence, youth/students association, 'centro sociale', trade unions, political organization or party, professional or category association.

#### **IV.5 Political Efficacy**

*2001:* I will now read some common statements about politics. Tell me for each of them if you agree, that is if for you is true, quite true, quite false, or false”

List of questions in a matrix:

- 1) People like me have no real say about what government does
- 2) Sometimes politics seems so complicated that is not possible to understand what is happening
- 3) People we elect in Parliament lose very soon contact with electors
- 4) Parties are only interested in people's votes, not to their opinions
- 5) Trade unions have too much power in Italy

Columns: “true”, “quite true”, “quite false”, “false”, “dk”

*2004:* “And can you tell me how you would comment each of the following sentences”

List of questions in a matrix:

- 1) People like me have no real say about what government does
- 2) Sometimes politics seems so complicated that is not possible to understand what is happening
- 3) People we elect in Parliament lose very soon contact with electors
- 4) Parties are only interested in people's votes, not to their opinions

Columns: “it's very true”, “it's quite true”, “it's not much true”, “it's not true at all”, “dk”, na

*2006:* “And can you tell me how you would comment each of the following sentences”

List of questions in a matrix:

- 1) People like me have no real say about what government does
- 2) People we elect in Parliament lose very soon contact with electors

Columns: “it's very true”, “it's quite true”, “it's not much true”, “it's not true at all”, “dk”, na

## Appendix V.

### Methodological Note on ITANES Panel Excluded Cases (Chap. 7&8)

#### V.1 How panel data should be gathered

Good panel data should be constructed with a few common sense rules of thumb. Our panel data does not, however, always follow these rules and presents us with some structural problems that require some reasoned but somehow arbitrary choices in order to make measures between waves comparable to each other. *Itanes* panel data consists of three waves of national elections study: a first wave in 2001, a second very detailed survey in 2004, and a third very brief survey in 2006. Yet, only the former and the latter waves are election years.

A first remark is that if the three waves were homogenous in terms of election years, data would have been more comparable in terms of participation to political and social associations. It is reasonable to assume that during election years, individuals are more likely to become members of a political party. During electoral campaigns political parties tend indeed to mobilize and to send more information to citizens in order to capture their attention, and eventually, their vote. A second remark is that for the purpose of our analysis, if the three waves had been collected more distantly in time, we were going to be able to measure participation during different stages of individuals' lives. Still, this panel has been constructed to study political behaviour and political culture, and not for specifically measuring organizational membership.

Usually for a panel to be considered good, the drop-out of respondents from one wave to the other should be as low as possible. In our panel the drop-out rate from the first to the third wave is quite high. Despite this, we checked if respondents differed from one wave to the other in their politically relevant characteristics. We discovered that respondents of the first two waves do not differ much, and only in the third wave there is a slight bias toward higher educated and people more interested in politics. Moreover, we believe that our analysis should not be strongly distorted by drop-out rate since social participation measures are present only in the first two waves of the panel, and except for voting, those are the waves we use to investigate the causal link between political and social participation.

#### V.2 Question Wording and Associations Equivalence

A few features to make sure panel data works are that the same measures, the same number of questions and the same response categories should be used for investigating the same concept across wave, most of all if the panel is short. This has not always happened. For what concerns political efficacy, a different number of questions has been presented to the respondents. Indeed, while in the first two waves this attitude has been measured with four items, in 2006 only two items were used, one for internal and one for external dimension. Moreover, wording of both questions and response categories were slightly different. The same is true for voting behaviour, political membership and social associations membership (see *Appendix IV*). For what concern

voting, since 2004 was not an election year, the question regarded voting recall and included the answer “don’t remember”, while in 2006 the category “I went but I renounced” included also “I made a blank or null vote”.

**Table V.1 - Associations in Panel Waves**

	Associations 2001	Associations 2004
Political Parties	Political Parties	Political Parties
Trade Unions	Trade Unions	Trade Unions
Professional Organizations	Professional	Professional
Activist Associations	Environment	Environment Peace Cooperation/Third World Solidarity Civil/Human Rights Defence Consumer Right Defence 'Centro Sociale' (politicized cultural/social centres)
Civic Associations	Religious Voluntary	Religious Charity/Socio-health
Leisure Associations	Leisure and Cultural Youth	Leisure/Sport Cultural Youth/Student

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

The most important problems are however to be found in the concept of political and social participation. First of all, a different question typology was used. While in 2001 political and economic participation were measured in separate questions and had a different list of options compared to social participation measures, in 2004 they were all included in the same battery question. In addition, also the structure of the question is different. Most importantly, however, the list of associations available in the answer was much more complete in 2004. Whereas in 2001 six association types were available, in 2004 the number was more than doubled (14 associations). We did our best to use equivalent measures, associating ‘voluntary’(2001) and ‘charity/socio-health associations’ (2004), to ‘youth’ (2001) and ‘youth/student associations’ (2004) to the same category. In addition, while in 2001 ‘leisure’ and ‘culture’ associations were grouped together, in 2004 they were listed as two separate categories. It would have been better to leave them separate at this stage of the analysis, but we had once again to include them in the same category (Table V.1).

Finally, different response categories, somehow overlapping, were offered for distinguishing between active and passive participation in the two waves. In 2001 the three available choices were the following: “not a member and no participation”, “only a member but never participate”, “participate to activities”. Does this category response set imply that those that participate are also members or not? It appears that is not possible to discriminate between members that participate and not-members that participate. In 2004, however, only two choices are offered: “participate to activities” and “member (even if never participates)”. Does the former category include both members and non members? In the latter category it is not clear the difference between those members that participate and those who do not. Since categories response are different and it is not possible to distinguish between members and non-members in the category “participation in activity”, after some data checking we chose to be very conservative in the choice of who we consider a member of an association and made equivalent the category “only a member but never participate” and “member (even if never participates)”. We are aware that this might cause some distortions in the analysis

but these are the only panel data we dispose of, and the best we can do is report what we did to improve them.

### V.3 Excluded cases and Control Variables

The last step in cleaning our dataset was to exclude some cases for political party and social association membership. When checking our data we realized that often people who had answered positively to membership in some social or political association, had not answered to the question of association importance (“which is, among those you indicated, the most important association for you?”). We believe that these cases are most likely biased by coding errors, but being unable to detect whether the bias is in the answer about association importance or in the answer about participation, we decided to exclude them to reduce structural errors in our sample. Thus, if in 2001 interviewed persons answered that they were member of a specific social association, but in 2004 they did not answer to the question about associations’ importance or answered that “they did not know”, cases were excluded from the analysis. We believe that the solutions we adopted were good at reducing bias and errors. Yet, we are aware that most of all with the first operation, we might have excluded from the analysis the most interesting cases along with wrongly coded cases. In order to have a better idea of the impact of this choice on our data, we checked how different excluded cases are from the data we use in our analysis.

We run four logistic regressions with organizational membership of 2004 as dependent variable (0=not member; 1=member). In the first one (m1) we include endogenous variables: internal efficacy<sup>132</sup> of 2001 and 2004 (0=no/not much 1=a bit/yes), external efficacy<sup>133</sup> of 2001 and 2004 (0=no/not much 1=a bit/yes) and association membership of 2001 (0=not member; 1=member). In the second (m2), we add the dummy variable of excluded cases for each specific association type (0=included 1=excluded). In the third (m3) we include endogenous variables and control variables of family political tradition, education in 2004, age in 2004<sup>134</sup>, gender and territory, while in the fourth (m4), we add excluded cases for each specific association type. In Table V.2 we can see that endogenous variable have always a significant relationship with the dependent variable (m1). Excluded cases (m2) are also quite significant, with the exception of political party and activist association membership. Yet the change in the explanation of the model is not very relevant, with maybe the exception of professional association membership, since excluded cases reduce the R-squared of .04. If we consider control variables we see that although they are significant for all associations with the only exception of political party, they add a relevant explanation power compared to m1 only to professional (+.04) and to leisure associations (+.06). When we add excluded variables (m4), we see that control variables of professional and civic associations are not significant anymore, while excluded cases are. Yet, also in this case, they do not relevantly reduce the R-squared of the model.

This analysis on the one hand implies that since control variables do not add very relevant information, for the parsimony of the structural equation modelling analysis they can easily be omitted. On the other hand, it implies that although excluded cases are significantly different from data we are going to use and, accordingly, are very

<sup>132</sup> “politics is too complicated”, “people like me have no say”

<sup>133</sup> “politicians lose touch”, “politicians don’t care”

<sup>134</sup> Age variable has been divided by 10

interesting cases, by not including them in the analysis, we are not going to compromise the explanatory power of the models.

**Table V.2 - Excluded Cases and Control Variables for Associational Participation**

Associational Participation	Political Party	Trade Union	Profess Assoc.	Activist Assoc.	Civic Assoc.	Leisure Assoc.
<b>m1</b>						
(N)	(1708)	(1707)	(1712)	(1708)	(1705)	(1709)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	**	***
R <sup>2</sup>	.37	.24	.15	.09	.02	.04
<b>m2</b>						
(N)	(533)	(703)	(656)	(588)	(534)	(614)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	**	*
Excluded cases	Omitted	***	**	no sig.	**	**
R <sup>2</sup>	.35	.22	.11	.08	.05	.04
R <sup>2</sup> Change	-.02	-.02	-.04	-.01	+.03	+.00
<b>m3</b>						
(N)	(1462)	(1459)	(1462)	(1460)	(1458)	(1460)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	**	**
Control Var.	no sig.	***	**	**	**	***
R <sup>2</sup>	.37	.24	.19	.12	.03	.10
R <sup>2</sup> Change (m1-m3)	+.00	+.00	+.04	+.03	+.01	+.06
<b>m4</b>						
(N)	(483)	(629)	(588)	(528)	(534)	(550)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	*	*
Control Var.	no sig.	*	no sig.	*	no sig.	***
Excluded Cases	omitted	***	***	*	**	**
R <sup>2</sup>	.35	.21	.16	.11	.05	.09
R <sup>2</sup> Change (m3-m4)	-.02	-.03	-.03	-.01	+.02	-.01

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Endogenous variables= same organization membership in 2001, external and internal efficacy in 2001 and 2004

Control variables= age in 2004, education level in 2004, family political tradition, geo-political areas (north, red belt, south) and sex.

Excluded cases: dummy variable coded 1=excluded cases in further analysis 0=not excluded cases

Since also internal as well as external efficacy are endogenous variables and are used as such in Chapter 8, we wanted to control the role of excluded cases also when they are used as dependent variables and thus we run the same procedure for them. In Table V.3 we used internal efficacy as dependent variable and we saw that while endogenous variables are significant for all associations types (m1), excluded cases are not significantly differently related to internal efficacy in professional, activist and civic association membership (m2). The change in the explanatory power of this variable, contrarily to participation, is positive, but is only relevantly positive for activist associations. We can see that control variables are also significant for all associations (m3), yet they make the R-squared increase of only few points. Finally, excluded cases are significant only for political parties and trade unions, but they add some explanatory power to the model for activist, civic, and leisure associations.

In Table V.4 we use external efficacy as dependent variable. Also in this case endogenous variables (m1) are significant for all types of associations, while excluded cases are not (m2). Yet, controlling for excluded cases makes the R-squared increase of .04 or more for all associations, with the exception of leisure associations. Control variables (m3) are all significant but not relevantly improving the explanatory power of



the model, while excluded cases (m4) are not significant for external efficacy but they increase the explanatory power of the model for all associations and particularly for political party, activist and leisure associations.

**Table V.3 – Excluded Cases and Control Variables for Internal Efficacy**

Internal Efficacy	Political Party	Trade Union	Professional Organization	Activist Association	Civic Association	Leisure Association
m1						
(N)	(1708)	(1707)	(1712)	(1708)	(1705)	(1709)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
R <sup>2</sup>	.14	.15	.15	.14	.15	.15
m2						
(N)	(598)	(703)	(656)	(588)	(595)	(614)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Excluded cases	*	*	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	*
R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.16	.17	.19	.18	.18
R <sup>2</sup> Change	+03	+01	+02	+05	+03	+03
m3						
(N)	(1462)	(1459)	(1462)	(1460)	(1458)	(1460)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Control Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.17	.17	.17	.17	.17
R <sup>2</sup> Change (m1-m3)	+03	+02	+02	+03	+02	+02
m4						
(N)	(538)	(629)	(588)	(528)	(534)	(550)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Control Var.	**	*	**	*	*	**
Excluded Cases	*	*	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.
R <sup>2</sup>	.19	.18	.20	.21	.21	.21
R <sup>2</sup> Change (m3-m4)	+02	+01	+03	+04	+04	+04

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Endogenous variables= organization membership in 2001 and 2004, external efficacy in 2001 and 2004, internal efficacy in 2001. Control variables= age in 2004, education level in 2004, geo-political areas (north, red belt, south) and sex. Excluded cases= dummy variable coded 1=excluded cases in further analysis 0=not excluded cases

Also for internal and, most of all, for external efficacy we see that although excluded cases drastically reduce the number of valid cases, keeping them out of the analysis does not significantly bias our sample and in certain cases even increases the explanatory power of the model. Moreover, control variables are significantly related to the dependent variables but also in this case can be omitted for the parsimony of the model, since they do not make the R-square increase in relevant ways. These findings allow us to proceed with the analysis in Chapter 8, excluding biased cases and focusing exclusively on the causal relationship between endogenous variables, adding only in a second moment some control variables. Finally, we think that members of trade unions and professional organizations might be different when they are actively part of the labour market and when they are retired. For this reason, in order to avoid other bias, we also excluded non-working members from both 2001 and 2004 for these two types of organizations.

**Table V.4 – Excluded Cases and Control Variables for External Efficacy**

External Efficacy	Political Party	Trade Union	Professional Organization	Activist Association	Civic Association	Leisure Association
<b>m1</b>						
(N)	(1708)	(1707)	(1712)	(1708)	(1705)	(1709)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
R <sup>2</sup>	.18	.17	.17	.17	.17	.17
<b>m2</b>						
(N)	(598)	(703)	(656)	(588)	(595)	(614)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Excluded cases	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.
R <sup>2</sup>	.24	.21	.21	.23	.24	.20
R <sup>2</sup> Change	+0.06	+0.04	+0.04	+0.06	+0.07	+0.03
<b>m3</b>						
(N)	(1462)	(1459)	(1462)	(1460)	(1458)	(1460)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Control Var.	*	*	*	*	*	*
R <sup>2</sup>	.20	.19	.18	.18	.19	.19
R <sup>2</sup> Change (m1-m3)	+0.02	+0.02	+0.01	+0.01	+0.02	+0.02
<b>m4</b>						
(N)	(538)	(629)	(588)	(528)	(534)	(550)
Endogenous Var.	***	***	***	***	***	***
Control Var.	no sig.	*	*	*	*	*
Excluded Cases	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.	no sig.
R <sup>2</sup>	.24	.22	.21	.24	.25	.21
R <sup>2</sup> Change (m3-m4)	+0.04	+0.03	+0.03	+0.06	+0.06	+0.02

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Endogenous variables= organization membership in 2001 and 2004, internal efficacy in 2001 and 2004, external efficacy in 2001. Control variables= age in 2004, education level in 2004, geo-political areas (north, red belt, south) and sex. Excluded cases= dummy variable coded 1=excluded cases in further analysis 0=not excluded cases

## Appendix VI.

### ITANES Panel Respondents' Characteristics (Chap.7&8)

#### VI.1 Descriptive Characteristics of Panel Data

**Table VI.1 - Descriptive Characteristics of Panel Data**

	2001	2004	2006		2001	2004	2006
<i>Gender</i>							
Man	50.3	50.4	47.8				
Woman	49.7	49.6	52.2				
N	3209	1882	1048				
<i>Study title</i>							
Elementary school	23.9	23.4	16.0	1 A Left	5.3	5.0	6.3
Middle school diploma	35.1	34.8	35.9	2 B	5.2	5.3	6.3
High school diploma	32.0	32.7	36.9	3 C	10.5	10.6	10.9
University degree	9.0	9.1	11.2	4 D	9.1	9.4	10.7
N	3202	1875	1042	5 E	12.9	12.9	13.4
<i>Interested in politics</i>							
Very much	4.6	5.2	6.8	6 F	10.1	10.4	11.7
A little bit	25.1	25.0	28.5	7 G	10.4	11.0	11.0
Not much	42.2	43.0	43.8	8 H	9.9	10.0	9.6
Not at all	28.0	26.8	20.8	9 I	4.0	4.2	4.0
				10 L Right	5.2	5.4	5.4
				11 D.k.	6.3	6.4	4.5
				12 Do not want to self- place	9.1	8.3	5.3
No answers	0.1	0.1	0.1	13 No answer	1.9	1.1	0.8
N	3209	1882	1048	N	3209	1882	1047

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

## VI.2 Participation per Education and Political Tradition

**Table VI.2 – Education Levels of Participants and Non-Participants in 2001-04/06 (Column %)**

Education	Political parties				Trade Unions				Professional Associations				Activist Associations			
	2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2004	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No/Low	48	48	43	46	39	45	31	41	43	36	35	30	49	15	45	29
Med/High	52	52	57	54	61	<u>55</u>	69	<u>59</u>	57	<b>64</b>	65	<b>70</b>	52	<b>85</b>	55	<b>71</b>
(N)	(578)		(583)		(327)		(343)		(330)		(343)		(580)		(583)	

Education	Civic Associations				Leisure Associations				Vote			
	2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2006	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No/Low	47	55	44	41	49	37	43	43	72	59	73	47
Med/High	53	<u>45</u>	56	<b>59</b>	51	<b>63</b>	57	57	28	<b>41</b>	27	<b>53</b>
(N)	(580)		(583)		(580)		(583)		(3192)		(1039)	

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Without biased excluded cases

**Table VI.3 – Political Tradition of Participants and Non-Participants in 2001-04/06 (Column %)**

Political Tradition	Political parties				Trade Unions				Professional Associations				Activist Associations			
	2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2004	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No/Low	56	48	56	44	57	49	55	60	57	56	54	58	55	36	55	55
Med/High	44	<b>52</b>	44	<b>56</b>	45	<b>51</b>	45	<u>40</u>	43	44	46	<u>43</u>	45	<b>64</b>	45	<b>45</b>
(N)	(528)		(530)		(319)		(304)		(306)		(319)		(529)		(530)	

Political Tradition	Civic Associations				Leisure Associations				Vote			
	2001		2004		2001		2004		2001		2006	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
No/Low	56	39	54	57	55	50	56	49	71	62	70	58
Med/High	44	<b>61</b>	46	<u>43</u>	45	<b>50</b>	44	<b>51</b>	29	<b>38</b>	30	<b>42</b>
(N)	(529)		(530)		(529)		(530)		(2738)		(905)	

Source: ITANES panel data 2001-04-06

Note: Without biased excluded cases

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