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Introduction [A]

In the last decades most European countries have promoted a labor market deregulation, under the assumption that rigid protection was the main reason for the persistent share of unemployment and long-term unemployment. In some countries these reforms have just been juxtaposed to the already-present regulation, *de facto* increasing the existing fracture among the core workforce, namely the adult male workers, relatively permanently hired, and a growing share of workers exposed to an unstable labor market participation, young people, women, and workers with a minority background in particular. One of the most relevant consequences of such transformation is a reduction of boundaries between employment and unemployment, and the rise of discontinuity, thus reconfiguring the “old” risk of being totally excluded from the labor market into the “new” risk, associated with post-industrial societies, of being temporarily, unstably, and therefore loosely, integrated (Ranci 2010).

Although forms of non-standard jobs differ considerably, and their regulation varies across countries, they often display several elements associated to insecurity: instability of income, but also of professional status, an inadequate salary, limited protection against arbitrary dismissal and on-the-job risks, reduced access to training, and lack of representation by intermediate bodies. These elements of job insecurity, combined with the lower degree of protection against social risks (especially unemployment, but also illness, pregnancy and old age) that non-standard contracts

generally give entitlement to, may generate precariousness, understood as the impossibility to build a career and to clearly identify oneself with an occupation, in conditions of limited rights and protections. The degree of precariousness is in fact deeply influenced by the overall architecture of the social protection system, particularly the presence or absence of universalistic income support measures, and the accessibility and effectiveness of public employment services.

The increase of work precariousness is one of the factors that have contributed to the rise of social vulnerability (see chapter 1). Social vulnerability does not identify a state of material deprivation or poverty, but rather a situation of instability and in a context of harsh constraints within one or more of the main systems of social integration: family, welfare, or labor market (Ranci 2010). In this multidimensional condition, each of these domains may contribute to the fragility of the individuals. A worker with an unstable job might in fact not be vulnerable *per se*, but might become so in presence of other conditions, such as scant welfare protection or weak family support.

The exposure to work precariousness varies depending on different variables, such as education, skills, type of occupation, but also gender, ethnic origins, and age (Kalleberg 2009). Young people are especially affected by it (Blossfeld *et al.* 2005, Kahn 2007, Baranowska and Gebel 2010, Lancker 2012). As a consequence, in recent decades the transition from school to work has become a longer and blurrier period, in which - more than in “traditional” unemployment, defined as the absence of work (Esping-Andersen 2002) - young adults are stuck in a “gray zone” of fixed term contracts, occasional jobs, involuntary part-time occupations, internships, training, and education initiatives. This condition of continuous uncertainty in the labor market might jeopardize their transition to stability (Walther 2011) and put into question their capacity of planning and realizing an independent life (Côté and Bynner 2008), although with uneven impacts. Those who cumulate several factors of weakness on the labor market, such as women, the low-educated, and those with a foreign or minority background, are more exposed to the risk of work precariousness (Blossfeld *et al.* 2005).

This chapter aims to address in a comparative perspective the experiences of occupational precariousness of young adults, the consequences on their social vulnerability, and the contribution in terms of protection and support offered by local welfare policies. In the next paragraph we present the research design. In the third paragraph recent data about labor market participation of young people in Europe are illustrated. In the fourth paragraph we identify five profiles of young people facing employment instability. In the fifth paragraph we examine the size and composition of the resource packages they can rely upon. The sixth paragraph discusses how work precariousness affects the living conditions of young adults, and their overall strategies to improve them. Finally, the last paragraph draws some conclusions.

The research [A]

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on part of the empirical results of the WILCO project¹. The objective of the research was to deepen the actual conditions of vulnerability of young people, and the factors that may be detected at the basis of it, as well as the resources they can have access to and that can act as protective factors against further downturns. In order to do that, the biographies of 120 young Europeans were collected.

The focus of the analysis was on young adults with a low educational profile, a group especially exposed to the risk of being precariously employed, or unemployed (Isengard 2003, Baranowska and Gebel 2010). In fact, people with a low education level are comparatively less employed and earn less (OECD 2012), and education has become increasingly important as a determinant of life chances, especially since welfare protection and representation by intermediate corps have

¹ “Social innovations at the local level in favour of cohesion” (www.wilcoproject.eu). We warmly thank the researchers who contributed to the fieldwork, and all the young respondents who shared with us their – often heavy – experiences.

weakened in the last decades (Kalleberg 2009). Coherently, the sample included young people either jobless or employed on a very unstable basis; with a low education level (maximum ISCED 3 and no university education); either living autonomously, or being eager to live autonomously, but living with their family of origin because of clearly insufficient economic means. Interviewees were selected between the ages of 18, as younger people are still in compulsory education, and 33, as the process of transition to adulthood—the achievement of full independence from the family of origin—has been diversified², postponed, and extended up to 30 years of age and over, especially (but not only) in Southern European countries (Walther 2006).

The in-depth interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire, organized in four main areas: personal and household situation; individual path through education and labor market participation; resources mobilized/accessed to deal with work instability (namely income support; training, activation measures and job search actions; access to information and emotional support; housing conditions); influence of work precariousness on individual wellbeing and coping strategies.

The interviews were carried out in twenty cities in ten European countries, covering all welfare regimes³. Whereas quite many qualitative studies of the experiences of young unstable workers

² The order of completion of “sub-transitions”—finding a stable job, leaving one’s parents’ dwelling, forming an autonomous household, having children—that used to be linear and prevalent in the industrial era, now follows a rather differentiated range of sequences (Guillemard 2005).

³ The twenty cities are: Zagreb and Varaždin (Croatia), Lille and Nantes (France), Münster and Berlin (Germany), Amsterdam and Nijmegen (the Netherlands), Milan and Brescia (Italy), Warsaw and Płock (Poland), Barcelona and Pamplona (Spain), Malmö and Stockholm (Sweden), Bern and Geneva (Switzerland), Medway and Birmingham (UK). The interviews were carried out in nine languages and translated into English by the national research teams.

have by now been produced in specific national or local contexts in Europe (Fullin 2004, Bertolini *et al.* 2011), an in-depth analysis of individual narratives comparing such a wide array of European contexts is rather new. Also quite rare in previous investigations is the interest on the city as the context in which work precariousness is concretely experienced and dealt with. The added value of the research presented here is exactly the comparative focus on the local level.

Young Europeans and the labor market⁴ [A]

Youth (15-24) and young adults (25-34) are more at risk of labor market marginalization than other age groups also because they are more exposed to temporary jobs, thus leading to a higher risk of being laid off than older workers (Blossfeld *et al.* 2005, Baranowska and Gebel 2010). Furthermore, the crisis was sharper for some profiles, as low-skilled, temporarily-employed and young workers (OECD 2012). The average youth unemployment rate (under 25), that had decreased to 15.7 percent in 2007, has been growing to 22.9 percent in 2012 (EU-27, source: Eurostat). The impact of the crisis on unemployment rates is, however, mediated by national economic performance and, compared to adults, young people are strongly affected by institutional mechanism, as long as the key process in their labor market integration is the school-to-work transition (Dietrich 2012). The rate of unemployment among young people under the age of 25 in 2012 was 53.2 percent in Spain, 35.3 percent in Italy, and 41.7 percent in Croatia, while being below 10 percent in Germany and the Netherlands (source: Eurostat). Although these data should be read against the backdrop of activity rates that are particularly low for this age group, since many young people are still exclusively or predominantly students (see chapter 3), their unemployment trends during the crisis is nevertheless

⁴ All tables and graphs in this paragraph will report data referring to the ten countries involved in the WILCO project, in order to frame the labor market contexts in which our interviewees act. Main source of data is Eurostat Statistical database, European Labour Force Indicators.

rather worrying, and will be one of the main axes of intervention of European social policies in the near future (Social Europe 2012).

Figure 7.1 – Young people in education/training and in the labor market in the WILCO countries, 15-24 years old in 2007/2012. Source: Eurostat, EU 27.

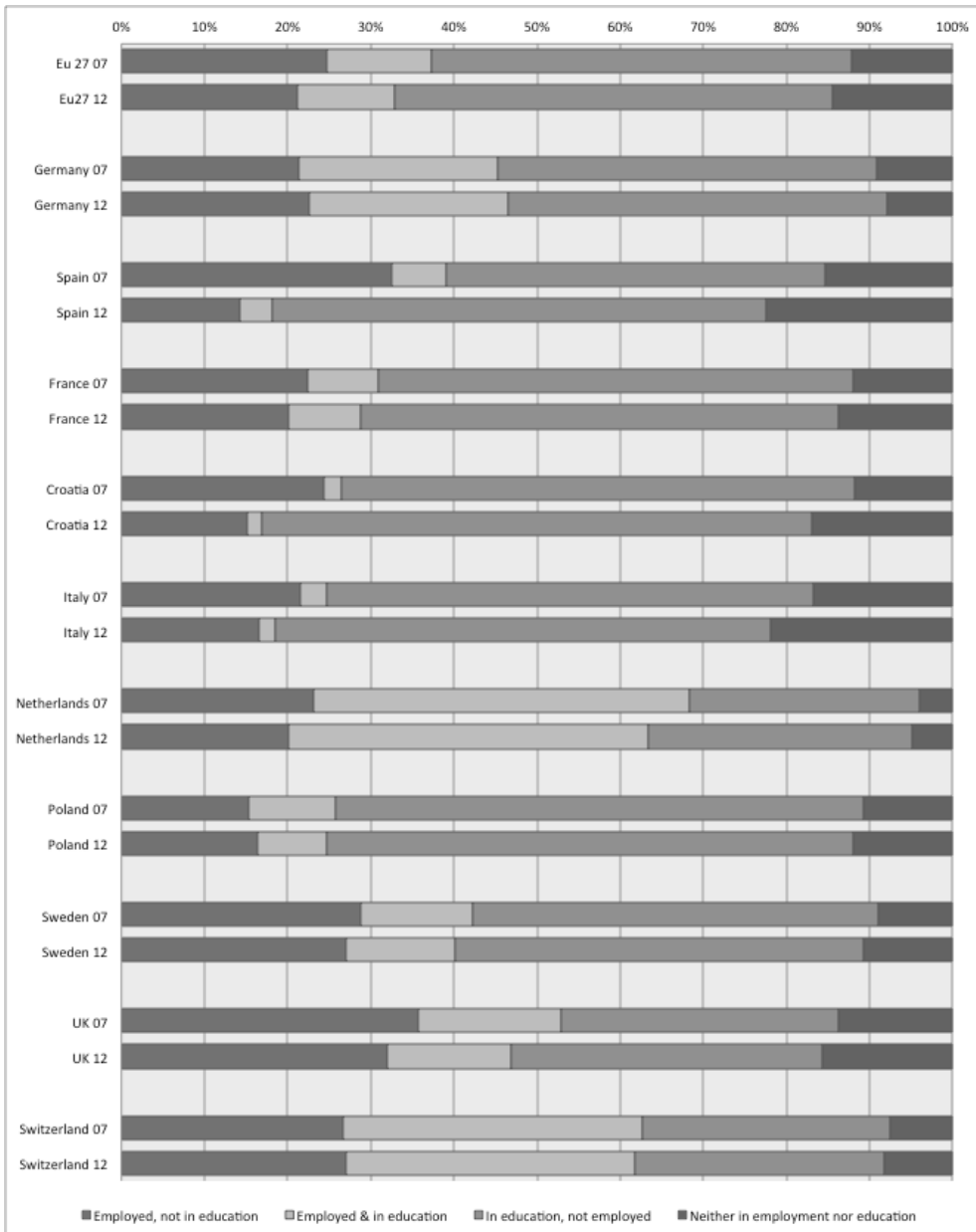
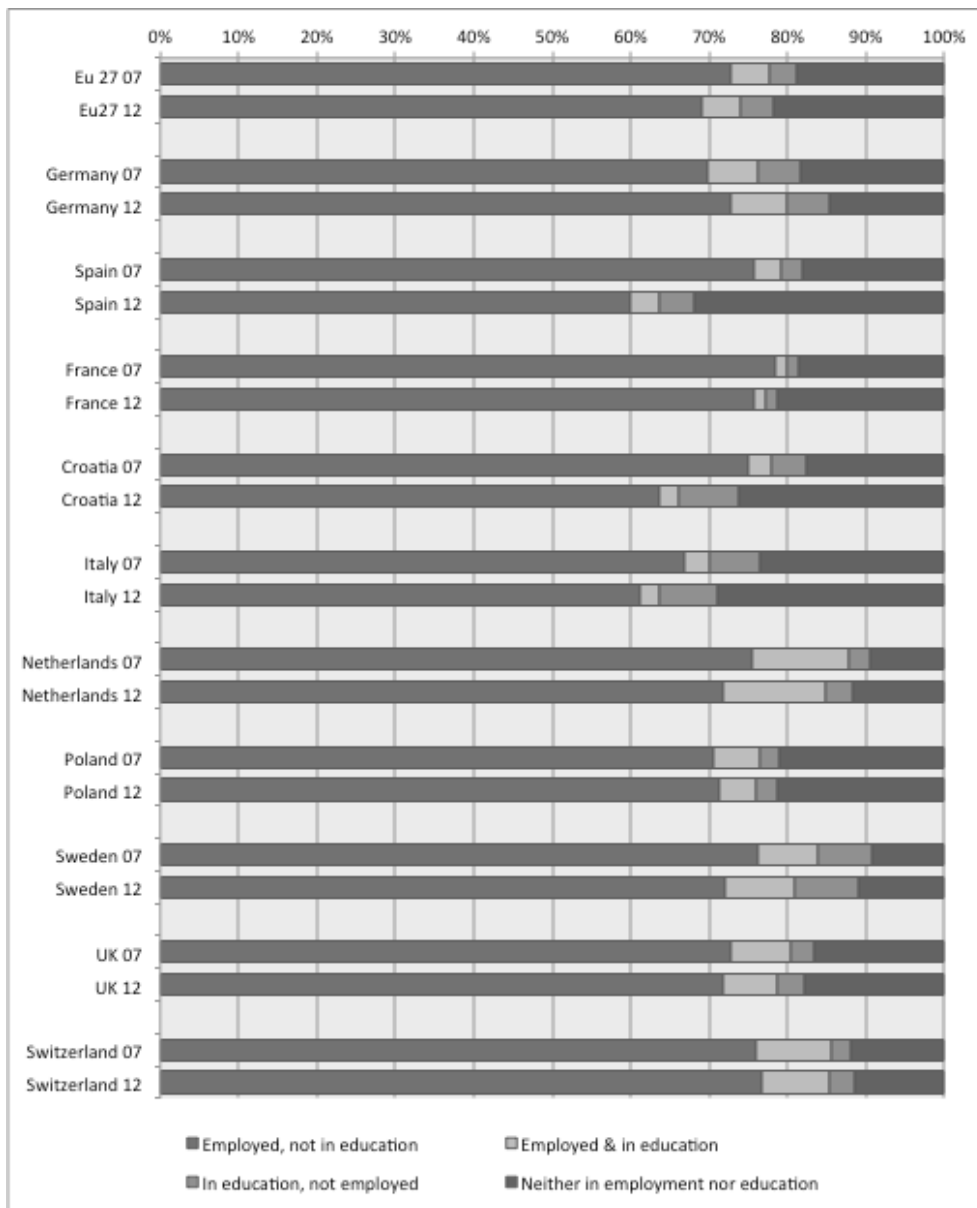


Figure 7.2 – Young people in education/training and in the labor market in the WILCO countries, 25-34 years old in 2007/2012. Source: Eurostat, EU 27.



Employment rates have diminished among young people in Europe-27, with the exception of Germany, where employment rates increased even among the 15- to 24-year-olds. The decline of employment rates is mirrored by an increase in education and training activities, especially in those countries where youth employment has been particularly hit by the crisis, such as Spain (OECD 2012). One important institutional difference among countries relates to how their education system combines theoretical learning and work experience, which can also have important consequences on early labor market transitions (Blossfeld *et al.* 2005). In some European countries, like Germany

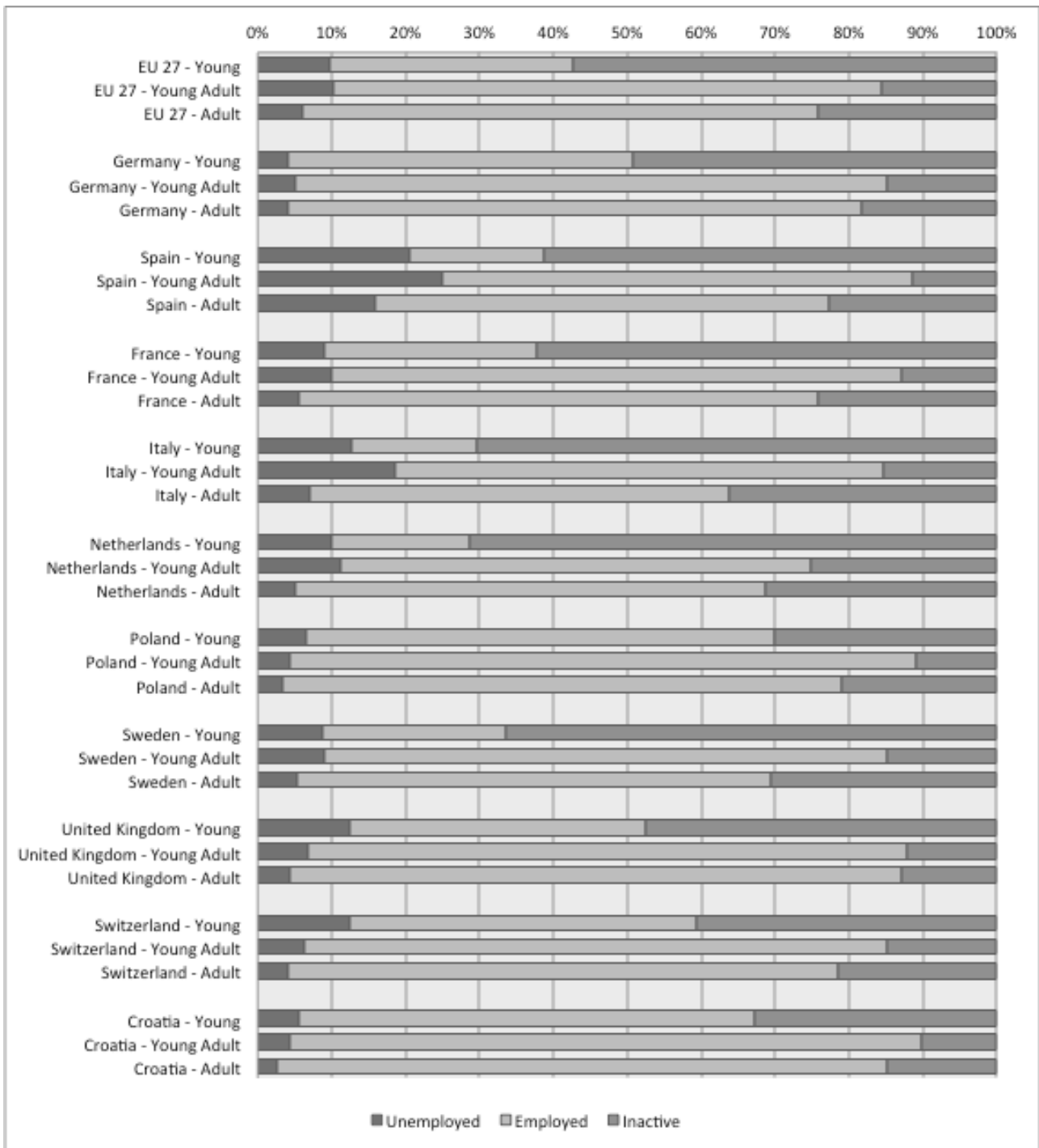
and the Netherlands, it is quite common for students to be also involved in the labor market, also thanks to the dual education system and measures of stimulus for employers and/or mentoring for young people (European Foundation 2012). On the contrary, in Southern Europe, where measures to support school-to-work transition are particularly weak, less than one young person in four is active in the labor market, and only a small minority is working and studying at the same time. Despite their small numbers, active young people in Southern Europe are reducing their employment during the crisis more than their German or Swiss peers.

In Southern Europe, however, the highest percentage increment has been in the number of young people who are neither involved in education or training nor in employment (Social Europe 2012). This is especially evident for the older segment of youth (25-34 years old) in which the persistence and increment of a NEET condition might be considered a risk of long-term exclusion from labor market. In Spain, Croatia and Italy this condition concerns about 30% of the total population 25-34. Young adults (19 and 24) have been the group most affected by the crisis (OECD 2012). Although in almost all the countries studied, youth and young adults experience periods of unemployment that are sensibly shorter than those of older workers, one other side effect of the crisis was a general increase in the average duration of unemployment, which leads to an increase in the number of long-term unemployed and discouraged job-seekers, with the sharpest increment among young adults (Dietrich 2012, OECD 2012). Moreover, unemployment is not a transitory condition for young adults either, especially in certain countries (Italy, Spain, Poland, and Croatia). The persistence of a condition of unemployment might be particularly hard for workers who are at the beginning of their professional career: the so-called “scarring effect” may jeopardize integration into the labor market and reduce future earnings prospects.

Furthermore, if we consider the activity rate, the data gives us a different picture, since just a minority of those under 25 years of age is active on the labor market, with the relevant exception of Germany, Poland and Croatia. In Spain and Italy, a higher share of young adults in the total

population are suffering from unemployment compared to their youngest peers, who are usually less active on the labor market.

Figure 7.3 – Inactivity, employment, and unemployment rate by age in WILCO countries (Youth: 15-24, young adults: 25-34, adults: 35-64), 2012. Source: Eurostat, EU 27.



Among the employed, young people tend to be overrepresented in the temporary work category compared to other age groups, confirming a trend established in the 2000s. The distribution of temporary and part-time jobs among them was 35.9 percent of the total employment rate in 2001, and reached about 42,1 percent in 2012. Young people's exposure to temporary employment has been worsened by the crisis. Nevertheless, the meaning of temporary employment for young workers also depends on the structural features of the education and welfare system. In dual education systems like the German one, it is partly linked to parallel participation in education and training, while in the Nordic countries, which promote policies to support the achievement of autonomy from an early age (housing support, employment services), it can constitute an opportunity (Social Europe 2012). In absence of these conditions it is more often a factor of precariousness, as it usually happens in Southern Europe.

Another effect of the crisis was a general increase in the use of part-time employment (OECD 2012). Even if not as strongly as for temporary employment (Social Europe 2012), the crisis forced especially young unemployed adults to unwillingly accept part-time jobs, exposing them to the risk of being underemployed or worse, becoming part of the working poor (Lancker 2012). In the EU-27, underemployed young people between the ages of 15 and 24 made up 5.5 percent of the total labor force in 2007, but in 2011 they accounted for 7.7 percent, reaching their highest levels in Spain (16.8 percent), Sweden (14.6 percent), and the UK (14.5 percent). The rate of involuntary part-time within total part-time employment in the EU-27 has grown from 23.2 to 28 percent in the same period; Italy (70 percent), Spain (51 percent), and France (45.2 percent) show the highest mismatch for the 15- to 24-year-old workers. The risk of poor quality employment might result in a long-term impact on earnings and status, especially in the case of the low-skilled (OECD 2012).

Besides being mediated by the national regulation of labor markets and the contingent economic trends, and conditioned by individual skills, the risk of being unemployed or unstably integrated in the labor market is also influenced by social characteristics, especially ethnicity and gender, and by

the structural opportunities of the local systems of production (Russell and O'Connell 2001, Isengard 2003, Baranowska and Gebel 2010, Escott 2012, Dietrich 2012). Being a migrant in general, and particularly being a young migrant, increases the risk of unemployment in almost all the WILCO countries, with the only exceptions being Italy and the UK, and the crisis increased this gap in the EU-27 (Dietrich 2012). Migrants usually have lower language skills and they encounter difficulties having their educational qualifications recognized outside their country of origin, and may undergo discrimination in the labor market (Isengard 2003).

The analysis of gender gaps is more complicated. In fact, if women are less unemployed than men in the 15-24 age group, the tendency changes for women during their most fertile years (25-39) when they may have their own family and children. If the unemployment rate of young women was significantly higher before the crisis than that of young men, this trend has changed with the crisis, which has influenced more sectors, like manufacturing or construction, where young men are traditionally concentrated (Dietrich 2012), whereas women are more employable than men in the service sectors. In fact, local productive systems that still retain an industrial core, like in Italy, France, or Poland, offer fewer jobs for women. On the contrary, countries - like the UK - that have experienced a stronger decline in manufacturing in the past currently favor the employability of women more (Isengard 2003), although there is strong occupational segregation (Escott 2012).

Locality is more important for low-skilled workers, to the extent that their lack of education and employability reduces their competitiveness on the national or even international labor market, thus limiting them more to the opportunities offered within their area of residence (Escott 2012). Taking into consideration the role of local (regional) productive systems, the situation of young unemployed adults varies a lot among the twenty cities studied, but quite coherently with the general performance of local labor markets (see chapter 3). As we can see from table below, Berlin and Birmingham have more unemployment at the regional level than the national average, while the

situation in Milan/Brescia, Pamplona, Barcelona, Münster, and Warsaw is better than that of their respective countries as a whole.

Table 7.1 Unemployment rate, 15-34 years old, Regional and Country, 2006 - 2011.

	2006		2011		Diff. 2006/2011	
	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>Country</i>
Berlin	13.69	7.88	8.52	5.06	-5.17	-2.82
Münster	7.54	7.88	4.95	5.06	-2.59	-2.82
Barcelona	5.94	8.15	13.46	20.36	7.52	12.21
Pamplona	6.33	8.15	19.05	20.36	12.72	12.21
Nantes	11.05	8.63	11.76	9.25	0.71	0.62
Lille	7.23	8.62	8.47	9.25	1.24	0.63
Milan/Brescia	4.19	7.05	6.01	8.33	1.82	1.28
Amsterdam	3.09	3.72	4.07	4.49	0.98	0.77
Nijmegen	3.35	3.72	4.73	4.49	1.38	0.77
Warsaw/Płock	9.62	10.88	7.22	8.61	-2.40	-2.27
Stockholm	6.96	8.64	7.73	9.29	0.77	0.65
Malmö	9.6	8.64	10.18	9.29	0.58	0.65
Birmingham	8.24	6.44	12.04	9.47	3.80	3.03
Medway	6.59	6.44	10.98	9.47	4.39	3.03
Geneva	5.72	4.58	7.14	4.62	1.42	0.04
Bern	4.29	4.58	3.96	4.62	-0.33	0.04
Zagreb/Varaždin	:	10.37	:	13.42		3.05

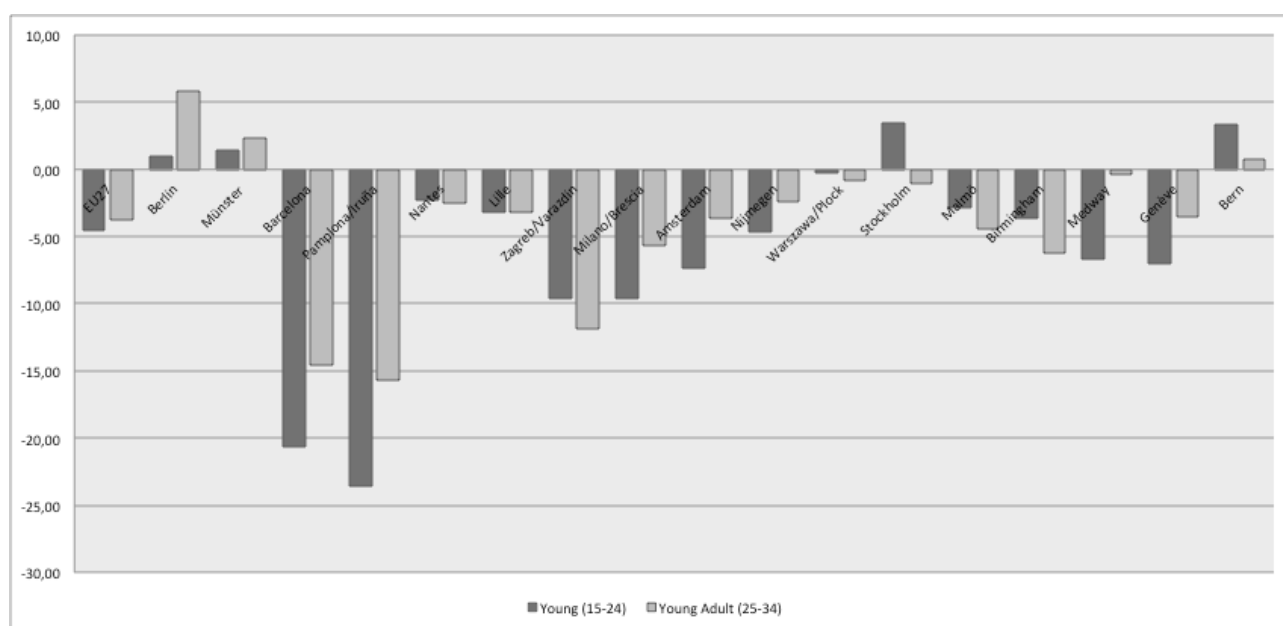
Source: Eurostat database 2006/2011.

If we take a deeper look at the transformation between 2006 and 2011, we notice that the worst increases in youth unemployment occurred in the regions of Barcelona (+7.52 percent), Pamplona (+12.72 percent), and Medway (+4.39 percent). Birmingham and Milan/Brescia show a lower increase (+3.8 percent and +1.82 percent). Cities like Bern, as well as Polish and German cities, seem to not have suffered from the financial crisis. Instead, they saw their youth unemployment rate reduced, even more than at the national level. The evolution of unemployment and youth unemployment in Barcelona, Pamplona, and Medway seems closely related to the burst of the real estate bubble and the crisis in construction particularly important in the previous period (see chapter

3). However, as table 7.1 shows, in all the cities studied young people have not suffered from the crisis at the same levels. Locality seems important in explaining the relative trends.

The regions where Stockholm and Bern are located have succeeded in promoting a wider participation of young people (15-24), while Berlin and Münster were more effective with young adults (25-34). On the contrary, the regions where Barcelona, Pamplona, Geneva, Medway and the Italian and Dutch cities are embedded saw a reduction in employment rates among the youngest age groups, even with a sharp difference in Spain and Medway. In Malmö and Birmingham as Croatian cities employment rates were reduced especially among young adults. Some local labor markets seem more insidious for young adults than for young people in general. Thus, young people suffer more from the economic crisis, especially in those countries in which the male breadwinner model is more persistent, as in Spain and Italy, but also in cities like Medway and Amsterdam, where some resources for the activation of the most fragile have undergone austerity-linked cuts (see chapter 3).

Figure 7.4 – Variation in the employment rate for youth (15-24) and young adults (25-34), 2007 – 2012. Source: Eurostat, NUTS 2.



In conclusion, structural factors (age, gender, and migrant background) play a role in configuring the opportunities for young people on the labor market, together with the education level and locality (the features of local production systems and of local welfare provisions). Macro data depict a broad landscape of the main trends occurring in the labor market, but do not give information on trajectories and strategies by which young people try to overcome instability and precariousness, nor on the type and generosity of resources they can rely upon for support. After having illustrated the position of young Europeans on the labor market, highlighting common trends and relevant differences among countries and local contexts, we shall now focus on the narratives about their experience of work precariousness that emerged from the interviews. We will first concentrate on the paths young people take to access the labor market, identifying different profiles of work precariousness, and then analyze the packages of resources they can rely on to deal with their situation of work instability.

From unemployment to precariousness: five different profiles of youth at risk [A]

Most of our interviews confirm that the conditions of young people can really not be conceived as standard unemployment conditions, but rather consist of a gray zone of weak integration in the labor market. Their working biographies are discontinuous and made up of episodes of unemployment (quite often the result of the expiration of a temporary contract), that are followed by occasional jobs, temporary contracts, or failed efforts of starting apprenticeships or university.

Education is still considered by most of the interviewees to be the key factor in permanently accessing the labor market, even if not all of them are aware that their unstable condition might be caused by their weak professional profile. Having a higher education or specialized qualification eases the transition into the labor market and reduces the risk of unemployment (Isengard 2003).

Many of our interviewees do not meet any of these two conditions, as a result of two processes. The most fragile cases dropped out from school before achieving a full professional profile, which

makes it quite difficult for them to access qualified jobs. Others do have a professional qualification, which is nevertheless inadequate for the labor market demands, either because school did not really prepare them practically for the desired jobs, or because the market segment in which they would like to work is narrow or in crisis. However, albeit conditioned by low education and by their motivation, their unstable labor market integration seems influenced by a sum of weaknesses, including fragile family contexts and a chain of frail biographical steps, and by the framework of opportunities and constraints offered by the local production and welfare system. This confirms that vulnerability stems from an individual fragility in different dimensions that reinforce one another (Ranci 2010).

Among our 120 interviewees we identified five profiles based on a multifaceted combination of individual elements defining their anyway weak, but differentiated position on the labor market. Our aim was to assess on the one hand the level of their social integration in two main institutions, school and the labor market, and on the other hand the personal assets they can rely on in order to pursue not only employability but also possibly stabilization. These include also their agency since, besides public regulation of work, the multi-faceted concept of insecurity also comprises effective capacity of the worker to obtain employment continuity (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt 2010). The main elements considered were: the age at which they had their first “serious” job (excluding occasional and seasonal jobs), if they ever had one; having a stable past job experience (at least 2 years) or not; the number and duration of accumulated job experiences; the number and length of spells of unemployment or inactivity; their educational and training path and achievements; the presence of a professional project guiding their experiences and job search.

Quite surprisingly, our results show no strong association between any profile and characteristics such as gender or migrant background; rather, such elements act as catalysts of vulnerability, worsening the condition of interviewees compared to the male native job seeker, but the effects are

different for each profile. The profiles seem to be transversal with respect to WILCO countries and cities. We will go back to this point at the end of the chapter.

Young and fragile [B]

A first group of interviewees (14) had just exited the education system, in some cases achieving a basic professional qualification but more often just dropping out of it. Their careers as students had often been unstable and fragmented, also because they have no clear idea yet of what profession they would pursue. They were still quite young (under 20 on average) and their work experiences had been mostly temporary or protected by youth activation programs. Many of these respondents had been employed as seasonal workers in retail, personal services, or tourism, sometimes even without contracts. Their profile was often particularly fragile, not only for the insecurity they had experienced, both in the education system and on the labor market, but also because they came from unstable and problematic families.

During their unemployment spells, they hoped for the right occasion that might lead to a more stable labor market integration, like an apprenticeship, to gain a more solid professional experience, or more vaguely waited for someone to propose them “something to do”. The role of the social services in activating their agency was determinant, especially if they had a migrant background.

“I was doubting a little, whether I should continue studying or not, so I didn't do anything for 2 or 3 months, just thinking if I was going to go back to school or look for a job. And then I decided to get a job because I wanted to earn money, help my parents and stuff, and so I started looking for a job.” (Man, 25, Amsterdam)

The most insidious risk derived from their passivity, which might lead them to a NEET condition if they were not adequately supported by their family or by services. In fact, their lack of motivation

and orientation might jeopardize the development of a professional project, and push them toward a situation of exclusion from both the labor market and the education system.

Flexible with a professional project [B]

A small group of respondents (9) was made up of persons just slightly older than the previous ones (around 24 years old on average) but who, on the contrary, had developed a rather specific professional project they tried to pursue. Their projects often focused on creative or artistic fields: filmmaking, dancing, writing. These people were not simply accepting the first job offer that might arrive, but they were trying to build a definite occupational profile coherent with their specialization objective. Their approach was strategic, as they alternated or combined job experiences with training to build a set of competencies useful in their field of interest. Quite often they were favored by the fact of still being young enough to access starter contracts favorable for employers, thus being competitive with respect to older workers even if they lacked experience. Since training often has a cost that they cannot meet without support, some had temporary, instrumental jobs, just to cover basic needs while studying or getting further training.

The most serious risk they faced was the failure of their professional project. Despite their motivation, this may occur not only due to business cycles and competition (quite tough especially in the most creative sectors, like movie-making or radio entertainment), but also because the links between the education system and labor market are lacking.

“I'm precarious as a life-style., It is probably due to the fact that in Italy there aren't many opportunities for young people. You have the chance to learn a job at school, but it's hard to do it in practice afterwards. Many young people have good ideas in creative sectors, but it's hard to establish a real career, particularly in my field [filmmaking].” (Man, 28, Milan)

Young people in this group were ready to face periods of unemployment, as long as these were functional to obtain an apprenticeship in their field of interest, or better job offers. To be able to use such a strategy, the role of family or social support is fundamental. Nevertheless, their genuine interest in a specific field kept their motivation high and constant, and their coherence was rewarded by the fact that they were able to obtain longer job contracts (17 months on average).

Precarious with fragmented paths [B]

A large number of interviewees (48) had been able to work more or less continuously in the past years, but had not been able to develop a professional project yet; they were simply browsing the labor market to grab the best job offer they could find on the short term. They were facing the insidious risks of entrapment into precariousness, as their CVs got more and more fragmented and they had neither been able to build a coherent professional profile, nor to achieve a job that offered them more stable integration into the labor market.

Even if they experienced the shortest spells of unemployment among our interviewees (less than 6 months on average), these were often followed by very short contracts of a few weeks or even days. Their philosophy was just to accept the first job offer they got in order to cover their basic needs. Their unstable labor market integration may get worse as years passed by, since their eclecticism did not allow them to accumulate a critical mass of professional experience so as to be competitive in a sector or profession.

“If I have to make a CV now, I think I can fill up 3 pages at least... My parents always told me: 'make sure you have an income'... so at some point I was just too quick to accept anything I was offered.... I have not been critical enough in choosing something I really liked, I just had to have an income... I don't think I can count the number of jobs I had on one hand.... Maybe 15 different employers? And whether that helped me in my career?”

Well, if I look at where I was when I was 18 and where I am now, then no.”

(Man, 30, Amsterdam)

This extremely short-term arrangement puts into question young people’s planning capacity, in terms of leaving their family of origin and establishing a new household, but also in terms of building a career. In Southern European cities (Pamplona and Barcelona, Milan and Brescia), the deregulation of temporary contracts implemented at the national level in the past decades has boosted the diffusion of these highly precarious profiles, increasing the vulnerability of young workers since there is no law against social dumping. Our interviewees often reported being obliged to accept jobs that were clearly underpaid.

This never-ending instability had brought a general mistrust toward the market: only a minority among them thought that finding a new job could be the solution for their currently difficult situation, as it would probably be as short and dead-end as the previous ones. Many just had no idea of what to do in the next months, so simply pushing them to activate themselves did not seem to be an effective strategy for public services to implement.

Marginal and weak [B]

These respondents (34) were confronted with the most difficult paths of labor market integration, and were thus particularly at risk for different reasons, not all related to their employability. In most cases, these young people had been long-term unemployed (over 18 months on average since their last contract), with scarce or very precarious experiences on the labor market and low and fragmented educational profiles. Many of them were confronted with a difficult local production system, as the old industrial centers in Berlin, Lille and Birmingham (see chapter 3), making their integration potential more challenging.

In some cases, the suggestion of their PES tutors to use these months of unemployment to get trained or re-trained to be better equipped and more competitive once the economy started to recover was not welcomed by the interviewees. Quite often in the past they had failed educational objectives, without achieving a clear idea yet of what they wanted to do in the future. The result was rather often exclusion both from education or training and the labor market.

“I started technical secondary school to see if I was interested in economics; after half a year I stopped this and started an educational training. I finished in 2008. Then I started sending applications, but I just received refusals. I wanted to work in the social field and took some programs, so I worked at the Familienzentrum in 2008 for six months. When the contract expired I could have extended it, but I needed a vacation. Later I regretted I had not extended that contract.” (Man, 24, Berlin)

The problem is neither simply their weak agency, nor the failure of the implemented measures. In the majority of cases, these young people had gone through difficult situations in the past: they came from families at risk (experiencing parents’ hard separation, illness, death, or imprisonment), they had difficult migration trajectories, or they had problems with the law (e.g. for drugs or small illegal traffics). Harsh political and social events had also marked some of our interviewees’ biographies (e.g. the war in Croatia). In some cases, disabilities and disease made their integration in the labor market more difficult than for their peers; in others they had to care for family members. Both situations diminished their possibility to be employed full-time. For young women, an early pregnancy became an obstacle to labor market integration, especially if childcare options were lacking in the area where they lived, or after the separation from the child’s father.

Quite often, these young people were totally cared for by social services, which offered them protected labor market experiences, but also income and housing support. However, the quality of

these initiatives depends on the generosity of the national and local welfare systems, and thus varies a lot among our cities.

Interrupted careers [B]

The last profile is more typical of our oldest interviewees (27 and over). What is common among these (15) persons is past experience with healthy, stable labor market integration, with contracts lasting 24 months and more followed by a long unemployment period (20 months and more). The reasons why they were not able to find another job after their last contract were quite gender-oriented. Women felt that their unemployment was correlated to maternity. In fact, being in their 30s now, they were quite likely either to have young children, and/or to have a baby in the subsequent years. Quite often, the previous contract had been interrupted, or not renewed because of a pregnancy. In contrast, men understood their exit from the labor market as more correlated to business cycles: interviewees quite often blamed the financial crisis for their situation, insofar as neither their motivation, nor their experience, nor activation measures seemed sufficient to find a job.

For both men and women, reduced employability might also depend on age: growing older meant they could no longer benefit from starters' contracts incentives. In other cases the temporary contract they had was not renewed since public regulation imposed, after a certain number of extensions, to transform it into a permanent one, which their previous employer did not want to do.

“I've been a hairdresser for 11 years but now I've been unemployed since about 2 years. I didn't want to change jobs, it's just that I didn't find a job anymore, also because I'm out of the age group for apprenticeship contracts. This is a real limit for me and that's one of the reasons why I'm doing other courses to try to change jobs.” (Woman, 31, Milan)

Their unemployment status persists even if they are quite active in looking for a new job or in trying to adjust their competencies with training courses in new fields. The major challenge for them will be to succeed in overcoming the scarring effect of their long period of unemployment, which might later lead to worse job conditions and less career opportunities.

Trapped in the short term or oriented toward the medium term? [B]

In the five profiles we identified there is one element that might turn the period of uncertainty into a window of opportunity: the development of a strategy in the form of a coherent career project. “Flexible adults with a professional project” are more careful in choosing the right opportunities, and might benefit more from the initiatives taken during their periods of unemployment. However, their strategy is not immune to risks: their coherent and specialized profile might not be useful out of their specific – highly competitive – sector, or become obsolete.

For the “young and fragile,” the youngest among our interviewees, the issue at stake is to develop their agency and set up a clear idea of what type of career to pursue. For the most vulnerable “marginal and weak” group, however, the risk of simply becoming inactive and marginal is always present. For these young people the role of public services is particularly important, as it is quite often the only welfare pillar they can access with some continuity and reliability. For both profiles, the activation approach is effective if it is oriented to medium-term objectives: encompassing structures like the *Second Chance School* in Nantes offer the necessary support to build a coherent professional profile that may sustain a better and permanent integration into the labor market in the future.

For our “precarious with a fragmented path” group, temporary employment does mean entrapment in a long-lasting series of unstable job experiences (Barbieri and Scherer 2009) that prevents them from building up a coherent profile despite a positive attitude of activation toward the labor market. The horizon of their strategies is short, oriented just toward returning to employment as soon as

possible. Among our interviewees they are the most exposed to commodification, which might become particularly insidious for those who are not eligible for any public support.

In conclusion, our empirical findings show that the condition of work precariousness has a diversified impact and meaning for the young experiencing it: individual factors (such as the ability to browse the labor market) and institutional factors (such as the capacity of the welfare system to support young people) shape the set of opportunities of the individuals, and therefore also their risks of being marginalized on the labor market or entrapped in highly precarious jobs.

Resource packages [A]

Having analyzed the paths of our young interviewees throughout their complex integration in the labor market, and identified different profiles of work precariousness, we shall now explore what resources these young people can count on in order to cope with their condition of instability and build up their own welfare. We investigated their access to resources in five domains: income support; training, employment, and activation services; housing solutions; information (about job opportunities, useful services, entitlement to welfare measures, housing solutions); and emotional support. Such resources vary in generosity, continuity and their actual impact on individual welfare. However, it is not only the quantity of resources young people have access to that counts, but also the coverage of different needs and the balance among the contributions from different “pillars.” Drawing on the classic Polanyi’s spheres of socio-economic integration (1978), we have considered the three classic pillars: public welfare, market, and family and primary network. Resources stemming from solidarity networks (NGOs, neighborhood associations, and the like) have been considered as “public welfare” intervention if third sector bodies implement, entirely or partly, programs that in fact represent institutional (publicly financed) schemes, even if experimental or local.

As expected, given our selection criteria, our interviewees have generally little attachment to the market. Currently unemployed, they are either involved in activation programs or protected jobs, or work discontinuously, just for a few hours a week, without a contract or even in illegal activities. They have little means to purchase employment, training or information services on the market. Their connection to the market mainly consists of the initiatives they autonomously undertake to look for a job: checking vacancies, sending CVs, visiting firms or employment agencies, pursuing self-employment, etc. As we shall see, the degree of importance of public and family resources for the people in our sample is more varied.

By combining the amount and type of resources respondents declared they could rely upon; distinguishing the source these stem from; and assessing their continuity, generosity, and impact; we identified five different “resource packages” that we will present in this paragraph.

A sound and comprehensive package [B]

A first group of interviewees (24) could count on a sound and diversified package of resources, stemming partly from public welfare, partly from the family, and partly from the market. Moreover, some of the resources they could rely upon were characterized by continuity and/or generosity that made their impact on overall individual welfare rather significant. Being able to somehow lean on all the main pillars reduced their degree of vulnerability, since if one of them should even temporarily fall away, they could still count on the other two.

In fact, these respondents received public income support and had access to public activating measures. Moreover, their package was complemented by significant support from the primary network. This took the form of income support, housing support (e.g. co-habitation with the family of origin, or partner’s parents, or with a partner who owned a dwelling or paid rent), but also emotional support, as well as information about the functioning of PES, the entitlement to welfare schemes, or acquaintances who might offer a job or affordable housing solutions. A few of these

respondents also reported help from the solidarity network (trade unions, local associations, parish) that completed their diversified package of resources.

“My income is made up of unemployment benefits, health care benefits, and housing benefits. When it was known that they were not going to extend my contract, my employer contacted the public unemployment agency, and then I got a letter from them saying ‘we sent your papers’. So accessing unemployment benefits was basically organized for me... this was great. Also, the unemployment agency has some good new initiatives, such as employers-jobseekers speed-dating, and if you need help from them, you can always ask, about how to write a CV, etc. [Besides sending out CVs] I took short [seasonal and undeclared] jobs to have an extra income [...], jobs recommended by a friend. When it is really necessary, my girlfriend helps me out.” (Man, 30 Amsterdam)

The composed assistance these young people received (this excerpt reminds us that, depending on the institutional context, working with a non standard contract does not necessarily mean to be excluded from social protection) may help get them through a period of unemployment during which they attempted to strengthen their skills. Nevertheless, a majority of them still did not have a clear idea of what to do in the future, which exposed them to the risk of becoming dependent on the help received, especially public support. Interestingly, almost half of the interviewees we classified in this group lived in the British and Swiss cities (especially in Bern and Birmingham), embedded in welfare models with a quite liberal approach.

Counting on diversified resources [B]

Most of our interviewees disposed of a rather diversified package of resources, although more limited than the one available to the previous group. Disregarding age, sex, origin, or city they lived

in, around one third of the respondents (45), could be classified in this group. Their welfare leaned to a certain extent on all three pillars, and they showed a balanced agency, pursuing some access to public welfare and some attempts toward labor market integration, and cultivating relations with family and friends. Anyway, the patchwork contributions they managed to put together were not enough to lift them over a threshold of vulnerability: they often declared that they really needed each bit of help they got, even though it cost them a lot to obtain it, otherwise they would not be able to make a living.

“My brother and I live with our uncle. We both have seasonal work every now and then. We also get social help. We live well, but always on the edge: we must spend very carefully in order to afford basic things, like food and bills.” (Man, 25, Varaždin)

“Having to sign on [for benefits] was the most mortifying experience ever, the attitude of other people can be demoralizing as you can't just walk into a place and ask for a job now. I would have moved back in with my parents, but I have two siblings still living there and the space is tight. So I moved in with my grandparents: I am not sure how I would manage without their support.” (Woman, 23, Medway)

This group of young people seems to be quite transversal to the cities in our sample, and therefore transversal to employment-related policies available in those localities, which are diversified in their scope (see chapter 3). One third of this group has no idea of what to do in the future, which puts into question the effectiveness of the support they get.

Relying upon public welfare [B]

A number of respondents (22) reported a rather imbalanced package of resources, which relied mainly on public welfare support. Apart from the interviewees of the first group, these were the ones who accessed public income support most. Their link to the labor market is very weak. They received some help from the primary network, but this was often limited to emotional and information support, or irregular monetary transfers; only a few of them lived with their family of origin or their partner's.

This situation was more often observed among men than women, and mostly present within the “marginal and weak” profile, characterized by long-term unemployment and personal and family difficulties. It was, on the contrary, least present among the interviewees with a (creative) professional project, who seemed more interested in strategically looking for professionally oriented experiences rather than in soliciting entitlement to welfare measures. It was also less present among those in the “precarious with a fragmented path” category, supposedly because in many countries, unstable jobs give little access to public support (especially where a universalistic unemployment benefit does not exist).

This “public-welfare” package is in fact more often found in the cities of the occupational, universalistic, and liberal welfare models, where entitlement to welfare measures is a subjective right and, if conditions are fulfilled, payment is assured as long as the need lasts. Social assistance and/or housing support are neither marginal in generosity, nor just paid *una tantum*. In the continental cities as well, family allowances are generous and have a real impact on household disposable income when children are present.

“I receive 1000€ per month from the training program, and 430€ in family allowances for the children. When I started to work for the Municipality I had priority access to social housing because I lived far away; I also get 400€/month housing benefit. The father of my son is in prison and I don't have a good relationship with my family, except for my sister, who

sometimes helps me with the children. Sometimes I put them in the [public] after-school center. I have very good and friendly relations with the staff of the 'Second chance School,' where I also received useful information. I got psychological support from other students I met there, and from my friends.” (Woman, 25, Nantes)

By contrast, almost no interviewee with an “all public welfare” package lived in Southern and Eastern European cities, where most first-time job seekers and temporary workers with expiring contracts are excluded from income maintenance, social assistance entitlement is more uncertain, and the duration of support depends more on budget constraints and discretionary power of case-managers.

The uneven character of this package is, however, risky. If their entitlement to public welfare should expire, or generosity or inclusiveness of public programs should be downsized (also linked to the current austerity measures), their ability to make ends meet would be seriously jeopardized, as they could not count much on family support, either because relations were strained, or because their families also suffered from resource scarcity.

Depending on the family [B]

A small but significant group of interviewees (9) overwhelmingly relied on the support of the primary network. Both their housing solutions and income maintenance depended on the help of their parents, partners, parents in law, and/or friends. They either continued living with their parents, or went back to live them after a period of autonomy, once they lost a job and could not afford living independently anymore. In other cases, they lived with siblings or partners, or alone, but they could do so because they had inherited the property of a dwelling or the entitlement to live in social housing from a parent or grandparent, that is, thanks to a family-derived resource. Parents and/or siblings contributed with monetary transfers as well, or, in case of co-habiting partners or

relatives, took care of all bills and utilities. Friends, together with relatives, were often also gatekeepers of information and important for psychological support and motivation.

Public support seemed to play a limited role, or was something they indirectly benefited from, due to income pooling with, again, their family members (of family allowances, illness benefits, or old-age pensions of their relatives). Their narratives indicated a mistrust toward, and bad experiences with, operators of social services. Their initiative to achieve labor market (re)integration also appeared to be rather vague, pointing at quite undefined migration or self-employment projects for the future.

“I live with my sister in a semi-public [cooperative] apartment. My grandmother used to live there; when she moved in with my parents, my sister and I decided to move into the empty flat. My sister is employed with a temporary contract [her sister’s boyfriend, permanently and full-time employed, lives with them]. My parents support me financially since I lost my job. I never applied for any kind of support from the local labor office. The officials aren't nice. I am not even registered as unemployed. [...] All members of my family cut their expenditures on holidays, leisure, sports. [...] My friend, who lives in Korea, helped me to arrange a one-month stay there, where I would like to find a job in the future.” (Woman, 25, Warsaw)

“I didn’t consider asking for help at the center for social care because I think that is shameful.” (Woman, 21, Varaždin)

Women had more often an “all family” resource package because they depended on their life partner’s income, and bore care responsibilities of young children. Men with such a resource

package, instead, generally relied on their parents, with whom they still lived when they were very young (under 21). Most of these interviewees lived in eastern cities (Warsaw and Zagreb in particular). Interviewees receiving no public income support were overrepresented in these cities, together with respondents who reported never having been involved in any activation measures, whereas the great majority of young people interviewed were involved in at least one program in all the other cities.

The risk for these young people lies in family overburden. If the family should be burdened with additional responsibilities, and/or its income capacity reduced, for instance because of another family member losing his or her job, the family collective capacity to cope with its members' vulnerability would be severely jeopardized. Also, if the relations of these respondents with their relatives should for some reason deteriorate, they would risk losing their main, or only, source of support. In both cases, building a relationship with public welfare agencies from scratch would require time, information, and also psychological and emotional energy, which is difficult to mobilize for individuals who were never acquainted with those channels.

A limited resource package [B]

The last group is the most preoccupying in our sample. It gathers 20 young people who relied upon very weak (or even absent) resources from all the main pillars. Their degree of vulnerability was the highest, since they could barely make ends meet. The primary network support they received was often confined to information or emotional help. As for public help, most of them received no income support (unemployment benefit or social assistance) at all, and one third of them had never had access to any activating program. In some cases their condition was the result of the worsening of a previous situation, for instance because their entitlement to income support expired. In some others, it was perceived by respondents as a transitional phase toward the achievement of a better

situation, because they were about to reach the age when they were eligible for monetary transfers, or because they were on a waiting list to join activating programs, or to access social housing.

Half of the interviewees with this limited resource package live in Southern European cities, what confirms that in these contexts, when the degree of family support is low, no other pillar is really able to lift people over a threshold of dangerous vulnerability.

Young adults with a migrant background were overrepresented in this group. Some of them came to the country of destination without their family of origin, but those who had relatives in the same city could anyway count on primary networks that were less embedded in the local context than those of natives. Some reported being disadvantaged by their scant understanding of how social services and welfare entitlements worked.

“In Bulgaria I started working at the age of 13 after my mother died. When I moved to Spain, I had many temporary jobs, cleaning houses and in food factories. I live with my [unemployed] sister and her son. I can only find temporary jobs, with irregular durations, so I cannot plan my life. I have applied for housing support, economic support for myself and child support for my sister, but I haven't received anything. I don't understand which criteria are used to decide who gets what kind of support. I have [only] been able to access Spanish courses through some NGOs. No relevant help came from my family; some friends have helped me, lending me some money.”

(Woman, 24, Pamplona)

Even if there was still a strong motivation to join the labor market, also due to the lack of other sources of support, the number of those who had no idea what to do in the future was overrepresented in this group compared to others. This is related to the fact that neither training, nor having a job had been a real solution for them in the past.

Young people juggling between market earnings, family help, public support [B]

Five different “resources packages” emerge, based on the source, amount, type, and relevance of resources respondents rely upon. Two of these packages are rather comprehensive and well-balanced, founded both on the market, the family, and public support. A first group of interviewees gets a “sound and encompassing” resource set, which protects them from a shift into impoverishment, while for the second group, these resources are “diversified,” but barely enough to keep them on the edge. Two other packages are more imbalanced, being predominantly based on only one of the welfare pillars, mainly or exclusively on “public welfare” for the third group, and essentially on “family-based” solidarity for the fourth. These two groups are particularly at risk, because if the only source they can have access to should be lost (their entitlement to a benefit could expire, or their parents could not be able to support them anymore), they would be left with no other buffer. Finally, a fifth group is able to gather only a “scant” set of resources, meager and/or short-termed; although they wish to access more solid back-up, for instance by applying for welfare measures, they are either not entitled, or lack relevant information, or do not even understand why they are excluded. They are those most at risk among our respondents, since their connection to all three spheres is either weak, or producing only minor relief. Combined with different profiles of work precariousness, these diverse patterns of access to resources present different challenges to local policies. Before discussing this in the concluding paragraph, we shall now go into the impact of work instability on the well-being of our respondents.

Facing instability [A]

Although characterized by diverse profiles of precariousness and relying on different resource packages, most of our respondents shared similar overall strategies to cope with their conditions of instability, which cross-cut the different cities of residence. These strategies imply changes in or a

reorganization of their life expectations and steps, as already noted in previous research (Blossfeld *et al.* 2005).

A first recurrent overall strategy is the postponement of steps toward autonomy and adulthood (exiting parents' households, living with a partner, having children, etc.) or even, for some of them, taking a step backwards, and going back to live with their family of origin. This has consequences not only at the individual but also at the societal level, on the reduction of birth rates and the ageing of the population (Billari 2004) and thus on the difficult sustainability of social expenditure on the medium to long term. Also most of those who live by themselves, heavily rely on the family net: all resources available in the (even extended) family are put together in wide income pooling strategies. Nevertheless, depending on their family or partners stresses and depresses young adults, who feel "behind" compared to an ideal of full autonomy that they believe one should have achieved at their age. Those who have come back to live with their parents after a period of autonomy complain of a sort of personal regression, and of a feeling of being "treated as a child."

"I moved back in with my parents. They've always helped me, but the relationship is strained since I moved back, because they treat me like a child, not like an adult." (Woman, 24, Barcelona)

"This situation has a great influence on my well-being. Maybe we manage financially somehow, but I feel as though I don't earn my own money. I would like to achieve something in my life, have a job that I like, complete my studies. But I can't do it now and it really brings me down. I sent so many CVs and nobody called me. I didn't lose my motivation, but it generated conflicts between my husband and me." (Woman, 29, Warsaw)

A second strategy, the severe reduction of spending, is even more widespread. This means not only renouncing everything that is not indispensable (such as leisure activities, sports, holidays), but also

cutting down on basic goods (e.g. reducing health expenses or food quality), bearing arrearage (on utilities, dwelling rent, car insurance, etc.),

“Now I go to the food bank once a week. In the beginning, I was ashamed of this, but now I see that there are also people coming who have a job, because even for them it is not enough. My children also learned to buy cheap articles like cheap chocolate and sweets or to look at the price per kg. They also know that it is better to buy at the discount shop than at the supermarket just around the corner.” (Woman, 28, Münster)

Many renounce training courses or achieving the driving license, or graduation because they lack the money needed for it. This is not the case of “flexible adults with a professional project”, who are ready to take loans, or cut on other costs like clothes or housing, in order to get additional training that they consider crucial for their career.

A third strategy of interviewees is to try to increase their income level through different means. Many have borrowed money from relatives and friends, or from social services where it is possible; some report selling family goods (like minor real estate properties, or the car), or renting out a room in their dwelling if they have the possibility to do so. Some are developing migration projects. Others undertake minor illegal activities, or are even thinking about extreme solutions, such as “selling ovules,” or “having children” in order to receive family allowances and have priority to social housing. As expected, those who face the biggest challenges are those who can only rely upon limited resources: the severe reduction does impact their basic quality of life, both in terms of food and housing. Having a sound and comprehensive package of resources is fundamental to sustaining their basic expenses, and helps overcome the present difficult situation, but it does not really change their anxiety about the future, especially for those who do not have a clear career project.

The negative impact of labor market instability on overall well-being is also similar across European cities. This is a classical sociological subject—ever since Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeifel (1933) that has regained momentum in recent theories on precariousness (Standing 2011). Despite the profound changes employment has undergone in the last decades, being permanently integrated in the labor market still remains very important for the sense of identity of individuals. Our young interviewees clearly share feelings of distress including anxiety, sadness, loss of confidence and self-esteem, negativity, and loss of strategy for the present and of perspective for the future. These views also lead to and are reinforced by difficult family relations, and/or psychological and health problems, such as depression, rapid changes in weight, and obesity. Some report an effort to maintain a routine: waking up early, carrying out everyday activities, doing (inexpensive) sports or volunteer work, etc. Others, on the contrary, lose their daily organization, sleeping and lazing around all day long, feeling worthless and useless, or even plunging into despair.

“I just became very lazy. I don’t know what to do, so I’m lying in bed, watching TV. But you miss the social contact, really; everybody is at school, everybody is busy and you do nothing. That’s very weird. You even get irritated sometimes.” (Man, 22, Nijmegen)

“Unemployment is negative. One needs to work, otherwise day after day you feel you are wasting your time, you feel useless and you see no perspective, you are afraid you will use up your money. You are not motivated and you think about your situation again and again in a loop.” (Man, 18, Milan)

In this sense, having a strategy for the future has an important impact on wellbeing: the three most concrete projects (finding a job, getting additional training, or emigrating) help young people to not surrender to their situation of distress, but to try to find renewed motivation to become active again. On the contrary, when they have no idea about the future, even getting a sound and comprehensive package of resources has little favorable impact on their self-esteem.

Particularly for those who are not pursuing a precise professional project, involvement in activation programs like training courses and protected jobs is also important for the recuperation of young people's motivation, organization of time, and self-esteem.

“At first I felt really bad. Now, since I am in the program, I don't feel unemployed anymore, and it's getting much better.” (Woman, 21, Bern)

Nevertheless, if young people perceive that such an involvement has no real content, but is just an expedient that public services use for instance to justify the provision of income support, they will tend to use the services instrumentally in turn.

“I just did what I had to do... I first had to do 2 job applications, then 3, then 4... So I did all the basic things. I think ‘ok, I have to apply for jobs, and I want to work, but I am not going to send out 30 applications when I only have to do 10. Who's the fool then?’ [...] Then, I too start thinking opportunistically: ‘ok, if you are going to stick to the rules, then I am going to stick to the rules too’.” (Man, 28, Amsterdam)

The risk here is twofold: to make activation measures ineffective because of the rigidity of their implementation (Sabatinelli and Villa 2011), but also to (further) reduce the trust these young recipients have toward public welfare and activating services, especially when they feel compelled to accept jobs that are far below their level of skill, or that have a very short duration and/or very low pay.

Conclusions [A]

In this chapter we investigated the experience of vulnerability of young Europeans confronted with the discontinuity of their employment. We identified five profiles of work precariousness that differ in the degree of weakness, fragmentation and orientation of the path. Young unstable workers that

are neither characterized by a specific professional plan, nor that have been able to build a somehow coherent–albeit fragmented–career path, represent the weakest profile. The complex biographies of individuals in the “marginal and weak” profile have a strong influence that makes it more difficult for them to enter the labor market than for their peers. For the “precarious with fragmented paths”, determinants are also related to the recent deregulation in job contracts, entrapping some young people in an extremely short-term dynamic.

There is a wide range of profiles in all our cities, although their relative importance is different (particularly those with a “precarious fragmented” or “flexible project-oriented” profile are more frequently found in the small- and medium-sized cities, where local labor markets are narrower). This suggests that the impacts of labor market transformations on the paths of young people are rather common throughout European countries.

We then identified five different types of resource packages our respondents rely upon, comparing their size and composition, and the contribution of public welfare, market-based, family and primary network, and solidarity network. Whereas more than half of the respondents show a rather balanced resource package, leaning on all main pillars, two groups of interviewees overwhelmingly rely respectively on public welfare and on their family and primary network, while a last group has access only to a scant set of resources. The young people in the most risky position are those who depend upon a particularly weak or imbalanced resource package, since if that support should fail, they would be entirely exposed to contingencies.

Although our sample does not allow us to generalize, it is interesting to note that there is a certain concentration of each resource package in different European geographical areas, with some correspondence to welfare regimes. The most generous resource package is most often found in our British, French, and Swiss cities (especially in Bern). The all-public package is mostly observed in continental cities, particularly Nantes, Münster, and the Dutch cities. The all-family package is most often found in eastern cities (especially Warsaw), while the scant packages are concentrated in the

small southern cities. This confirms that welfare protection for young people is comparatively minimal in the south and east of Europe, and also that in familistic welfare systems, when the family fails to support its members, there is barely any other buffer available.

If we relate profiles of work precariousness and resource packages, a diversified picture emerges. Young adults with “interrupted careers” usually have access to an abundant resource package. They are entitled to public measures, since until some years ago they were stably integrated in the labor market; they also rely on the family and, despite their present situation and the influence of the crisis, they continue pursuing labor market reintegration. The “young and fragile” generally have resource packages that are abundant and well distributed across all the welfare pillars; they access a lot of support probably because thanks to their young age and difficult life experiences they are considered as deserving both by social services and by their primary network. “Flexible adults with a professional project” are usually rather well supported by welfare pillars (“diversified package”); their strong motivation towards their professional project eases a virtuous circle between their agency and the support they receive, and allows to emphasize the positive side of instability as opportunity. On the contrary, those young people who are greatly detached from the labor market, the long-term unemployed (“marginal and weak”), or the severely precarious with no professional plans (“precarious fragmented”) and who, at the same time, rely on an uneven (“all-public” or “all-family”) or frail (“limited”) resource package bear a high risk of ending up economically deprived and socially excluded. Almost one third of our interviewees fall into this trap. Even more insidiously, more than one young person in ten in our sample is in the situation combining a “precarious fragmented” profile with a “limited” resource package, and is therefore dangerously exposed to commodification, with little support from family and public welfare. Most of them are concentrated in Southern Europe, where the labor market deregulation has not been compensated by an adequate reform of social security, which remains fragmented and barely effective in supporting young people.

Whereas the precariousness profiles cut across all our cities, the resource packages appear to be more diversified along a dividing line that in a way retraces a well-known cleavage, which separates Southern and Eastern Europe from the rest of the countries (Ferrera 1996, Cerami 2006). This may suggest that, while the deregulation of labor markets and flexibilization of job contracts has been rather transversal throughout Europe (although with differentiated weights in the different countries, OECD 2002), the composition of the mosaic of welfare resources remains more stuck to welfare regimes, also because changes in welfare policies are slower and more path-dependent than changes in economic regulation and the role of national entitlement remains strong, particularly in this policy area.

As highlighted in chapter 3 in this book, in fact, local policies appear to be decisive in those cases in which the division of labor within the different institutional levels is well balanced, even if concretely it takes different forms. Some of the respondents benefiting from good support have been involved in widely encompassing local programs, like in Nantes. Others have benefited from a nationally set and locally implemented priority on labor market reintegration of young people, as in the British cities. Still others have profited from nationally (in Swedish cities) or regionally (in Dutch and Swiss cities) framed but locally specified support and activation programs. In contrast, southern and eastern cities are confronted with the vulnerability of young people who are scarcely protected by national and regional regulation and provision, but do not have enough competencies and resources to set up truly effective programs; they can only provide light forms of support, which are not able to make a real difference in the life chances of these young people (see chapter 3).

In conclusion, the analysis of the narratives of young Europeans shows how the role of locally-implemented policies can be crucial in the path of young people experiencing instability. However, in order to be effective, truly empowering and activating, programs need to be flexible and encompassing, with the possibility to adapt specific contents to the differentiated needs and assets of young people. The youngest ones need to be proposed a training or working occasion as soon as

possible, even if short-termed, in order to prevent their shift into passivity. Those entrapped in fragmented paths, on the contrary, need orientation and support to build a coherent professional project that can take them out of work precariousness. Those with a precise project need support in pursuing it, while those who were stably employed in the past need to take advantage of their period of protection to get a new job. Finally, the most marginal ones need more encompassing support, including social assistance and family tutoring. Yet, the standardized, short-term orientation of many activation programs, and the risk—due to the current crisis and budget constraints — that they may be cut down, threatens their potential support to young people in their strive for autonomy and self-realization, especially in contexts where austerity interventions have greatly reduced resources for welfare measures. Especially in countries in which public regulation fails to protect those with more precarious profiles, growing numbers of young people risk to be strongly exposed to commodification and thus undergo a worsening in their social vulnerability.

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