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Motivations for Joining and Engaging in Youth Organisations in the Italian Context.

This is the final peer-reviewed author's accepted manuscript (postprint) of the following publication:

*Published Version:*
Guarino Antonella, C.E. (2020). Motivations for Joining and Engaging in Youth Organisations in the Italian Context.. London : Palgrave Macmillan, Cham [10.1007/978-3-030-35794-8_2].

*Availability:*
This version is available at: https://hdl.handle.net/11585/760729 since: 2020-06-08

*Published:*
DOI: http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35794-8_2

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(Article begins on next page)

12 October 2024

This is the accepted manuscript of:

**Guarino A., Cicognani E., Zani B. (2020) Motivations for Joining and Engaging in Youth Organisations in the Italian Context. In: Banaji S., Mejias S. (eds) Youth Active Citizenship in Europe. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham**

The final published version is available online at: **https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35794-8_2**

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***When citing, please refer to the published version.***

In: Banaji S., Mejias S. (eds) *Youth Active Citizenship in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35794-8_2

# Motivations for joining and engaging in youth organisations in the Italian context

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The present chapter discusses the role of youth civic organizations in the process of promoting active citizenship. In particular, the focus is on young people's motivations to join and to remain engaged in youth organisations.

We analyse young people's motivations for engaging in three different types of civic organisations: a youth organisation engaged in arts projects, a civic and cultural organisation and a voluntary organisation. Specifically, we addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the motivations to become engaged in organisations?
2. What are the motivations that sustain engagement?
3. Are there differences in the motivations for engagement in the three different types of organisations?

## Introduction

Italy has a long-standing tradition of youth civic movements. In '60es- '70es, students began to occupy universities and they wanted to be involved in their governance and limit the academic power of professors. Later the movement grew up and young people manifested against the consumer society and the Vietnam War. During these years, young people were very active, as much as adults, taking part to political parties, trade unions and political movements. The 80es brought new changes in the Italian society, characterised by an increasing disengagement from political issues; young people became increasingly more oriented to an individualist perspective, giving importance to themes like peace or associations for environment defence (Caniglia, 2002). During the 90es occupied and self-run social centres renewed the interest in politics and to the development of spaces for alternative cultural movements (*ibidem).*

According to researchers and policy makers, Italy as a nation seems to be unable to build on the resources and potentials of its young people (Ivarsson & Amna, 2016).

The Italian survey, *Rapporto Giovani* (Istituto Toniolo, 2014) indicated that young people prefer to take part to *less structured organisations and strongly connected with issues at community level* instead of associations of the national level. The main motivation mentioned for joining community organizations is the possibility of contributing to social change. Rapporto Giovani documents

evidence that young people are losing trust in big parties, however they are active, ready to participate and resourceful, also because they are aware that social and relational experiences are useful to build civic competences.

**Youth organisations in the community psychology perspective**

Organisations aimed to social or political change have been identified as a significant context for young people's civic engagement. They enable young people to identify common interests, mobilise their peers, and work collectively to address relevant issues in their communities (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Pancer, Prarr, Hunsberger, Alisar, Pratt, Hunsberger, Alisat 2007). Membership and engagement in local youth organisations seem to be precursors of active citizenship as discussed in introduction to this volume, particularly for the process of raising awareness of a phenomenon that has been called 'global citizenship'[i] (Reysen & Katzarska- Miller, 2013). The range and variety of existing youth initiatives can satisfy different motivations for engagement and therefore get characterised as belonging to different genres: social or political action groups, networks, organisations (e.g. volunteer or charity, NGOs, social enterprises, youth political arms, grassroots horizontal social movements), the scouts and religious youth groups, environmental organisations and movements, youth arts and cultural hubs with civic or participatory programmes, dissident groups acting against poverty, racism, inequality and injustice, local youth clubs and sports networks (e.g. government and local council institutions, bringing together disadvantaged young people to play sport, or to create music), youth run spaces which facilitate events on LGBTQ+ and women's issues, youth associations and cross-generational associations that include young people, student networks, students' unions, campus political groups (Banaji, 2018).

From the perspective of developmental and community psychology (Watts, Williams, & Jagers 2003), involvement in organisational activities may enhance young people's 'healthy development', including academic success, a sense of wellbeing, a sense of belonging, positive peer relationships, and lower risk taking (Albanesi, Mazzoni, Cicognani & Zani, 2015; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). Flanagan (2003) argues that when young people are involved in local community organisations, they experience the opportunity for developing skills and competencies for exercising rights and fulfilling democratic obligations: they can contribute to group projects, learn how to speak in public, to express their opinions logically and with evidence, to listen to other people's opinions. They may learn skills useful for their future careers, and exploring future career options. Moreover, membership of youth organisations increases young people's awareness that they can act collectively to achieve common goals (e.g. collective efficacy) and allows them to develop trust with peers (Flanagan, 2003). As such, civic and political organisations can be considered as small

communities, for which members may feel a sense of community that acts as a catalyst for wider civic or political participation (Wandersman & Florin, 2000).

In this context, researchers have sought to identify more precisely which motivational tendencies, as well as characteristics of people's life circumstances, are associated with civic engagement, specifically volunteering. Considering people's motivations for volunteering, within the extensive existing theoretical literature, a prominent classification of motives has been proposed by the Volunteer Process Model (Snyder & Omoto, 2008), identifying six basic functions or motives: enacting one's values, developing skills and competences, psychological growth, making career-related gains, strengthening social relationships, and meeting personal needs. Motivations can be conceptualised as self-focused ('to make friends') or other-focused ('because people should do something about issues important to them'; Ballard, Malin, Porter, Colby, & Damon, 2015). Moreover, individual motivations seem to be sustained or hindered by organisational characteristics, such as the culture, values and ideologies promoted by the organizations. Some authors (Snyder & Omoto, 2008; Penner, 2002) found that the motive- favouring young people's decision to remain within organisations, is organisational commitment, that means sharing the organisational culture.

Considering another form of engagement like collective action, van Zomeren and Spears (2009) identified three profiles of activists according to the motives that lead people to be engaged. The profiles are: 'intuitive economists', 'intuitive politicians' and 'theologians'. The three types differ in the focus of their actions: cost-benefit calculations (intuitive economists), achieving social change and transformative power (intuitive politicians), and protecting values considered sacred (theologians).

We note that none of these positions are necessarily linked to values that are normatively democratic, although in our study we chose to focus on active citizenship taking place within a normative frame of democratic action.

Self-Determination (SD) theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991, 1998, 2002) is another general framework that explores motivations as psychological mechanisms in people's lives. SD theory focuses on the concept of *need* and some authors expand it to the civic and political domains.

Based on this perspective Haivas, Hofmans & Permans, (2013); Russo & Stattin, (2017) have attempted to explain young people's civic and political engagement, by considering young people as protagonists in shaping the forms and the process of participation. Indeed, the concept of self-determination is in line with the process of developing critical thinking in young people and focusing on their strengths, by promoting the opportunity to make life choices in a critical and responsible way (Freire,1970).

According to SD theory, individuals' actions are aimed to satisfy three basic needs. First, the need for *autonomy*, meaning feeling free to explore and deepen personal interests in a self-governed manner. Being autonomous means perceiving a full sense of choice in endorsing actions that stem from personal interest (Deci & Ryan, 2002). A second need, the need for *relatedness* refers to feeling connected to others and being accepted by them. In general, relatedness has been described as striving authentically to relate to others and to feel a satisfying involvement with them (Deci & Ryan, 1991). In other words, relatedness is the feeling of belonging to a group of people who share the same interests. Third, the need for *competence* is defined as 'the desire to feel efficacious, to have an effect on one's environment, and to be able to attain valued outcomes' (Deci, 1998, p. 152). Competence is not viewed as an attained skill but is rather understood as a sense of confidence in action (Deci & Ryan, 2002); thus, feelings of efficacy (Bandura, 2006) are central to the satisfaction of competence needs.

In this study we draw on the SD theory by assuming that young people decisions to become engaged in organizations are motivated by the need to satisfy these three needs: autonomy, relatedness and competence in social and political domains. Russo and Stattin (2017) explored, through a longitudinal study, the indicators for each area of need and how they influence political interest. They find that political interest is clearly related to the different areas of need and also acts as a predictor of changes through time. Multiple motivations for civic engagement might have an influence on individuals' outcomes. Activities that can satisfy several motivations should therefore enhance overall satisfaction with engagement in an organisation of this type. In fact, when people have multiple motivations and one of those motives is not satisfied, they can choose which one can lead to achieve outcomes when another motive fails to find satisfaction.

The feeling of engagement makes people experience happiness and positive emotions. Even if engagement in actions can be stressful and demanding, people could view it as challenging, interesting, and enjoyable. If so, they will feel good about themselves and committed to their organisations (Vecina, Chacón, Marzana, & Marta, 2013). Some authors (van Stekelenburg, Klandermans & van Dijk, 2007) consider emotions as accelerators or amplifiers of action, so both positive and negative emotions can be considered factors that increase the level of action within a youth civic or political organisation (Cicognani & Zani, 2015). As described above, many researchers have explored motivations for civic engagement through different methods. Based on the different research and theoretical frameworks in the literature, the study described in this chapter aims to contribute to the existing literature by focusing on youth motivations for engaging in civic organisations through a qualitative approach and to explore how motivations differ in specific types of youth organisations.

## Method

### Participants

We conducted three case studies on different types of youth organisations. The case studies were chosen following a larger survey of the youth civic landscape in Italy; in particular, we selected three types of civic organisations involving young people, from different social backgrounds, age and genders. All the three youth organisations were located in the Emilia Romagna region of Italy. The organisations are the following: Radioimmaginaria (RI), selected as example of a youth organisation engaged in arts projects, Prendiparte, as example of a civic and cultural organization and AGE as a voluntary organisation.

Radioimmaginaria (RI, "Imaginary Radio") is a youth co-led organisation, with the national headquarter located in a small city in the province of Bologna, Emilia-Romagna region. It was founded in 2012, as a European media hub and it can be considered a unique case of adolescents' radio network in Italy and in Europe. Overall, it engages young people with artistic and creative activities and includes three types of members: adolescents from 11 to 17 years old coming from almost 33 different cities in Italy and 7 in the rest of Europe who are 'partners' of the radio with the consent of their parents, a group of 20 young people from 18 to 21 years old and 3 adults over 40 years old.

PrendiParte (PP, "Take Part") is a youth-led organisation located in Bologna. It is a civic and cultural organisation created by a group of high school students who shared similar experiences of school engagement. Nowadays, members of PrendiParte are all young adults (ranging from 20 to 24 years old) and include local young people and university students coming from different parts of Italy.

AGE (Association of European Youth) is a youth led organisation located in Reggio Emilia, Emilia Romagna Region. AGE is a voluntary organisation and it was founded firstly in 2001 as *a committee with the main aim to promote dialogue between citizens and European institutions, to enhance critical thinking about sense of belonging to European culture and the meaning of (European) Union. (Organisation document about the history of the association, AGE archive).* AGE includes 30 members, 19 men and 11 women aged between 17 and 36 years old (M age = 26 years) with the support of a 65 years old member who can be considered as the historical memory of the organisation. There are 20 active members and 10 supporters. All members live in the province of Reggio Emilia. 14 are workers and 17 are still students[ii] (13 of them are university students and 4 were in secondary school). AGE can also be considered a multicultural organisation in the sense that there are members of different origins, such as Moroccan, Tunisian, Syrian and Azerbaijani.

## Research design

Following the approval by the Bioethic Board of the University of Bologna, an email was sent to the organisations' key representatives to ascertain their willingness to take part to the study. Then, we scheduled a meeting and an interview with a key informant or the board responsible for each organisation to explain the aims and method of the study and ask for their consent to participate. Each board consulted the organisations' members and after their approval, a calendar of the activities was planned together. Contacts with the organisations during the study were maintained in an informal way.

In the implementation of the case studies, we encountered some difficulties due to the structure of each organisation and the in-depth perspective we adopted, which at first seemed too intrusive for some participants. In the case of one organisation (RI), it was difficult at the beginning to establish trusting relationships due to the protective structure of the organisation for the younger members involved and the peculiar activities implemented. Indeed, the group dynamics that are developed among adolescents within the organisation, are protected from a "paternalistic" influence of the adults' perspective and behaviors whose role is more similar to a tutor who support their development and ideas. They show a high sensibility on the process of construction of youth- adult partnership, by promoting the protagonism of adolescents. Our involvement in the organisation, and the planned ethnographic interactions with members, allowed the researcher (one of the Authors) to create informal and trusting relationships with members. The overall study lasted 7 months, from March to October 2017 with visits to projects and activities of the organisations. In one case, the research timetable was linked to the school time.

### Method and instruments

The study was conducted using an in-depth ethnographic analysis of the youth organisations. Each qualitative case study (Jason & Glenwick, 2016; Stake, 2005) was developed to study the experiences of citizenship practices operating in youth organizations. Qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activities of each organization as they occur in their contexts and in particular situation. Qualitative interviews were conducted, audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. A total of 24 narrative interviews from the three youth organisations were collected (Table 1) during the ethnography. The current study is based on the interview data and this, rather than the observations, form the basic data for this chapter.

The interview structure and questions were designed to explore young people's needs and motivations for joining and remaining in these civic organisations.

| | Radioimmaginaria | Prendiparte | AGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| N | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Age | Mean = 19.4 | Mean = 21.9 | Mean = 23.7 |
| | Min = 17, Max=21 | Min = 21, Max=24 | Min = 22, Max = 25 |
| Gender | 4F 4M | 4F 4M | 4F 4 M |

Table 1. Descriptive data of interviewees for each organisation.

## Analysis

Data collected from interviews were analysed by a member of the research team using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative thematic analysis (Table 2) involves exploring the data identifying codes, classifying subthemes and framing themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). In this study, the process of analysis followed three phases: 1. Selective coding of the interviews with the support of another researcher to ensure reliability of the coding categories; 2. Classification of the codes in subthemes; 3. Identification of themes according to the SD theory.

| | Initiating motivations | Sustaining motivations |
|---|---|---|
| Need for autonomy | Interest (SO[a])<br>Previous personal experiences (SO) | *Not reported* |
| Need for relatedness | Meet new people (OO[b])<br>Opportunity for adolescents (OO)<br>Trustworthy organisation (OO) | Sense of belonging (OO)<br>Peer- adult good relationships (OO)<br>Positive emotions (SO) |
| Need for competence | Learned skills (SO) | Finding balance between different aspects of life (SO)<br>Civic competences (SO) |

Table 2. Motivations for autonomy, relatedness and competence.

[a] Self-Oriented motivations [b] Other- Oriented motivations

## Results

In this section, we present the results from the three case studies considering motivation for joining the organisations and motivations that sustain engagement.

### *Initiating motivations*

***Need for autonomy.*** Motivations raised by the need for autonomy, can be connected to *interests* and *previous experiences* of members during critical phases of their lives. Interest can be considered a strong motivation that leads different members to search to be protagonists in their own lives. As

part of Radio Immaginaria, adolescents show their interests in music or radio activities before joining the organisation, as one of the young members, a radio director, says:

*I always had this interest for 'deejay art'. I had this great passion for music and I heard from my cousin that in RadioImmaginaria they just play music without speaking. But I didn't understand…After two months I went to meet M. who is the artistic director of RadioImmaginaria and I asked him if I could be a deejay but he looked at me and told me: In what sense? Because here, we don't have deejays". I said: what could I do?" "If you are interested in music, you could support G." who was one of our most important directors (…) I collaborated with him for long time and I learned a lot of things (…) my interest was being a deejay, but I discovered that I liked also being a production director. (RI_6, M, 20)*

It is important to notice that such interests generally spring from early experiences and passions and could find in an organised context a place to be developed, explored and deepened. Radio Immaginaria offers a specific area of interest in which young people can get involved. The artistic and creative character of this is peculiar to Radio Immaginaria, compared to a more general interest on different civic and school aspects related to the other two organisations.

In Radioimmaginaria and for its adolescents, the process of experimenting and deepening interest is self-oriented. In fact, members join the organisation to explore their interests in line with the main activities of the organisation.

Members from PrendiParte explain the personal interest in social and political issues that encouraged young people to join the organisation:

*My interest in education was always there, so this was an opportunity for my personal benefit of doing something useful within the local context and to go to school to help students in need, then, this could be a very important experience also for my future work as teacher (PP_6, M, 21)*

Previous membership of a similar organisation that deals with cultural, civic or political issues, is a motivation that encourages members of PrendiParte to decide to join the organisation. As the new president says, her motivations can be summarised as the need to create an experience of participation that is adapted to youth interests and values, by following her learning from previous experiences:

*I was a volunteer for Libera[iii] since high school and, then, before joining the organisation I had training of three years with a group of students in Libera. This group was composed of students coming from different schools and, then, the different groups of Libera that were present within every school met and together we did awareness-raising activities, funding activities and typical*

*things of associations. It was a very useful and important experience, for me it has surely influenced many choices I made in my life and, then PrendiParte was born. (PP_5, M, 24)*

It emerges that previous experience in an organisation dealing with similar global civic issues and using similar pedagogic methods, led this member to search for a new organisation in which these elements are improved with a focus on broad civic issues.

***Need for relatedness.*** In PrendiParte, members are moved by motivations oriented towards social and political issues that involve not just them but other young people. Their interests are directed towards their future careers and focused on improving the quality of social and political lives of their peers. In this case, *positive emotions* play a fundamental role in promoting civic and political interests and recruit other interested adolescents. Individual passion and enthusiasm allow the organisation to recruit and to attract new members:

*It is true that I am very enthusiastic about things, above all when I believe a lot in the organisation, as this is the case; and my enthusiasm and my energy help to attract and recruit – this is what others say- and I believe it because many of my friends joined the organisation and this means that I gave them a positive picture. (PP_3, F, 23)*

In AGE, initial trust in the organisation seems to be a key element that enhances members' motivation because it allows members to choose that organisation for specific reasons. The focus on practical activities, on projects that increase competencies and on the context are considered very important for new members, particularly for students coming from other Italian cities. The organisation is considered as 'serious and competent' by members, hence they think of their membership as an opportunity to acquire new competencies for their future.

A strongly political motivation was expressed by one of the founders who was inspired by the opportunity to have voice and power through the re-creation of the organisation:

*We wanted to do things a bit seriously, participate in calls for projects, have a voice. This man helped us and gave us the contact details of the former president, the last president and founder of AGE. We contacted him, and we re-created his organisation; it was an exchange that I very much enjoyed personally, because I am aware that leaving an organisation that you have founded to other people, younger people with no experience is always a leap into the void (AGE_8, M, 25)*

AGE members are moved by a collective interest that is based on giving voice to youth and to offer new activities for youth in their community.

Another motivation for AGE members comes from the opportunity that the organisation provides

to new members to participate to its mobility programs. As one member says, travelling to a new place to meet other youth for some weeks seems an attractive opportunity to create international bonds:

> *I took part in Duiuspikinglish and it was fun, but to be honest I hadn't thought about getting involved (...) Then later on I got to know people like P. etcetera who contacted me for the Ovunque (Everywhere) project. It was the first year that we organised – that they organised then – so you had to enrol, so I actually joined, compulsorily in quotes, in the sense that if you wanted to go with them, precisely, free of charge etcetera, enrolment was obligatory. Well, I said: five euros for a week in the Czech Republic, I'd say that's worthwhile. To tell you the truth, I joined precisely to make that trip. (AGE_5, F, 23)*

***Need for competence.*** Another subtheme concerns the process of learning new skills that are considered as self-oriented motivations. As one member of RI explains, his previous membership to a cultural organisation and the competences acquired during this experience, led him to decide to leave the previous organisation and to devote his time to radio activities:

> *It was 2015 when I met them at "Sea of Books", a cultural festival held every summer in June in Rimini, my city. It lasted three days and I was a volunteer, dealing with logistics, a task very close to the one that I have now; one year we collaborated with RadioImmaginaria and G., C. G. came to Rimini. So, the idea to create a local staff in Rimini was born. (RI_3, M, 21)*

Moreover, the use of informal language gives members the opportunity to improve their skills with the initial support of adults.

It seems that the use of 'authentic' youthful language gives them the opportunity to acquire communication skills without obstacles that can be found in other structured organisations like schools.

In Prendiparte, the process of learning new skills is related to an exchange of knowledge and competencies of active citizenship within a subgroup called 'Group of Citizenship Education'. This subgroup within the organisation is composed of young people from different schools who are aware of the importance of citizenship education thanks to their own experience.

***Sustaining motivations***

***Need for relatedness.*** The organisations seem to be managed as communities in which advantages and limits can be found. Constructing authentic relationships between members and creating a shared emotional climate within the organisation can be considered as a strength for the organisations.

Radioimmaginaria members seem to be attracted by innovative activities suggested mainly by the adults or older members of the organisation that provide positive relationships within the group, thus enhancing members' sense of belonging:

*I stayed because I felt highly integrated in the group since the beginning, I liked to work in this group…I stayed because I felt that it was a very lively environment. When they asked me: "let's go to Expo" I said: "Wow! We go to Expo, they are really enterprising. So, I always engaged a lot, and in the end, I realized that it was something that I would want to continue, so I decided to remain and give priority to this project. (RI_3, M, 21)*

Relationships with peers and with younger members are maintained via a jovial atmosphere. Peers are considered both as colleagues on the radio activities and as younger brothers or sisters to be taken care of when this seems necessary, as one member affirms:

*We have a lot of fun, even if there is an age difference of ten years. For example, I feel good with boys and girls aged 11 or 12 years old and you can find something similar maybe in an oratory but here is something completely different. We do this because we have fun and we enjoy it and we really like to do radio with other people because, any age they are, they share ideas that others didn't have. And the beautiful thing is to play with that idea, on that creativity to get out a radio content, to decide to play that music or another… (RI_2, M, 19)*

Adults are considered as tutors, employers and as fathers or mothers, as described by this member:

*They are our … not really our employers, they manage the most demanding part of the organization that is to relate with institutions or to manage the most difficult balanced relations; but they are also great models for us. For example, M. is like a father for me, when I am in Castel Guelfo I am at his home because often we host each other (…) at the end, it is inevitable to create a friendship or a family relation because when I set the table at his home I know where all the things are (…) it is a very positive and formative relationship. (RI_8, F, 21)*

There are also pleasant feelings linked to the relationships that can be created within the organisation:

*The great thing is that the oldest helps you based on the mistakes they made or based on their experience and they give us suggestions, and this is a good thing because they motivate you, they try to understand you… and this is a good feeling because you feel to be in a unified place. When*

*I join my staff, I feel to be in a family because I stayed with them since years and we shared good and bad things, we faced many challenges (RI_4, F, 17)*

Positive emotions strengthen the process of consolidating relationships because they are linked to particular events of the organisation life, as explained by this member of Radioimmaginaria:

*Three days of Team building on Js[iv]. And I remember a very beautiful moment in which all of us, we stood and we said: okay, these are Js of RadioImmaginaria; now, all those Js are not here, some went out, some left the organisation but the sense was: ok, this is the team that lead RadioImmaginaria, it's you. And for me that was a very strong emotion (RI_3, M, 21)*

PrendiParte members feel positive emotions connected to the activities shared with students they meet in schools:

*Getting in touch with students is the most beautiful thing; I like a lot the organisational part and I like when we have training meetings, I like also the board meetings, but the most emotional moment is the time spent with students (PP_3, F, 23)*

In these two organisations, gender does not seem to be an issue. The distribution of roles and responsibilities does not appear to follow a hierarchical structure based on gender but roles are self-selected based on individual personal interests and preferences During the observations of some activities of Prendiparte, members try to balance the presence of girls and boys who manage the activity to allow the students they meet to express, communicate and share their opinions balancing the perspective of male and female members.

In AGE, some changes in personal motivations are reported: from being motivated by others at the beginning to be the promoter of the whole organisation. It is an interesting process that shows how the strength and the cohesion of the group work, the internal relationships between members of the organisation can enhance active participation and, eventually, create some sustainable changes across time.

*I was very bored, and I didn't know what to do and I spent most of my days playing with pc. Then, this organisation comes up and the fact that there was a group of friends in which M. was – let's say- the leader (…) I liked it, I had fun to not be on pc for the following three days … I was no more the person to be motivated but I was the promoter and the motivator. And this is still the situation and, maybe, it is a problem. (AGE_7, M, 25)*

Moreover, it seems that experiencing a united and cohesive group that sustains its members is a factor that promotes collective efficacy, that is the awareness of the possibility to act collectively, as explained by this female member:

*…and the opportunities that it offers because I could never say "stop, now I want to do this and I organise it alone" but it is possible with an organisation behind, because there is who can explain me how to do it, who can give some materials I don't have, who can support me and to have someone to count on to realize almost all the projects you want. Having someone to collaborate and count on, is very nice. (AGE_4, F, 23).*

Belonging to a group and experimenting with a sense of cohesion are sustaining factors for civic engagement within the organisations. Positive feelings such as satisfaction, a sense of self-fulfilment and a sense of belonging are reported by AGE members:

*From a lot of fun to a sense of responsibility, sense of realization, sense of unity, knowing that I had someone who supported me, knowing that I am part of something. Once I went with the past president to an important meeting, I felt designated because I was there as a member of the organisation AGE, (…) sometimes it was surprising the projects we did, we succeeded in involving people and we realized nice experiences as the Youth Camp (AGE_4, F, 23)*

In this organisation, the gender difference on distributing roles and responsibilities were observed during the activities. In particular, from the observations of different meetings it seems that girls tend to have stereotyped role, such as secretary, while boys have management and organizing roles, such as leading meetings and activities.

***Need for competence.*** Adolescents and young adults of RI make their own decisions and choices and play a mediating role for their peers. The communication strategy used by members allows other peers to become interested in different cultural and political issues. As one member says:

*We want it to be the media of adolescents, OK? Instead of listening to news from anywhere, we would like that adolescents listen to us because we think that our generation is right for the others, ok? For another adolescent, it will be more comfortable to listen to something that comes from similar adolescents. It is also interesting for adults to understand what adolescents think of a terrorist attack, ok? (RI_6, M, 20)*

This emerges particularly for RI members who consider themselves less likely to have good opportunities for civic and political development than members from the other organisations.

Transversal competences and skills can be learned within the organizations and spread to different contexts of life. The influence of the radio activities on other aspects of their everyday lives, in particular on their school lives, keeps young people engaged. As this member explains:

> *In fact, I have started to write all the things that were not on the book. (…) I mean, with Radioimmaginaria you talk about things, news of current events that will give you a huge head start. For instance, being at a college of humanities, [studying] sociology we often talk about news and you can link some past facts to current events. And this will help you a lot, because maybe with the radio, the day before, you have talked about something that is relied with what you are saying and so, you know something more that, then, you can use during exams. You have a wider sight. (RI_4, F, 17)*

Some difficulties experienced by the organisation depend on members' school assignments and tasks. As this member of RI explains, sometimes the commitment within the organisation must be come to terms with school life. Moreover, the feeling to be bored by the everyday routine of the organisation and life, can motivate members to explore new interests for new activities.

> *Sometimes it is not so easy because we have school, tests and then, sometimes, we get bored if we are here since long time…and you can't find your space. Then, every time we need to find some new topics and understand the attitudes of every single member, find their interests in order to transform their interests into a radio content to motivate members, to motivate them to be on air, then activate their passion and this is not so easy. (RI_4, F, 17)*

Members from Radioimmaginaria acquire skills and competences that have positive influences in other contexts of life, by keeping them involved in the organisation.

## Discussion

Young people from the three youth initiatives analysed in this chapter offer an in-depth view of the motivations that they consider when joining and remaining in civic organisations. The psychological perspective on motivations outlines the processes of constructing active citizenship within the civic and cultural organisations. The three organisations were different in terms of the age of members, structures and the activities offered. Regarding the motivations for joining a youth organisation, a prevalence of psychological self-oriented motivations emerges from younger people

who are members of RadioImmaginaria and Prendiparte. An interest in cultural issues and a focus on personal characteristics is strongly related with their motivation to get engaged. It is noticeable that in each organisation the specific content of interest is predominant according to the focus of each organisation: artistic for RI, educational for PrendiParte and civic for AGE. Moreover, during this phase, the role of interest generally moves young people to join the organisations, but there are exceptions, for instance, Radioimmaginaria, whose artistic, creative and attractive structure motivate more young people to join and remain in it. Only members who have an interest in radio experience, music or creative instruments join the organisation while a more general interest in civic issues attracts members of Prendiparte and AGE. Peers have a strong influence both in initiating and specifically in sustaining phases of group activities. The context of friendships acts as an extrinsic factor – as young people perceive their friends as an "enlarged" context in which they experiment with their independence. For AGE and Prendiparte young people, the searching for new people and friends seems to be more important than for adolescents of Radioimmaginaria. Indeed, older young people in their twenties and early thirties join a civic organisation to extend their social bonds and to create new ones. In contrast, adolescents search for organisations that offer concrete opportunities for action or activities. The possibility of cross-border mobility promoted by one of the organisations is an attractive motivation for youth to participate and search for social connections outside Italy.

In the case of these organisations, we can notice that younger members (from RI) are moved mainly by the need of autonomy, trying to find space and relations to construct and develop their identity as young people and as citizens. Older members (from Prendiparte and AGE) are motivated by the fulfilment of need of relatedness. This need seems to be more relevant for young people of 20 years old.

In this initiating phase, the role of competencies varies according to the type of the organisation. For the adolescent members of RadioImmaginaria, it emerges that the opportunity to acquire soft skills plays a significant role in the initiatives' allure. Youth members of the other two organisations are motivated by more abstract civic and political competencies as these are an explicit demand from the organisations. In fact, civic and political content is expressed openly by AGE and Prendiparte, while in Radioimmaginaria this is conveyed through creative programming. In a process of self-determination, competences are considered important because they make it possible for young people to feel able to have an active role within an organisation and the latter become learning contexts in which competencies are acquired and can be used in other domains of life. The sense of efficacy, both general and political, is improved and members can prove their abilities in different domains of life, from school to free time to private life.

For young people to remain motivated as part of the organisations, opportunities, as well as the concrete and interesting activities that organisations provide, seem to play a central role. The role of practical action lets young people experience what it means to be protagonists of a formative and enjoyable process leading to civic participation. This provides them with a feeling of belonging to a group, in which peers (in the three organisations) and adults (in RadioImmaginaria) share their experiences, competencies and feelings.

Membership and emotional shared connection (Wandersman & Florin, 2000) are considered the most important factors that sustain engagement, independently from age and that allow to consider organisations as small communities of citizen participation. The creation of a community allows young people to deepen the soft skills and more transversal competencies while being members of the organisation.

Finally, our work confirms that organisational motivations, such as interest and trust in organisational activities which enhance good feelings strengthen and sustain engagement.

It is necessary to highlight some strengths and limitations of this research. The use of qualitative and in-depth lens on the civic and cultural youth organisations allow to explore the motivations as promoting factors of active citizenship, but also as constitutive process for the maintenance of the organisations. We can point out some limitations in this study, such as the lack of representativeness of the three organisations of the young Italian population and the impact of macro social and political factors on the raising of motivations for commitment.

The process of self-determination of young people, by fulfilling needs in both civic and political domains, seems an important path to follow, both for organisations that want to sustain their projects and for young people who want to act as citizens in a collective way.

Active citizenship is enacted in youth organisations as a form of vital engagement (Nakamura, 2001) because it gives a meaningful sense to youth life and can fulfil personal, social and political needs.

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i "Global citizenship is defined as awareness, caring, and embracing cultural diversity while promoting social justice and sustainability, coupled with a sense of responsibility to act." (Reysen & Katzarska- Miller, 2013, p. 858).

ii These data refer to the time of the research.

iii *Libera. Associazioni, nomi e numeri contro le mafie* (Free. Associations, names and numbers against mafias) is an Italian association that promotes outreach activities and various types of protest action against the Mafia phenomenon, Italian organised crime, and organised crime in general.

iv J is the nickname for members of Radioimmaginaria who are older than 18 and have a role in the board of the organisation.

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The underlying data of this chapter can be found at http://doi.org/10.6092/unibo/amsacta/6395.