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LAVORARE CON...

ESPERIENZE, EXPERTISE E SAPERI NEL MERCATO CHE VERRÀ



A CURA DI
STEFANIA FERRARO
ANNA D'ASCENZIO

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A cura di Anna D'Ascenzio e Stefania Ferraro

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Anna D'ascenzio, Stefania Ferraro*

WHAT JOB PROSPECTS FOR THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AFTER THE PANDEMIC?
Some data from a sociological research

Abstract:
Looking at the structural difficulties that affect young Italians concerning employability and prospects, this paper aims to deconstruct the stereotypes that have characterised the narration of youth behaviour in Italy during the pandemic through analysing some data processed during the research entitled SaNaMi. Particularly the authors examine the disorientation of young people (between 19 and 24 years old) relating to job prospects and their family unit economic situation following the pandemic.

Keywords:
Job Prospects; Survey; Questionnaire; Pandemic; University Students; University.

1. *About the research SaNaMi*

SaNaMi. Opinions and behaviours of students at the time of the Coronavirus is a research started during the period when the course of the epidemic led political authorities to adopt provisions limiting certain rights. This so-called lockdown phase became an opportunity to assess whether democratic behaviour and practices are reinforced or overturned in paradoxical situations. Tools to collect student opinions, attitudes and behaviours have been used during this initial phase. The survey has been implemented for this purpose. It has been aimed at the students from two universities in

* The general structure of the paper is the result of cooperation between the two authors. However, paragraphs 2 and 3 were written by Stefania Ferraro; paragraphs 1 and 4 were written by Anna D'Ascenzio. A first version of this paper was written by Stefania Ferraro; it is *Lo spazio pandemico degli studenti: tra consapevolezza e responsabilità*, in «Annali», Suor Orsola Benincasa University Press, Naples, 2021, pp. 99-127.

Lombardy (University of Milano-Bicocca and Politecnico in Milano) and two universities in Campania (Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples and the University of Salerno)[1]. This questionnaire has handed out during the lockdown period and partial re-opening of activities. The sample comprises about a thousand subjects between 19 and 24 years old, all attending Bachelor's and Master's Degrees.

These surveys mainly explore the following aspects: the economic conditions of the relative families before, during and after the pandemic; objective living conditions during isolation and "resources" available to deal with it (surface area and quality of the home, technological devices owned etc.); subjective perception of isolation and, in general, the health, economic, social and political consequences of the pandemic; resulting future expectations; from a behavioural point of view, levels of personal acceptance and observance of the restrictions issued by the authorities; use and set-up of personal time, with particular reference to remote learning related activities; degree of involvement in social and political activities (volunteering activities, taking part in online forums, petitions, flash-mob); degree of trust in political institutions (respectively at a national, regional and local level) and specific State structures (health staff, law enforcers); general

1 This is a research developped within an informal réseau which has sprung up in April 2020 putting together the four Universities and Antonello Petrillo is its scientific responsible. Particularly, this research has compared the conditions of students of Campania and Lombardia, two Italian Regions. For further details on this research, also in methodological terms, see: *Libro Bianco della ricerca. Idee, proposte, progetti per il mondo post Covid-19*; link: https://www.unisob.na.it/ateneo/librobiancodellaricerca.pdf
Students' testimonies reported on this essay refear to the answers given to the open question number 87 of the questionnaire titled Ricerca SaNaMi sul Coronavirus. The text of the question is: «Can you finally tell us how would you generally describe with few words the moment you are living these days, comparing your routine before Coronavirus?».
The questions in the questionnaire and the collected testimonies were translated by the authors of this paper.
The origins of the subject of testimony are declared only in those cases where we need to describe different positions between the students from Campania and those from Lombardy; in all the other cases such data will be omitted as it is believed to be "non-significant" for the purpose of the presented analysis.
To get to know to the first returns of results see *A. Petrillo: Il vaso di Pandora della pandemia: il disagio dei giovani*, Il sabato delle Idee, June 5, 2021; link: https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?extid=SEO----&v=1210238019408753&ref=watch_permalink; Id., Sindemia e immaginario sociale. Ripartire dall'immaginazione sociologica, Radio Onda d'Urto; link: https://disagio.radiondadurto.org/2021/05/12/sindemia-e-immaginario-sociale-ripartire-dallimmaginazione-sociologica/

political direction of travel as regards variables such as the centralisation/decentralisation of decisional processes etc.; specific vote related direction of travel; quantitative and qualitative relevance of individual information tools (various radio and television stations, press bodies and individual social channels) in the opinion forming process.

Data on student behaviours as regards a) relationships with other family members, friends and colleagues; b) aspects of daily life, but also the epidemic and related decisions taken by the authorities; c) remote learning activities has been collected using the time balance method. The student has been requested to complete a spreadsheet listing activities (including timings) carried out in a day during the lockdown and partial re-opening. This made it possible to assess how much time students spent studying, working, playing and in recreational activities during these various periods. Data collected with these surveys and the time balance method will enable researchers to assess how the evolving "social climate" impacts these young university students' varying opinions, attitudes and behaviours. It will be possible to assess if and how these behaviours and opinions change with the course of the epidemic, but also as a result of economic worries and the communication and decisional styles of national and local political authorities.

2. *Structural incertitudes for young people in Italy*

It appears reasonable to remember that Italy is not a Country for the younger. The reasons for this statement have been recently analyzed in deep by Antonello Petrillo[2]: from a demographic point of view, we have one of the lowest young population rates in Europe, but aside from that, Italy is not a Country for young people primarily because of the scarce study and work opportunities that have offered to them, with the well-known difficulties in accessing credit, both for study reasons and for any enterprise to be started; consequently, in Italy, we have a high migration rate, mainly among high-trained and qualified young people. Ultimately, there is an apparent difficulty in fully considering young people as citizens concerning significant factors, such as cultural and social ones. In turn, their employment perspective is too often inherent in some occupational blackmail. In some way, in this Country, the infamous social distances were already an issue in young lives' trajectories before the

2 See: *Il vaso di Pandora della pandemia*, *op. cit.*

start of the pandemic[3]. It is not by accident that from the mentioned above research, *SaNaMi. Opinions and behaviours of students at the time of the Coronavirus*, it emerges how uncertainty for the future is a factor that this pandemic has nothing but multiplied, and it has already characterized many young students' biographies; speaking of this, we have decided to report the following testimony to resume the high percentage of answers of the same kind:

> The uncertainty about the future has increased since the only occasions for confrontation with the relational circle are virtual. The confusing information released by the mainstream press is not reassuring. Furthermore, the often irrational attitudes of a population gripped by fear are not reassuring either[4].

Given these premises, it is sociologically deducible the reason why during the lockdown phases and more generally in the presence of the necessary containment measures of gatherings, in the public debate, the young have become the scapegoat for the virus spread, like migrants[5], albeit with different narratives, often connected to the happy hour frenzy[6] and so to their irresponsibility. The latter finds a significant space among the discursive devices activated to naturalise immaturity. The unconsciousness of young generations to conceal and preserve the structural deficiencies of a labour system that requires more and more flexibility and precariousness to support the logic of the neo-liberal economy. It is necessary to remember that the Italian narrative of the young as "bamboccioni" dates back to 2007, at the beginning of that economic crisis, that would dramatically reduce social politics in favour of the new generations. The Minister of the

3 *Ibidem*.

4 Testimony of a student, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, infra.

5 See: *Il vaso di Pandora della pandemia*, op. cit.

6 From North to South of Italy, during both the first and the second lockdown phases, just as during those periods defined by mild restrictive measures, by opinion leaders, politicians and media (national and local), the narrative of the young Italians as irresponsible has spread; we report just two sources among many as a testimony of an identical stereotyped vision produced in different periods and by a national and a local newspaper. Ruccia G., *Gli aperitivi, gli spot e le liti su mascherine e chiusure: così le Regioni hanno affrontato la prima ondata tra errori e polemiche*, in «Il fatto quotidiano», December 31, 2020, link: https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/12/31/gli-aperitivi-gli-spot-e-le-liti-su-mascherine-e-chiusure-cosi-le-regioni-hanno-affrontato-la-prima-ondata-tra-errori-e-polemiche-il-videoblob/6048333/; Venturoni D., *Focolaio della variante Delta nato da un aperitivo sulla costa*, «il Centro», July 3, 2021, link: https://www.ilcentro.it/teramo/focolaio-della-variante-delta-nato-da-un-aperitivo-sulla-costa-1.2654776

Economy, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa developed it, and from that moment on, uninterrupted production of political speeches started to discredit the efficiency of the Italian youths:

> "You represent the worst Italy", Minister Renato Brunetta replied to two temporary workers; or "having a life-long permanent job is boring; you youths should open your minds to new challenges instead of wishing for a permanent contract", Mario Monti stated[7].

These discursive logics contribute to more clearly and vigorously discriminating those people they should take in charge, encouraging the individuals to exercise their responsibility in determining the existence, and so remarking their blame in case of a social and/or personal failure[8].

However, as Miller and Rose (2008) well explained, the evolution of neo-liberism enhances the gap between government intervention and the social environment, increasing the political value of self-government, thanks to the stress put on individual autonomy and responsibility in the management of risks and social issues[9].

Therefore individual responsibility becomes one of the main criteria in the individualist society: a free individual is responsible for his objective condition and destiny (Bec, Procacci 2003; Gauchet 2003). Individualism, personalization and discipline of autonomy are the cornerstones of governmental principles and lead to what Rose (1996) defined years ago as the "death of social", tragically supported by the undeniable link between flexibility and precariousness, followed by a noticeable transformation of work into an all-encompassing life project.

In this scenario of narrative and operational provisions, we have to analyze and deconstruct the media criminalization of young Italians (students and young workers, precarious or off-the-books) that occurred during the pandemic. Mainly defined by chaos in the pieces of information, which, however – at least in the first and prolonged phase of the pandemic – declared the young being low or zero risk people in the presence of the virus[10]. Such "disordered" pieces of information have also been

7 *Ibidem*; these testimonies were translated by the authors of this paper.

8 Concerning the current government politicies on poverty and labour in a state of crisis, see Ferraro 2016; 2017; 2020a.

9 See also D'Ascenzio 2022; D'Ascenzio, Ferraro 2019.

10 In this regard, it is useful to say that the question number 33 of the *SaNaMi* questionnaire (Based on the information you have, how much do you generally think the Coronavirus is dangerous?), about 60% of the students answered "very much", when circa the 40% of the students answering "enough". However, in the

highlighted by many young involved in the *SaNaMi* research; here is testimony among the other ones:

> We would describe this as a situation of anguish, mental instability and constant insecurity, all caused by the confusion originating from the multiple information coming from too many "sources", worthy or not, or from a minimal or total absence of directives[11].

We do not deny that there have been gatherings by the young. We are instead trying to deconstruct their criminalization, even offering other possible interpretations of the facts; for example, Bilotta (2021b, p. 70) explains – without justifying anything or anyone – that "gatherings" are a cry not for freedom but liberation from fear or maybe only from anguish, even if expressed dangerously.

When answering the questionnaire, almost all of the students involved in the *SaNaMi* research spoke of disorientation, discomfort, and fear[12]. However, many among them have jointly shown other glimpses of life and youth awareness towards pandemic, like for instance the rational belief of a scarce and remote political investment in educational and cultural growth paths for young, that can be summed up with the following testimony:

> The current situation is theatrical and, if it is not enough, we are neither supported by the Government nor by other local authorities. The routine is very static, and one can not do anything. We wake up, have breakfast and take our University lessons. Our internet connection pretends to make us feel close, but we are increasingly distant, as we almost forget the importance of a genuine hug, human relations, and sociality. This new everyday life does not allow us

following question number 34 (How worried are you that the following people can get sick because of the Coronavirus?), almost all the subjects claim to be highly worried about their parents.

11 Testimony of a student from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*. We feel it appropriate to report also the testimony of those who, already living a previous condition of psychological weakness, has suffered a worsening of their condition due to the chaos of information: «Suffering from anxiety problems, in this period I tend to stay far from any media as News are often conflicting. The biggest difference is in the distance I put between me and the world, a decision due to the psycho-somatic problems encountered at the beginning of lockdown» (*Ibidem*).

12 We can just report two of the many testimonies of fear and discomfort, because of lack of space: «Being continuously trapped at home carries in a lot of anxiety and many obsessive thoughts»; «Physically weakened, our mind busy studying, more worried and emotionally fragile»; testimonies of two students, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.

> to do much. Considering we cannot afford to buy the University books I need, no one offers to help. We are left alone, just for being University students[13].

Furthermore, despite the common belief describing young people as the main actors of consumerism and frivolities, many students involved in the *SaNaMi* research define pandemic and its tragic consequences as «a slap in the face to globalization»[14]. Others recognise Coronavirus as having been able to stop our neo-liberal instincts and our rush to success and performance: «It took a virus, a pandemic, to make us stop a while, stop to go around a world that we do not feel as being our own anymore»[15].

3. *Some of the results of the research*

The questionnaire given during the research investigated many different aspects of the pandemic condition of young University students, as sons and daughters respect their being citizens. More specifically, the first part of the questionnaire examined socio-demographic factors regarding the space represented by the houses as a particular element of discomfort due to their limited mobility[16] and the possible condition of worker-student.

The second section of the *SaNaMi* questionnaire was dedicated "to facing Coronavirus", focusing on issues relating to awareness of the socio-economical and health consequences of the pandemic. The third section of the questionnaire, on the other hand, has investigated the opinions and behaviours of the students concerning policies to combat contagion, not also forgetting the issue of caution and interpersonal trust. The fourth section of the questionnaire is dedicated to the crossroads of politics to assess the student's level of faith and participation of the students in the country's political life during the pandemic. The fifth section of the questionnaire analysed the modification processes in everyday life during a pandemic, especially during the lockdown. The last part has investigated the habits and modalities of approach to information, particularly regarding the use of social networks. The other portion of the questionnaire

13 Testimony of a student, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.
14 *Ibidem*.
15 *Ibidem*.
16 We mainly refer to the following questions of the *SaNaMi* questionnaire: question number 5 (How many people do you currently share your home with?); question number 11/b [How many rooms did the house you spent your "quarantine" have (bathrooms and kitchen excluded)?].

("time reports") had the purpose of understanding how the students had spent their days during the lockdown, giving back data that were much more useful to understand their capability to organize their own study time, their job, readings, hobbies and the care of their emotional bonds. What follows is a report on the analysis of data of the *SaNaMi* research considered helpful to the deconstruction of stereotypes in the conduct of the young Italians. The following data have no presumption of completeness, as they only represent a micro-cosmos, even if they highlight some aspects necessary to analyze the state of the art. concerning socio-demographic factors, we realise that about the 86% of the students who answered the questionnaire have lived with their parents during the lockdown. Therefore many of the offsite students have gone back to their College accommodations; regarding this specific condition, we report the following testimony:

> A dramatic yet necessary situation to oppose Coronavirus. We currently live at our parents' house, where we take online classes; after quitting the students' accommodation. We shared it with roommates. This way, we feel much safer[17].

There have managed personal computer for work or studies[18]. The percentage of those experiencing lockdown far from their family and without disadvantages is deficient: «I live far from my family, and I feel quite alone»[19].

Many remarks have the problematic management of home spaces. The 42% live with three more people at home. The data has summed the difficulties in organizing work and study spaces in a little house. The 60% claim to live in a house with double rooms aside from the bathroom and the kitchen. Many could provide testimony of such discomfort, especially when answering open question number 87; among the others, we report the following ones:

> A routine day is "choking". We live in 5, soo I have to share the bedroom with two brothers. So, if we used to go to the library or to study halls frequently, now we feel pretty challenging to keep up with everything[20].

17 A student's testimony, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.
18 A low percentage of testimonies live with a partner or spouse. Mainly women live with children who have attended distance learning.
19 A student's testimony, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.
20 *Ibidem*.

And

> We do not have enough room to attend online classes peacefully with our family. Sometimes on sunny days, we study out on the balcony[21].

Supporting has already been written above on the young Italians' complex and insecure employment prospects before the pandemic, we can state that 18,6% of the interviewees claim to be students/workers; of these, 24,1% do not have formal employment and primarily work in the private sector. Concerning the virus, the percentage of those who claim to consider the virus very dangerous is high. The percentage clarifies the students' will to reduce the opportunities for contact with others and mobility in general. Many students have valued the restrictions as necessary. In question number 87, they have a motivated response referring primarily to preserving themselves and the others. We report one of the replies:

> It certainly is a situation that could have defined as extraneous to the daily routine, but we want to specify that we do not see the respect of restrictions as an obligation but as a moral duty, especially towards parents with whom we live, and that could potentially be at risk of infection[22].

Concerning the economic consequences of the pandemic, to question number 39 of the questionnaire[23], about 30% foresee serious consequences, with over the 7% that foresee much more severe consequences.

The same can have said concerning the general economic situation in the answers to question number 39 of the questionnaire[24]. The awareness of the problematic context is evident: about 55% consider the consequences of being "very serious", with about 45% considering them just "serious".

Also, over 35% of the interviewees claim to have a father who carries out self-employment and, as can come out in the testimonies collected in question number 87[25], such a condition is legitimately perceived to be at high risk. There are some particularly fragile family contexts from an economic point of view, like the one reported in the following testimony:

---

21 *Ibidem*.

22 A student's testimony, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.

23 Which consequences are you expecting the Coronavirus will have on your and your family's economic condition?

24 Which consequences are you expecting the Coronavirus will have on our country's overall economic condition?

25 See note 1, *infra*.

> […] Because I was the only one at home that had a salary, I was the only one who could financially be more helpful, so to give up both spaces and savings that I could use to finally obtain my independence, which I am longing so much, now more than ever[26].

At the same time, many more testimonies have been collected of students deeply aware both of global economic issues and their own "privileged" condition; more about this has been stated in the following interview:

> These days we feel lucky for living in this area of the world; our thoughts go to all those people escaping from war sites or living in areas where health care is on the brink of collapse[27].

Concerning the policies of Government, Regions and Municipalities in the containment of contagion, if they are widely considered "timely" on the one hand, on the other, also due to the high emergency context, the percentage of those considering it as "late" is not to be underestimated. In this regard, we need to stress the quite significant difference in the answers given by the students from Campania and by those from Lombardy: the first one focuses on a timely assessment of the measures of containment adopted by the Region; the second one, on the contrary, are much more cautious, and the percentage of those who define the measures of containment adopted by the Region as "late" is significantly high, also as a consequence of the high number of infections and deaths in Lombardy, and therefore of the severe suffering of the regional health system.

In return, the media pressure exerted by the Region Campania's President regarding the contagion contentment. It has accompanied a constant narration of controls on the territory and the related fines, which has conditioned the Campania students' perception so much that the majority defines them as "very restrictive" on a regional level and "restrictive" on a national and local level. Therefore the majority of the interviewees have positively judged the functioning of the health system, accompanying this position with not a few merit assessments – produced in the honest answers to question number 87 of the questionnaire[28] – for the responsibilities of those Governments that have made drastic cuts in public spending in general, but particularly in the health system. These data have been

26 A student's testimony, from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.
27 *Ibidem*.
28 See note 1, *infra*.

confirmed by the answers given to question number 59[29]: only for the doctors did the interviewees answer in a large majority, claiming "many trusts"; to journalists, a minor majority expressed "enough trust"; the data concerning religious institutions is also relevant as in this case we have a majority stating to have "no trust at all", proving how the young are profoundly disoriented (and consequently detached) compared to those that are the reference institutions in our country, and not only towards the relationship with politics.

Concerning the trust in others and the institutions, it is noteworthy how the interviewed students show a certain degree of scepticism; on question number 46[30], about 60% stated "strongly agree", and the reminder almost totally states to "agree" and "quite agree"; just as about the 80% claims to agree with the statement reported in the question number 47 of the questionnaire[31]. All this confirms that a fair amount of representation of the variegated world of young Italians, criminalized in the public debate, is the bearer of a high distrust towards others and the institutions.

In support of this, we add that in question number 48 of the questionnaire, about 78% stated that "the Government should adopt restrictive measures even at the cost of sacrificing the citizens' freedom". Moreover, 66% of the interviewees stated (answering question number 49) to have felt "quite confident" after the adoption of the measures that have ordered to stop commercial activities, school closings, and limitation of travel, compared to only the 16% who has stated to have felt "very much confident". Prove is important to emphasize that we do not detect a sense of net distancing from the other, but rather a very conservative attitude aimed at containing the contagion and so at collective wellness; proof of this is the datum relating to question number 60 of the questionnaire[32], which returns a majority

29 How much trust do you have on a scale from 0 to 5 (0 = No trust; 5 A lot of trust) in the following subjects or social and cultural figures?

30 How much do you agree with the following statement "The measures adopted by the Italian Government to contain Coronavirus are correct, but their efficiency has been thwarted by the behaviour of many irresponsible citizens"? Express a judgement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

31 How much do you agree with the following statement "Italians will be able to overcome this dangerous situation, even if the political authorities have not been able to adopt the most appropriate measures to deal with it"? Express a judgement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

32 According to some, the majority of people can be trusted; according to others, one needs to be cautious in dealing with people. Can you indicate which of the two statements you feel closer to? They express an intermediate position between those two.

of interviewees positioned in the middle between these two statements: one must cautiously trust in the others.

A particularly interesting datum is that relating to the answers to question number 50[33], it proves the persistent principle of separation of powers, and so a lack of adherence to the spread of personalization and professionalization of politics[34], that is why the majority of the answers are "absolutely disagree". It is a reproduction of the data relating to the answers to question number 58[35]; the data represents a higher majority among those who choose the Parliament, followed – in a decreasing way – by the majority that chooses the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. From this, one could also deduce the complexity and disorientation originated by the pandemic state of emergency managed with the long list of decrees he passed.

This condition is absorbing if associated with the data showing a consolidated phase when the young distance from politics, also attested by a gap from the contemporary audience of political subjects and political Parties/Movements, also detectable from the answers to question number 61[36]. All the options offered – representing the primary current political spectrum, each accompanied by its leader's name, right, left, and centre wing – have obtained the highest percentage of "not at all probable".

The reasons why young people distance themselves from politics should not have taken stereotypically, citing their general lack of interest and considering them inclined to a more superficial relationship with different social fields. Meanwhile, this element must be included and analyzed in the extended and more complex datum related to the high rate of distrust that the Italian population shows towards politics[37]. Furthermore, this data must have considered that the Mass Parties' transformation into Personal Parties and Movements has radically changed the relationship with territories and people and has dismissed the pedagogical function addressed to the young members of them (Fruncillo 2020).

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33 How much do you agree with the following statement "In difficult situations like this it is right that only one is in charge?" Express a judgment from 1 (absolutely disagree) to 5 (totally agree).

34 To accurately analyze the logic of personalization and professionalization of politics see Fruncillo 2021.

35 How much do you trust in the following institutions or institutional figures on a scale from 0 to 5 (0 = No trust and 5 = A lot of trusts)?

36 How likely is it that in the future you could vote for the following Parties or leaders on a scale from 1 (absolutely not likely) to 5 (very likely)?

37 Concerning the trends in the Italians' political participation, the ISTAT 2020 report evidences that the phenomenon of easing from politics surely is a complicated factor that precedes pandemic; about this topic see Ferraro 2021.

The overall participation in political life has been revealed through the questions range in 51-61 of the *SaNaMi* questionnaire and it shows the same pre-pandemic scenario already analyzed by the ISTAT Report 2020, provided working on a much broader sample of youths, and not just students:

> The lack of participation in political topics concerns the 30% of young people between 18 and 34 years old. It reaches almost 50% of those between fourteen and eighteen. It also appears that 74,8% of the political participation is indirect, and only 8% is actively involved. The same report shows how indirect political participation is also decreasing in the face of scarce but stable active participation. On the contrary, the data about the information show that 52,7% of the very young keep informed on politics, 27,6% do not keep informed, and only 15% follow political debates (Di Donato *et al.* 2021)[38].

To compare what has been reported in pre-pandemic periods and what was reported by the *SaNaMi sample*, we will report that about 46% of the interviewees claim to have very little interest in politics. About 16% do not care, about 27% claim to be interested "enough", and about 9% are very interested in it. The perception about political offer has contained in question number 55, the 54% replies to "agree with enough", to which we must add about the 15% who claim to "agree very much".

Regarding approach pieces of information, we can report that the primary source is represented by the Web sites for about 47% of the interviewees, with a significant increase in the social network as a source of information. Television is a primary source of information for about 29%. It has to have clarified simultaneously that the News data are changed downwards. 43% of the interviewees claim that before the beginning of the pandemic. They did not watch it "ever or almost" during the pandemic. The datum increases to about 65%, proving a will to distance from the chaos of pieces of information. The interviewees found it helpful to confront their parents, friends and colleagues, to keep informed on politics and Coronavirus.

In order to be as informative as possible, it appears a progressive distancing of youths from politics has not come to a halt. Not even after the passing of the law No.145 in 2018, which a Government specific representative body for the young, called the National Council of Youth, encouraged and implement the young to participate in political life through «some kind of institutional dialogue between Government and local autonomies in which

38 This testimony was translated by the authors of this paper.

financial resources have well defined, goals and priority of intervention in the matter of youth policies»[39].

Furthermore, let us suppose that managing such a pandemic has meant detouring resources and energies from youth policies; however, many young Italians have replied to this condition by setting up Rete Giovani (Youth Network) 2021, born in the middle of the pandemic emergency on July 2020. It is

> A total of 90 youth associations joined to make an inter-generational dialogue between young citizens and political decision-makers and to promote the creation of a renewed project for the country. The task of the network is to cooperate to create a forward-looking agenda through a constant discussion on the future of Italy with a view of cooperation between different generations (Donato *et al.*, 2021)[40].

We report this as evidence of a young Italian context surely not always "picky"[41] but still not well supported by the Government.

Concerning the management of everyday life, we want to remark that from the data collected by the *SaNaMi* questionnaire, it is possible to highlight a conscious reduction of times dedicated to shopping and going out with friends in general, renouncing almost totally seeing friends and other hobbies. Generally speaking, the percentage of the interviewees doing sport is relatively low, also due to the costs of doing sport, which does not always combine with University costs. The percentage has highly reduced mainly during the lockdown phases, as many students tell – answering the open question number 87[42] – to have managed to re-organize their sports activities at home, often sharing them with their family. The data concerning readings not for study stays low before and after lockdown.

Overall, mainly analyzing the "time evaluation", namely the description of all the activities carried out during the whole day, we discover a high

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39 Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento per le Politiche Giovanili e il Servizio Civile Universale, *Strategia nazionale per aumentare la partecipazione dei giovani*; See to link: https://www.politichegiovanili.gov.it/youthwiki/panoramica/5-partecipazione/55-strategia-nazionale-per-aumentare-la-partecipazione-dei-giovani. This testimony was translated by the authors of the paper.

40 This testimony was translated by the authors of the paper.

41 The then Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Elsa Fornero, utilized this term (picky = in Italian language is schizzinoso) when she admonished Italian youths for being too much tied to permanent jobs and to their birthplaces, and yet very little prepared; on this subject see Cillis, op. cit.

42 See note 1, *infra*.

organizational skill of the interviewees, many of whom admitted that being "forced to stay at home" had the merit to have given more time to dedicate to human and family relationships:

> These days, I learned to appreciate those everyday things I did mechanically and did not give the proper importance. At the same time, though, we rediscovered things we had forgotten we could do due to lack of time[43].

The mandatory confluence of education onto online platforms has also generated a new unique phenomenon represented by University, the real living one in people's homes.

We can add that this unexpected kind of socialization is not the problem, but it keeps students, teachers, University and families together. It was lived and appreciated by many of the interviewed students, who admired the efforts to guarantee their unalienable right to study during this emergency rule. There were several episodes experienced by the writer of these pages of interactions with moms and dads, who were firmly asking us to participate, to be there, to understand what all that was about, but they have also been asked to exercise their legitimate wish to talk about themselves, that everyday life that they used to share and they still do (Ferraro 2020b).

We need to acknowledge the special responsibility for what we could or could have done better for young people during the pandemic, but mainly for what had not been done for them before this state of emergency. Thus, it has been poorly done for young people. The things done include the terrible cuts in public spending on education. Furthermore, what has been carried out without listening to their needing claims? We do not have the right to be surprised by their discomforts; on the contrary, we do have to gather them:

> We constantly think negatively about when we will get over all this, to our future, and how often the monsters of our past still scare us, and we do not have any way to replace them, not even with those small successes that would have arisen if such disgrace had not happened. Such a situation inside us is pretty sad, for being scared of living at twenty years old[44].

Thus, we must start giving answers to every "fear of living", especially when this concerns a twenty-year-old person.

43 A student's testimony from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.
44 A student's testimony from *SaNaMi*; see note 1, *infra*.

4. *To conclude: physical distancing, non social distancing*

There is a significant difference between social and physical distancing: what a citizen needs in order to stay safe from the pandemic is not social distancing but more properly physical distancing, which involves a strengthening of social ties, and primarily of solidarity itself (Bilotta 2021a).

Supporting what has been claimed until now, the reference to the Government of space at the time of the pandemic here is entirely meant to be taken strictly according to a Foucaultian idea of social relationships: people are power relationships in a specific space[45], so "government" refers to those techniques and procedures that aim to "direct human behaviours" in multiple contexts, relations and situations that can have established (Foucault 2016), starting from the Government of one's own (Foucault 2011). The same Foucault (2007) teaches us that synchronous management of territory and population is the element that moves government devices in globalized societies.

In return, here we have an idea of space, which we try to analyse as a relationship of reciprocity: space generates effects, seen as a condition of possibility of social relationships, just like social relationships transform space configurations and assign them meaning, as first explained by Simmel (1950, 2004, 2005)[46], and then by Bourdieu (1980, 2013). The latter has carefully analysed the existing interaction between social norms and space configurations in a never-ending process of reciprocity between artefacts and social actions, mainly emphasising the role of *limen*: the cultural act par-excellence consists in drawing a line that creates a separate and delimitated space.

The management of pandemics has unavoidably acted to narrow the different dimensions in the production of social fields (Bourdieu 1972), mainly regarding the necessary strategies to limit the contagion. It undoubtfully strengthens the space as a signifier of what has or has not to have done: space has control over bodies.

It defines their gestures, trajectories and paths, as explained by Lefebvre (1974)[47]. All this does not represent anything new: Ag. Petrillo (2021, p. 42) states that within bio-politics and necro-politics, a relationship problem between politics e pandemic […] has arisen since the origins of modern

45 See Foucault 1991.
46 See also Serino 2017.
47 See also Hillier, Hanson 1984; Hillier 2007; Chiesi 2010.

towns. Pandemics have always been both opportunities and tools for social and urban transformation.

However, we cannot remain indifferent – and social sciences can not[48] – when we are facing the awareness that never before the onset of these epidemic diseases, those social divisions that cross the urban dimension have so clearly highlighted, and so the importance of living in one place or another (*Ivi*, p. 43). In pandemic government policies is crucial to consider the space issue. In *Le Droit à la Ville* (1968), Lefebvre describes how the shape of public space stress housing allocation and services (Harvey 1973, 2011). Furthermore, different transport, health, and social access have been classified.

After all, as Belingardi (2017) points out, for a long time, several researchers – beginning with Lefebvre's theories – have reflected on the crisis of public space, about financial flows that take possession of urban spaces (through the financialization of space, tourism, town branding, public events, and gentrification) gradually.

In order to manage public and private spaces that followed this pandemic, it can be helpful to take into account all of these aspects, especially when we wish to examine the effects that a high mobility reduction can generate on each activity.

On the one hand, it was necessary to impose limited contacts and mobility. On the other hand, the hottest and contradictory tones of the political and institutional debate surely did not help develop a full consciousness of the needing for some restrictions. «Nothing will ever be the same»[49] has been the catchphrase during most of the lockdown phases; it is true of its own. However, too often accompanied by explications, like those we reported further, that indeed cannot be defined as aimed at strengthening social relationships:

> The only certainty is an admission of uncertainty: "Nothing will ever be the same".
>
> […]
>
> We will get increasingly used to swap time with safety, putting the binomial distrust-distance ahead of our post-globalization habits, and living with gloves and masks[50].

48 To analyse the role played by social sciences during pandemics, see Ant. Petrillo 2021.

49 We only report one source among the other ones for a matter of space: A. Morelli, *Niente sarà come prima, dalla casa alla spesa così vivremo dopo l'emergenza coronavirus. Il profilo della vita al tempo del covid-19*, in «ANSA», April 5, 2020; see link: https://www.ansa.it/canale_lifestyle/notizie/societa_diritti/2020/04/04/niente-sara-come-prima-dalla-casa-alla-spesa-cosi-vivremo-dopo-lemergenza-coronavirus_aa12247e-551c-4e8a-b4c1-a5d52d91b659.html

50 *Ibidem*. This testimony was translated by the authors of the paper.

A similar claim of truth can be a problem, especially when we realise that class solidarities have halted during pandemics, making room for individualism and unique solutions. It represents a significant issue. The naturalization and de-politicization of social matters represent the backbone of neo-liberal discourse (Ant. Petrillo 2021; Moini 2020). Populist visions have supported it. It has represented a categorization of emergency, commissioner management, and "experts"[51].

Given this as a reference, it is helpful to stress that the systematic growth of inequality is not only due to the virus's spread. This way, the virus has fought unpredictable effects on lives and bodies. It has re-defining its downhill trajectories, working on spaces: spaces of life, mobility, choice, work, or study, as stated in the following testimony:

> We feel deprived of our freedom. Respect before time, we do not choose what to do, go for a ride, or hang around with a girlfriend, things that were granted to us before. Our mother has lost her job, and our father is on partial layoffs, sometimes working at home, other times at his office; as being not two very profitable jobs, it was pretty challenging even before the pandemic, so it will surely be much worse now.
>
> Staying at the computer, studying or relaxing all day long is tiring, and it is hard to find some time to study when having classes five days a week until 6:30 PM. I live in a 50-square-meter apartment in a working-class neighbourhood and share our bedroom 24 hours a day with a brother. He used to work at a Pub: he is off these days, so now he plays all day at the Play Station or sleeps, and I can not blame him, there is very little to do, but sometimes attending classes or studying is impossible […] We can not do it anywhere else, as my father works in our living room, and my mother stays in her bedroom so as not to disturb him.
>
> This situation is surreal, one tries to do his best not to lose his temper, but some days I thought we could not make it[52].

This neo-liberal management of such emergency can not find its space to care about lives and bodies, as being deeply "governmental"[53], it does not oblige, does not forbid, but it just directs their conduct, governs human beings until when they manage to be still that, so until when they can keep themselves alive.

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51 For a critical analysis on the significant role that experts have in government practices, see Giannone 2019; Caselli 2020. Concerning the role of experts in the government of pandemic see Ant. Petrillo 2021.

52 Testimony of a student, from SaNaMi; see note 1, *infra*.

53 *See* Foucault 1978.

Nevertheless, the new poor produced during the lockdown phases can be primarily found among the short-term and part-time workers. Governing this pandemic has strengthened the peculiar role of tactics and calculations which allow to highlight and to target high-risk areas and identify pre-symptomatic individuals at stake, through analysing various factors statistically and clinically related to problematic behaviour. In other words, they allow rigid cartographies of normality and deviance, pondering the complicated subjects with risk assessment and entering them into risk records. So, students must also decide on their therapy concerning the risk level by monitoring the risk itself (Rose 2008). However, such tactics and calculations reply to neoliberal logic in managing territories and populations, which minimally include preventive actions that protect from and prevent the risk.

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