

Union inclusiveness and temporary agency workers: The role of power resources and union ideology

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Abstract

This article investigates the determinants of union inclusiveness towards agency workers in Western Europe, using an index which combines unionization rates with dimensions of collective agreements covering agency workers. Using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis, we identify two combinations of conditions leading to inclusiveness: the ‘Northern path’ includes high union density, high bargaining coverage and high union authority, and is consistent with the power resources approach. The ‘Southern path’ combines high union authority, high bargaining coverage, statutory regulations of agency work and working-class orientation, showing that ideology rather than institutional incentives shapes union strategies towards the marginal workforce.

Keywords

Agency workers, dualization, Ghent, identity, ideology, Italy, Southern Europe, union strategies

Contingent work has been growing in Europe during the last 20 years, challenging trade unions’ structures and their understanding of representation (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). Recent research on labour market dualization argues that some unions discriminate against contingent workers, contributing to inequality between their well-protected core members and the growing marginal workforce (Bentolila et al., 2012; Palier and

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Thelen, 2010). In contrast, the revitalization literature shows that unions try to expand their representation domain to contingent workers through recruiting and bargaining initiatives (Heery and Adler, 2004).

Within this literature, there is significant attention to temporary agency workers (TAWs); these require targeted union action because of the triangular configuration between worker, employment agency and hiring company (Håkansson et al., 2009). Furthermore, agency work represents a particularly interesting subject for cross-national research: it raises similar challenges but results in different union responses across European countries (Ahlberg et al., 2008; Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2013). By building on this research, we explore the controversy regarding the extent to which unions are inclusive.

The revitalization literature mainly relies on case studies of union strategies, neglecting their actual achievements (Greer, 2008; Krzywdzinski, 2010), and does not permit systematic cross-national comparison. On the other hand, the dualization literature derives union preferences from those of permanent workers or from labour market outcomes (Palier and Thelen, 2010; Rueda, 2005), neglecting the constraints under which unions operate and the drivers of union strategies beyond their members' interests.

We reconceptualize 'union inclusiveness' as intermediating between inputs (strategies) and labour market outcomes. We capture this through an index including both the content of collective agreements for TAWs and the union density of temporary workers. By systematically coding union inclusiveness towards TAWs across 14 western European countries, we observe that unions in Ghent countries (Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) are inclusive, maintaining a tradition of broad-based membership and encompassing collective agreements (Ebbinghaus, 2002). However, unions in France, Italy and Spain are also inclusive. This contrasts with the dualization literature that typically represents these as exclusionary (Bentolila et al., 2012; Palier and Thelen, 2010; Simoni, 2012).

This pattern calls for a reassessment of the determinants of union inclusiveness towards TAWs. Using the method of fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), we test conditions related to bargaining power and union preferences or ideology. We find two different paths to union inclusiveness, in the Ghent countries and in France, Italy and Spain. The 'Northern path' combines high bargaining coverage with high union authority and high union density. The 'Southern path' involves high bargaining coverage, high union authority, statutory regulation of TAW and working-class ideology.

We first discuss the construction of the index 'union inclusiveness' for our 14 countries. Next, we identify potential conditions leading to inclusiveness and discuss our methodology. We then present the results of the fsQCA analysis and compare these to country-level experience, with a particular focus on the Italian case in order to illustrate the causal mechanism of the 'Southern' path. The final section concludes.

Comparing union inclusiveness

Union inclusiveness towards temporary workers, including TAWs, is often measured by the unionization rate (Ebbinghaus et al., 2008), disregarding the collective bargaining dimension. In contrast, we follow Heery in adopting an encompassing concept of union

inclusiveness towards non-standard workers, involving both recruitment and bargained provisions. When unions aim to achieve equal treatment for contingent workers, their strategy is defined as 'inclusion'. 'Engagement' refers to union strategies targeting contingent workers' specific needs (Heery, 2009: 431).

We first considered union density of TAWs as a proxy for internal representation, but the data are not available for all countries. We therefore rely on the data on the union density of temporary workers calculated by Ebbinghaus et al. (2008) using the European Social Survey for 2002–2003. In order to ensure that this measure is reliable, we compared these density rates for temporary workers with the rates for TAWs in Arrowsmith (2009), which refer approximately to the same period but are available only for eight countries. Given that these data cover few countries and the density rates of TAWs are union estimations, the correlation between the series is high (0.83) and the ranking of the countries is similar.

We include four types of collectively agreed provisions. Equal pay was selected as indicator of 'inclusion', because wages are the most relevant source of deviation between permanent and temporary workers (Segal and Sullivan, 1997). Provisions addressing the specific needs of TAWs (engagement dimension) include supplementary training, which addresses the needs resulting from frequent changes of workplace and job position; and flexibility and availability bonuses, which are similarly important because they compensate for job insecurity. We collect information on the provisions bargained by the unions for TAWs between 1998 and 2007, relying on national and cross-national reports of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) (Arrowsmith, 2009) and other research institutes (Chaidron, 2003; JILPT, 2011) and national collective agreements.

Table 1 displays information on union inclusiveness across European countries and specifies which provisions are included in collective agreements and which are set by law. Unions in Ghent countries display a comparatively high union density of temporary workers, and they also have relatively encompassing collective agreements. However, despite the low union density of temporary workers, unions in Spain, Italy and France have bargained inclusive collective agreements for TAWs covering most of the above dimensions.

While union inclusiveness in Ghent countries is consistent with existing literature, that in Spain, Italy and France is surprising because these countries are marked by labour market dualism, to which unions have been claimed to contribute. For instance, it has been argued that unions have agreed to the liberalization of peripheral labour markets in order to defend the standards of their core members (Bentolila et al., 2012; Palier and Thelen, 2010; Simoni, 2012). Thus, we should expect much lower union inclusiveness in Southern countries. This calls for a reinvestigation of the conditions leading to inclusiveness, which we discuss next.

The determinants of union inclusiveness

The puzzle described above invites a reconsideration of the determinants of union inclusiveness towards temporary workers. We first present the conditions explaining union inclusiveness in the Ghent countries according to the dualization literature and the power resources approach. We then discuss which additional conditions may explain the high inclusiveness of the 'Southern' cluster.

Table 1. Measuring inclusiveness.

Country	UD (temporary workers)	Equality dimension	Compensating dimension ^a	Inclusiveness index
AT	27.5 (0.6)	Law amended by CA but favourability principle (0.2)	Limited indemnity by CA (0.4)	0.40
BE	39.3 (0.6)	Law and CA (1.0)	Training provision in CA (0.4)	0.67
DK	75.9 (1.0)	CA but sectoral differences (0.8)	Training provision in CA (0.4)	0.73
FI	67.4 (0.8)	CA (1.0)	(0)	0.60
FR	2.4 (0.2)	Law and CA (1.0)	Flexibility bonus and training provision in CA (0.8)	0.67
DE	10.65 (0.4)	Law, weakened by CA (0.2)	(0)	0.20
EL	9.5 (0.2)	Law (0.2)	(0)	0.13
IE	37.4 (1.0)	No (0)	(0)	0.33
IT	10.2 (0.2)	Law and CA (1.0)	Training provision and indemnity in CA (0.8)	0.67
NL	14.6 (0.6)	CA after twenty-six weeks (0.8)	Training provision in CA (0.4)	0.60
PT	2.0 (0)	Law (0.2)	Training provision by law (0.2)	0.13
ES	5.4 (0.2)	Law and CA (1.0)	Training provision in CA (0.4)	0.53
SE	59.8 (0.6)	CA but only for blue-collar workers (0.8)	Training provision and indemnity in CA (0.8)	0.73
UK	9.8 (0.2)	No (0)	(0)	0.07

UD: union density; CA: collective agreement.

Calibrated values used for the fsQCA analysis are shown in parentheses.

^aFlexibility bonus, supplementary training, indemnity for availability.

Explaining the Northern path

The dualization literature (e.g. Marx and Picot, 2013) emphasizes differences in preferences between non-standard workers (and also the unemployed) and workers in full-time permanent employment, who primarily shape union strategies because they ‘tend to be both more unionized and a more influential constituency’ (Rueda, 2007: 28). However, two conditions may align the interests of TAWs and permanent workers. First, low employment protection (as in Denmark and Sweden) exposes core workers to labour market risks, hence core workers and their unions may support pro-outsider policies (Rueda, 2007).

Condition 1. Low employment protection for permanent workers leads to union inclusiveness towards TAWs.

Second, the dualization literature argues that high union density (which is typical of the Ghent countries) means that marginal workers, including TAWs, are also part of the union constituencies and therefore influence bargaining priorities (Lindvall and Rueda, 2014). The power resources approach also posits that high density leads to inclusiveness, but through a different causal mechanism. As this approach treats the labour movement as a homogenous actor representing the interests of the whole workforce, the representation of temporary workers depends mainly on whether unions have sufficient power resources (Korpi, 1983). Thus, high union density could be expected to contribute to union inclusiveness by increasing unions' mobilization potential and political influence. Indeed, research has found a link between union density and better outcomes for the whole workforce such as lower wage inequality (Rueda and Pontusson, 2000). Though the two approaches suggest different causal mechanisms, we can derive the following condition:

Condition 2. High union density leads to union inclusiveness towards TAWs.

A further power-based explanation for inclusiveness concerns the strength of collective bargaining institutions. Comparative studies at sectoral and workplace levels have shown that institutional resources available to unions crucially contribute to the success of their strategies towards marginal workers (Keune, 2013; Pulignano and Keune, 2014).

Condition 3. Strong collective bargaining rights lead unions to bargain inclusive provisions for TAWs.

In addition, the structure of the labour movement has an impact on union bargaining strategies (Frege and Kelly, 2003). Centralized decision-making tends to be associated with encompassing bargaining goals, because the authority of the national union confederation prevents sectoral or occupational unions from pursuing particularistic interests rather than the general welfare of the working-class (Gordon, 2014; Oliver, 2010). For instance, Gordon (2014) contends that unions with a centralized structure (as in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden) are more likely to support pro-outsider policies such as unemployment benefits.

Condition 4. High union central authority leads to union inclusiveness towards TAWs.

Explaining the Southern path

According to the comparative political economy literature, France, Italy and Spain display pervasive state regulatory interventions in the market, including the labour market (Schmidt, 2006), and dense labour market regulation is usually a source of union power (Doellgast and Benassi, 2014: 229–230). Conversely, loopholes in TAW regulation were

found to restrain unions' ability to bargain for these workers because they offer employers exit options from collective agreements (Bosch et al., 2010).

Condition 5. The presence of law regulating TAW and putting it under unions' domain leads to union inclusiveness towards TAWs.

A large and growing temporary sector is likely to push unions to seek the regulation of the sector and to include contingent workers in their representation domain (Benassi and Dorigatti, 2014; Keune, 2013: 66). For instance, French unions demanded greater employment protection for temporary workers, because they feared that this growing workforce segment would undermine the core workforce (Vlandas, 2013b).

Condition 6. The large presence of temporary work in the labour market leads to union inclusiveness towards TAWs.

All factors mentioned above explain union inclusiveness in both Northern and Southern Europe as a response to a structure of incentives and of power resources provided by the institutional and economic context. However, existing literature shows that unions' strategies are also influenced by cultural and ideological factors (Meardi, 2011; Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2013; Vlandas, 2013a). Unions must be understood not only as 'rational' actors with fixed interests but as actors with distinctive logics of action, or ideological orientations, which derive from their embeddedness in the national context. According to Hyman (2001), union identities can be conceptualized within a tension between market, class and society, which generate three ideal types: business unionism, class unionism and social partnership. The identity of a union never fully overlaps with one ideal type: unions are caught in a tension between two of the three ideal types and tend either to the one or the other extreme depending on the economic and political context and on the issues at stake.

There is significant evidence that ideology has affected union strategies towards marginal groups of workers such as migrants (Connolly et al., 2014; Marino, 2012), young workers (Papadopoulos, 2014) and agency workers. In their comparison of two manufacturing companies in Belgium and Germany, Pulignano and Doerflinger (2013) showed that the inclusive approach of Belgian unions towards TAWs resulted from their identity between society and class, combined with local conditions.

Ideological orientation is likely to be particularly important for explaining union inclusiveness in the Southern cluster. Previous literature has found that French, Italian and Spanish unions pursue bargaining strategies which are committed to equality and to the increase of general welfare (Jódar et al., 2011; Regalia, 2012; Rojot, 2014). These bargaining strategies are linked to their class orientation, which is reflected in high politicization and militancy against employers (Frege and Kelly, 2003; Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). It can therefore be expected that their working-class orientation is associated with inclusiveness towards TAWs.

Condition 7. Working-class orientation leads to inclusiveness towards TAWs.

Method

We collected data for 14 Western European countries (EU15 minus Luxembourg) in the most recent period prior to the crisis (1998–2007). While the crisis period is of obvious interest, it is outside the scope of this article for three reasons. First, most of the literature we address concerns dynamics in non-crisis periods (Frege and Kelly, 2003; Rueda, 2007); in crisis times, union aims are likely to be distinctive, because of rapid labour market changes and a decline in temporary work. By restricting our analysis, we can be confident that differences between our findings and previous literature do not reflect the crisis but rather pre-crisis dynamics that previous theories had not fully captured. Second, while in principle one could analyse both crisis and non-crisis dynamics, this is in practice difficult because of space constraints and of the inclusion of too many conditions for a QCA on 14 cases (see our discussion below). Third, the new European Directive on Agency Work in 2008 has caused a convergence on certain minimum standards, probably leading to higher union inclusiveness irrespective of national specificities.

We use the method of fsQCA, which relies on Boolean algebra to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for the presence of a given outcome. This process ‘formalizes the logic of qualitative analysis’ and ‘makes it possible to bring the logic and empirical intensity of qualitative approaches to studies that embrace more than a handful of cases’ (Ragin, n.d.). We use fsQCA for two reasons. First, we have only 14 country cases, so this method is more appropriate than regression analysis, which requires a larger sample to draw valid causal inference. Second, we want to explore how different combinations of factors lead to the outcome of union inclusiveness towards TAWs.

We first identify relevant proxies for our outcome and conditions, and calibrate them. Then, we identify the necessary conditions and run a series of models including multiple combinations of the necessary condition with other conditions. We initially include four conditions at a time, which yields 16 possible combinations (two to the power of the number of conditions), meaning that some combinations do not correspond to any empirical observation. We then try five conditions in subsequent models. While we only report the models showing the highest consistency and coverage values, we also discuss other models with different combinations of conditions that have lower coverage and consistency scores. The full results for these other models as well as the detailed presentation of the calibration process and the original data are in an Appendix (online), which is available on the ResearchGate and Academia profiles of the authors.

The QCA software analyses all possible combinations of conditions leading to our outcome in the model under consideration. Only combinations with a consistency score of at least 0.8 were considered, which means the combination is almost always sufficient for the outcome to occur (Avdagic, 2010: 644). We exclude all logical remainders (combinations that are theoretically possible but are not empirically observed).

These are the key metrics that the QCA software generates: the combination(s) of conditions that are sufficient to explain the presence of the outcome, that is, our Composite Index of Inclusiveness; the solution coverage is a measure of ‘empirical relevance’, akin to the ‘R² in regression analysis’; the consistency measure captures ‘how well a given solution set explains the outcome in question’; the raw coverage shows how many of the cases are covered by a given causal configuration; and the unique coverage is a measure

of ‘the proportion of cases explained exclusively by a given causal configuration’ (Avdagic, 2010: 645–646).

Calibrating union inclusiveness

Our outcome variable is based on three dimensions of union inclusiveness. For our first dimension, union density of temporary workers, we use the direct method of calibration, which uses a logistic function to fit the raw data between the three qualitative anchors at 0.95 (full membership), 0.5 (point of indifference) and 0.05 (full non-membership). The three anchors correspond to gaps in the data. In order to establish the membership threshold, we calculated the middle value between the union density rates of Netherlands and Austria, where we find one of the biggest gaps in the distribution. The value for the threshold is 21. We decided not to raise the threshold to the other big gap between Belgium and Sweden, because union density of 30–40 percent among temporary workers cannot be considered low (for comparison, union density for the whole French workforce is around 8%). The threshold for full non-membership is 2.4 and that of full membership is 75.9.

For the two dimensions of inclusiveness based on collectively agreed provisions for TAWs, we use the theoretical calibration, which is based on logical reasoning, on ‘generally accepted notions in the social sciences’ and on ‘the knowledge of the researcher accumulated in a specific field of study or specific cases’ (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012: 11). The equal pay dimension is coded 0 if there are no legal or collectively agreed provisions or if collective agreements weaken the law; 0.2 if there is a law but no collective agreements, because legal provisions do not necessarily reflect an inclusive union orientation; and 0.8 if collective agreements exist but the provisions do not set equal pay for all temporary workers or if equal pay applies only after a certain period of time. The value is equal to 1 if the collective agreements include equal pay provisions for all workers.

For our third dimension capturing compensating provisions (flexibility bonus, supplementary training, indemnity for availability), the value is 0 if there are no provisions. It is 0.2 if there are laws but no collectively agreed provisions. We attribute a value of 0.4 to cases with only one collectively agreed provision, 0.8 if there are provisions for two dimensions and 1 if there are provisions for all three dimensions.

We have combined the calibrated values into what we call the Composite Index of Inclusiveness (CII), which is shown in the last column of Table 1. This is obtained by calculating the simple average of the calibrated values of the representation, equality and compensating dimensions.

Calibrating the conditions

To calibrate our conditions, we use the direct method of calibration discussed earlier, with the exception of the presence of law and of union ideology, where we use instead the theoretical calibration.

The job security of permanent workers (condition 1) relies on the OECD index of Employment Protection Legislation (EPL). Union density (condition 2) is captured by the share of unionized employees. We proxy strong collective bargaining rights (condition 3) using the share of employees covered by wage bargaining agreements. High

central union authority (condition 4) relies on Visser (2013). Condition 5 on the presence of regulation of temporary work is coded as a fuzzy set using the EIRO database (we also created and used a crisp version of this condition). For condition 6, we rely on the share of temporary workers in the economy because of limited data availability; however, it is plausible that unions would shape their strategies towards TAWs in the context of the broader problem of temporary work.

Our measure of union class ideology (condition 7) is based on secondary literature concerning ideological orientations and strategies. We have categorized the labour movements of the 14 countries in our study along Hyman's (2001) triptych 'class, market and society'. We code working-class ideology as a fuzzy set as there are ideological differences between national union confederations and there is never a perfect overlap between the ideal type and the actual union. The labour movements included in the set of working-class oriented unions have at least one working-class oriented confederation, which engages in collective bargaining. This seems to us to be a conservative threshold, consistent with the fact that one confederation alone could potentially sign collective agreements for TAWs, therefore influencing the overall bargaining process.

Because ideology is difficult to identify robustly and reliably, we also used an externally reliable proxy. We choose Visser's index of effective number of confederations and assume that the presence of two or more confederations – where both have significant membership – is likely to be associated with the presence of at least one union confederation with a working-class orientation. These robustness checks can also be found in the Appendix (online).

Findings from QCA

We first identify necessary conditions for the presence of our outcome and then discuss the alternative sufficient paths which emerge from our analysis. These are presented in Table 2. Two conditions have a consistency score higher than 0.9, suggesting these might be necessary conditions for union inclusiveness towards TAWs: high bargaining coverage (in bold) and high union authority. However, while high authority of union confederations over their sectoral unions seems at first necessary, the analysis of an XY plot suggests that the condition is trivial because it is present in both outcome and non-outcome cases (see figures A1 and A2 in the Appendix (online)) (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012: 235 ff.). As a result, we do not consider this a necessary condition. Other models including variables such as bargaining centralization were also run but yield weaker results, so are not reported for reasons of parsimony.

In order to identify sufficient paths to inclusiveness, we first run a model including the necessary condition (bargaining coverage) and three conditions: the share of temporary workers, union density and low EPL. This first model (Model 1, Table A8 of the Appendix (online)) yields two paths: one comprising not-high temporary work, not-low EPL, high union density and high bargaining coverage, which covers Denmark and Belgium, while the other comprising high density, high bargaining coverage, high temporary work and low EPL covers Finland and Sweden. The model exhibits a high consistency (0.97) but a low coverage (0.60).

Table 2. Necessary conditions for union inclusiveness.

Conditions tested	Consistency	Coverage
High density	0.683153	0.809524
Low EPL	0.611540	0.651840
High union fragmentation	0.563112	0.895168
High bargaining coverage	0.973210	0.673440
High temporary work	0.654817	0.699120
High union authority	0.958784	0.516944
High law (crisp)	0.618753	0.444815
High law (fuzzy)	0.607934	0.595960
Working-class ideology	0.546110	0.803030

Note: Bold values indicate necessary conditions.

Next, we replace temporary work with whether laws are in place (both crisp and fuzzy conditions: see Models 2 and 3 in Table A8). The coverage improves (0.66) while consistency falls (0.90) and our paths are altered: the first path (high bargaining coverage, high density, not-high laws) covers Finland, Sweden and Denmark, while the second path (high bargaining coverage, high union density, not-low EPL) covers Denmark and Belgium. These models therefore do not allow us to explain union inclusiveness in Southern Europe.

Replacing the presence of law, by working-class ideology, results in a better model as shown in Model 1 of Table 3. The first path covers Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Belgium and occurs through high bargaining coverage, not-working-class ideology and high union density (0.99 consistency and 0.62 raw coverage). The second path explains France, Italy and Spain and comprises high bargaining coverage, not-low density and not-low EPL, as well as working-class ideology (0.87 consistency and 0.37 raw coverage). The overall consistency score for this solution is 0.93 and the coverage is higher than before (0.82).

Replacing low EPL by temporary work does not affect the presence of the two paths but the coverage is lower, so we discard this model (Model 6, Table A8). Replacing low EPL by law in Model 1 shows that law is a component of the Southern path (Model 2). Overall consistency remains around 0.93 and coverage remains around 0.82. The raw coverage and consistency scores of the Southern path are slightly lower than before.

Next, we add high union authority to the four conditions that constituted Model 1, which becomes part of both the Southern and the Northern paths (Model 3). Even though the overall coverage is slightly lower (0.78), the consistency scores for the model and the paths remain similarly high. When substituting low EPL by the presence of law, coverage (0.79) and consistency (0.92) remain more or less the same (Model 4). This model is included in the table because it still scores high and, following logical reasoning, it is the most 'complete' as it includes all conditions whose presence was identified as relevant. The Ghent path now comprises high bargaining coverage, high union authority, not-working-class ideology and high density. This path has a consistency of 0.99 and raw coverage of 0.59. The Southern path comprises high bargaining coverage, not-high density, working-class ideology, high union authority and high law. This path has a consistency of 0.86 and a raw coverage of 0.35.

Table 3. Sufficient paths.

Model	QCA	Overall solution	Paths	Consistency	Coverage
1	High bargaining coverage, high density, low EPL, working-class ideology	Consistency: 0.926316 Coverage: 0.816074	High bargaining coverage*high density*not working-class ideology (BE, DK, FI, SE)	0.988477	Raw: 0.618753 Unique: 0.442555
			High bargaining coverage*not high density*not low EPL*working-class ideology (ES, FR, IT)	0.866189	Raw: 0.373519 Unique: 0.197321
2	High bargaining coverage, high density, working-class ideology, high law	Consistency: 0.926445 Coverage: 0.817620	High bargaining coverage*high density*not-working-class ideology (BE, DK, FI, SE)	0.988477	Raw: 0.618753 Unique: 0.467285
			High bargaining coverage*not high union density*working-class ideology*high law (ES, FR, IT)	0.858586	Raw:0.350335 Unique: 0.198867
3	High bargaining coverage, high union density, working-class ideology, high union authority, low EPL	Consistency: 0.923497 Coverage: 0.783617	High bargaining coverage*high density*not working-class ideology*high union authority (BE, DK, FI, SE)	0.987847	Raw: 0.586296 Unique: 0.411643
			High bargaining coverage*not high density*working-class ideology*high union authority*not low EPL (ES, FR, IT)	0.865707	Raw: 0.371973 Unique: 0.197321
4	High bargaining coverage, high union density, working-class ideology, high union authority, high law	Consistency: 0.923636 Coverage: 0.785162	High bargaining coverage*high union density*not working-class ideology*high union authority (BE, DK, FI, SE)	0.987847	Raw: 0.586296 Unique: 0.434827
			High bargaining coverage*not high density*working-class ideology*high union authority*high law (ES, FR, IT)	0.858586	Raw: 0.350335 Unique: 0.198867

Note: other models were tried but performed less well (see Table A7 in the Appendix (online)).

As a robustness check, we rerun all our analysis substituting working-class ideology by our alternative proxy, which is a measure of the fragmentation of the union movement in each country. The results do not change substantively (see Models 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19 and 21 in Table A8).

Back to country cases

We now discuss how our results are qualitatively consistent with the cross-national variation in inclusiveness across country cases. Note that we cannot illustrate in detail the ‘exclusionary cases’ because fsQCA only shows causal paths leading to inclusiveness. We discuss both the Ghent path and the Southern path. While the former path is consistent with the existing literature, the latter path is novel; therefore, following best practice for fsQCA (Schneider and Rohlfing, 2013), we dedicate a subsection to the analysis of the causal mechanism by focusing on the Italian case.

Country overviews

Six cases score as exclusionary towards TAWs: Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Even though the absence of conditions does not necessarily lead to exclusiveness (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012), we briefly discuss here the differences between these cases and the inclusive cases along several dimensions. In Austria, Ireland and the United Kingdom, the proportion of temporary workers in the whole workforce is comparatively low, which might partly explain the limited union efforts for TAWs. The German DGB (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*) has limited authority over the agenda-setting of its sectoral unions, confirming the argument of the dualization literature that the prominence of unions in German export-oriented sectors led the labour movement to neglect outsiders’ interests (Hassel, 2014; Palier and Thelen, 2010). Regarding ideology, the literature on union strategies has highlighted tendencies towards the market within the labour movement of all cases except Portugal (see Table A4). Finally, the low bargaining coverage rates in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the United Kingdom (Visser, 2013) show that these national labour movements have limited power to achieve encompassing agreements for TAWs.

The Northern path comprises Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Belgium. Low employment protection and the proportion of temporary employees, which varies from 9 percent in Belgium to 16 percent in Finland (OECD, 2000), do not seem particularly relevant in these cases. In contrast, the countries display high density rates, between 50 percent in Belgium and 80 percent in Sweden, and high bargaining coverage, ranging from 77 percent in Denmark to 96 percent in Belgium (Visser, 2013). All these labour movements also display high central authority, which allows the coordination of the policies of member unions. Thus, the Northern path follows the expectation of insider–outsider theories in regard to union density but, most of all, of the power resources approach. It shows that a strong and centralized labour movement is inclusive towards TAWs, confirming the traditional association between the Ghent system and egalitarian workers’ outcomes (Rueda and Pontusson, 2000; Thelen, 2014).

Low employment protection and high density were not relevant to the Southern path, as France, Italy and Spain have comparatively high employment protection for permanent workers and medium to low density. These findings contrast with the expectations of the dualization literature and (partly) of the power resources approach. All three countries possess a large temporary work sector (over 30% in Spain) and an encompassing legislative framework setting equal pay for TAWs and the provision of training in all three countries, a flexibility bonus in France and an indemnity for availability in Italy and in France (Arrowsmith, 2009). The high levels of regulation reflect the expectations of the political economy literature, which claims that the state in Mediterranean countries has an important regulatory role in the labour market (Schmidt, 2003). Furthermore, the national labour movement includes at least one working-class-oriented union in each country (Accornero, 1992; Martínez Lucio, 2003; Vlandas, 2013b). This means that at least one of the unions within the labour movement wants to represent and protect all workers for ideological rather than only for strategic reasons.

The Italian case

The Italian case allows us to explore in greater depth the causal mechanism. We draw on secondary literature and on eight interviews conducted between 2011 and 2012 with officials of the atypical workers' unions, as well as with union officials in the manufacturing sector (metal-working) and in services (telecommunications).

The Italian unions score 0.67 on the inclusiveness index. Union density of temporary workers is low (10%) compared to the whole workforce (around 30%). However, the three confederations CGIL (*Confederazione generale italiana del lavoro*), CISL (*Confederazione italiana sindacati lavoratori*) and UIL (*Unione italiana del lavoro*) created unions for atypical workers at the end of the 1990s (NIdiL, FeLSA and CPO, now Tem.p@). These unions signed the first collective agreement for TAWs in 1998 (since renewed twice) to promote the principle of equal pay already set by law, covering working hours, job classifications and leave. The 1998 agreement was the basis for the bilateral training institution *Formatemp*, jointly managed by unions and employers; and the additional bilateral fund *Ebitemp*, which provides the indemnity for availability of €700 per month to TAWs (Leonardi, 2008; Pulignano et al., in press).

These provisions exceeded the legislative requirements and were fundamental for their implementation. Previous legislation had already set the principle of equal pay and created a training fund (1997 Treu law) and contained provisions for availability (2003 Biagi law). However, the legislative provisions were so general that they resulted in an 'implementation vacuum' the social partners had to fill (Johnston et al., 2011: 356). The collective agreements also preceded the law on indemnity (Burroni and Pedaci, 2014).

The institutionalized bargaining rights ensure the independence of union power from the membership, allowing unions to pursue solidaristic goals independently of the commitment of (atypical) workers to the union. A union official involved in the campaigns for precarious workers in call centres (including TAWs) pointed out that the union does not run campaigns only for its members or for recruiting but rather for improving the working conditions of the workforce.

This propensity for encompassing bargaining also reflects Italian unions' identities and internalized values. They are oriented 'between class and society' (Hyman, 2001: 143), which is expressed in support and solidarity also to marginal workers in the name of 'working-class unity'. However, their ideologies are different: CISL is catholic, while UIL has socialist roots. CGIL, which is the biggest union confederation and leads the initiatives towards TAWs (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011: 301), was the former communist confederation, and still is the most left-wing organization with its identity built around 'the defence of workers' rights' (Hyman, 2001: 165). A NidiL official explained that the idea of bargaining for the whole workforce is deeply rooted in the purposes and strategies of the union, which he sees as 'tying everyone together' to avoid 'locking themselves in a stronghold'.

This crucial working-class orientation is also linked to the confederal structure. The unions organize the workforce vertically across occupations, and in every sector there are three different unions affiliated to each confederation. All sectoral unions are committed to the principle of confederalism, which implies that unions within the same confederation cannot strike collective bargaining agreements that diverge excessively. Thus, according to a NidiL union official, it is in the nature of confederal unions to represent all workers without discrimination (Durazzi, 2013).

All conditions in the Southern path can be causally related to the outcome in the Italian case. The ability of unions to set homogenous standards for the workforce is necessary to adopt solidaristic bargaining policies which do not serve particularistic membership interests. The law provides a general framework, which unions use to achieve often more generous provisions through collective agreements. Finally, unions' bargaining strategies are driven by their working-class orientation and rest on a confederal structure that allows unions to pursue the ideal of working-class unity.

Discussion

We have investigated the variation in union inclusiveness of TAWs in Western Europe, developing a measure of union inclusiveness combining the union density of temporary workers with collective agreements for TAWs. Our first contribution is therefore to provide a systematic picture of union inclusiveness across countries. This reveals a puzzling cross-national pattern, which could not easily be explained by the existing literature: while union inclusiveness in Ghent countries seems consistent with *a priori* expectations of the power resources approach and insider–outsider literature, some Southern European countries display an unexpectedly high level of inclusiveness.

We then carried out a systematic cross-national investigation of the necessary conditions for union inclusiveness towards TAWs. The fsQCA identified high bargaining coverage as a necessary condition, suggesting that strong bargaining rights are crucial for unions' ability to undertake inclusive strategies, consistent with the power resources perspective (Korpi, 1983). High confederal authority, which is present in both paths, also confirms that centralized decision-making contributes to a more encompassing labour movement. By contrast, our results contradict the expectation of the dualization literature that low employment protection is necessary for union inclusiveness towards TAWs

(Rueda, 2007). The relevance of collective bargaining coverage, instead, suggests that insiders' institutions can also be used to deliver outcomes for outsiders (Oliver, 2010).

Our analysis has found two causal paths to inclusiveness: the 'Northern path', which combines high bargaining coverage with high union authority and high density, is consistent with the power resources approach and only partly with insider–outsider theory. The 'Southern path', which involves high bargaining coverage, high union authority and working-class ideology (and also the presence of law in a slightly weaker path), points to the relevance of labour movement ideology. The presence of state legislation in this path is consistent with the notion that the state can provide a 'helping hand' to unions in regulating increasingly flexible labour markets (Burrioni and Pedaci, 2014; Thelen, 2014).

The difference in causal mechanisms between the Ghent and the Southern paths are best explained with reference to distinct 'logics of action' of labour movements. In the Ghent countries, the insider–outsider approach suggests that unions' preferences are influenced by the outsiders, who are well represented among their membership. In France, Italy and Spain, unions bargain following their working-class ideology, which is reflected in solidaristic policies. Thus, while existing literature describe a representational logic of strategy formation towards contingent workers (as in the Northern path), we find that Southern unions formulate their strategies following their ideological orientations.

Finally, our article contributes to a growing literature pointing at the need to combine institutional and cultural/ideological factors for explaining unions' bargaining strategies. National identities and culture have been most often included in explanations for building cross-national solidarities and transnational bargaining, or failing to do so (Meardi, 2011; Pernicka and Glassner, 2014); however, recent literature has also shown that union identity should be included in cross-national analyses of unions' attitudes towards the marginal workforce (Marino, 2012; Papadopoulos, 2014; Pulignano and Doerflinger, 2013). Our findings on the relevance of working-class ideology for the Southern path corroborate the potential of this research perspective.

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