



Most updated Document - incorporating feedback we are receiving after submission

A Post-Growth Deal for Italy

Exploring the Coalition-Building Potential of Post-Growth Non-Reformist Reforms

11.03.2025

Master thesis in *Political Ecology, Degrowth, and Environmental Justice* 2023-24 (ICTA-UAB)

Students: Arcuri Federico, Paglia Carlotta

Supervisors: Dallas O'Dell (ICTA-UAB), Charles Stevenson (ICTA-UAB)

Co-Supervisor: Riccardo Mastini (Politecnico di Milano)

Output: Academic study

Abstract

Starting from the wide review of degrowth policies developed in the last years and found in the literature (e.g. the review carried out by Fitzpatrick et al. 2022), we would like to develop a policy package for postgrowth in Italy and understand its perception by activists and the broader public. We situate our research in collaboration to the REAL project, exploring a Post-Growth Deal, in the intersection between the *policies* and *politics* research theme. The hypothesis is that the popularity of post-growth policies, conceptualized as *non-reformist reforms* (Mastini, 2021), will be useful to create momentum around emancipatory degrowth values and forge critical masses, alliances of different social groups and mobilize bottom-up power. A post-growth and degrowth narrative might help to create a united trans-environmental, feminist, anti-capitalist and decolonial front, which is deemed as necessary by many also to address the rise of far-right parties. We want to understand if this is true, in the context of Italy, which would have significant political implications in times of neo-fascist revivals, fragmentation within the left and low participation in electoral politics. Thus, we ask: how can a post-growth policy package help to delineate a clear emancipatory discursive tool to facilitate the formation of a trans-environmental, anti-capitalist, feminist and decolonial alliance in Italy? We focus on three target groups: social movements, working syndicates and political party members. To address this question, we create a theoretical and analytical framework, our hypothetical “Post-growth Deal for Italy”, and then analyze the perception of such a policy package by the three above-mentioned groups. In particular, we focus on the proposals of universal care income, universal public services, green job guarantee, deliberative forums and working time reduction as “non-reformist reforms” around which to lay the foundations for an eco-social transition. We would also like to attempt at drafting a small, initial contribution to the emerging discussion about a post-growth deal through a qualitative analysis of perceptions to a post-growth deal in the Italian context. The idea for this project stems from our involvement in the Italian degrowth movements and activism within like-minded movements in Italy, and our willingness to carry on this commitment through our TFM.

Choice of output formats and contextualization

The primary output of this research is the Master's thesis, which is presented in a detailed, academic format suitable for an audience of scholars, policymakers, and activists interested in degrowth and post-growth strategies. The thesis is structured to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research question, including a literature review, methodology, results, and discussion. The inclusion of focus group transcripts, survey data, and visualizations (e.g., charts and tables) enhances the accessibility of the research, making it easier for readers to engage with the data and draw their own conclusions. The thesis also includes annexes that provide additional context, such as examples of existing policies in Italy, detailed descriptions of the focus group design, and a broader research agenda for future studies. We plan to translate it into a 8000-words analysis article to be submitted to the journal *Ecological Economics*. In addition to the academic output, we are planning other outputs as outlined in the [TFM Proposal](#), including a policy brief and a series of blog posts. The policy brief will distill the key findings of the research into a concise, accessible format aimed at policymakers and practitioners. It highlights the coalition-building potential of work-centered policies like WTR and GJG, while also addressing the challenges associated with policies like UCI and Deliberative Forums (DF). The brief is designed to provide actionable recommendations for integrating post-growth policies into political agendas, particularly in the Italian context.

REAL Project

This thesis is aligned with the *REAL - A Post-Growth Deal* research project, given that we received funding and guidance from its members. This is a major initiative funded by the European Research Council (ERC) that investigates how a just post-growth transition can be achieved, ensuring well-being for all while respecting planetary boundaries. The thesis tries to bridge the post-growth policies and politics research focuses of the REAL project. Post-growth policies focus on designing frameworks for economic and social transformation, such as reducing working hours, introducing universal basic services, and redefining prosperity beyond GDP. Post-growth politics, on the other hand, explores how movements, institutions, and geopolitical dynamics can align to drive a transition beyond growth. This research contributes to this agenda by examining the coalition-building potential of a post-growth policy package in Italy. Our work tries to draw on the work of our supervisors (see O'Dell et al., 2025) and of our professors, including the concept of Universal Care Income (UCI) proposed by Giacomo D'Alisa and Filka Sekulova.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the culmination of a collective journey: we are grateful to everyone who supported, challenged, and inspired us along the way.

First and foremost, we thank our supervisors, Charles Stevenson and Dallas O'Dell, for their guidance and belief in our project, and especially for the time and energy dedicated to giving us feedback and reading our texts, which were never short reads. To Riccardo Mastini, our third supervisor, also thank you for your support. We extend our gratitude to our friend and “co-supervisor” Hugo Abad Frías, without whom we wouldn't have had the idea of connecting the idea of the social conditions necessary for environmental regulations with deeper philosophical reflections about ontology and resonance.

To our classmates in the Master's program, thank you for creating a space of radical learning and solidarity—this work is as much yours as it is ours. The professors and staff at ICTA-UAB and the *Research and Degrowth* collective provided not only academic rigor but also a nurturing environment for our ideas to flourish. Special thanks to the members of the REAL Project, particularly to our interlocutor Giorgos Kallis, for funding our focus groups and believing in our project.

Crucially, this thesis would not exist without the trust and collaboration of actors in Italy's degrowth movement. To Associazione Decrescita, Movimento per la Decrescita Felice, Benvenuti in Italia, and the individuals who opened doors for us—Daniele, Simone, Mauro, Karl, Margherita, Michel, Mario, Paolo, Maria Elena, Nello, Silvio, and many others—thank you for refining our policies, sharing your wisdom, and reminding us that another world is possible. To Bruno, Kathleen, Lisa, Marta, Luana, and the editors of *Quaderni della Decrescita*, thank you for laying the groundwork for this research through our earlier collaborations, especially with the research presented in Pontevedra. To Luca, Maria, and the rest of the GEV Post-Growth Platform team, our conversations and our work together have shaped our study.

We are indebted to the participants from CGIL, Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Ecologia Politica, Mutuo Soccorso, and other collectives who shared their time, critiques, and dreams during our focus groups. To Cascinet and Ferrobedò in Milan, thank you for offering radical spaces where these conversations could thrive.

To our friends—your laughter, debates, and late-night conversations sustained us. To our parents—your unconditional support gave us the courage to pursue this unconventional path.

Finally, to each other.

Grazie mille to all who made this possible and were not cited here.

— Carlotta & Federico

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: A Post-Growth Deal: What, and Why?

2.1 A Post-Growth Deal: Why?	3
2.1.2 Perceptions of degrowth policies	5
2.2 A post-Growth Deal: What?	5
2.2.1 A post-Growth Deal: first-generation policies	7
Universal Care Income	9
Universal Basic Services	9
Working Time Reduction	10
Green Job Guarantee	11
Deliberative Forums and citizens assemblies	11
The complementarity of post-growth policies	12

Chapter 3: A Post-Growth Deal for Italy

3.1 Setting the stage	13
3.2 The target groups in the Italian context	13
3.3 Situating a “Post-Growth Deal” framework in the Italian context: Examples of the five policies in Italy	17

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Research Design	29
4.2 Focus Group Design and Analysis	30
4.3 Survey design and Analysis	35

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Analysis	41
5.2 Discussion	51
5.2.1 The centrality of work	51
5.2.2 Divergent views: between and within target groups	52
5.2.3 Implications for coalition-building	52
5.2.5 Recommendations	53

Limitations	54
-------------	----

Conclusion	55
------------	----

Bibliography	57
--------------	----

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

1. **Table 1**– Summary of our five policies. Source: own elaboration, drawing on Kallis et al. (2025) and others.
2. **Table 2** – Summary of WTR proposals in Italy in the last 3 years. Source: own elaboration
3. **Table 3** – A synthesis of the content of our Focus group.
4. **Table 4** – Summary of survey questions and response categories.

Figures

1. **Figure 1** – “From 1st Generation to 2nd generation eco-social policies”. Source: Abad Frias, 2024
2. **Figure 2** – “A Post-Growth Deal for Italy: the general framework”. Source: own elaboration, including visualization by Olk et al., 2023
3. **Figure 3** – Visualization of our analysis. Source: own elaboration
4. **Figure 4** - Demographic Breakdown
5. **Figure 5** – Question 1: “How aligned are you personally with the objective of this proposal?”
6. **Figure 6** – Question 2: “How effective do you think this proposal is to reach its stated objective?”
7. **Figure 7** - Question 5: “Does this policy align with or complement the demands of your group/organization?”
8. **Figure 8** - Question 6: “if your organization was preparing a mediatic campaign, how likely would it be that it included this proposal?”
9. **Figure 9** - Question 7: “if your organization was preparing a mediatic campaign, how likely would it be that it included this proposals

List of Annexes

[Annex 1](#): Focus on Possible Environmental regulations (2nd Generation policies) and tentative timelines

[Annex 2](#): Pillars of Degrowth: what are they, and how do the policies try to meet them?

[Annex 3](#): *Uncomplete*

[Annex 4](#): Results of Pilot focus groups - C fatto

[Annex 5](#): An extensive review on Universal Basic Services

[Annex 6](#): “How to pay?”

[Annex 7](#): “The policies complement each other”

Annex 8: *Uncomplete*

[Annex 9](#): Scripts of our focus group

[Annex 10](#): Transcripts of our focus groups

[Annex 11](#): How did we select and structure our focus groups?

[Annex 12](#): Code-book, Matrix, simplifications

[Annex 13](#): Survey Graphs

[Annex 14](#): Pictures

[Annex 15](#): Demographic Breakdown Survey

[Annex 16](#): “Narrative simplifications” of focus group analysis

[Annex 17](#): Ethics and confidentiality form, signed by all participants

1. Introduction

“The old world is dying. The new one is slow to appear. And in this interregnum, monsters are born”, wrote Italian intellectual and politician Antonio Gramsci in 1930 from a fascist prison. Gramsci saw fascism as a symptom of an “organic crisis”, where the ruling class, no longer hegemonic and unable to secure mass consent, resorted to coercive domination to maintain power. He described it as a “passive revolution”, a top-down, authoritarian restructuring to preserve capitalist power during crises. Despite the many years distancing us from when Gramsci was writing, it is striking to observe how relevant his words still are today.

The liberal world order - centred on representative democracy and free-market capitalism, under the banner of western universalist values - seems to have become obsolete. The rise of anti-NATO and anti-UN right-wing politics in both the United States (U.S.) and the European Union (EU) are the most visible signs of this crisis. The fundamental contradiction rooted in this system lies in its dual commitment to capitalism and principles of democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability. When forced to choose, liberal institutions consistently prioritize capital over people: slashing public services to appease markets (Harvey, 2005), undermining labor rights under austerity regimes (Blyth, 2013), or greenlighting fossil fuel projects despite climate pledges (Klein, 2014). This hypocrisy erodes public trust, fueling perceptions of liberals as “sneering” elites who rely on incremental changes, at best, to avoid systemic change (Brown, 2015). Today’s multifaceted crisis might be considered as a modern interregnum where capitalism’s contradictions (e.g. GDP growth versus finite resources and widening inequalities) and their effects (anger, fear, depoliticization) are evident.

Even though the need for a change of paradigm becomes increasingly clear, we are confronted with a crisis of imagination. With the rise of neoliberal ideology and the reframing of the state’s role from ensuring social welfare to enabling market freedom through privatization and deregulation (Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009) - the idea that there is no viable alternative to capitalism has become predominant (Fisher, 2009). The increasing awareness of the contradictions of capitalism, combined with the sense of powerlessness generated by the conviction that the current system cannot be changed, is producing in many people a sort of cognitive dissonance - the mental stress of holding contradictory beliefs (Festinger, 1957). This dissonance risks generating the “monsters” evoked by Gramsci.

Even though the narrative of capitalism is pervasive and alternative worldviews are being constantly silenced, many other possibilities exist (see Kothari et al., 2019). One of those is degrowth. Degrowth has been defined in many ways. Parrique (2024) synthesized these definitions in five key elements: (1) a downscaling of production and consumption (2) to reduce ecological footprints, (3) planned democratically (4) in a way that is equitable (5) while securing wellbeing. Degrowth borrows from existing strands of critical theory highlighting that endless economic growth and the logic of profit maximization are the common root of different systemic crises and systems of oppression. These crises are tied together by what in this work we define as the four main pillars of degrowth—feminist, decolonial, ecological, and marxist critiques of reality. At its core, economic growth depends on the undervaluation of key inputs—human labor and natural resources—to maximize profit (Harvey, 2005). The feminist critique adds that unpaid care work—essential for social reproduction—is systematically undervalued (Fraser, 2013). If care work were fairly compensated, the cost of labor would rise, threatening the profitability that GDP growth relies on (Federici, 2012). Similarly, the decolonial critique exposes how growth depends on the exploitation of resources and labor from the countries of the Global South, perpetuating neocolonial extractivism to maintain cheap inputs for Northern economies (Hickel, 2020), making our lifestyle an imperial mode of living (Brand et al., 2017). Finally, the ecological crisis stems from treating nature as an infinite, free resource. If ecosystems were valued and compensated for their services, the cost of production would skyrocket, which would considerably hamper economic growth (Martínez-Alier,

2012). It is no surprise, then, that there is no empirical evidence that rich countries can keep growing GDP sustainably (EEB, 2023) - it would take them 200 years to reach the goal of net zero while doing so (Vogel et al., 2023).

In this paper, we focus on degrowth policies - those measures aimed at securing wellbeing without economic growth in high-income countries (see Kallis et al., 2025) - as a means to transition to post-capitalism, and we reflect on their interconnections with the politics of degrowth. We adopt the term post-growth, which is often considered as more palatable as it sidesteps the immediate negative connotations associated with degrowth in pro-growth discourse (Hickel, 2021). While there is optimism on the popularity of post-growth policies (Hickel, 2022), the research on how they are perceived by different social and political actors is still limited (O'Dell et al., 2025). Even fewer studies have contextualized these proposals within specific national or cultural settings, leaving a gap in understanding how degrowth ideas resonate in diverse contexts (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). Most of the research on post-growth has concentrated on Northern and Western Europe, with little attention given to Southern and Eastern European countries, where economic precarity, regional inequalities, and distinct political traditions may shape public attitudes towards economic transformation. Moreover, the literature on post-growth policies has not focused adequately on the politics behind implementing such policies. Research into its translation into political power and the strategic compromises necessary to build coalitions across divergent interests remains underdeveloped—a gap that risks relegating degrowth to political irrelevance (Bärnthaler 2024). Degrowth literature, thus, needs to confront the question of who will be the agents of the transition (Savini, 2024).

To address these gaps, the present study examines how post-growth policies are perceived by three target groups: grassroots environmental movements, progressive political parties and worker unions, focussing on the case-study of Italy. The country's fragmented left, rising far-right narratives, and regional inequalities provide a relevant example of whether post-growth policies can unify progressive actors in contexts where growth dependencies run deep. The North-South divide within the country, with its economic disparities and divergent political traditions, offers a microcosm of the broader European Union's challenges, where debates over austerity, green transitions, and social equity often clash. Thus, the central research question guiding this work is: **“How can a post-growth policy package serve as an emancipatory tool to help form a trans-environmental, anti-capitalist, feminist, and decolonial alliance in Italy?”** To operationalize the question, we develop a Post-Growth Deal for Italy - a Post-Growth policy package comprised of the following five policies found in the literature: Universal Care Income (UCI), Universal Basic Services (UBS), Working Time Reduction (WTR), Green Job Guarantee (GJG) and Deliberative Forums (DF).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: in chapter 2 we explain the rationale behind the construction of the policy package, with a critical review of the existing literature on degrowth strategy and on the perceptions of degrowth policies. Then, we delineate the five policies that constitute this policy package. Chapter 3 offers a contextualization of the package focusing on Italian history and socio-political environment. Chapter 4 provides a justification for the methodological choices, clarifying the research design, data collection methods and methods of analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the results of the analysis, followed by a discussion of the findings, how they answer the research question, and how they contribute to the broader discourse on post-growth and degrowth strategies.

We recognize ourselves as activists researchers committed to producing knowledge that serves social movements and fosters transformative change. We are both individuals that are active in the Italian Degrowth movement. Our aim is political: to allow the discussion about degrowth to leave its academic bubble and access other spaces, hence our choice of focus groups as a research method. For now, we want to signal that we are aware of how our unique positions in society affect both our initial motivation and our research itself.

2. A Post-Growth Deal: Why, and What?

2.1 A Post-Growth Deal: Why?

In the last years, degrowth scholarship has increasingly focussed on policy proposals, as demonstrated by the comprehensive review conducted by Fitzpatrick et al. (2022), who analyzed the degrowth literature published between 2005 and 2020, identifying a total of 530 degrowth policies.

The concept of “non-reformist reforms” has been used by different scholars to justify the revolutionary character of degrowth policies (Mastini et. al, 2021; Schmelzer et. al, 2022). Non-reformist reforms are those measures that, by challenging established power relations, create the conditions for long-lasting, revolutionary changes (Gorz, 1967). They are structural changes that do not merely ameliorate symptoms but undermine capitalist logics by reorienting production and distribution toward human needs rather than profit (Gorz, 1974; Kallis, 2018). Key criteria for identifying such reforms include challenging capital accumulation and expanding workers’ power, strengthening democratic control over resources. For example, Gorz cites the Viennese Gemeindebau program—a publicly funded housing initiative that expropriated private land for social use—as a non-reformist reform.

The focus on non-reformist reforms is a strategic choice: transformative change depends on integrating bottom-up movements with state mechanisms to establish new economic and social paradigms. This argument (see Barlow et al., 2024) follows Olin Wright’s (2010) theory of change, which centers on the idea of building alternative institutions that challenge existing power structures while simultaneously working within them to create progressive transformations. Wright distinguishes three transformation strategies: ruptural (revolutionary breaks), interstitial (grassroots alternatives, *nowtopias*), and symbiotic (non-reformist reforms), and posits them as complementary. Building on this approach, D’Alisa and Kallis (2020) address the paradox of reconciling support for grassroots initiatives with frequent calls for top-down action (Cosme et al. 2017; for further criticisms, see Fitzpatrick, 2024). They argue that this apparent contradiction stems from the fact that degrowth treats the state as static and external, leading to fragmented strategies—Interstitial strategies lack enforcement, while symbiotic ones underestimate cultural shifts. Applying Gramsci’s integral state theory - the idea that both civil society and political actors are integral components of the state - they highlight the complementarity of bottom-up and top-down efforts. Transformative change requires building counter-hegemony, meaning the process of challenging dominant ideologies and institutions by constructing alternative values, practices, and political structures. Alternative practices like food cooperatives contribute to this end, but structural barriers—land access, legislation, and market forces—limit impact. Thus, degrowth policies such as working-hour reductions, basic income, and rent controls are needed to create space for these initiatives to scale and reshape institutions. These non-reformist reforms simultaneously weaken capitalist logics (e.g., expropriating land for social housing) and build new norms (e.g., cooperatives redefining housing).

Thus, the debate on the strategy of degrowth has reached a point where the key question is whether popular consensus can be built around such a multifaceted strategy. The question arises of which actors should build the counter-hegemonic bloc bridging civil society and state structures. Addressing the question of agency, and asking who is going to be the subject of a degrowth transition, is now crucial. Savini (2024) argues that a coalition should be formed among diverse grassroots groups, urban planners, and civic organizations that can collectively contest the dominant growth paradigm. Agency, for him, needs to be diffused, rather than centralized. He uses the case of contested land use in The Netherlands (2025) to illustrate how grassroots struggles can generate alternative institutions, showing how the counter-hegemonic bloc envisioned by Gramsci must include not only environmental or

labor groups but also those involved in legal and spatial planning struggles. Savini argues that these coalitions must work both within and against the current institutional frameworks to gradually establish alternative norms and practices. Degrowth requires a broad social coalition, connecting with calls from the broader critical literature on the ecological crisis (e.g. Malm, 2021; Hornborg, 2017) and on working class environmentalism (e.g. Imperatore and Leonardi, 2023; Feltrin and Leonardi, 2023, Barca, 2020). This resonates with Hickel's point that proposals like working time reduction, universal basic services and job guarantee are desirable because they unite worker and environmental demands (2023).

Yet, this strategy still misses a practical dimension of coalition-building: compromise. Building on Buch-Hansen's (2018) framework—which identifies four prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift (a deep crisis, an alternative political project, a comprehensive coalition of social forces, and broad-based consent)—Bärnthaler (2024) reveals how discursive practices within the degrowth movement often sidestep the complexities of coalition-building. He identifies two ignored complexities when approaching degrowth strategy: compromise and the exercise of power. He draws a fifth prerequisite from Gramscian political theory: the will to coerce and rule, reframing hegemony not merely as a consent-based process but as one inherently stabilized by coercion, challenging degrowth advocates to confront the dialectical interplay of force and persuasion in societal transformation. Before working on how a counter-hegemonic coalition can coerce (or if it should), though, compromise is needed to build such a coalition in the first place. He defines hegemony as a *compromise-mediated* and *consent-based* process of exercising power. The search for compromises - defined as agreement areas that “maintain a sufficient connection with and integrate the common sense of different sections of the population (while also critically stretching it)” (p.8) and “involving some form of (moral) loss and a justified feeling of regret” (p.8) - is a precondition to build a coalitions of social forces.

The hypothesis behind a “Post-Growth Deal for Italy”

Combining the insights from the literature on degrowth strategy - calling for alliances around degrowth policies between environmental movements and workers, and civil and political actors - the present work investigates the coalition-building potential of post-growth policies. Degrowth discussions sometimes avoid hard truths, like working with people who disagree or using authority to enforce change. A counter-hegemonic degrowth coalition of social forces is needed - beyond communities of like-minded people. Building a degrowth counter-hegemonic coalition, thus, requires consent-based compromises. Post-growth policies can help: they can act as ideas or tools that are flexible enough to mean different things to different groups while still creating common ground. For example, a Green Job Guarantee might appeal to unions as a source of stable employment, while climate activists see it as a step toward ecological transition. By aligning on the shared goal of fulfilling essential human needs, post-growth policies offer a compromise platform that can integrate the common sense of different sections of society—even if each group interprets the policies differently. This shared commitment to basic needs thus becomes a cornerstone for building the kind of broad coalition that Gramsci envisions. Thus, **the hypothesis guiding the “Post-Growth Deal” framework is that degrowth/post-growth policy proposals can be an instrument to mobilize political power and to create alliances among grassroots environmental movements, workers and progressive politicians.** The word “Deal” positions this work in the tradition of attempts at bridging the degrowth policy agenda with the Green New Deal (GND) Packages, for instance the “Green New Deal without growth” (Mastini, 2021), or in the traditions of criticisms of mainstream GND frameworks from a decolonial marxist perspective (see Ajil, 2021).

To tackle this question, it is essential to shed light on the degree of support for such policies among the actors identified. Thus, in the next paragraph, we provide an overview of the literature on degrowth policy perceptions.

2.1.2 Perceptions on degrowth policies

Research on degrowth and post-growth policy perceptions is still scarce. In particular, as highlighted by Fitzpatrick et al. (2022), analyses contextualized to specific geographies are lacking. One notable exception is the work by O'Dell et al. (2025), who examined degrowth policy perceptions in the U.S.: they observed that sufficiency behaviors are connected to support for ecosocial policies and that working time reduction and universal healthcare coverage are widely supported. In another study surveying a representative sample of the Swedish population, Lee et al. (2023) explored the level of public support for various post-growth policies in the country. The authors found lower support for proposals setting maximum limits than for universal basic services (UBS). Also focussing on Sweden, Khan et al. (2023) analyzed public perceptions of five eco-social policies - working time reduction, wealth tax, maximum income tax, basic income, and meat tax. They observed that working time reduction is the most supported measure, a wealth tax is supported by around 40% of respondents, and the remaining three policies are met with skepticism, the meat tax being especially unpopular. Looking at how specific characteristics influence support for the policies, they found that lower-income individuals are more likely to support these policies, and university education and knowledge about climate change was associated with increased support for the meat tax. They also observed that left-wing political orientation was the strongest factor influencing support for the policies.

Other studies on degrowth and post-growth policy perceptions investigate how demographic factors influence support for these policies. Evidence shows that socio-economically disadvantaged groups are more likely to support income redistribution measures and the public provision of goods and services (see Paulson & Büchs, 2022; Vlandas, 2019). Looking at how personal views influence degrowth policy perceptions, Paulson and Büchs (2022) observed that holding strong environmental values does not increase support for redistributive policies, suggesting that individuals who are concerned about the environment do not necessarily uphold values of social justice. However, they argue that post-growth policies targeting the reduction of inequalities contribute to advancing post-growth values and in turn create the conditions for introducing measures aimed at reducing consumption. Policies like universal basic services, universal basic income and income guarantee would contribute to social justice by allowing more inclusive democratic participation, including in environmental action (Büchs, 2021). These positions are in line with the increasing emphasis in degrowth literature on the need to focus on reducing inequalities in order to make degrowth and post-growth policy proposals popular among the wider population (Hickel, 2023).

While these studies provide insightful information on the question of how degrowth policies are perceived among the general public, research on how degrowth and post-growth policies are perceived by groups critically positioned to advance a degrowth transition is still lacking. The present work aims to fill this gap in the literature, by looking at **how a post-growth deal for Italy is perceived by grassroots environmental movements, progressive politicians and worker unionists**. The next section provides a detailed overview of the policies included in the Post-Growth Deal for Italy.

2.2 A post-Growth Deal: What?

Combining insights from the literature with empirical observations on the current political landscape with a sharp rise of left-wing forces, the choice of policies included in the package is based on the assumption that measures aimed at reducing inequalities should be prioritized in order to create consensus for setting environmental limits. We draw from Abad Frias' (2024)'s observation that a post-growth agenda needs to follow a two-stage approach. As fig. 1 shows, the first step should be the implementation of a policy package focussed on creating the social and material condition to allow for a second policy package, introducing ecological limits. The strategy he suggests is based on the premise that

for degrowth to become politically viable and socially desirable, an ontological transformation is necessary. He envisions a transformation from the current ontology of separation—one that disconnects individuals from their interdependence with society and the environment, towards a relational ontology, in which well-being is understood not through material accumulation but through collective sufficiency, care, and ecological balance (Escobar, 2018; Rosa, 2019). First-generation policies - by ensuring economic stability and freeing up time for political participation, community-building, and alternative forms of livelihood - create the material and psychological conditions for this shift. After these foundational changes take root second-generation contractionary policies—such as resource caps, flight quotas, and stricter environmental regulations— can be successfully introduced without triggering backlash (Abad Frías, 2024). This staged approach is aimed at making the transition away from capitalist growth socially accepted, by embedding relational values into everyday life.

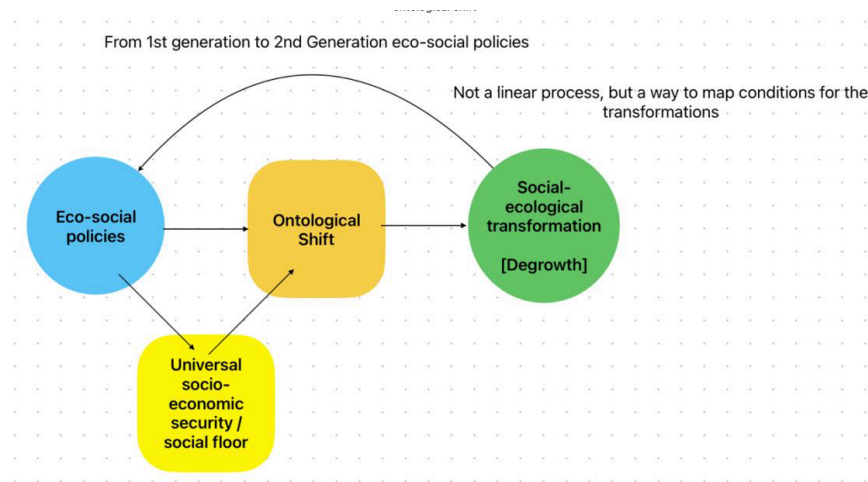


Figure 1 – “From 1st Generation to 2nd generation eco-social policies”. Source: Abad Frías, 2024

As shown in Fig. 2, the proposed Post-Growth framework is structured in two stages. First-generation policies, which are included in the package and consist of the five policies listed below, aim to reduce access to basic needs while promoting ecological sustainability. Second-generation policies aim to set environmental limits by focusing on sufficiency rather than efficiency, prioritizing reductions in material throughput and consumption. The approach to finance both first- and second-generation policies is based on Modern Monetary Theory (MMT), which allows for increased public spending while ensuring long-term sustainability (see Olk et al. 2023, and annex 6 for more reflection on this).

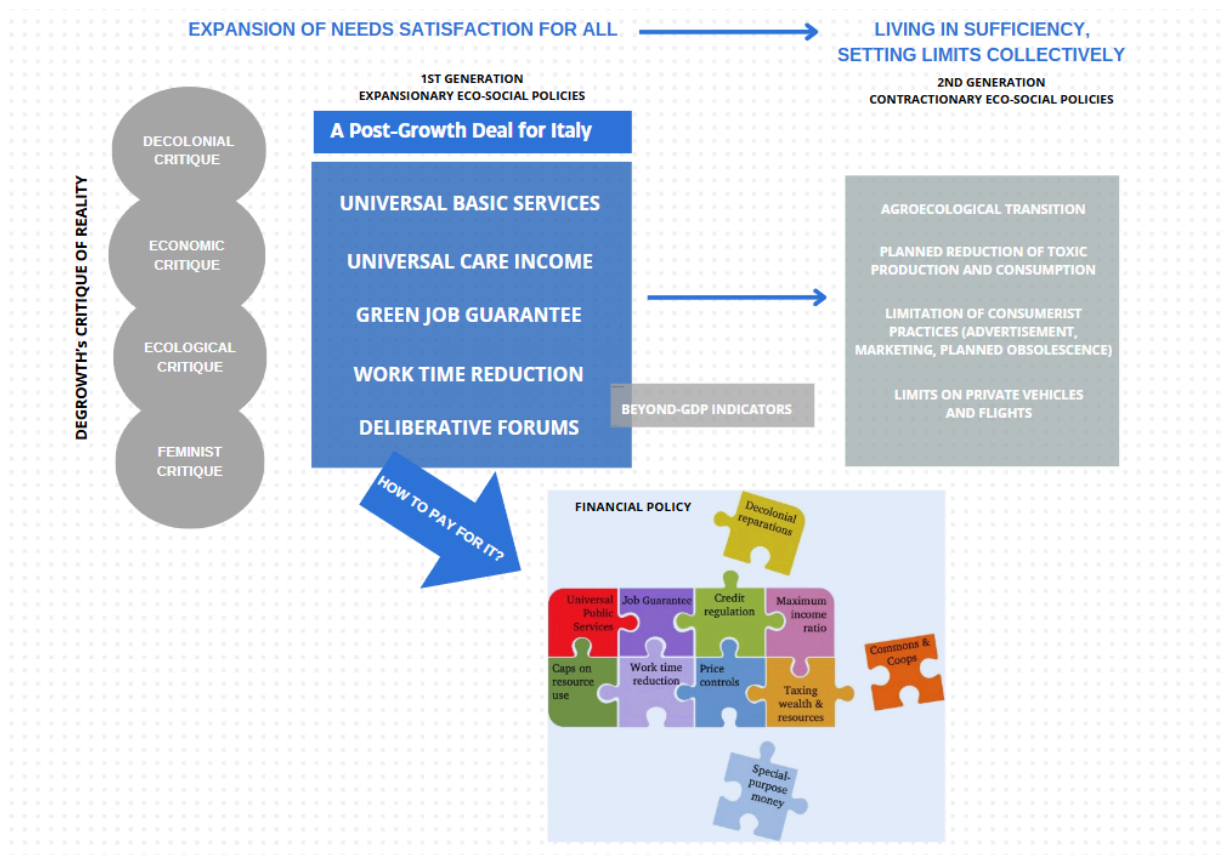


Figure 2 – “A Post-Growth Deal for Italy: the general framework”. Source: own elaboration, including visualization by Olk et al., 2023

2.2.1 A post-Growth Deal: first-generation policies

We now move to the content of the Post-Growth Deal for Italy, presenting each policy, defining their rationale and illustrating how they would interact with each other. Before presenting the rationale of the five policies in detail, and how they complement each other, we present the general framework of a Post-Growth Deal, summarized in the table below (Table 1). We designed these definitions referring to the existing literature (see Kallis et al., 2025) and then refined them through a set of pilot groups with three key stakeholders in the Italian Degrowth Movement (*Movimento Decrescita Felice*, *Associazione Decrescita*, *Benvenuti in Italia*).¹ We also added some virtuous examples (see more in Annex 1).

¹ We illustrate the results of our pilot focus groups, and how these results influenced our conceptualization of the policies, in Annex 4, and chapter 4

1st Generation Policy	Description
Universal Care Income (UCI)	An unconditional and undifferentiated monetary transfer that all people above 18 years of age should receive every month – e.g. 60% of the median income in a country, i.e. at least €1,622 in Italy. ² It recognizes the essential role of care work in ensuring the well-being of people, communities and the environment. It is: a) Individual: received directly by each person rather than by the household; b) Unconditional: it does not depend on labour market participation or the fulfillment of specific conditions; 3) Universal: paid to all adults with no exceptions. We propose a care instead of basic income to underline the centrality of reproductive and subsistence labour for the functioning of society.
Universal Basic Services (UBS)	A provisioning system that guarantees decommodified (i.e. for free or at very low price) access to basic services for all members of society. It is: a) Universal: everyone is entitled to services needed to meet their needs, regardless of their ability to pay; b) Basic: essential and sufficient (rather than minimal) to enable people to meet their needs; Services: collectively generated activities that serve the public interest. It includes the following services: housing, water, food, energy, healthcare, transport, communication, and education. Based on existing best practices, the Italian state should fund the provisioning systems above and guarantee a high degree of autonomy in their organization by incentivizing their organization in cooperative forms.
Working Time Reduction (WTR)	Mandatory reduction of the working week to a maximum of 32 hours (possibly over 4 days) without pay cuts, aimed to decouple well-being from productivity and reduce carbon footprints. A national WTR Commission under the Ministry of Labor will enforce sector-specific guidelines, with regional labor councils adapting rules for local contexts For the private sector: - Tax incentives: 20% corporate tax cuts for compliant firms [Belgium's 2022 tax rebate model]. - Penalties: 1–5% fines for non-compliance after a 3-year grace period [France's progressive penalty system]. - Job-sharing subsidies: State-funded hiring support to offset reduced hours [France's chômage partiel scheme]. The public sector will transition to 32-hour weeks by 2026 [Iceland's public sector trials, 2015–2019]. Overtime caps at 8 hours/month (200% wage) [Iceland's 2021 overtime rules] and lowered retirement age to 60 reduce workforce strain.
Green Job Guarantee (GJG)	A permanent, state-funded, and locally administered program that supplies voluntary employment opportunities on demand for all who are ready and willing to work at a living wage ³ . The State would guarantee funds for employment with the following conditions: a reduced working time (32-hours working week); a living wage; Re-training for people employed in sectors than need to be scaled down as a consequence of the degrowth transition. Types of jobs: renewable energy infrastructures, building retrofitting, climate adaptation, nature conservation, community-supported agro-ecological projects, common kitchens, repair centers, child and elderly care programs. A GJG should be coordinated locally through democratic administration, alongside citizens' assemblies.
Deliberative Forums (DF)	The state facilitates, with financial resources and infrastructures, the creation of bodies that enhance the democratic participation of citizens, following a sociocratic model. Feminist facilitation seminars and non-violent communication education is provided to all so that facilitation tasks can be rotated and designed to guarantee outcomes that are both efficient and equitable. The forums can be designed to discuss specific topics (e.g. the eco-social transition), or to manage the functioning of provisioning systems under a UBS framework. Depending on the size of a municipality and of given provisioning systems, deliberative forums adhere to either neighborhood or whole cities, which in turn respond to regional bodies

² Recalculating based on an average annual gross wage of €32,450 in Italy, the estimated median monthly income is about €2,704. Taking 60% of this, the suggested unconditional transfer should be approximately €1,622 per month. Source: Own calculation; data from: ([Statista](#), 2024)

³ Wray et al. 2018, p. 35, as cited in Schneider and Stevenson, (Forthcoming)

Universal Care Income

The policy package includes a Universal Care Income (UCI), inspired by Sekoulova and D’Alisa’s proposal (2024). This version of UCI aims at recognizing care as a constitutive aspect of life, and valuing it as such. This broader understanding of care encompasses care for the community, which can take place in many different forms, from community gardens to disability support, and care for ecosystems. The proposal is centered on the notion of “freedom to care”, as opposed to the “freedom to enter the market” that characterizes many care-focused public policies. The UCI proposed by the authors consists of an unconditional and differentiated monetary transfer corresponding to all adults living in Europe every month, set at 60 percent of the median income of a country. It is differentiated because the sum granted to women would be higher than that given to men, as a compensation for the care debt accumulated by men towards women through the historically unequal distribution of care work. The emphasis on universality means there is no condition attached and anyone receives it, independently of their work status or other characteristics.

UCI is a variation of the Universal basic income (UBI), one of the most cited policy instruments in degrowth literature (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). Its proponents argue that measures of this kind contribute to reducing inequalities and guaranteeing the universal provision of human rights (Kallis et al., 2025). Decoupling livelihoods from wage labor, UBI can be seen as a non-reformist reform: rather than merely modifying the welfare state, it reconfigures the relationship between labor, income, and economic security (see Graeber, 2018). However, the UBI suffers from some limitations, from a degrowth perspective, by not adequately addressing gender disparities. For this reason, Care Income (CI)—a policy designed to compensate unpaid care labor and formally recognize its societal value (Vega et al., 2022)—has been proposed by feminist economists as a corrective. Yet, if designed as a compensation exclusively for people socialized as women and doing unpaid care work, CI itself can reinforce traditional gender roles and exacerbate time poverty (Ciepiński et al., 2023). Addressing these concerns, a Universal Care Income (UCI), blending UBI and CI, could better support equitable outcomes and a degrowth transition. The UCI included in the package is an undifferentiated universal care income for both men and women which recognizes that gender and sex are not binary (Thorne et al., 2020).

While the denomination is different, for the reasons highlighted above, the UCI proposed here is based on the same rationale as the UBI. In addition to valuing care work and its positive impact in terms of social justice and energy consumption, degrowth advocates argue that UBI could enable people to reduce their reliance on unsustainable forms of work, fostering a shift towards less resource-intensive lifestyles (Kallis et al., 2018). As suggested by Jackson and Victor (2018), by providing financial security without requiring paid labor, a basic income might support a transition towards more sustainable economic practices, allowing individuals to engage in community-focused and environmentally friendly activities. Following this logic, decoupling income from work challenges the growth-driven economic system.

Universal Basic Services

Universal Basic Services (UBS) is a policy framework that guarantees free access (or at very low price) to essential services— food, healthcare, education, housing, transport, energy, communication —for all citizens, funded by the State through progressive taxation. The central idea behind UBS is that these services are public goods and should be universally available to meet basic human needs, reducing reliance on market-based solutions and income transfers (Coote & Percy, 2020). This reduces the need for individuals to earn high incomes to access these services privately, thereby reducing the overall consumption of resources and generation of waste (see Kallis, 2018). By promoting collective provision and reducing competition for privatized resources, UBS fosters a more equitable distribution of wealth while maintaining environmental limits (Hickel, 2020).

Following Dengler (2022), a social policy for degrowth means creating “provisioning systems” that commonize care and that are not dependent on capitalist growth to ensure wellbeing. Through an “*Incremental, emancipatory commonization of care*” (p. 1), a common good, like care, needs to be reproduced to be shared (Commonization) so to erode the State-welfare structure (Emancipatory), encouraging the formation of grassroots commons, caring structures that can get rid of State-dependent provisioning systems with time (Incremental), eventually creating collective responsibility and resilience. This whole process needs to be incremental: starting from the reality of the present situation, the State needs to be used as a vehicle to create high-quality free provisioning systems, to avoid the risk of “Community Capitalism” - a dynamic where local or grassroots initiatives, though seemingly progressive, reproduce capitalist hierarchies by prioritizing market-friendly “self-reliance” over systemic redistribution, leaving marginalized groups excluded and care labor undervalued (Joseph, 2002)⁴. A UBS policy framework should avoid this by facilitating the incremental commonization of those infrastructures that allow our human needs to be satisfied, collectively.

Hickel identifies the following sectors that should be covered by UBS: food, healthcare, education, housing, transport, energy, communication (Hickel, 2023). Annex 5 provides a comprehensive overview of examples of UBS for each of these categories.

Working Time Reduction

Working Time Reduction (WTR) is one of the most cited degrowth policies (Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). It refers to policies that shorten workweeks or reduce daily working hours without lowering income.

By redistributing labor, WTR addresses unemployment, overwork, and the dominance of paid labor in people’s lives. It gives individuals time to rest, fostering social relations and community engagement while shifting the focus from economic output to well-being and collective prosperity (Schor, 2010). WTR also addresses systemic labor inequalities: growth-driven economies create both overwork and unemployment, reinforcing economic insecurity. Without growth, unemployment increases. WTR would mitigate this effect by distributing work more equally (Kallis, 2018).

Kallis recognizes that reducing working hours does not *per se* entail a reduction of production. If reduced working time leads to greater substitution of labor by energy-intensive machines and increased consumption, the total effect might have negative ecological consequences, at odds with degrowth objectives (2013). Moreover, a WTR might result in labor intensification, where workers are expected to maintain equal output with reduced time, thereby benefiting capital over labor (Kallis, 2017). Therefore, this policy must be implemented in combination, or followed by, sufficiency-oriented measures. From a feminist perspective, Weeks cautions that WTR could inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles if the additional free time predominantly shifts women from paid employment to unpaid domestic labor, thereby perpetuating existing inequalities (2011). Moreover, empirical studies suggest that WTR does not automatically lead to increased employment, challenging the assumption that reduced hours distribute work more equitably (Tsoukatou, 2019). These critiques underscore the necessity of implementing WTR alongside comprehensive post-growth policies to effectively promote sustainability and equity. WTR frees up hours of labour that can be directed towards ecologically and socially desirable outcomes through a GJG and UBS. It also frees time to care for oneself, for others, and for society, for instance by joining deliberative forums (DF).

⁴For more references on the idea of “Community Capitalism” see Joseph, M. (2002) *Against the Romance of Community*. In this book, Miranda Joseph critiques the idealization of “community” within capitalist societies, arguing that such notions often obscure underlying power dynamics and economic inequalities.

Green Job Guarantee

The Green Job Guarantee (GJG) would permanently end unemployment, and ensure that anyone who wants to can train to participate in collective projects advancing social objectives: expanding renewable energy capacity, regenerating ecosystems, improving public services, doing care work, are just some examples (see Hickel, 2023). A job guarantee scheme entails the government offering employment to anyone seeking it. While the government would set a minimum wage, the administration of the program would be decentralized, envisaging a central role of local governments and community organizations to propose and oversee GJG projects. As highlighted by Unti (2017), some of the the most obvious advantages of the GJG over other forms of income support are that: 1) it is beneficial not only for those who receive it, but also to the community they live in, as the programs are tailored local demands and needs, 2) it contributes to the improvement of working conditions in the private sector by setting a minimum wage, improving workplace democracy, and paving the way for working time reduction (workers would no longer have a reason to accept exploitative conditions, as they would have another option), and 3) it avoids the stigma of traditional welfare measures.

In the current system, economic growth is necessary to offset the increase in labor productivity without causing unemployment. The productivity gains resulting from technological innovation and improved efficiency, rather than being oriented towards the improvement of working conditions and the satisfaction of basic needs, are reinvested into increased production to ensure capital accumulation. As Mastini points out, a job guarantee is essential to decouple employment from economic growth and capital accumulation, and its introduction is crucial in a degrowth transition to avert mass unemployment (2021). Crucially, this measure would be a step towards the decommodification of basic needs provision, facilitating the allocation of resources to sectors and activities that are not considered productive by the private sector and promoting ecological and social goals rather than corporate profit (Hickel, 2023). In addition, the GJG is essential to complement universal basic services, providing the funding, re-training and general coordination and labor force necessary to organize new provisioning systems (ibid.).

Deliberative Forums and citizens assemblies

Deliberative forums (DF) emerge as often-cited degrowth policy, with regard to the democracy and governance aspects of a degrowth transition (see Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). We include this proposal in the package, following Büchs and Koch (2019), who suggest that the implementation of deliberative forums would be an essential tool for facilitating the shift to a degrowth economy. These forums would foster democratic discussions on the challenges and opportunities associated with moving beyond economic growth. Providing spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds engage in participatory processes would critically enhance public understanding of degrowth and tackle the resistance that it often faces due to misconceptions and lack of awareness (Koch & Kallis, 2017). By creating opportunities to reframe societal goals and address political and social barriers to the ecological transition driven by the deeply embedded growth-centric values, these discussions could help to realign policies with values like ecological sustainability and human flourishing rather than perpetual growth (Büchs & Koch, 2019).

Authors outside the degrowth literature also recognize the positive aspects of DF. The most evident one is inclusive participation, and ensuring that voices from all segments of society, especially marginalized groups, are heard, and that policy recommendations reflect diverse experiences and needs, fostering social equity within a transition process (Dryzek, 2010). Building consensus is also a core objective of DF, as they provide a structured environment for addressing important questions (Mouffe, 2013). As implementing a degrowth transition requires a shift in how wellbeing is defined and how resources are allocated, building bottom-up consensus around these questions is crucial. The outcomes of these participatory decision-making processes could inform the design of policy proposals and guide the implementation of degrowth strategies.

The complementarity of post-growth policies

The complementarity of post-growth growth policies and the importance of implementing them together is often emphasised. The positive interaction of the policies included in the package and their complementarity are crucial. Only as a package can they dismantle the hegemony of economic growth, reorienting both productive and reproductive work and governance structures towards sufficiency and collective control—fulfilling Gorz’s (1967) vision of non-reformist reforms as systemic ruptures. The Post-growth Deal for Italy is a policy package of non-reformist reforms, as their revolutionary potential lies in their interdependence. We now illustrate in more details how these interdependencies play out.

As mentioned above, UCI decouples income from employment, providing financial security and recognizing unpaid care work. However, coupled with the liberation of time through WTR, UCI might boost consumption, fuelling economic growth. This risk is partially offset by UBS: reducing the centrality of markets through decommodification might lead to a decrease of production more organically than introducing limits outright. As resources are diverted to the provision of basic services, less resources will be available for wasteful production, inducing a supply-driven reduction of production. Ecological taxation on wealth, production and consumption, included in an MMT-inspired financial policy package (see Fig.2), further curb the risk of overconsumption. This is further facilitated by the GJG, which channels labor into regenerative work rather than harmful production, and DF, democratically setting sustainability limits. In turn, DF’s drawback of excluding participation of those with less financial and time resources is addressed through the UCI, which ensures material security in the short term enabling participation, and UBS in the long term. Direct involvement in decision-making might further contribute to increasing civic awareness and consciousness of environmental limits.

It is also important to recognize that these policies without the sufficiency-oriented counterparts are not sufficient to bring about a degrowth transition. Just to cite one example, UCI and WTR without limits on advertising, income ceilings and other sufficiency measures might be ecologically harmful, as the liberated time and additional income might lead to an increase in consumption (Kallis 2013). Yet, some of the limits can be offset by ecological taxation and other instruments contained by a potential financial policy package (see Olk et al., 2023). At any rate, our focus on 1st generation policies, and division between the two generations, does not ignore the crucial role of environmental regulations in times of climate crisis.

3. A Post-growth Deal for Italy

In this section, we set the stage for presenting our Post-Growth Deal for Italy. We start by presenting the little research existing on degrowth policy perceptions in Italy, and exploring how the relationship between environmental policies and the preservation of jobs is playing out in the Italian political discourse (3.1.) Then, we justify the choice of the target groups and present their history in Italy (3.2); Lastly, we ground the policy package presented in section 2.3 within the Italian context, by analysing the history of historical demands, experiments and proposals in Italy that resonate with the ones contained in our policy package (3.3).

3.1 Setting the stage

Analyzing degrowth policy perception in Italy is interesting not only because of the need to contextualize degrowth to specific geographies (Fitzpatrick, 2024), but also because there is little literature on how Italians perceive degrowth and post-growth-leaning proposals. To our knowledge, the only analysis of this kind is Mazzara et al.(2024). The study evaluates, through a survey, the level of entrenchment of imaginaries of growth in the Italian population – meaning the conviction that economic growth is the only path to a desirable life. The results reveal that many participants are skeptical of a paradigm change as they see economic growth as the only path to individual and social prosperity. The analysis indicates that younger people, especially those experiencing economic hardship, and less educated individuals, are more likely to be immersed in the ideology of growth and consumption. Additionally, the research finds that there is a trust in technology as a potential solution to the issues posed by the current development model and its ability to mitigate environmental impacts. Over 37% of respondents agree that technological progress would allow society to control the negative effects of development while maintaining current consumption levels. This confidence in technology was particularly high among right-wing participants and it was associated with other factors such as older age, lower cultural engagement, and greater internet usage.

3.2 The target groups in the Italian context

Defining clear target groups is essential in policy perception analysis because it enables researchers to capture the diverse ways in which different segments of society interpret and respond to policy proposals. The current study tests the hypothesis that policies expanding people's rights, enhancing their access to the means to satisfy their needs, and increasing their participation in decision-making processes will make a degrowth transition desirable and popular. To assess this, we focus on three target groups in Italy: grassroots environmental movements, syndicates (unions), and political party members. These groups are at a critical intersection. Social movements contribute to the diffusion of radical ideas and alternative visions of progress (Demaria et al. 2013), while unions and political party members are engaged in negotiating and implementing policies in institutional contexts. This dual perspective is crucial because it bridges the gap between abstract critiques of growth and concrete, actionable policy proposals (Kallis et al. 2018). This dynamic makes them ideal for testing the hypothesis that expanding rights and participatory decision-making increases the desirability of degrowth transitions. Following our previous reflection on the coalition-building potential of post-growth policies, we can say that these groups represent interdependent sites of power: activists inject radical visions, unions anchor policies in working-class realities, and policymakers navigate institutional constraints. This also justifies excluding right-wing actors, as the study probes whether progressive factions can coalesce and build compromise before engaging adversaries.

In this section, we sketch out the characteristics of each one of the three target groups, presenting their historical evolution in the Italian context and highlighting why it is relevant to focus on them in order to test our hypothesis. We also briefly present the Italian degrowth movement(s) and explain their interaction with these actors.

Social Movements in Italy

Della Porta and Diani (2015) define “activists” as individuals committed to social and political change through active participation in mobilization and collective action. They emphasize that activists invest significant personal time and resources to challenge established power structures and advocate for alternative visions of society. Consequently, social movements are understood as sustained, organized collective challenges to established authorities aimed at influencing or transforming public policy and societal values. As previously mentioned, degrowth is not just an academic framework but a prescriptive approach to eco-social transition, rooted in theories and practices that have emerged, in part, from activist movements and militant research. A diverse set of strategies for degrowth-driven transformation must include grassroots, non-institutional movements, which play a crucial role in envisioning and enacting systemic change (Demaria et al., 2013).

Considering the long history of social movements in Italy and the recent politicization of Italian youth within the climate movement, it is essential to include the perspectives of social movements in drafting any policy analysis of a Post-Growth Deal for Italy. In the early 1970s, Italian activism was primarily rooted in working-class struggles, particularly during the “Hot Autumn” (*Autunno caldo*), when waves of factory occupations and mass strikes erupted in industrial centers such as Turin, Milan, and Genoa (Della Porta et al., 2015). During this period, activism was closely tied to the labor movement, with trade unions and leftist organizations mobilizing large-scale protests against exploitative working conditions and advocating for structural changes in society. Calise (2003) describes this era as a time of “intense politicization” of the working class, where everyday workplace struggles became part of a broader critique of capitalism. As Italy entered the late 1970s and 1980s, the country’s industrial landscape changed dramatically due to deindustrialization and economic restructuring. These shifts led to a gradual transformation in the composition and focus of activist movements. New social actors—students, intellectuals, and urban middle-class groups—emerged, expanding the scope of activism to include not only labor rights but also issues of social justice, gender equality, and environmental concerns (Della Porta et al., 2015).

A particularly significant development in recent decades has been the rise of climate activism in Italy. The politicization of young people has been evident in movements such as Fridays for Future (FFF) and Extinction Rebellion (XR), which have reintroduced mass protest as a necessary response to the climate crisis (Green European Journal, 2023). However, these movements have faced increasing repression. Most recently, in January 2025, seven female climate activists were reportedly subjected to degrading treatment by Italian police during a protest at the Leonardo arms manufacturing plant in Brescia (The Guardian, 2025). Whereas one could observe an increasing separation between youth and student activism and working class struggles since the 90s, in the recent years, Italian environmental activists have become more and more keen to dialogue and collaborate with workers. A famous example is the one of the “EX-GKN” occupied factory, which as already mentioned, saw climate activists and workers collaborate on drafting a proposal similar to a green job guarantee.

These examples illustrate why activist perspectives are crucial to any discussion about a Post-Growth Deal for Italy. Social movements not only identify systemic problems but also propose and experiment with alternative solutions—often long before policymakers notice. As such, integrating activist voices into policy debates is essential to ensure that transformative change is both possible and inclusive.

Worker unions in Italy

Our second target group are unionists, including individuals formally involved with unions in Italy, such as unionized workers, union employees, and worker representatives within trade unions. Italy's trade union landscape is predominantly shaped by three major confederations: the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions (CISL), and the Italian Labour Union (UIL). Each of these organizations has a distinct historical background and ideological orientation, which has evolved over time.

Established in 1944, the CGIL was initially a unified labor organization encompassing communists, socialists, and Christian democrats (Loreto, 2017). Subsequently, ideological divergences led to significant splits, resulting in the formation of CISL and UIL in 1950. After these divisions, CGIL maintained a strong affiliation with the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its subsequent political successors. CISL was closely aligned with Christian democratic ideals, seeking to establish a labor organization rooted in Catholic social teachings. (Limata, 2021).

Also established in 1950, UIL emerged from another split within CGIL. The founding members of UIL were primarily socialists, social democrats, republicans, and secularists who sought to create a union free from religious and communist influences. This diverse coalition aimed to represent a broad spectrum of workers, advocating for labor rights through a secular and democratic approach (Loreto, 2017). Despite their distinct origins and ideological differences, CGIL, CISL, and UIL have made several attempts to unify the Italian labor movement. Notably, in 1972, the three confederations formed the super-body *Federazione CGIL, CISL, UIL*, aiming to coordinate their efforts and present a united front on labor issues. This federation marked the first official reunification since the initial splits, driven by grassroots demands for solidarity among workers. However, internal disagreements, particularly over responses to government policies, led to its dissolution in the 1980s (Limata, 2021). In recent decades, the relationships among CGIL, CISL, and UIL have been characterized by both collaboration and contention. While they often unite to address common challenges facing workers, different ideological perspectives and policy approaches can lead to divergent strategies.

Italian Party politics

We focus on “politicians” or “policy-makers” as one of our target groups; we narrow down the category to “party members” - i.e. individuals formally part of a political party. The historical evolution of Italian political parties reveals a complex interplay between ideological innovation and practical governance. After the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the early 1990s, the landscape of Italian party politics underwent profound transformations, marked by ideological shifts, the restructuring of political identities, and the emergence of new political forces (Ginsborg, 2003; Bufacchi & Burgess, 2001). The end of the First Republic and the collapse of traditional party structures—exacerbated by corruption scandals uncovered in the *Mani Pulite* investigations—created a vacuum that reshaped both left- and right-wing politics in the country (Bufacchi & Burgess, 2001), paving the way for the rise of Silvio Berlusconi, a media tycoon who established *Forza Italia* in 1994 (Bufacchi & Burgess, 2001). Berlusconi's brand of populist, media-driven politics redefined the right, combining neoliberal economic policies with a strong emphasis on leadership charisma and direct communication with voters, which started dominance of center-right coalitions, often in alliance with nationalist and anti-immigrant parties such as the *Lega Nord* (now *Lega*) and, later, *Fratelli d'Italia* (Zaslove, 2011). The rise of these parties marked a broader shift toward right-wing nationalism, which intensified after the 2008 financial crisis and the European migration crisis of the mid-2010s. These developments created a political environment which one might see as hostile to post-growth policies, as economic nationalism and productivist rhetoric gained traction.

In contrast, the Italian left struggled to maintain cohesion following the PCI's dissolution. The Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), later evolving into the Democrats of the Left (DS), and finally the Democratic Party (PD) in 2007, attempted to integrate former communist elements with centrist and social-democratic factions (Mete, 2022). However, this ideological broadening often resulted in internal conflicts and a dilution of traditional left-wing

principles (Bordignon 2014). Further fragmentation occurred with the emergence of smaller radical left parties, such as *Sinistra Italiana* and *Rifondazione Comunista*, which failed to build a strong electoral base in the face of declining union influence and the growing appeal of populist movements (Mete, 2022). The left's inability to present a coherent, alternative economic model has limited the political viability of degrowth-oriented policies, leaving ecological and post-growth narratives marginalized within mainstream discourse. The early 2010s saw the emergence of the Five Star Movement (M5S), an anti-establishment party that capitalized on public dissatisfaction with traditional parties and economic stagnation (Bordignon et al., 2015). M5S positioned itself as a "post-ideological" force, advocating for direct democracy, environmental sustainability, and economic reforms, including proposals for a universal basic income. While M5S has introduced elements of post-growth thinking into political debate, particularly through its emphasis on ecological issues and participatory governance, its pragmatic alliances—ranging from left-wing coalitions to a brief partnership with the far-right Lega—have complicated its ideological identity. As M5S has shifted from protest politics to governance, it has faced difficulties in maintaining its commitment to radical transformation, often prioritizing short-term electoral survival over long-term structural change (Mosca et al., 2021).

In recent years, the merger of Europa Verde (EV) and Sinistra Italiana (SI) into Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra (AvS) has marked a significant strategic move to unify environmental and leftist agendas, reflecting a growing recognition that social justice and ecological sustainability must be addressed together (AvS, 2023).⁵ Europa Verde has further solidified its leaning towards degrowth by introducing an anti-green growth amendment in its statute, emphasizing a shift away from conventional economic expansion narratives in favor of sustainability and degrowth (Europa Verde, 2023).⁶

The Italian Degrowth movement

In this context, the Italian degrowth movement(s) have not been able to build strong alliances with any of the three groups above. The Italian degrowth movement - emerging two decades ago in academic settings after the participation of Italian scholars in the first French degrowth circles - has transitioned from a marginal and isolated movement to one with greater political relevance. However, it has struggled to build strong alliances with activist movements, worker unions, and political parties due to internal divisions, past political associations, and external influences shaping its trajectory. According to a recent analysis published by the co-presidents of the movement, this has to do with three main reasons. Firstly, internal debates between the "*Movimento per la Decrescita Felice*", or "*Movement for Happy Degrowth*" (MDF), which prioritized ecological and individual well-being over social issues, and the Degrowth Association (AD), which focused on theoretical anthropological critiques without concrete applications, created fragmentation and hindered coalition-building (Krähmer et al., n.d.)

Secondly, the movement's early association with the Five Star Movement (M5S) proved detrimental, as the M5S's politica inconsistencies and lack of clear ideological stance weakened the credibility of degrowth ideas and distanced them from grassroots labor and activist organizations (Krähmer et al., n.d.). This is especially interesting for our work. Initially, the M5S appeared to align with degrowth principles, advocating for environmental sustainability, participatory democracy, and critiques of economic growth, with Beppe Grillo, the movement's founder, openly

⁵ A key figure in this process was Alexander Langer, a founder of the Italian Greens, who, as early as 1989, argued for the recognition of planetary limits in political discourse, positioning environmental sustainability as a core principle of green politics (Langer, 1989). His work laid the foundation for integrating ecological concerns into Italian political movements and influenced the trajectory of the Greens both in Italy and at the European level.

⁶ The Italian Greens have also contributed to intellectual debates on post-growth through publications in *Ecologica*, their affiliated journal, which has extensively covered topics on degrowth and sustainability (Ecologica, 2021). These discussions highlight a broader ideological transformation within green politics in Italy, increasingly moving towards a critique of economic growth as a central policy objective. The convergence of green and leftist forces within AvS signifies an effort to integrate ecological imperatives with social equity, representing a dynamic shift in Italian progressive politics.

quoting degrowth scholars and using the word. However, as M5S transitioned from an anti-establishment force to a mainstream political party, it abandoned many of its radical stances, adopting more ambiguous and opportunistic policies to secure electoral success. However, M5S's populist rhetoric and refusal to engage in traditional left-wing labor struggles distanced it from worker unions, reinforcing the perception that degrowth was disconnected from social justice concerns. M5S's superficial adoption of degrowth terminology diluted its significance in Italian public discourse. While the movement included degrowth among its key issues, its lack of concrete policies and subsequent ideological shifts rendered the term ambiguous and hampered its transformative potential. This co-optation led to public confusion and skepticism, further compromising the degrowth movement's efforts to build meaningful alliances with political parties and advance its agenda.

Activists are also far from advocating for degrowth: Mazzara et al.'s analysis of 113 social movement websites revealed that only 20 explicitly mentioned “degrowth.” Among these, 17 adopted a positive stance—highlighting degrowth as a pathway to sustainable and just alternatives—while 3 framed it explicitly negatively, opposing it to the traditional, positive narrative of growth (e.g., wealth creation, job security). Notably, the negative portrayals were more common among certain farmers' organizations (Mazzara et al., 2024). What is also worth-noting however is that there has been recently a resurgence of degrowth-related events in Italy, such as the Italian Beyond Growth conference in Rome in the Italian Parliament (April 2024), the organization of the degrowth and queer ecology festival Licheni (August 2024), the school of “policies beyond growth” in Turin (February 2025), and the spread of post-growth educational events within youth league of political parties. Especially noteworthy is the formation of a “Post-growth platform” within the youth league of the Italian green party (Giovani Europeisti Verdi, GEV), which saw a group of 50 under-35 youth compiling a report detailing why and how post-growth should be adopted as the approach of the Italian green party. This report was shared during the latest congress of the youth league of the Italian Green Party (GEV), where an amendment proposing “post-growth” as the official approach to the ecological transition of the organization was passed unanimously. This new “degrowth spring” has been largely driven by the climate justice movement and international influences rather than the strategic efforts of the Italian degrowth movement itself (Krähmer et al., n.d.)

We chose to stick to the REAL project's wording choice adopting the term “Post-growth” rather than “degrowth” due to the negative connotation that the term has gained in the Italian public discourse. While the negative association is not unique to the Italian context, it is especially strong in the country due to the empty utilization of the word “degrowth” by the 5-Star Movement in its political campaign, with its promise of bottom-up, participatory politics, which has revealed itself as a populist propaganda. Moreover, as Italian collectives and associations that start to explore degrowth often tend to choose other words, such as Post-growth⁷ and Beyond Growth⁸, this choice aims at placing the current work in continuity with this direction.

3.3 Situating a “Post-Growth Deal” framework in the Italian context: Examples of the five policies in Italy

In this section, we look at examples of policies presented in the last years that share common elements with the five contained in the Post-Growth Deal for Italy. This historical contextualization helps better understand which barriers and facilitators these policies might face and provides relevant insights for our analysis.

7

⁸ Beyond Growth conference; Scuola di politiche “Oltre la Crescita”

Universal Care Income (UCI) - *Reddito di Cura Universale*

Whereas there is no grassroots or political proposal demanding this exact policy, the demand for a basic income in Italy can be traced through a diverse array of historical movements and political contexts, from the demands emerging out of labor struggles and grassroots activism to political parties' proposals. Italian working class struggles, particularly in the post-World War II era, have consistently placed income demands at the heart of its social justice agenda. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, a wave of student, feminist, and workers' movements sought to challenge the traditional connection between employment and survival. Influenced by Marxist and feminist ideologies, movements like the *Autonomia Operaia* introduced the idea of the "salario sociale" (Archivio Autnomia, 1973), consisting of income not tied to formal employment but understood as a recognition of individuals' social contributions. In the same years, Silvia Federici and Mariarosa Dalla Costa's "Wages for Housework" campaign challenged the capitalist system by demanding financial compensation for women's unpaid domestic labor. This initiative extended beyond academic discourse, evolving into an active movement with the formation of groups like *Lotta Femminista* and the *International Feminist Collective in Italy* (Federici, 2012). These organizations campaigned vigorously for the recognition and remuneration of domestic labor, organizing events and engaging in public demonstrations to promote their cause. They argued that housework, although essential to the economy as it enables workers to perform their work by supporting them both in their material and psychological needs, is undervalued and exploited by capitalism and performed for free by women. Their proposal aimed to reveal the hidden exploitation of women's labor, which was seen as "natural" rather than productive. By monetizing housework, they believed women could gain financial independence and disrupt the capitalist reliance on free labor in the home.

In the 1990s, with the intensification of precarious labor, driven by the erosion of traditional industrial work and the rise of temporary, part-time, and insecure forms of employment, social movements intensified their focus on forms of basic or guaranteed income in their fights. For instance, the *Tute Bianche* movement emerged in Italy in the late 1990s as part of the anti-globalization movement, criticizing neoliberal policies and advocating for **reddito sociale** (social income) in response to precarious work and unemployment. The movement called for a new social contract to address the exclusion of workers from stable employment and it included diverse groups like students and precarious workers, making the demand flexible but lacking specific implementation plans. Meanwhile, critical scholars were also contributing to the debate on basic income. One such conceptualization was *Reddito Sociale Minimo* (Vasapollo, 1999), conditional to employment. The first one was contingent upon being unemployed, while the second had more specific conditions such as being registered to an unemployment center and it was also tied to family income. These were examples of temporary schemes to provide support during phases of unemployment rather than universal basic incomes: This is a key difference with the demands by *Tute Bianche* (Fumagalli and Lazzarato, 1999), which was more in tune with the universality of the UBI.

In terms of worker unions, one of the most significant early proposals came from the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions (CGIL), which, in the mid-1990s, called for the introduction of a guaranteed minimum income to combat rising poverty among the unemployed and those in temporary or part-time employment. The CGIL's position was grounded in the need for the welfare state to evolve in the face of the changing labor market, where traditional protections based on full-time, permanent work were increasingly insufficient (Carrieri, 1995). The other two syndicate confederations, CISL and UIL both backed some form of income support during the 1990s, always with a focus on ensuring that such schemes did not discourage work and were designed to provide an income safety net for those in genuine need. The political climate in Italy during this time was influenced by economic austerity and the neoliberal reforms initiated by the government, which had led to the reduction of social benefits and the weakening of labor protections. In this context, unions pushed for reforms that would protect

workers' rights while also addressing the rise of precariousness through the introduction of a safety net for those outside traditional labor markets (Carrieri, 1995).

On the political party front, the most relevant basic income policy implementation is M5S' "Reddito di Cittadinanza" (RdC) [citizenship income]. Introduced in 2019, the program offered a monthly allowance of up to €780 for individuals and €1,200 for families, conditional on residency, citizenship, and a household income not exceeding €9,360 annually. The rationale behind the RdC was to combat rising poverty levels and promote social inclusion, particularly in a context of growing economic precariousness. However, one of the most controversial aspects of the RdC was the management of the program, which was entrusted to the "centri per l'impiego" (employment centers) that had historically struggled to provide adequate support for job seekers, rather than local administrations, which some argue could have offered more tailored and effective assistance (Saraceno, 2018). The RdC faced significant criticism due to the lack of complementing policies aimed at boosting employment opportunities. Critics argued that merely providing financial assistance without comprehensive employment strategies would not lead to sustainable improvements in job prospects for recipients and would fail to provide a holistic solution to poverty and precariousness (Sacchi et al., 2023). In early 2024, the RdC was replaced by the "Assegno di Inclusione", a new scheme designed to provide economic support conditional on stricter eligibility criteria and participation in social inclusion programs. The Assegno di Inclusione targets individuals with an income lower than €6,000 and it incorporates a personalized activation pathway, including training and job support. The general sentiment is that measure as a step backward in terms of guaranteed income support. Furthermore, the introduction of other measures such as the "*Carta Dedicata a Te*," aimed at providing additional food support to low-income families, illustrates a shift in focus from unconditional income support to targeted benefits (Governo Italiano, 2023). While the RdC was a significant step forward in mainstreaming the concept of a universal income, it faced criticisms for being insufficient and overly bureaucratic (Arlotti et al., 2022).

Despite these flaws, the RdC marked a key moment in Italian politics, signaling growing political support for the idea of basic income, even if it was ultimately replaced by the Assegno di Inclusione in 2024, which introduced stricter eligibility criteria and more conditional support (Governo Italiano, 2023). The shift away from unconditional income support towards more conditional measures reflected a significant departure from the broader UCI rationale, focusing more on employment activation than economic security.

Work-Time Reduction (WTR) - *Riduzione dell'Orario di Lavoro*

The debate around working time reduction (WTR) in Italy has gained traction in recent years, with growing political, corporate, and labor unions' engagement in the issue. The Italian labor market presents a paradox: on the one hand, a significant portion of workers are overworked, with long working hours exceeding the EU average (Eurostat, 2024); on the other hand, structural unemployment remains persistently high (Euronews, 2024). In this context, WTR has been framed as a possible solution to both problems—improving workers' well-being while increasing employment opportunities through work redistribution (Kallis et al., 2018). The Italian labor market has undergone profound transformations since the 1990s, with an increase in the precarity of workers. The 2016 *Jobs Act*, which facilitated dismissals and introduced fixed-term contracts with fewer protections, is often cited as a turning point in weakening labor security (Fana, 2016). Against this backdrop, any proposal to reduce working hours must address workers' concerns about job stability and wage security. Surveys suggest that WTR is broadly supported by workers, especially among younger generations and women, who see it as a way to improve work-life balance and reduce stress (Ipsos 2023). However, concerns persist, particularly regarding potential salary reductions and the risk that WTR could exacerbate precarization rather than create stable employment opportunities (Eurispes 2024). In recent years, major unions—especially CGIL—have begun advocating for WTR as part of a broader strategy for improving labor conditions. Major labor confederations have cautiously embraced WTR, though with

different priorities. CGIL has pushed for a gradual reduction in weekly hours through collective bargaining agreements and sectoral negotiations (Person, 2024). CISL and UIL have been more moderate, supporting flexibility in WTR implementation while emphasizing the need for productivity-enhancing agreements (First CISL, 2024). Some more radical labor groups, such as SI Cobas and USB, have framed WTR as part of a broader struggle against exploitative labor conditions, calling for its integration with demands for higher wages and stronger workplace protections (SI Cobas 2023).

Employers' perspectives on WTR are mixed. Some large companies, particularly in finance and luxury manufacturing, have implemented pilot projects to test different models of working time reduction (Sole 24 Ore 2024, March 2024). However, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which form the backbone of the Italian economy, remain skeptical, fearing that shorter working hours would increase labor costs and reduce competitiveness (Huffington Post, May 2024). Confindustria, the main business association, has repeatedly warned that WTR should not be imposed without considering sectoral differences and productivity levels (Sole 24 Ore 2024, March 2024). The political landscape reflects these divisions. Left-wing parties (Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra, Movimento 5 Stelle, Partito Democratico) have actively promoted WTR as a tool for redistributing work, improving mental health, and fostering social well-being (Camera dei Deputati, 2023). However, center-right and right-wing parties (Forza Italia, Lega, Fratelli d'Italia) have remained skeptical, arguing that such measures could harm economic growth and increase labor costs for businesses (Fanpage, 2024).

An overview summarizing key proposals, experiments, and policies of WTR in Italy allows us to compare institutional, corporate, and grassroots approaches, assessing their compatibility with a post-growth rationale (Table 3). Those put forward by CGIL and Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra (AVS) align most closely with a degrowth rationale. CGIL's proposal for a 32-hour workweek through collective bargaining explicitly prioritizes worker well-being and labor redistribution over productivity concerns (CGIL, 2022). Similarly, AVS's legislative proposal advocates a systematic reduction in working hours, supported by state incentives, ensuring that WTR does not exacerbate job insecurity or income loss (AVS, 2022). Both proposals contrast with more moderate employer-friendly approaches, such as those by the Partito Democratico (PD) and Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), which emphasize productivity-based incentives and gradual WTR rather than systemic change (see Camera dei Deputati, 2023).

Origin of the proposal	Advocating entity	Year	Main features
<i>Corporate</i>	Intesa Sanpaolo	2023	4-day week, 36-hour workweek, same salary, voluntary participation
	Luxottica	2023	4-day week for 20 weeks/year, slight salary adjustments
	Lamborghini	2023	Alternating 4- and 5-day weeks, 33.5-hour workweek
	SACE	2024	4-day week, telework, flexibility, 36-hour workweek
	Lavazza	2024	"Short Friday" pilot, redistribution of hours worked
<i>Legislative Proposals</i>	Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra (AVS)	2022	34-hour workweek, state incentives for employers, focus on redistributing productivity gains
	Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S)	2023	32-hour minimum, financial support for companies implementing WTR
	Partito Democratico (PD)	2023	Collective agreements for gradual WTR, tax incentives for companies

<i>Union Proposals</i>	CGIL proposal	2022	32-hour workweek, collective bargaining agreements
	SI Cobas campaign	2023	Reduction of work week, higher wages, stronger worker protections

Green Job Guarantee (GJG) - Garanzia di Lavori Verdi

The Green Job Guarantee (GJG) has been a relatively marginal proposal in the Italian public discourse compared to other progressive labor policies such as Universal Basic Income or Working Time Reduction. However, emerging initiatives and debates indicate a growing interest in policies that directly address unemployment while supporting ecological and social objectives. Three examples of initiatives akin to a GJG show a growing interest on this front : the local pilot project "Territori a Occupazione Zero," the grassroots campaign "Lavori Climatici, Ex-GKN," and the long-standing labor union proposal "Piano del Lavoro" by CGIL.

The project "Territori a Occupazione zero" or "Territories with zero unemployment" is part of the Integrated Urban Programs (IUP) of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). It is an initiative of the city of Rome in collaboration with the Sapienza University. The pilot project started in 2023 in two neighborhoods of Rome with a high concentration of people working under the poverty threshold (Tor Bella Monaca and Corviale) to test the methodology, with the intention to expand it to other places in the future (Gli Stati Generali, 2023). The coordinator of the project, Andrea Ciarini, highlights that the difference between this project and the traditional active labor market policies is that it starts from concrete needs of the community, to create jobs that are actually useful to the people living in the area. The development of this initiative starts by mapping needs, involving all actors to build a shared strategy to respond to the local demands. The second phase consists of creating new jobs to tackle those needs. The third step is to promote professional reintegration to satisfy the identified needs through the involvement of the social and productive fabric of the territory. Importantly, according to the coordinator of the project, the expectation is that other needs will rise, apart from welfare services, like work related to urban regeneration, reuse of the territory, productive reconversion of old productive plants, the valorization and protection of historical and artistic heritage, and the protection of the commons (Secondo Welfare, 2023).

The project is not in competition with other types of subsidized public work, as it aims to be economically sustainable and attract private finances in the long run, while responding to existing local needs. The director states that, if the pilot gives good results, it will be possible to create workers' coops or small businesses (ibid.). As for financing, he points out that there are many funds that can be used, from urban regeneration programs to European programs, and that a national investment fund could be created that covers a fraction of the cost covered by the new social enterprises, and also invests in accompanying actions, to fostering local action, identifying needs, technical assistance and the creation of territorial partnerships, like in France. Ciarini suggests that such a model could become a case study for Italy and be extended to other cities (ibid.). The topic of "Zero unemployment territories" has also started to be debated at the EU level: at the end of May 2023, the vice-secretary general of the Party of European Socialists (PES) Yonnec Polet, presented to the Committee of Regions (COR) an opinion on the local and regional perspective on it. On 26 June 2023 there was a meeting of the European Parliament to discuss it and call for the creation of an ad-hoc fund for these experiments (Gli Stati Generali, 2023).

Another interesting example is the The "Lavori Climatici" campaign, initiated by Fridays for Future (FFF) and the Ex-GKN movement, explicitly linking employment policy with climate action. Unlike state-driven programs, this initiative emphasizes democratic planning of job creation through workers' and community deliberation, positioning

itself as an alternative to neoliberal labor market approaches. It proposes job guarantees in sectors such as public transportation and industrial reconversion, emphasizing a just transition for workers affected by economic restructuring. The campaign also advocates for a national fund to finance climate jobs, integrating job guarantee principles with broader economic planning and public sector expansion. The challenge remains in securing institutional support and overcoming political resistance to large-scale state intervention in employment creation. In April 2024, Fridays For Future (FFF), GKN and other social movements and syndicates launched the “Jobs for climate” campaign. The initiative involves the elaboration of estimates on the ecological reconversion of the productive system, through collective deliberation on what to produce..

The overall goal is to determine the number of new jobs to be created and to identify the sectors, through a democratically planned deliberation process.. The campaign also has the objective of building a new imaginary, and to frame other policies, and it is targeted to both institutions and workers who decide to participate. The proposal for a job guarantee already exists in the climate agenda of FFF, and it is the starting point of the initiative, which aims at creating necessary jobs both through hiring in the public administration and as reserve jobs. The narrative emphasizes care and unpaid productive and reproductive work, and the possibility of shifting to more fulfilling jobs. In terms of funding, the plan is to rely on a national fund for industrial planification, gathering various resources now used to finance employment policies. The use of NPRR funds is also envisioned. In addition, the reorganization of and nationalization of public agencies in the various industrial sectors charged to intervene in industrial policies is called for. In terms of process, the implementation of citizens’ forums is one idea for the implementation.

In its 2013 Piano del lavoro (Plan for work) titled “Creating jobs to give a future to the development of the country”, CGIL put forward a proposal for introducing a job guarantee. Although the Plan was published more than ten years ago, on 18 March 2021 the General Coordinator of the CGIL participated in a debate arguing in favor of the job guarantee and mentioning the document. The discussion took place with other labor union representatives, economists, scholars, and workers. and the Italian Ministry of employment and social policies. One of the main problems of the Italian job market, highlighted by CGIL, is the chronic precarity, exacerbated by the habit of masking employment contracts with “working partnerships” contracts (thereby reducing fiscal burdens on employers and making the conditions of workers more precarious). At the same time, care work is invisibilized and underpaid, the rate of brain drain is the highest in Europe, and informal work is extremely widespread reaching about one fourth of GDP (CGIL, 2013).

The declared objective of the Plan is to formulate an employment policy aiming at: 1) *generating economic growth*, 2) ensuring justice in the fiscal system, 3) redistributing wealth and 4) protecting weak groups by increasing services for citizens. The objective of full employment should be pursued, according to the Plan, by reviving the industrial base in Italy and increasing the specialization of productive activities, improving the country’s infrastructures while also promoting a new ethic of respect of the common goods, in the spirit of legality, participation and redistribution of wealth. Protection of common resources like land, water, the environment, coasts, beaches, woods, mountains is presented as a goal of the Plan, which suggests to start by identifying the needs of the Italian population and promoting social cohesion, intergenerational solidarity and territorial unity through work.

The Plan sets out to create new jobs in the following sectors: activities of remediation and reclamation, (e.g. securing land and enhancement of cultural heritage), development of technological innovation for the protection of artistic heritage, reform and renewal of public administration, welfare, and the knowledge economy, innovation and sustainability of infrastructure networks (construction, energy, transport). In the long term, it envisions activities of cleanup and the promotion of new hiring of young people in the public administration. It also suggests creating an emergency plan within the Plan to create jobs for young people, especially in the South, to be immediately activated. It envisions the development of multi-annual plans and programs, operational projects, and monitoring activities,

through the participative governance of territories and economic subjects operating within it and with the contribution of civil society, associations and young people. The national government would determine the general strategy, in dialogue with social parties, and the regions and local entities would define the social stakeholders dealing with the specificities of each territory. In terms of financing, the Plan would be realized with public-private finances. To secure the financing, a reform of the fiscal system envisioned, with the objective of reclaiming finances lost due to fiscal evasion, expanding the tax base, increasing the progressivity of taxation (it would secure 40 billions per year, according to the Plan). Other sources of financing suggested by CGIL include: reducing cost of politics and redistributing public budget (saving 20 billion), using part of the resources of banking foundations, using funds from European programs, separating investment from the criteria of the Stability and Growth Pact, using pension funds to direct funds to long-term investments.

The Italian debate on job guarantees reflects broader tensions in labor and economic policy. On one hand, the local and grassroots initiatives show increasing recognition of the need for direct job creation to address unemployment and ecological crises. On the other hand, institutional barriers—such as austerity policies, EU fiscal constraints, and political opposition to state intervention—continue to limit the feasibility of a national job guarantee. While existing pilot projects and labor campaigns demonstrate the viability of such policies at smaller scales, their expansion would require a significant shift in political and economic priorities, particularly in terms of financing and governance structures. The key question remains whether these initiatives can generate enough political momentum to challenge the prevailing market-driven approach to employment policy and establish a job guarantee as a central pillar of Italy's post-growth transition.

Universal Basic Services (UBS) - *Servizi Pubblici Universali*

UBS in Italy can be understood as a proposal that reimagines public welfare in contrast to decades of gradual privatization and fragmentation of services. The development of the Italian welfare state followed a similar trajectory as other Western European countries, with a significant expansion of public expenditure on social services from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, peaking at 45% of GDP. Landmark reforms, such as the introduction of a public education system in 1962 and a universal healthcare system in the late 1970s, were driven by social movements advocating for workers' and citizens' rights (Ascoli, 2002). However, the 1980s ushered in neoliberal policies and budgetary constraints, leading to privatization, income support reductions, and a growing divide in service quality (Saraceno et al., 2022). Distinctive features of Italy's welfare state include its fragmented and particularistic nature, with social protections tied to employment status rather than universal access. While healthcare and education remain relatively universal, other benefits, such as pensions and income support, are distributed unevenly (Ascoli, 2002; Carocci, 2022; Donati, 2023). The system has also been vulnerable to clientelism, with complex legislation creating loopholes for political favoritism. Additionally, the reliance on monetary transfers rather than direct services, combined with a patriarchal structure, has perpetuated inequalities, particularly in terms of unpaid care work performed by women (Saraceno, 2023). As welfare performance is directly tied to GDP, regional disparities further exacerbate inequalities, with southern Italy suffering from lower-quality services (Pavolini, 2022). Some scholars argue that rather than redistributing income, the Italian welfare system has deepened social inequalities (Donati, 2023).

In Italy, the provision of local public services (LPS), including gas, electricity, communication, water and transport, have undergone various phases of privatization in the last decades. While LPS have been for the most part commodified, healthcare and transport - despite partial privatization - remain alongside education, a public service. We now provide a brief overview of the evolution of these services in Italy, indicating certain virtuous examples and best practices that a UBS policy in Italy could build on.

Housing Policies and Privatization

The post-war period, until the 1990s, is defined by Boni & Gobbo (2023) as the first phase of housing policies in Italy. In this period, the priority of the government was to build new houses: the strategy was to direct public investment to the housing sector, in order to increase employment and the access to housing for all. Through the Plan “INA-casa”, or “Fanfani Plan”, and the following “Piani Decennali per l’Edilizia Residenziale Pubblica- ERP” the government guaranteed both public housing and houses that would be sold at control prices to people in need. These plans were funded through big funds that workers, firms and the government contributed to. From the 1990s onwards, there has been “a progressive public divestment in housing policies, that coincided with considerable economic and legislative changes. A turning point was the abolition of the Gescal fund, in 1998, that guaranteed permanent funding to housing: from then on there has been a lack of stable financing needed to plan housing policies. n In 1998 a rent control measure that fixed a maximum rental price was eliminated, preventing the control of rental market prices . To deal with the consequent rise of rental prices, two Funds were created, however with very limited finances. Another important legislative development was the reform of title V of the Constitution in 2001, which transferred the competence of public housing policies to regions, which however lacked adequate financial instruments . Because of the abolition of dedicated funds for public housing, regions and local entities depended on the administration of public housing on the budget law agreed on at the national level, making it difficult for them to plan efficiently. As highlighted by Boni & Gobbo (2023), in the 1990s, the government’s priority shifted from building new public houses to creating mechanisms to match supply and demand in the private housing sector.

The new housing policy, carried out by the regions and constrained by budgetary decisions taken at the national level, followed two main paths. Providing households with financial aid to pay rent and implementing social housing programs. Social housing has become the dominant paradigm to deal with housing issues in Italy. It consists of providing housing at controlled prices to those who cannot afford market prices, nor qualify for public housing. It focuses on medium-lower income groups and its stated aim is to promote social relations among inhabitants. Crucially, this model differs from public housing in that it relies on private capital. Public entities give private constructors permits to build, granting the fiscal incentives applied to social housing, provided that they then rent at “social prices”. As Boni & Gobbo (2023) underline, social housing has replaced public housing, with the consequence that direct public investment in the provision of housing has become minimal, while private capital plays a major role. According to the Associazione Inquilini e Abitanti (ASIA), public institutions have abandoned their role of guarantor of an essential welfare service like housing, placing it in the hands of private subjects, who now use it to make profit (2022). They highlight that this approach only provides short-term solutions to the housing crisis, adopting the narrative of urban requalification/regeneration to support speculation in the housing sector. A more structural solution is necessary, ASIA points out (2022), that prioritizes public housing and the right to housing as a public welfare service, decoupled from speculation and private profit. In sum, they call for more public housing rather than social housing and temporary housing.

Against this background, Cafora et al. propose a comprehensive strategy to decommodify the right to housing in Italy (2024). They advocate for comprehensive reforms to address the ongoing housing crisis by shifting the focus from commodification to public welfare. The restoration of national public expenditure to strengthen public intervention in housing, alongside redefining social housing to prioritize social rental over for-sale properties. Additionally, they call for more inclusive housing policies, such as revising access criteria to support vulnerable groups and re-establishing funds to assist those facing eviction. At the municipal level, they suggest reorganizing housing institutions and developing plans to increase affordable housing stock, enhance transparency in real estate markets, and promote the reuse of heritage properties for social housing. They also emphasize curbing speculative investments through new funding streams for affordable housing, taxing excess profits from urban rent, and introducing regulatory measures like rent caps and limits on short-term rentals. A virtuous example of degrowth-aligned housing projects that could be impulse by a UBS in Italy is Bologna’s Social Housing Cooperatives: The city supports cooperative housing models like Coop

Abitanti, where residents collectively own and manage affordable housing. This approach reduces speculative pressures and fosters community resilience, echoing degrowth values of decommodification and participatory governance.

Local Public Services (LPS) and Marketization

The 1980s have seen the start of a process of privatization of the public sector in Western Europe, which has been taken up by the whole of the European Union in the 1990s. As underlined by Del Ciello, the public sector includes all the goods and services that are not meant to be sold, and include the Public Administration, namely the operator producing collective services that do not have a market price. An important characteristic of the public sector is that it is meant to contribute to the redistribution of income and wealth (2001). The phenomenon of privatization entails the transfer of property rights of an enterprise providing such collective services (connected to basic human necessities), from the State to a private entity. Various reforms have been introduced by the Italian government starting in the 1990s that changed the management of public services: next to the direct management of public services by public institutions (in-house) and the concession to third parties, the option of public-private management was introduced. Later on, the legislation was modified to allow for “mixed” companies to be mainly controlled by private capital, with the transformation of “municipal firms” (*aziende municipalizzate*) into “special firms” (*aziende speciali*), and then into actual private corporations. To be sure, municipal firms are economic entities created for the sole purpose of responding to the needs of municipalities, and they are accountable to the city council and in the last instance, to the prefect. Special firms designate an entity that is, like the municipal one, created as an instrument of local institutions to meet the demand for a given service. They are legal entities, with entrepreneurial autonomy and their own statute. They have a president and a director and are managed like private firms, with the rationale of adapting the management of public services to an entrepreneurial, private logic, according to open and competitive dynamics (Fiorini, 2012).

The rationale behind the transformation of LPS into private companies subject to market logics in Italy like elsewhere, is the following: 1) contributing to the improvement of the services, increasing efficiency, guaranteeing quality and universality and better responding to their social functioning, 2) creating a competitive market between operators of the LPS, 3) reinforcing the system by involving the private capital necessary for infrastructural investments. If we look at the Italian legislative framework regarding the provision of public services, national collective interests belong to the sectors of defense, transport, telecommunications, energy, and other public services. As established by the “Testo Unico degli Enti locali” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2000), the entities in charge of providing those services are local institutions, namely “*municipalities, provinces, metropolitan cities, mountain communities, islands and unions of towns*”. Law n. 476 determines the forms through which LPS should be managed, namely: 1) relying on existing actors, when the dimension and characteristics of the service is so limited that there is no interest in constituting an institution/company, 2) through a concession, when there are technical, economic, and social reasons, 3) through special companies, for the management of services that are of economic and entrepreneurial relevance, 4) through an institutions, for social services without entrepreneurial relevance, 5) through an institutions, for social services with entrepreneurial relevance, 6) through SPA or SRL with a majority of local public capital, constituted or participated by the entity responsible for the public services, where the participation of multiple public or private subjects is needed, 7) through SPA with no constraint on having a majority of public ownership.

Starting from the post-WWII period, public services in Italy have been articulated in the three following types: 1) strategic services (electricity, telecommunication etc.) which have traditionally been provided through state-owned companies (IRI, ENI, ENEL etc.), 2) decentralized services, managed by local entities (transport, street cleaning, etc.) either directly or by outsourcing to private or municipal companies, 3) services directly provided by public administrations (post, social provisioning, public education, healthcare system etc.). As underlined by Del Ciello, the tendency in the last years is towards liberalizing the provision of services for all, with few exceptions for particularly disadvantaged citizens, so that everyone has to pay for the given services. This trajectory was inaugurated in 1992 with

law n.333, that transformed ENEL, ENI, IRI, INA from public economic entities into joint-stock companies, and created the Authority for electric energy and gas, charged with setting prices. Privatization in Italy, like in the rest of the EU, came to be seen as a solution to the problem of public debt. Other problems that the privatization measures were meant to tackle, part of what was defined as the crisis of the public sector emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, were the inefficient management of public services, the atomisation of providers and the lack of investments (Merusi, 1990; Sabbioni, 2015; Massarutto, 2011 as cited in Galanti, 2016).

The main interventions and reforms carried out in the 1990s were in the following realms: 1) concession contracts (regulation), 2) decentralization (competences were moved from the central government to regions and local entities), 3) the transformation of public economic entities into private corporation by selling shares into the market (privatization), 4) the composition of local monopolies, by creating different managing entities. As noted by Citroni et al. (2015, as cited in Galanti, 2016) efficiency was not the only rationale behind privatization, there were also economic and political reasons. On the one hand, the declared intention is to relieve the public budget by reducing expenditure. On the other hand, by creating public-private joint ventures (“mixed” firms) by selling some of the shares to private shareholders, public institutions can maintain some degree of control (depending on the number of shares controlled). This decreases democratic accountability of policy-makers, allowing them to take decisions while being subject to a lesser extent to public scrutiny (Thienne, 1998 in Galanti, 2016). Critically, Citroni et.al pinpoint, this setup creates parallel decisional contexts to those of the traditional representative democracy, providing different settings to interact with decision-makers (2015). As underlined by Galanti (2016), the overall effects of privatization can be summarized in the two following dynamics: weakened accountability, the possible loss of the public mission of the provision of public services, and the possibility of a conflict of interests among those working in the city council and the managers and clients of the firms.

Just to provide an example of a good existing Energy Communities in Italy could be impulsed by a degrowth-aligned UBS policy: Inspired by the EU’s Renewable Energy Directive (RED II), Italian municipalities like Magliano Alpi (Piedmont) have established energy cooperatives. These communities enable citizen-owned renewable energy projects, such as solar panels on public buildings, reducing reliance on corporate utilities and democratizing energy access. Similar to *Barcelona Energía*, these initiatives prioritize local generation, affordability, and participatory governance. Other interesting virtuous examples that could be revitalized are those of water remunicipalisation: Following the 2011 national referendum rejecting water privatization, municipalities like Naples and Turin have reclaimed water management from private entities. Naples’ public utility, ABC Napoli, now ensures transparent pricing and reinvests profits into infrastructure, aligning with UBS goals of equitable access and democratic control (See Annex 5 for a comprehensive overview of such examples in each sector).

Deliberative forums (DF) - *Forum Deliberativi*

Deliberative forums, citizens’ assemblies or other forms of direct democratic processes have gained traction in Italy as mechanisms to enhance democratic legitimacy and participatory decision-making in environmental and social policy. However, their institutionalization remains limited, often relying on grassroots mobilization and experimental initiatives rather than top-down political will. In terms of party politics, the M5S has been one of the most prominent advocates for direct democracy in Italy, seeking to transform political engagement through digital platforms and increased citizen participation (Mosca 2020). Their approach centered on the use of online voting systems, particularly the “Rousseau” platform, which aimed to involve party members in decision-making processes (Deseriis 2020). However, the implementation of these tools, especially during their governance in Rome, revealed both opportunities and significant challenges. Virginia Raggi, first M5S mayor of Rome, sought to engage citizens in governance through participatory processes and digital platforms. However, several obstacles emerged. Integrating direct democracy mechanisms into Rome’s complex bureaucratic system proved difficult, as existing administrative structures were not

easily adaptable to participatory approaches (D'Alimonte 2019). On top of that, within M5S, tensions arose between grassroots democratic ideals and the practicalities of governance. Disagreements over participatory processes and internal decision-making led to divisions within the movement (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2019). This was also connected to the fact that digital tools designed to facilitate participation faced technical issues and usability challenges, limiting their effectiveness in engaging a broader segment of the population (Mosca 2020).

Beyond the experience of Rome, central to M5S's direct democracy strategy was the *Rousseau* platform, an online system designed to involve party members in various political processes (Deseriis 2020). Registered members could vote online to select candidates for local, national, and European elections, aiming to democratize candidate selection and reduce traditional party hierarchies (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2019). The platform also enabled users to propose and discuss legislative initiatives, with the most supported proposals being presented in parliament by M5S representatives (Mosca 2020). Members could participate in online polls to determine the party's stance on various political issues, theoretically ensuring that policies reflected the collective will of the membership (Deseriis 2020). Yet, the platform suffered from major security vulnerabilities. In 2017, a hacker exposed critical flaws, raising concerns about the integrity of the voting process and user data protection. Moreover, *Rousseau* was managed by a private company, Casaleggio Associati, which led to concerns about transparency and the concentration of decision-making power within the movement. Many critics questioned whether the platform truly democratized participation or simply centralized control under a small elite (Deseriis 2020). While intended to empower members, participation rates varied, and the complexity of the platform may have discouraged widespread engagement, limiting its impact on grassroots democracy (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2019). Over time, M5S's commitment to direct democracy was tested by the realities of governance and internal struggles. The transition from opposition to holding office required navigating institutional complexities, often leading to compromises that conflicted with the movement's original participatory ideals (D'Alimonte 2019). Additionally, growing dissatisfaction with the *Rousseau* platform led M5S to seek greater autonomy over its digital tools and decision-making structures, moving away from Casaleggio Associati's control (Deseriis 2020).

Meanwhile, civil society organizations such as AIP2 Italia and *Politici per Caso* have actively promoted the implementation of citizens' assemblies in Italy, pushing for policy frameworks that integrate sortition-based decision-making into governance (Ansa, 2024). Groups like Extinction Rebellion Italy have demanded that citizens' assemblies play a central role in climate policy, arguing that they can provide legitimacy to necessary but politically challenging environmental transitions (Comune Info, 2022). In 2019, the Italian Parliament officially recognized the climate and ecological emergency, yet no formal deliberative mechanism was established as a response. Milan and Bologna have hosted climate assemblies, engaging citizens in discussions on urban sustainability and emissions reduction.

Similarly, Ultima Generazione, a climate movement, has conducted hands-on experiments, to demonstrate how participatory democracy can accelerate climate action (Italia Che Cambia, 2024). Another notable initiative is the ongoing signature campaign, "Cittadin3 per il Clima", which seeks to introduce a law requiring climate citizens' assemblies at all levels of government (Comune Info, 2022). At the municipal level, an interesting initiative was pushed by the Rimini City Council, which approved in August 2024 the experimental establishment of the *Forum Deliberativi dei Quartieri*, creating 12 new "Quartieri" or districts (Comune di Rimini, 2024). These forums are designed to foster active citizen participation in local decision-making, effectively replacing the previously abolished district councils. Each forum is equipped with a civic meeting space and supported by a facilitator to guide discussions. Membership is open to residents aged 16 and above, as well as individuals working or studying in the district. Participants engage in co-designing and managing local resources, aiming to enhance community involvement in municipal affairs. While still

in the early stages, the initiative has been positively received, with citizens actively contributing to discussions on urban development and public services.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

In our research, we adopt the research method of triangulation, incorporating qualitative data from focus groups and quantitative data from a survey. Triangulation, as defined by Denzin (1978), involves using multiple data sources or methods to study the same phenomenon, increasing the validity and depth of the research findings. This approach has been endorsed for its ability to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Carter et al., 2014). By integrating different data collection techniques, triangulation minimizes the limitations of individual methods. While focus groups provide rich, interactive insights into group dynamics, surveys offer broader trends through quantifiable data. Patton (1999) argues that this combination not only deepens understanding but also ensures more comprehensive coverage of the research question by capturing both breadth and depth. Triangulation can also reveal converging or diverging findings across different methods, which aids in detecting biases or inconsistencies, ultimately strengthening the study's overall validity (Flick, 2018).

We organized four focus groups, one for each of our target groups, and a mixed one with representatives of each target group who participated in the other sessions. Then, disseminated a survey through the three target groups' contacts. We held four focus groups in total, one with each target group and a final one gathering participants from all three focus groups. The first one, with policy makers, took place in early December 2024 and it was the only one conducted online, over Zoom. The other three were all held in person, in Milan, between mid-December 2024 and mid-January 2025. Through the focus groups that gathered members of the same category, namely policy makers, activists and syndicate representatives respectively, we investigated each group's perceptions on the Post-Growth Deal for Italy and their views on the packages' potential for coalition-building. The mixed focus group served to gather additional information to complement the analysis, allowing participants to come back to certain discussions after having had time to reflect on it. It also had the benefit of creating a space for direct interactions among members of different groups. The visualization below (Fig. 3) shows this process.

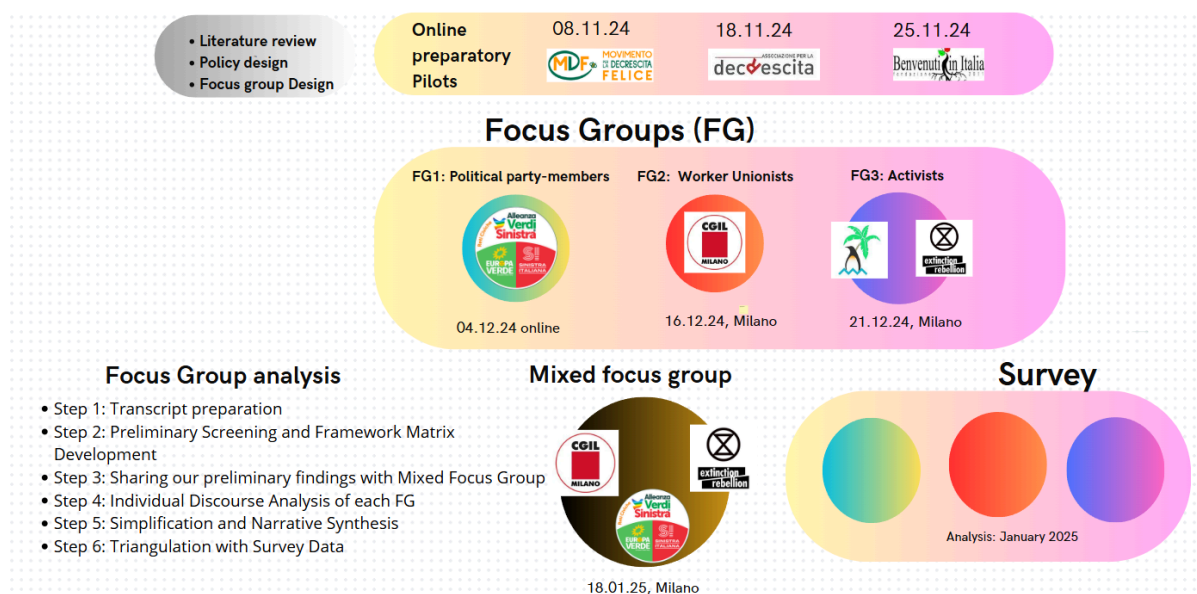


Figure 3 – Visualization of our analysis. Source: own elaboration

Activist Research

Activist research is defined by Martínez as *“collective processes of cooperation between academic researchers and non-academics while producing sociological knowledge and inciting actions aiming to change social problems, usually for the sake of the non-academic social groups involved”* (2024, p. 834). Activist Research uses scientific research as a tool to further political objectives for social justice and equality, and it is especially used by academics aligned with socialist, anarchist, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial or degrowth politics. It also aims to challenge dominant forms of knowledge by valuing the lived experiences of oppressed groups over official or administrative narratives, thus creating an alternative, grassroots-driven form of sociological knowledge. Through active engagement with activists and non-academics, Activist Research seeks to produce knowledge that is not just theoretically rigorous but also politically relevant, serving as a tool to advance social and political aims, strengthen movements, and support emancipation (Piven, 2010). We identify with the positionality of activist-researchers, as our aim is not only to contribute to the academic debate on post-growth and to advance research in this field. In terms of purpose, this research fully aligns with the definition of Activist Research, as one of the core objectives of the study is to develop a shared post-growth narrative among activists, trade unions, and progressive policy-makers that can be useful to advance social and environmental goals. As for the interlocutors, it engages with grassroots social movements and labor unions representing the working class, giving centrality to their voices and lived experience. While it could be argued that the decision to engage with policy-makers is not entirely consistent with the rationale explained above, it is justified by the choice to engage with young members of the green party, who are a minority voice within the party itself.

4.2 Focus Group Design and Analysis

4.2.1 Justification for choosing Focus-group analysis as a qualitative methodology

Through focus groups, we investigate post-growth policy perceptions in Italy. From a Gramscian perspective, building counter-hegemony requires a compromise between different members of the subaltern class (Banthaler, 2024), and focus groups are meant to give us an insights on our research question, exploring whether a policy package that focuses on reducing inequality, redistributing wealth, and addressing job losses during a degrowth transition can build consensus around a post-growth agenda and make it politically viable. Unlike individual interviews, focus groups mirror the messy praxis of coalition-building, allowing participants to articulate competing interests, confront contradictions, and identify shared priorities. This approach aligns with Bärnthaler’s (2024) critique of degrowth’s avoidance of power dynamics: by observing how activists, unions, and policymakers negotiate trade-offs (e.g., skepticism toward Universal Care Income), the method surfaces tensions essential for forging counter-hegemonic alliances. Homogeneous groups first enabled intra-group consensus-building, revealing distinct framings of post-growth policies. The subsequent mixed session simulated coalition-building, testing Bärnthaler’s (2024) assertion that hegemony requires confronting the need for compromise.

Besides connecting well to our hypothesis about the coalition-building potential of post-growth, Focus groups offer distinct methodological advantages in research. For instance, they enable participants to collectively generate ideas and prioritize issues based on their lived experiences (Du Bois, 1983). We picked this method over interviews for its ability to leverage group interactions to produce new insights that would be less likely to emerge through bilateral conversations (see Morgan, 1988). As underlined by Smithson (2000), directly observing how participants talk and think about a given topic, is helpful for the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the language and the

concepts through which participants frame their views. What is especially interesting for the purpose of this work is that, as Hughes and DuMont observe, in homogeneous groups settings participants are encouraged to share their experiences (1993). We expected to infer precious insights from observing how participants react to each others' positions: looking at how their views evolve throughout the focus group in light of the discussion might provide important elements to enrich the analysis.

However, what makes focus groups interesting can also turn into a weakness. Participants might be overly influenced by the opinions of the group, running the risk of (even involuntarily) aligning with the majority or with the most vocal participants (see Bloor, 2000). Despite these challenges, careful group management can mitigate such risks by encouraging participants to express divergent views and ensuring that all voices are heard. To deal with these limitations, we paid close attention as moderators to prevent participants from taking up too much space, ensuring that all voices were heard. Triangulating the information emerging from the focus groups with the data from the survey can also mitigate the risk of over- or under-representation of given opinions. See more detail on strengths and weaknesses of Focus Group analysis in Appendix 4.

As recommended by the literature, we conducted four pilot focus groups (Krueger 1994; Morgan 1997; Barbour 2007). Pilot focus groups are essential for refining research design, testing discussion guides, and ensuring that the topics resonate with participants (Barbour 2007). They help identify potential challenges in facilitation, participant engagement, and question formulation (Krueger 1994). Morgan (1997) emphasizes that pilot focus groups enhance the reliability of qualitative research by allowing researchers to adjust their approach based on preliminary findings. In addition, this choice had a political value to it, allowing us to gather questions and skepticism about post-growth policies from groups doing activism around the concept of degrowth for decades, allowing them to influence our drafting of each policy, our questions, our focus group outlines. We asked participants: "if you were us, conducting this research, what would you ask activists, worker unionists and politicians when discussing a Post-Growth Deal for Italy?". See Appendix 4 for more details.

4.2.2 How did we select FG participants?

The literature emphasizes the importance of group composition in shaping the dynamics and outcomes of discussions within focus groups. Focus groups are typically viewed as a collective unit of analysis, with homogeneity among participants being key to fostering open dialogue (Smithson, 2007; Kreuger, 1994). The recruitment process significantly impacts group interactions, and selecting members who do not share close relationships (such as friends or relatives) is recommended to avoid reinforcing shared assumptions (Agar & MacDonald, 1995). While focus groups are usually composed of 6-12 participants, smaller groups of 4-8 can encourage more active participation. It is crucial to balance comfort with diversity—participants should feel at ease expressing their views, yet different perspectives should be present to stimulate meaningful discussion (Morgan, 1997).

In the case of the present study, Participants to the focus groups were selected through a hybrid strategy combining power-mapping and personal networks in Milan, targeting activists (Extinction Rebellion), trade unions (CGIL), and policymakers (Europa Verde). Power-mapping identified influential actors based on organizational belonging, while personal contacts facilitated access to participants engaged in socio-ecological debates. Activists were recruited from climate justice collectives and housing rights movements. Unionists included representatives from CGIL's ecological transition committees and sector-specific delegates, Policymakers were drawn from the green party, which advocates for ecological and redistributive reforms. Forming groups of 5–7 participants ensured manageable discussions while capturing intra-group diversity (Krueger, 1994). Ethical safeguards included anonymity for policymakers and

compensation for activists (€10 per hour)⁹, recognizing their unpaid labor in grassroots movements (Halcomb et al., 2007). Unionists and policymakers participated during paid work hours.

4.2.3 How did we structure our focus group?

When structuring focus groups, the degree of moderation and structure can significantly influence the dynamics and depth of discussion. According to Smithson (2007), using an unstructured interview guide is recommended, with a list of key topics to guide the discussion while allowing space for related issues to emerge naturally. The role of the moderator is pivotal—they ensure all essential topics are covered, encourage participation from all group members, and manage disagreements or off-topic diversions. Moderators should balance guiding the conversation without pushing a predetermined agenda, ensuring that the discussion primarily happens between participants, rather than as a question-and-answer session with the moderator (Vaughn et al., 1996; Sim, 2002). There are two main focus group structures: structured and less structured. We opted for a less structured focus group, where the moderator plays a more facilitative role, encouraging participants to talk amongst themselves and fostering organic discussion, which aligned more with the dynamic of in-group assemblies discussing policy proposals. As moderators, we followed best practices as outlined by Stokoe & Smithson (2002). We were mindful of our influence on the group, and used a note-taker to document who spoke and how many times. We were mindful of our own influence on the group, and tried to limit our personal inputs, while being open to answering questions about the policies discussed (e.g. “can you expand on existing pilots of this policy”) during the focus group, and included these interactions in the transcript. As shown in Annex 17, we enforced confidentiality and privacy rights by clearly stating our final output. The focus groups were conducted in Italian and the transcript was translated into English for the purpose of this analysis.

The focus groups were structured into two parts, aligning with the definition of degrowth as a lens of interpretation of reality and as a framework for future pathways of transformation. Part 2 is the one that we recorded and analyzed. Part 1 began with a scenario-based roleplay, immersing participants in a fictional 2027 political assembly debating post-growth policies. This narrative framing, rooted in art-based methods (Leavy, 2020), aimed to reduce abstraction and stimulate imaginative engagement with real-world challenges. Participants then engaged in interactive exercises via cardboard and post-its (or via Mentimeter when online), voting on their alignment with the four critiques of reality brought by degrowth, and discussing these diagnoses collaboratively. This approach mirrored Lee et al.’s (2023) use of participatory forums to democratize policy debates while mitigating dominance by vocal participants (Bloor, 2000). In part 2, we presented the *Post-Growth Deal for Italy*, outlining the five policy proposals, explaining their rationale, existing examples and their complementarity. After a break, we opened the discussion, giving space to participants to express their views, criticism and doubts, going through each policy one by one. We used Miro boards when online, and billboards when in person. This visual, non-hierarchical method addressed power imbalances and allowed dialogue between participants rather than moderator-led interrogation. A policy-by-policy deep dive allowed nuanced debates on design trade-off. Finally, an art-based exercise (“A Day in 2027”) invited participants to sketch or write narratives envisioning how their lives would change with the introduction of these policies, blending affective and imaginative engagement (Leavy, 2020) to test narrative coherence.

The focus group design—scenario-based roleplay, policy deep dives, and “A Day in 2027” envisioning—attempted to embody Gramscian praxis. Roleplaying a 2027 assembly forced participants to perform coalition-building, testing policies’ discursive flexibility. Deliberative exercises (e.g., ranking critiques) mirrored Gramsci’s “common sense” formation, where fragmented ideas coalesce into collective narratives. Artistic envisioning prefigured the ontological shift Abad Frías (2024) deems necessary for degrowth, materializing abstract concepts into lived futures. This design

⁹ This was possible thanks to direct funding from the REAL project, for which we applied through our supervisors.

operationalizes Bärnthaler's (2024) call for degrowth to embrace both prefigurative values and strategic state engagement.

Table 3 provides a synthesis of the focus groups' content (Table 3; see Annex 9 for the original script and Annex 14 for pictures).

<i>Duration</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Aim</i>
Part I: Diagnosis (1h)		
15'	Introduction	• Ice-breaking • Ensuring transparency about the aims, the structure, the ethical boundaries of the project • Roadmap of the session, Q&A time • Introduction of the scenario (2027)
30'	World-Cafe: Interacting with key critiques of reality behind a Post-Growth Deal for Italy: • Ecological critique of growth • Decolonial critique of growth • Feminist critique of growth • Anti-capitalist critique of growth	• Enhancing transparency and collaborative research - allowing participants to interact with the underlying values and motivations behind the policies, rather than presenting them out of nowhere. • Allowing participants to discuss among themselves, have space for 1 to 1 interaction
15'	Presenting the <i>Post-Growth Deal for Italy</i>	• Presenting the strategy and the general framework behind a Post-Growth Deal • Presenting each policy (rationale, definition, complementarity with other policies, existing examples) • Mentioning the "how to pay" question
<i>Break (10')</i>		
Part II: Prognosis (1h 5')		
15'	Discussion on the strategy and the general framework behind a Post-Growth Deal through a shared cardboard and post-its • How aligned are these policies with [group's name] proposals and vision? Do you think there is room for convergence? Do you believe they are effective in creating an eco-social coalition? • (Bonus) From a communicative perspective: Is it immediately clear what these policies are about, what they consist of, and why we want them?	• Addressing research Question
30'	Discussion policy-by-policy • Round of clarification questions • Round of positive opinions • Round of negative opinions	• Addressing research Question
10'	"A Day in 2027" Game: What would a typical day look like for you with these policies in place? Exercise with drawing/writing and oral sharing.	• Activating imagination and alternative ways of thinking about the policies
10'	Final Check-in, Q&A, Convivial moment	• Ensuring transparency about the aims, the structure, the ethical boundaries of the project • Conviviality

4.2.4 Focus Group Analysis, step-by-step

The analysis of focus group data followed a structured, multi-stage process grounded in principles of comparative discourse analysis (CDA) and qualitative coding. Drawing on methodologies outlined by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) and Smithson (2007), we combined inductive thematic coding with systematic comparative frameworks to ensure scientific rigor and transparency. CDA, which examines how language shapes social realities and power dynamics (Fairclough, 2003), allowed us to compare how activists, unions, and policymakers framed policies. Qualitative coding—labeling data segments to identify patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006)—helped systematically categorize attitudes (e.g., enthusiasm for WTR vs. skepticism about UCI). We prioritized inductive thematic coding, letting themes emerge organically from participants' language (e.g., “generational change” as a barrier to feasibility), and systematic comparative frameworks, using matrices to map differences and quantify recurring ideas (e.g., frequency associations). These methods were chosen to balance depth (capturing group interactions and lived experiences) with breadth (comparing trends across subgroups), ensuring the analysis revealed both shared narratives (e.g., constitutional alignment of policies) and persistent divides (e.g., distrust in deliberative forums). Here are the steps that we followed:

Step 1: Transcript preparation using TurboScribe: All focus group sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim using TurboScribe, an AI-powered transcription tool. While automated transcription expedited the process, transcripts were manually reviewed for accuracy to correct misrecognized speech, contextualize colloquial expressions, and annotate non-verbal cues (e.g., laughter, pauses). Following recommendations by Braun & Clarke (2006), transcripts retained identifiers for speakers (e.g., P1, P2) and thematic markers (e.g., [discussion shifts] [someone who is late enters the room]) to preserve conversational dynamics. This approach ensured fidelity to participants' original discourse while enabling systematic coding.

Step 2: Preliminary Screening and Framework Matrix Development: A preliminary screening of transcripts was conducted to identify emergent themes and align them with predefined research questions. We adopted a Framework Matrix (Gale et al., 2013) to structure the data, mapping participants' quotes according to key themes such as Popularity, Desirability, Communicability, and Feasibility (Drews & Van den Bergh, 2015; Paulson & Büchs, 2022). This matrix allowed us to categorize responses while retaining contextual nuances, such as dissent or consensus within groups (see Annex 9).

Step 3: Sharing our preliminary findings with Mixed Focus Group participants: While conducting the analysis, we held the fourth focus group, a heterogenous assembly of participants who had participated in the other focus groups. To help us structure the session, we systematized our preliminary findings - the first themes emerging from the screening of the transcripts of the first three sessions - and presented it to participants, who had the opportunity to dialogue with the members of other target groups to discuss themes that had emerged in their respective groups.

Step 4: Individual Discourse Analysis and Pattern Emergence, Coding and Frequency Mapping: We conducted a CDA of each transcript (Fairclough, 2003), focusing on how participants constructed meaning through language, rhetorical strategies, and group interactions. We employed constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to iteratively identify patterns within and across groups. Using a hybrid approach, we coded themes inductively (letting them emerge naturally) and deductively (matching them to predefined categories like communicability, popularity, achievability, and desirability). For example, positive comments about the Green Job Guarantee (GJG) were labeled "GJG+1," while negative ones were "GJG-1." We counted how often each theme appeared to gauge its importance, such as noting 12 mentions of Universal Care Income (UCI) being linked to the Five Star Movement's "citizenship income." This process helped us understand key insights, challenges, and opportunities for the policies..

Step 5: Simplification and Narrative Synthesis: Coded data were synthesized into narrative summaries for each focus group, highlighting divergent and convergent perspectives. These narratives were simplified into the initial policy evaluation categories to facilitate cross-group comparison. Then, we selected specific themes that seemed more relevant for our discussion, and that you can see below. You can see these narratives in annex

Step 6: Triangulation with Survey Data: To triangulate the data from the survey with the ones from the focus groups, we integrate the qualitative from the open questions of the survey into the analysis of the focus groups.

4.3 Survey design and Analysis

We expanded the qualitative data obtained by the focus groups through a survey which reflected the questions asked in the focus groups (see annex 12).

4.3.1 Measures

The table below indicates the questions included in the survey (Table 4). The eight policy questions were repeated for each of the five policies, which totalled forty policy-related questions. In addition, at the end of the survey, twelve questions were posed to explore the participants' demographic characteristics.

Category	Question	Answer Type
<i>Policy-Related Questions</i>	1. How aligned are you personally with the objective of this policy?	1 = Not at all, 5 = Fully aligned
	2. How effective do you think this policy is in achieving its objective?	1 = Not at all effective, 5 = Very effective
	3. If your organization was preparing a political campaign, and a meeting was held to decide whether to include this proposal, how likely would you be to support it?	1 = Surely not, 5 = Most likely yes
	4. If you were asked to publicly support this proposal, how likely would you be to do so?	1 = I would never do it, 5 = I would most likely do it
	5. Does this proposal align with or complement the demands and practices of your group?	1 = Not at all, 5 = Fully aligned
	6. If your organization was preparing a media campaign, how likely would this proposal be in your opinion?	1 = I would never do it, 5 = I would most likely do it
	7. Do you think this proposal would be popular with the general public?	1 = Not at all, 5 = Very popular
	8. If in the previous question you gave a mark of 3 or less, please explain briefly why.	Open-ended
<i>Demographic Questions</i>	1. Indicate your gender	Multiple choice: Male, Female, Non-binary
	2. Indicate your age	Open question
	3. Indicate your personal income in the last month in euros	Multiple choice: 1-499; 500-749; 750-1133; 2000-2999; 3000-4999; 5000-9999; 10.000-19.999; 20.000-99.9999; 100.000 or more
	4. Where would you place yourself according to your political orientation?	Multiple choice: 1= completely left-wing, 10=completely right-wing
	5. What is your education level?	Multiple choice: elementary school, middle school, high school, Undergraduate, Graduate, Postgraduate
	6. What is your employment situation?	Multiple choice: Self-employed, Employee, Unemployed, Student
	7. If you are a worker/employee, in which sector do you work?	Multiple choice: Primary sector, Secondary sector, Industry, Small enterprise, Large enterprise, Arts and culture, Non-profit, Transport, Construction, Hospitality and tourism, Other
	8. Do you have children, and if so, how old are they?	Multiple choice: No, 1,2,3,4+
	9. In which municipality do you reside?	Open-ended
	10. Which [collective/association/union/party] do you belong to? What role do you have in it?	Open-ended
	11. How many hours a week do you dedicate to the organization?	Open-ended
	12. Are those hours paid?	Multiple choice: Yes, No, more than half, less than half

4.3.2 Sampling

In terms of sampling respondents for the survey, the rationale follows from the hypotheses and reflects the same logic as for the choice of participants to the focus groups. As the aim of the survey was to triangulate the data and gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the three target groups perceived the policy package, the respondents we aimed to reach were: activists from grassroots social and environmental movements, party members and labor unionists. However, in the case of the questionnaire, there was no requirement in terms of homogeneity of the groups: the only requirement was to belong to one of the three categories. This gave us the freedom to share the survey with all groups we considered as part of the three categories. To disseminate the survey, we first sent it to all those who participated in the focus groups, and we asked them to circulate it within their respective groups. Then, we shared it with our personal contacts who belong to one of the three target groups, and we asked them to share it within their circles. As we noticed that the responses from worker union members were considerably fewer than those from members of the other two groups, we also searched on the internet for contacts of workers unions to whom we sent the survey by email. We did not set a specific number of participants to reach, as we knew that surveying a representative sample of each target group would be beyond the scope of our work. We received responses from 100 participants in total, 45 activists, 33 party members and 22 labor unionists. This represents a great limitation for the representativity of the sample.

4.3.3 Demographic Breakdown

Here is a comparative summary of the three target groups (Activists, Unionists, and Party Members) across all 12 demographic variables. See Table 5 and Annex 15 for more detail.

Gender: activists groups show the most balanced gender distribution, with nearly equal representation of men (46.67%) and women (50%), and 3.33% identifying as non-binary. Unionists are predominantly male (66.67%), while party members also skew male (63.64%) but have the highest percentage of non-binary respondents (6.06%).

Age: Party members are the youngest group, with 69.7% aged 19-29. Activists have a broader distribution, with most respondents aged 30-39 (30%), while unionists tend to be older, with 47.62% aged 40 and above, making them the oldest group.

Income: Unionists report the highest incomes, with 42.86% earning between €1134-1999 monthly. Activists have a more even spread across income brackets, while party members exhibit the greatest income inequality, with 21.21% reporting zero income and one respondent earning over €20,000 monthly.

Political Orientation: All three groups lean left politically. Party members show the strongest left alignment (75.76% rating themselves between 1-3 on a left-to-right scale), followed by unionists (71.43%) and activists (66.67%).

Education Level: Activists are the most highly educated group, with 40% holding a master's degree or higher. Unionists have a balanced distribution across educational levels. Party members report the lowest levels of higher education, with 42.42% having only a diploma.

Comparative Demographic Visualizations

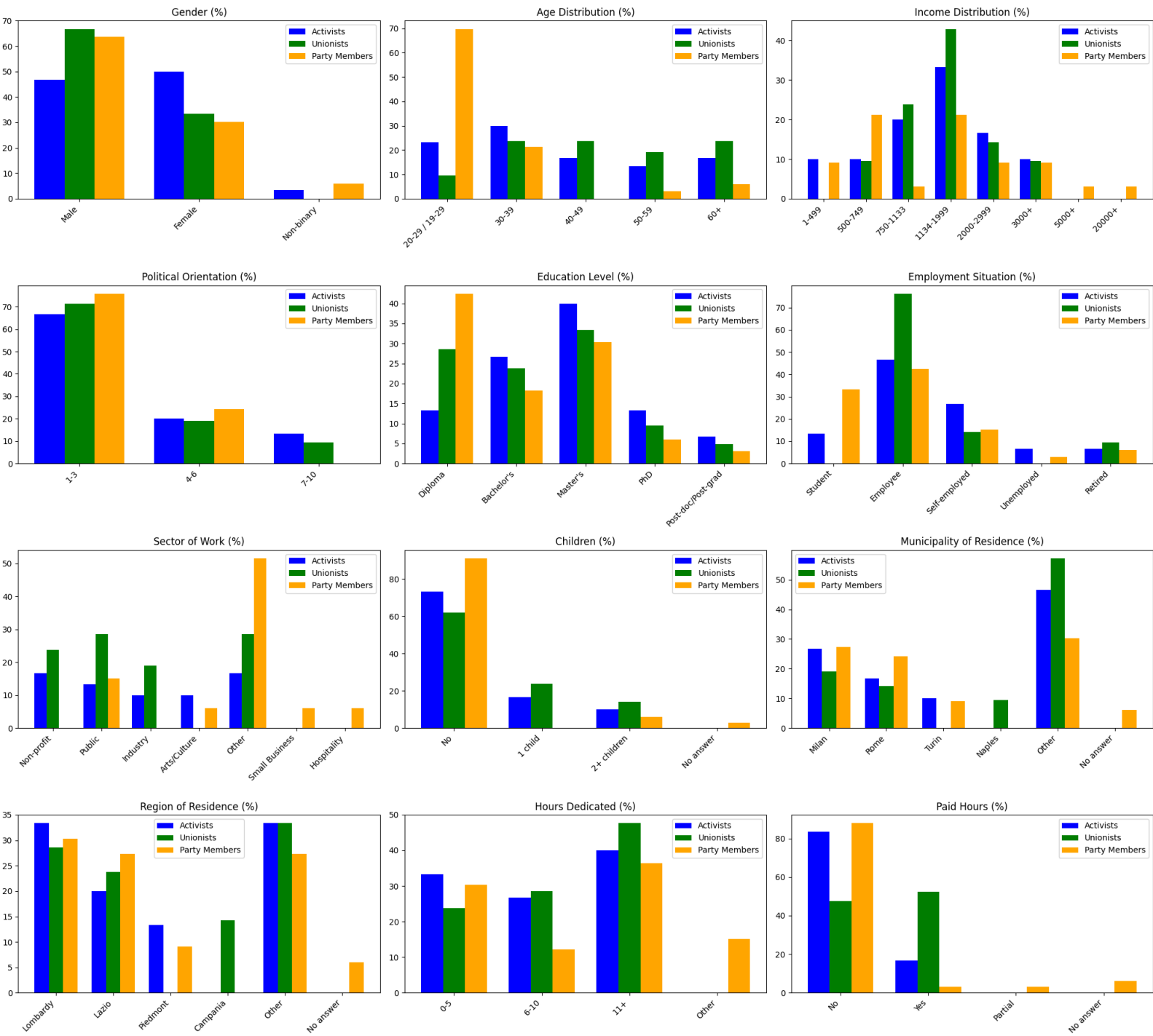


Figure 4 - Demographic Breakdown

Employment Situation: Unionists are the most likely to be employees (76.19%), while activists show greater diversity, including 26.67% self-employed. Party members include a substantial proportion of students (33.33%), reflecting their younger age profile.

Sector of Work: Unionists are concentrated in the public sector (28.57%), while activists are more evenly distributed across various fields, including arts and culture. Party members show a high share of respondents without a defined work sector (51.52%), likely reflecting the number of students and unemployed.

Children: Party members are the least likely to have children (90.91% child-free), which aligns with their younger age. Activists follow with 73.33% having no children, while unionists are the most likely to have children, with 38.1% reporting at least one.

Municipality of Residence: In terms of municipality of residence, Milan is the most common city for all groups, but with varying proportions: 27.27% of party members, 26.67% of activists, and 19.05% of unionists reside there. Rome follows as the second most common city, with 24.24% of party members, 16.67% of activists, and 14.29% of unionists. Turin is also notable, with 10% of activists, 9.09% of party members, and no significant representation among unionists. Naples is represented among unionists (9.52%) but less so among activists and party members. At the regional level, Lombardy is the most represented region across all groups, with 30.30% of party members, 33.33% of activists, and 28.57% of unionists residing there. Lazio is the second most common, particularly among party members (27.27%) and activists (20%), with unionists slightly higher at 23.81%. Piedmont is more relevant for activists (13.33%) and party members (9.09%) but less so for unionists. Campania appears significantly among unionists (14.29%), indicating stronger representation in the south. A clear north-south divide is visible, with respondents from the northern regions (Lombardy, Piedmont, and Veneto) more prevalent among activists and party members, while unionists show more balance, with notable participation from southern regions like Campania and Sicily. This suggests that union membership is more evenly spread across the country, whereas political activism and associative engagement are more concentrated in northern urban centers.

Membership: Unionists are highly affiliated with major unions, with 47.62% in CGIL. Activists are spread across multiple associations, while party members reflect a range of political affiliations including PD, Europa Verde, and Sinistra Italiana.

Hours Dedicated: Unionists commit the most time to their organizations, with 47.62% dedicating more than 11 hours per week. Among activists, 40% report 11+ hours, while party members are more likely to dedicate variable or minimal time.

Paid Hours: Unionists are the most likely to be paid for their organizational work (52.38%), while only 16.67% of activists and 3.03% of party members receive payment. Most party members (87.88%) work without compensation.

4.3.4 Survey analysis

Given the nature of our hypotheses, we employed descriptive analysis to interpret the results of the survey data. To facilitate the interpretation of the data collected through the survey, we developed charts for each of the policy-related questions presented in Table 4, which are discussed in the analysis section. As previously mentioned, we designed three distinct surveys tailored to the specific target groups, and this differentiation is reflected in the charts, which illustrate how the level of support for the policies varied across the target groups for each policy question. The presentation of

the survey data follows the same analytical approach applied to the focus group discussions, ensuring a consistent framework for comparison.

The connection between the survey and focus group data lies in their complementary roles in understanding the perceptions of the target groups. While the survey provides quantitative data on the level of support for each policy proposal, the focus group discussions offer qualitative insights into the reasons behind these perceptions. We found that each policy-related question in the survey reflected one of the key themes that emerged from the focus groups. In the analysis section, we dedicate specific subsections to compare the survey data with the insights derived from the focus groups. In addition, we integrated the qualitative data from the open questions included in the survey into the analysis of the focus groups. This combination serves multiple purposes: it allows us to either confirm the survey results, add nuance to the arguments presented, or highlight any discrepancies. By integrating both sources of data, we can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how the target groups perceive the proposed policies, considering both the quantitative levels of support and the qualitative reasons behind those views. This triangulation of data strengthens the validity of our findings and provides a more nuanced interpretation of the data.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Analysis

5.1.1 Comparative Discourse Analysis of Focus Groups

In what follows, we present our analysis of the focus groups. We organize the data according to the following categories: Desirability, Achievability, Popularity, Communicability. We provide a definition of each category before delving into the discussion. Each of these, in turn, are divided into themes. Both the categories and the themes were inferred from our discourse analysis. For every theme, we present the insights from each of the three homogeneous focus groups and, when relevant, from the mixed focus groups. As for the quantitative data from the survey, we present the results in a separate subsection under each of the four categories. (For the specific codes, see Annex 12).

A. Desirability

We summarize under this category the discussions on how desirable the participants perceive specific policies or the entire package to be, namely, whether they think the measures are likely to have a positive impact overall. We apply a broad understanding of desirability, which varies depending on the subjective perspective of participants. What one participant perceives as desirable might be very different from what another one considers so. As the subjective element is so central, this category is broad. However, the common thread is that it underlines positive or negative outcomes participants anticipate to spring from the implementation of the policy.

Theme 1: The focus on work boosts the desirability of the Package

In terms of desirability, in all the focus groups emerged a sense of common purpose and shared support for the overall objectives of the package, namely tackling climate and ecological breakdown, while also placing equality and social justice at the center. Specifically, work-related policies (WTR and GJG) are the most desirable for participants, putting workers' interests at the centre. The most questioned policy in terms of desirability was the UCI. Whereas each group shared the intended objective of the measure (recognizing and valuing care work), one worker unionist pointed out that the notion of a *"jobless society"* (P5), that he associated with the UCI, would not be widely shared among people in his organization: work is seen as a means that allows everyone to contribute to society, and the preservation of jobs is obviously a central concern for any worker union. The UCI, decoupling work from salary, would be at odds with this vision and therefore would, according to the participant, be met with resistance among workers unionists.

A conversation on the meaning of work also emerged when discussing the GJG. One unionist pointed out that, according to what he had observed, most workers conceive work first and foremost as a means to gain a living and pay expenses. The introduction of a GJG, he argued, could lead to a resignification of work as a means for people to contribute positively to their community. By giving a central role to work, while also helping to shift the narrative around it, the participant suggested, the GJG would be more likely to find support in a labor union than the UCI: *"We need to create an idea at the base of all this. If the idea behind all this is to recreate or reinvent (work), then the job guarantee also makes sense"* (P3). Another participant agreed, and added that the GJG would help face one of the main challenges of unions today, namely combining their priority of preserving jobs with the necessity of phasing out or reducing production in given sectors, in order to tackle the climate crisis: *"I agree too, that there is a job guarantee and also a guaranteed training. For instance, my job no longer exists, so I have to find another one that inspires me and the State guarantees me to train for that new job, very good"* (P5). What emerged from the discussion among worker unionists was that the GJG, by re-signifying work as something useful to society and valuing care work, would be more likely to find support among labor unions than the UCI.

Similarly, one activist pointed out that the GJG would be helpful to break away from the dichotomy between the preservation of jobs and the protection of the environment, which has prevented climate movements from connecting with vast segments of the population. Another activist added that implementing this policy would be fundamental to create useful jobs, contrasting the phenomenon of bullshit jobs¹⁰. This was mentioned also by a policy maker, who expressed interest in the GJG while also recognizing that it should be carefully thought through “*How do we ensure there are no more of these so-called “useless jobs”?... So the question is, how do we rethink work so that it serves the entire community?*” (Party members, P4). Overall, the group of party members was split on the assessment of a GJG’s desirability: for some it was an innovative policy that would lead to the creation of jobs with a high social value, while others focussed more on the obstacles to its implementation (see section on achievability).

The debate on the meaning of work was touched upon by worker unions’ representatives also while discussing the WTR. One participant observed that most workers, when it comes to negotiating working conditions, are more concerned about monetary aspects than anything else, a view supported by all her colleagues. According to her reasoning, introducing a WTR would not achieve the objective of valuing care work and liberating time without an overall change of attitude towards work. She also added that there are signs of positive change in this sense, as since the Covid-19 Pandemic people have been more concerned about having flexible hours and being able to work from home. And younger generations are more keen than previous ones to prioritize free time, “*time for life*”, as she defined it (Worker unions, P4), over career goals.

Theme 2: The risk of co-optation decreases the desirability of the Package

The idea of reducing working hours was considered desirable by all target groups - except one worker unionist who said it would be enough to introduce more flexibility - yet, workers’ unions representatives were sceptical about WTR given how it is currently being implemented in Italy¹¹. One participant pointed out that many companies, through the WTR, are doing what she defined as “*social washing*” improving their reputation, while offering very little advantages to the workers, and sometimes even to their disadvantage. She explained that oftentimes the reduction of working time is insignificant, and it comes with a general re-shuffling of shifts and increased flexibility, leading to increased precarity of working conditions. And in some cases companies make the reduction of working time contingent upon the removal of certain social benefits that in practice mean reduced salaries for workers. All participants agreed with these observations. The possibility that the WTR might increase precarity was also emphasized in a response from the party members’ survey.

Policy-makers had a different perspective: they were enthusiastic about the WTR, which some of them saw as the most desirable proposal in the package, for two reasons. Firstly, because of already existing examples of WTR in Italy, which they considered positive experiences, and secondly because they considered it as the least controversial proposal. More nuanced opinions emerged from the survey shared with party members. Some respondents saw the WTR and the GJG as problematic, because of the negative impact their implementation would have on the private sector. One response highlighted that the GJG would generate unfair competition with the private sector from the State .

As for activists, they agreed with the desirability of WTR, for it values care work and liberates time to do activism. One activist however observed that, if implemented in Italy, this measure would harm small and medium entrepreneurs, who make up most of the private sector in the country. This position sparked discussion in the group, with one participant responding that these small businesses would be compensated through taxation, and another one arguing that this objection is valid only in a scenario where the profit motive remains central, and that instead all businesses should become non-profit. In the mixed focus group, one policy-maker argued that the UCI risks reinforcing the capitalist logic by embedding care work into the mechanism of remuneration. Activists responded that the UCI must

¹⁰David Graeber’s concept of “bullshit jobs” refers to jobs that are meaningless or unnecessary, where workers feel their efforts contribute nothing of value to society. These roles often exist to serve bureaucratic or corporate interests rather than fulfill a genuine societal need. Graeber, D. (2018). *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. Simon & Schuster.

¹¹ See section 3.3.2 of the literature review

be paired with decommodification. Unionists recalled the failure of the "citizenship income" as a caution, stressing the need to clarify UCI's anti-capitalist intent by valuing unpaid care labor.

Theme 3: The decommodification of needs-satisfiers boosts the desirability of the Package

Most participants from the three target groups agreed that these policies, especially UBS, are desirable in that they guarantee universal access to the services that are meant to satisfy human needs. Worker Unionists were especially supportive of the UBS's objective of decoupling rights from income by guaranteeing universal access and underlined that it would not be a radically new policy, as it already exists in some sectors. They tied the desirability of UBS to their popularity, observing that the basic principle is common-sensical and it is also enshrined in the Italian Constitution. They recognized however that the universalist welfare system is eroding [e.g. healthcare: *"The issue is that what was already there has been dismantled piece by piece"* (Worker unions, P5)]. This aspect is further analyzed under the section of achievability. In the mixed focus group, one activist reflected on how the concept of UBS reflects Article 32 of the Constitution¹², while also warning that the policy risks seeming abstract without tangible examples. A unionist proposed democratizing the provision of UBS by managing them through deliberative forums.

When discussing UCI, an activist appreciated that the element of universality distinguishes it from the "reddito di cittadinanza" (citizenship income)¹³, identifying in the conditionalities applied to the latter the main flaws of the policy and the reasons for its failure to address poverty. Another activist wondered why to provide a basic income to those who are already wealthy, arguing that introducing a strongly redistributive taxation system (e.g. taxes on excessive profits, income ceiling) would be more desirable than a UCI *"If they're going to lose it through taxes anyway, I don't get it. I really believe in taxing the rich and reducing taxes for those who can't afford it"* (P6). Following from this discussion, one participant suggested that, since the UCI would just perpetuate the dependency on salary typical of capitalism, and, if complemented with UBS, it would be redundant. It would be better to directly use public resources to decommodify basic needs rather than for funding the UCI.

Theme 4: Do deliberative fora boost the desirability of a post-growth transition?

A question emerging throughout the focus groups was how this package contributes to making a transition towards post-growth desirable and participatory. The question of whether deliberative fora would contribute to this objective came up on different occasions. One unionist expressed doubts in this regard: *"Certainly some [in the Union] would have a lot of mistrust, because they [DF] are forms of direct democracy, and the Union believes in mediation, in forms of representative democracy..."* (Worker unions, P1). According to him, if deliberative fora's decisional power were limited to the management of UBS, it would probably be accepted. On the contrary, decisions related to UCI and WTR would have to be taken at the State level, through laws passed by Parliament. No one in the group contested this view.

As was predictable, activists considered DF as highly desirable. A point of discussion however emerged: one participant said deliberative fora (or citizen assemblies in her wording) should be the first policy to implement, so that collective decisions can be then taken about other policies. Another participant counter-argued that for DF to work effectively, the conditions should be put in place first, starting by educating people on the facilitation of group processes. *"I have the impression that a citizens' assembly cannot be the first point of action. It should come later—after certain steps"* (Activist, P7). Despite different views on the modality and order of implementation, participants agreed that deliberative fora would have an important role in complementing the other policies and making the package less top-down. Both members of the activists' group and of the worker unions said that DF can be tasked with identifying

¹² Art. 32 of the Italian Constitution: "The Republic protects health as a fundamental right of the individual and an interest of the community, and guarantees free care for the indigent [...]" <https://www.senato.it/istituzione/la-costituzione/parte-i/titolo-ii/articolo-32>

¹³ See section 3.3.1 of the literature review

those needs that should be covered through the UBS. Policy-makers did not express themselves on the desirability of DF, but one member did underline that the topic is being discussed by the party at the local level with an activist group, suggesting some degree of alignment. In the mixed focus group, an activist cited Rojava's decentralized councils as inspiration for DF. Another activist expressed the concern that DF might generate inequalities between regions and proposed the introduction of common standards (e.g., national UBS frameworks) alongside local decision-making. A policy-maker suggested piloting DF in post-industrial areas like Taranto.

Survey results: desirability

We now compare the results of the surveys with those emerging from the focus groups. For the category of desirability, we focus on the first and second questions of the survey, namely: "How aligned are you personally with the objective of this proposal?" and "How effective do you think this proposal is to reach its stated objective?" (Fig.5). These questions were asked for each of the five policies included in the package.

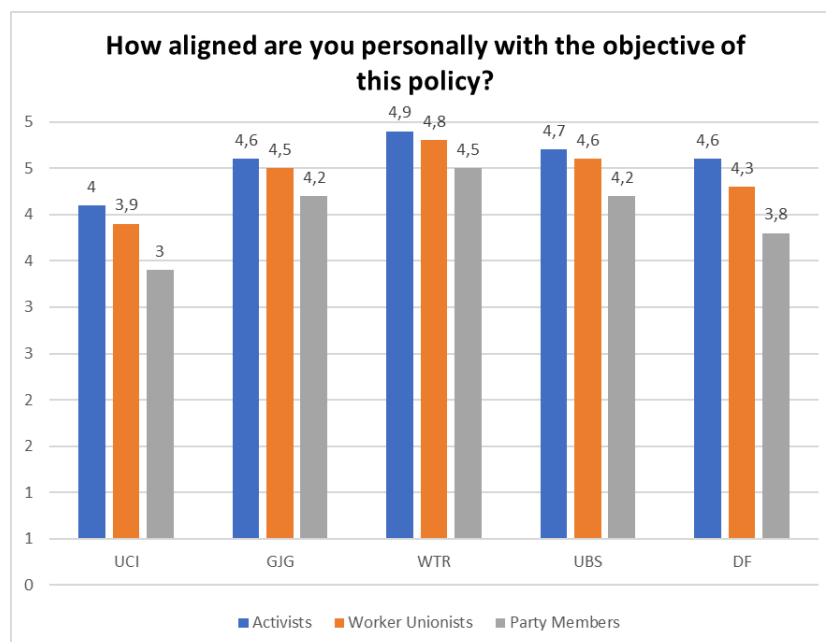


Figure 5 – Question 1: "How aligned are you personally with the objective of this proposal?"

Starting from the responses of worker unions' members, we can see that in general there is a high personal alignment, with an average above 4 (out of 5), on all policies. This reflects the discussions held in the focus group, in which workers' unions expressed sympathy for the objectives of the policy package as a whole. Looking at specific policies, it is interesting to notice that, while the average response on the question of personal alignment with UCI is 4, on perceived degree of effectiveness it drops to 3.3. This is in line with the participants' skepticism of a "jobless society", that as one participant explained, derived more from the view of the worker union as a whole than from a personal conviction. On WTR, the score is rather high for both questions, at 4.8. While in terms of personal alignment this is in line with the focus group discussion, in terms of degree of effectiveness it represents a discrepancy, as participants were cautious to consider the reduction of working time as effective in improving the conditions of workers (see discussion above). On deliberative forums, the survey shows a high degree of personal alignment, with an average of 4.2: the assessment had seemed less positive in the focus groups, where caution was expressed against forms of deliberative democracy. However, similarly to the UCI, this could be due to the fact that in the focus groups participants tended to express the

view of the union as a whole rather than their personal opinion. In terms of perceived degree of effectiveness, worker unions gave a score of 3.8 to the DF, which reflects the focus group's discussion.

As for activists, once again personal alignment is rated rather high, consistently above 4 for all policies, which confirms the results from the focus group. A discrepancy however can be observed on the WTR: from the discussion doubts emerged on the risk that the policy would harm small entrepreneurs, decreasing the desirability of the policy. The survey result could be a sign that this concern is not widely shared among activists. Regarding the second question, on perceived degree of effectiveness, two things can be observed. UCI scored an average of 3.1, which seems to reflect the focus groups, as various objections were made to it. More surprising is the average of 3.9 for deliberative forums, which are a key demand of grassroots activists and about which no negative opinions were expressed in the focus group.

Looking at responses from party members, we can notice that the degree of both personal alignment and perceived effectiveness of the UCI is the lowest of all groups, respectively at 3.3 and 3, reflecting the discussion in the focus group. It is interesting that for both questions the score is rather high on the GJG, equal to 4.3 and 4: considering that the participants in the focus groups were split on this one, with some expressing enthusiasm and others being quite skeptical, this result adds nuance, as it suggests that the former position might be more consistent with the sentiment of the groups as a whole. WTR and UBS scored above 4 on both questions, which is in line with the focus group. Finally, a 3.2 on the perceived effectiveness of deliberative forums sheds some light on an aspect that was not much discussed in the focus group, revealing that the target group does not seem to be enthusiastic about the proposal.

B. Achievability

Under the category of achievability, or feasibility, we outline the obstacles and facilitators identified by participants with respect to the implementation of the policy package, and of specific policies. This category is useful to get an insight on how realizable the policies are perceived to be by the participants.

Theme 1: The cultural hegemony of capitalism hampers the achievability of the Package

Capitalism's ideological hegemony was identified by all three target groups as a major obstacle to the achievability of the package. One policy-maker argued that the proposal of UBS would clash with the dominant narrative that *"The private sector is always better"* (Policy makers, P1). According to a labor unionist the majority of workers do not believe in the values of equality and universality of access to basic rights, which are the foundation of UBS and UCI. Another participant agreed that these policies are not likely to find support by 2027, however they might in the longer term, as younger people are more likely to share these values. All worker unionists agreed that a generational change is needed for the policy package to be accepted. Similarly, one activist recognised that *"There would need to be significant effort made to dismantle the false beliefs on which the system of supremacy is built and this makes it very difficult to implement them in the short term"* (Activists, P4). One party member also shared the concern that the entrenched idea that there is no alternative to the current system might hamper the realizability of these policies, referring in particular to the GJG: *"This way of conceiving work would perhaps be difficult to explain, that it is not a utopia for a few radical chic?"* (Party members, P1). While all participants agreed that the ideological hegemony of capitalism is a concrete obstacle to the implementation of these policies, they did not rule out the possibility of implementing it in the longer term, on the condition that much cultural and pedagogical work is done to promote values of social justice. And it is worth trying anyways, since the situation can only improve as compared to now, noted one activist.

Related to the question of ideological hegemony, the issue of de-politicization emerged when discussing deliberative fora: both worker unions and party members observed that the diffused lack of civic consciousness would be a major obstacle for DF to work. One party member cited as an additional obstacle the lack of knowledge about what deliberative fora are. While activists agreed that these problems exist, some of them suggested that the very act of participating in these types of spaces can contribute to creating a sense of collectivity. The problem of lack of civic awareness was also brought up in relation to the GJG and the UCI. One policy maker doubted that these policies

would be applicable in the South of Italy, facing high unemployment and a difficult economic situation, as He feared that the GJG there would fail to be implemented effectively as people would rather rely on the UCI. In the mixed focus group, all participants agreed that the capitalist narrative around meritocracy would hinder support for UCI and UBS and a unionist highlighted that people believe that income must be earned through work. Activists proposed reframing policies using constitutional principles (e.g., President Mattarella's speeches) to make them more relatable and bypass capitalist realism. However skepticism persisted about shifting public mindsets.

Theme 2: The tension between local autonomy and need for coordination is a limit to the achievability of the package

Another topic of discussion in terms of achievability was the difficulty to balance the desire for decentralized planning and local autonomy, and the need for coordination necessary to scale up these policies from the local, to the national and global level. The question of scalability was mentioned particularly in relation to the GJG and the UBS: one policy maker doubted that the GJG could go from a small-scale experiment to being implemented nationally. This was further elaborated by another participant, who mentioned the economic constraints posed by the EU as a major obstacle to the achievability of UBS, GJG and UCI. An activist pointed to the logistical challenges of organizing UBS at the local level through DFs, highlighting the risk that this would lead to profound inequalities between territories and would make the allocation of resources less efficient. Another participant from the activist' group responded that it would be helpful to look at existing examples, such as that of democratic confederalism in Rojava. One survey response from a party member also addressed questions of coordination and scalability, arguing that organizing UBS locally and decommodifying its provision would cause a decrease in the quality of services, due to the lack of incentives.

In the mixed focus group, the question of how to turn the GJG from a local project into a national policy sparked debate:: activists warned against "Rome-centric" impositions, while unionists highlighted the importance of regional coordination. One activist proposed transition councils to balance local specificity (e.g., renewable energy communities) with national standards. A policy-maker cautioned that local projects fail without state funding.

Survey results: achievability

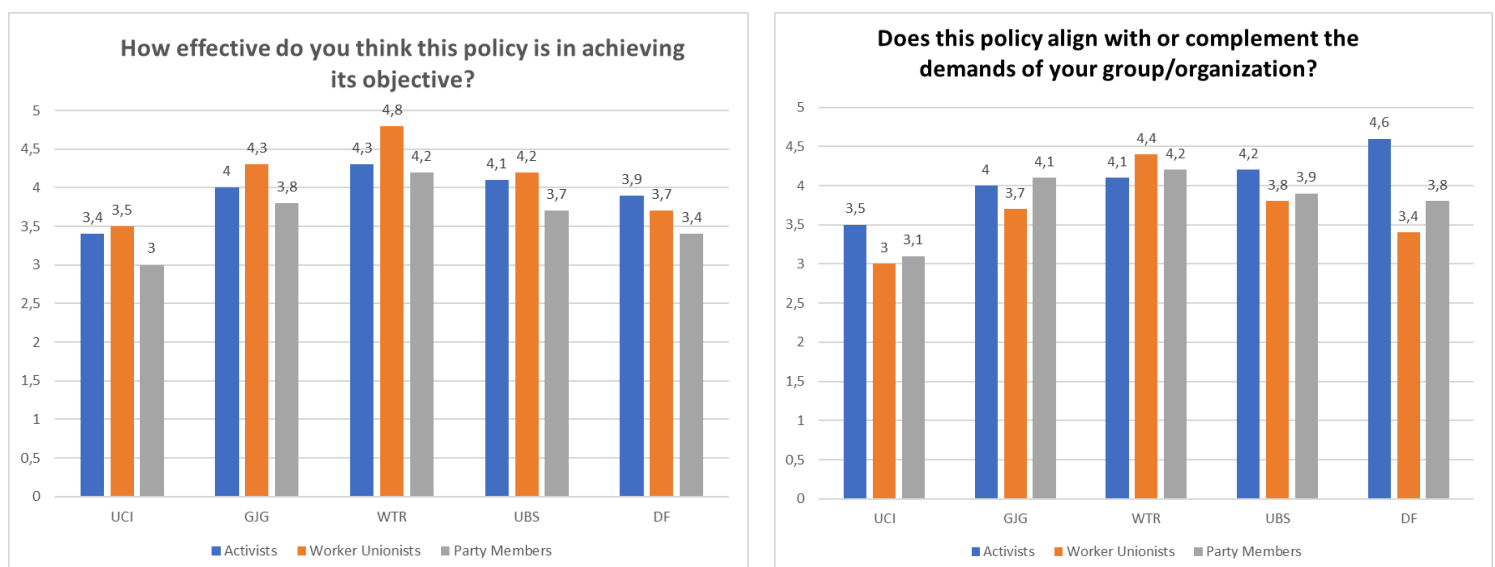


Figure 6 and 7 (from left to right) – “How effective do you think this proposal is to reach its stated objective?” and “Does this policy align with or complement the demands of your group/organization?”

We now compare the data from the focus groups analyzed above with the responses from the survey shared with the three target groups. For the category of achievability, we focus on question 5, which asks: “Does this policy align with or complement the demands of your group/organization?” (Fig.6), assuming that if the respondent perceives the policy to be aligned with what their group demands, it is an indication that they consider it as something that can be achieved.

Starting with worker unions, question 5 consistently received the lowest score across all policies, with an average of 3.58 out of 5, indicating only partial alignment between union demands and the objectives of the Post-Growth Deal for Italy. While this score is neutral rather than outright negative, it stands out as the lowest among the three groups, suggesting some reservations. Notably, the policies with the lowest scores are UCI (3.0) and DF (3.2). For UCI, this reveals new insights beyond the focus group, where concerns centered on its resemblance to welfare measures like the 5-Star Movement’s citizenship income. For DF, the lower score aligns with qualitative findings from the focus group, where participants highlighted obstacles to achievability, including a lack of civic consciousness and the time and energy required for participation. In contrast, UBS, with a score of 3.9, indicates a more favorable view. This aligns with focus group discussions, where participants acknowledged both obstacles—such as a strong hegemonic counter-narrative—and facilitators, including compatibility with constitutional values and common sense.

Among activists, UBS received a relatively high score, 4.1, on question 5, suggesting a stronger perceived alignment with their organizational goals. This contrasts with the focus group, where participants voiced concerns about the tension between local decision-making and the need for broader coordination. The survey results indicate that this critical stance may not reflect the broader activist community. This is further supported by the fact that when one participant proposed focusing on positive existing examples rather than potential implementation challenges, others expressed agreement.

For party members, the survey reveals a discrepancy with the focus group regarding UBS, which received an average score of 3.9 on question 5. While the focus group emphasized the difficulty of implementing UBS due to dominant neoliberal narratives, the survey suggests a more optimistic view within the broader party membership. A similar discrepancy arises with GJG, which scored 4.0 despite focus group participants being divided—some expressed concerns about challenging the dominant work paradigm, while others were more optimistic. The higher survey score suggests that confidence in GJG may be more widespread than anticipated among party members.

C. Popularity

The focus of this subsection is on the popularity of the policy package. It analyzes how popular the participant perceives a given (aspect of the) policy/entire package to be in the public opinion and how they think it will be received by people. It includes possible barriers, bias, criticism, or positive opinions the policies might be met with.

Theme 1: The popularity of the UCI is limited by its similarity with the 5-Star Movement’s citizenship income

A predominant concern across target groups was the striking resemblance between elements of the policy package - particularly the UCI - and the citizenship income introduced by the 5-Star Movement (M5S) in 2019. Worker unionists were aligned in warning that the UCI risks reproposing the same pitfalls as the M5S’s citizens income, that they defined as “*assistenzialista*” (“welfarist”¹⁴) as it was not designed to promote work. Policy makers, while recognizing that the past popularity of the SSM proposals might indicate potential mass appeal, also warned: “*We need to avoid the 5-star-movement effect*” (Policy makers, P1), arguing that invoking a similar narrative could backfire in a

¹⁴ The term refers to heavily relying on state-provided assistance—often through direct handouts or benefits—with the risk of fostering dependency rather than promoting self-reliance or long-term empowerment. The term is usually used pejoratively to suggest that such policies may discourage initiative and undermine sustainable, autonomous development. An English synonym is “welfarist.”, or expressions like “handout-oriented”.

political climate that remembers the shortcomings of 5SM policies. A second party voice echoed that *“Universal care income must be explained to avoid the 5-star effect, because without a strong vision, it just becomes a handout of money that discourages work”* (Policy makers, P4). In contrast, activists—most of them younger—tended to place less emphasis on the 5SM’s legacy. However, a few of them warned against repeating past assistentialist models, and emphasized that the focus should be on evolving beyond those. While all groups recognized that the heritage of the 5-Star Movement might impact the popularity of the package in Italy, they approached this challenge differently: unionists and party members were wary of repeating old mistakes, whereas activists were optimistic about the possibility of redefining the narrative.

In mixed focus groups, UCI’s resemblance to M5S’s citizenship polarized participants. While a unionist warned against the M5S’s failure tainting the UCI, an activist suggested renaming it “Care Income”, pointing out that removing the reference to universality might distance it from populist measures. Policy-makers advised including conditionalities to increase popularity.

Theme 2: The popularity of the Package is hindered by its perception as utopian

Both worker unionists and political party members voiced concerns about the proposals being perceived as too utopic, and lacking concrete implementation strategies. One unionist observed that the package *“Is not in line with people’s views; we claim these (referring to the ecological crisis and rising inequalities) as problems, but we have never managed to make them hegemonic across the country”* (Worker unions, P4). Political party members expressed similar views e *“I see it like a beautiful fairy tale that I find hard to think about in realistic terms”* (Policy makers, P3) one party member commented, and he went on to argue that some of these policies lack details, which might make them seem as difficult to realize, causing pushback from the public. He highlighted that lofty ideals must be accompanied by clear, practical measures, grounded in everyday realities. Another participant responded that the proposals are utopic as long as they are not implemented, and noted that if one really believes in it and presents it convincingly, the package can gain popularity.

While acknowledging the idealism inherent in the package, an activist argued that such visions could become achievable through grassroots engagement and that through citizens assemblies these measures could gain concreteness. Similarly, another one noted that these proposals, even though very ambitious, might gain popular support and be transformed into reality through participatory processes. Overall, while there was a common concern that the policy package risks being perceived as utopian, the groups proposed different approaches. Party members focused on the need to provide clear information in order to get support, presenting the proposals to people with as much detail as possible. Activists emphasized the potential for democratic deliberation to ground idealism in lived experience. In the mixed focus group, participants agreed that labels like post-growth are likely to be perceived as utopian and abstract. A policy-maker urged to start with pragmatic steps first proposing to start with WTR pilots in the public sector. Unionists called for linking the policies to concrete needs. Activists, yet, argued utopianism is strategic: “Radical ideas normalize alternatives.”

Theme 3: The popularity of the Package is hindered by the perceptions of a top-down imposition

The concern that the policy package might be perceived by the public as top-down emerged on various occasions. One worker unionist warned: *“It (policy package) risks being seen as a revolution dropped from above, disconnected from people’s actual needs”*, and added: *“I am missing a bit how to get there, and it seems like these assemblies are parachuted into the system”* (P4), underscoring a suspicion that the reforms may be dictated by elites rather than emerging organically from grassroots actors. A policy maker shared similar apprehensions, worrying that these policies might lack political legitimacy and public acceptance, if citizens feel that decisions are being imposed. Another one also expressed a concern for the package to be rejected as elitist, signalling a shared worry that top-down implementation could derail the policy’s transformative potential. Activists emphasized the role of participatory structures in confronting these risks, highlighting that citizen assemblies should be at the heart of the process to challenge top-down dynamics. While activists recognized the risks of centralized control, they also believed that robust, inclusive participation can mitigate these concerns. These exchanges illustrate both a common ground and a divergence: all groups agreed on the necessity of participatory processes to avoid the perception of a top-down imposition, yet they differed in their expectations of

how these processes should be integrated into existing political frameworks.

D. Communicability

Here we consider what challenges and strengths were identified by participants in terms of communicating the policy/the entire package to the public and whether it can be conveyed through a convincing narrative.

Theme 1: The Package is difficult to communicate because of its association with communism

One of the challenges in communicating the policy package that emerged throughout the focus groups is its potential association with communism. Several worker unionists worried that, due to certain elements of the proposals, the policies might be described as “communist.” As one participant noted, commenting on UBS: *“That’s why we said before with a joke, here they will attack us as dangerous communists... because if we look closely, the communist idea... I am not a communist, I don’t want to defend communism and so on, but the absolute ideal of communism meant just that”* (Worker Union, P3). Policy makers and some activists also recognize that the language used can trigger such associations. One policy maker expressed concern for the electoral repercussions of such misinterpretations: *“If we frame our ideas in a way that resembles historical communist rhetoric, it risks alienating moderate voters”* (Policy makers, P3). In contrast, some activists believed that by re-framing the proposals and emphasizing democratic participation —the association can be mitigated. *“We need to make clear that our vision is not about returning to old dogmas but about reimagining progress”*, an activist argued. Despite these differences, all groups agree that the shadow of communism hovers over the package and that its communicability depends on the ability to clearly delineate its goals away from the discursive connotation of historical communisms. Instead the emphasis should be on how they contribute to meeting concrete needs, to the common good and the universality of human rights, which are also foundational values of the Italian Constitution. In the mixed focus group, the fear that UBS’s universalism could be labeled as Marxist also emerged. A policy-maker advised using Catholic terms like “common good.” A union highlighted Italy’s cooperative traditions (e.g., Emilia-Romagna) to neutralize red-baiting. Activists cited constitutional principles to justify civil disobedience.

Theme 2: The GJG is a ‘slippery slope’ in terms of communication .

The Green Job Guarantee (GJG) emerged as one of the most complex and challenging elements in terms of communicability. Policy-makers described it as an interesting and promising proposal, also underlining potential communicative hurdles. Questions emerged on how to avoid the impression that the policy would bring about an authoritarian and top-down management of employment by the State. This point resonates with the fear of association with communism. Worker unionists were divided on the GJG. Some appreciated its potential to secure a green transition that is inclusive and just, while others worried about the risk of a top-down initiative and raised questions about the role of the private sector. Policy makers raised similar concerns: *“If we cannot clearly articulate the role of non-state actors in the GJG, we risk the narrative being co-opted by critics who claim that it is yet another state-controlled project.”* (policy makers, P2). Despite these reservations, there was also the acknowledgment that if communicated with clarity and a compelling vision, the GJG could become a rallying point. One party member noted that the strength of the narrative is often a function of the communicator’s conviction about the policy and ability to communicate it well.

Theme 3: The Constitution as a unifying communicative tool

As already mentioned above, worker unionists highlighted the resonance of the package with the foundational values of the Italian Constitution: *“Art. 4 of the Constitution doesn’t talk about growth, it talks about progress,”* said one unionist (P2). This association suggests that the proposal might find an ideological anchoring in the Constitutional Charter, presenting the package in the framework of broadly shared values of equality and justice. However one party member (P1) noted that the problem is less about having a common narrative than it is about having the courage to present an alternative to the current paradigm, which implies that even the Constitutional grounding would not suffice to convince a broader public if not backed by a strong will of the party. This reflects a wider concern that the Green Party currently lacks a cohesive and convincing narrative, which undermines the communicability of even those policies that are already in their program, let alone those of Post-Growth Deal. Some activists hinted at the

disadvantage that using the Constitution as a leverage for popularity would imply an association with obsolete state structures, while others acknowledge the “coolness” of this idea, as it presents an opportunity to make this policy package more tied to a “common-sense”

Theme 5: These policies lack simple slogans

A recurrent theme across the discussions was that the policy package, despite its good potential, is difficult to communicate effectively: both worker unionists and policy makers noted that many of the proposals cannot be easily simplified through slogans. While some policies, such as WTR, lend themselves to straightforward messaging like “*Lavorare Meno, Lavorare Tutti, Lavorare Meglio*” [*Working Less, Working All, Working better*] (Policy makers, P2) others are far more challenging to distill into compelling catchphrases. Some unionists and policy makers argued that if the policies are explained with a strong, coherent vision, their impact could be significant: “*I think these post-growth ideas can pass more easily than saying things like “You can no longer use the car”*” (Policy makers, P3). Yet, crafting a narrative that exploits the desirability of these policies requires a coherent narrative to frame the complex debates generated by these policies, and the lack of clarity of how they would be implemented and the timing (For the other survey charts, see [Annex 13](#)).

Survey results: Communicability and Achievability

The results of our survey seem to confirm these insights, if we look at answers to the question “if your organization was preparing a mediatic campaign, how likely would it be that it included this proposal?” (Fig. 9). UCI, a policy that is most associated with M5S’ *citizenship income*, scores the lowest in terms of popularity, confirming (C1), especially among worker unionists and party members. Activists, in turn, expect that DFs will be way more popular than the two other groups, fearful of a top-down imposition of the package (C3). Work-centred policies, especially WTR, are indeed the ones expected to be most popular (C4).

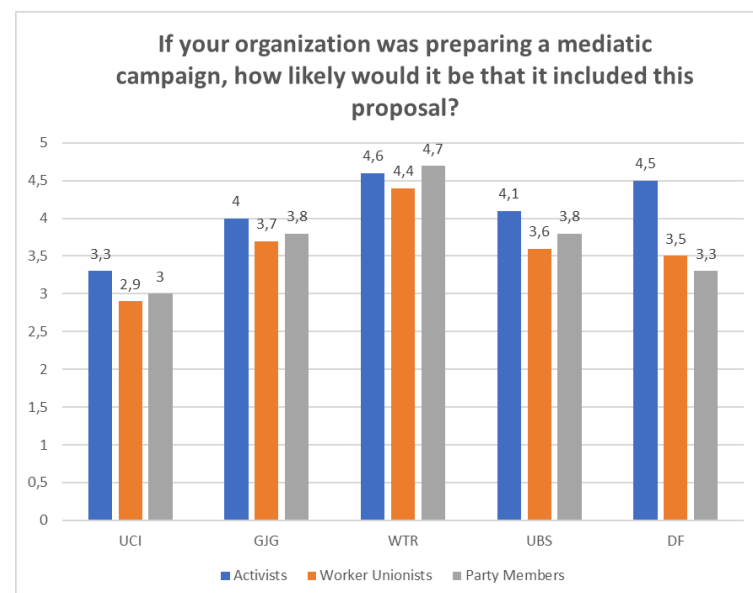
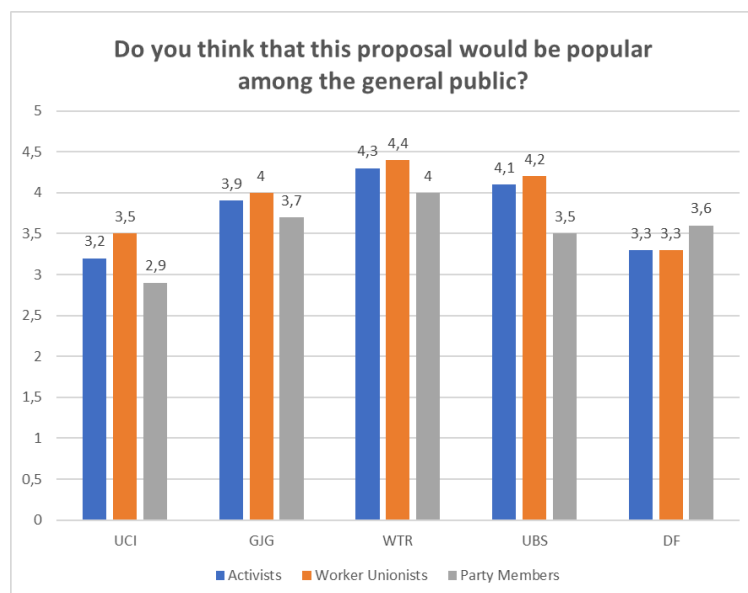


Figure 8 and 9 (from left to right) - Question 6: “if your organization was preparing a mediatic campaign, how likely would it be that it included this proposal?”; Question 7: “if your organization was preparing a mediatic campaign, how likely would it be that it included this proposal?”

Interestingly, the question “Do you think that this proposal would be popular among the general public” (Fig.8) yielded slightly different results, as respondents were thinking less about their organization’s likelihood of including the policy in a campaign, but simply guessing the perception of everyday people about the policies. The results suggest that activist groups tend to overestimate the popularity of citizen assemblies (DF), while political parties underestimate it.

UBS and WTR's popularity also is lower according to all target groups than its likelihood of being included in a campaign.

Respondents had the possibility to leave a clarifying comment if they voted 3 or below 3 to this question. A majority of respondents voting negatively confirmed that this policy package won't be included in the mediacampaign of their group because of exactly its perceived unfeasibility (C2). Worker unionists (N=7) expressed skepticism toward DF and UBS, arguing that participatory processes like DF would require "long and costly" efforts to foster civic engagement, while UBS faced resistance due to ingrained privatization preferences ("Better the private than the public"). Party members (N=10) focused on UCI, questioning its financial viability ("People would ask about financing") and dismissing UBS as "too utopian." Activists (N=12), though more supportive of Work Time Reduction (WTR), doubted UCI's feasibility in Italy's debt-laden context, noting that "economic sustainability concerns" could undermine consensus.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 The centrality of work

The centrality of work-related policies in the package stood out as a strong point according to participants across the three groups, as they recognized that reflecting on how work needs to evolve is fundamental in addressing both the social and ecological crises. All three target groups perceived the WTR and GJG as desirable, given that they provide an alternative to the narrative presenting the protection of the environment as antithetical to the interests of workers. For instance, worker unionists emphasized WTR's alignment with younger workers' demands for "time for life", while activists linked the GJG to dismantling "bullshit jobs", illustrating shared interests across labor and environmental movements. Beyond the merits of the policies, a broader reflection on the meaning of work emerged in all focus groups. The participants interrogated themselves on how work itself should evolve to tackle the current challenges. The discussions touched upon, for instance, the changing relationship of younger people with work, their shifting priorities between career goals and free time, often to the benefit of the latter, and the importance of care as opposed to productivity. The question of how to organize work around social value rather than monetary value was also raised by worker unions and policy makers. A common reflection was that the policies included in the package would contribute to changing people's relationship with work, leading to an evolution of what work means and what its purpose is. This however raises questions on how in practice this re-signification should occur, and whether these policies will be sufficient to produce such a profound change that touches on a central dimension of personal and collective life.

Connected to the reflection on the meaning of work was the discussion about the UCI's resemblance with the 5SM's citizenship income, discussed in detail in the previous section. Given that this topic also emerged in all focus groups, it is important to reflect on why this association is perceived as problematic. The main issue raised was that the policy of the 5SM was considered as a disincentive for people to work, a handout that favored laziness and reliance on public resources. This speaks to a broader concern, around the meaning of work discussed above, and the hegemony of the capitalist narrative around it. It reflects the conviction that salary is dependent on formal employment, and people who are not formally employed do not deserve it, irrespective of whether their work is useful to society or not. This was the rationale underlying the participants' concern when discussing citizenship income. This reflects a fundamental challenge, as the cultural hegemony of capitalism and its meritocratic narratives frame universalist policies as "handouts" rather than rights. Against this background, re-signifying work becomes a question of priority for the entire package to become viable. Providing a compelling narrative that is clear, straightforward and relatable to people's lived experiences is imperative. In a country like Italy, where it is embedded in the social fabric for women to be carer of

children, husbands and grandparents, and prioritize it over paid work, the UCI has the potential to be the most relatable policy. However, for the policy to resonate with people, it is also crucial to craft a convincing narrative around the meaning of work, highlighting the social value of informal care work.

5.2.2 Divergent views: between and within target groups

A diversity of perspectives emerged among participants, both between and within the three target groups. As for the divisions within groups, which the focus groups format made especially evident, it was noticeable that worker unionists' perspectives changed depending on the sectors they represented, which they often referred to. The participant who was part of the research section of the syndicate was one of the most optimistic on the implementability of the package, while the others often grounded the discussions in past experiences, providing examples of both positive and negative outcomes of their demands. Within the policy-makers group a divide was also visible, between two participants who were more optimistic and enthusiastic about the proposals, and two were more pessimistic. The activists' group was more homogenous, and generally enthusiastic, with only one divergent voice that was more critical of the package. As for the differences observed between different groups, one element of divergence was that, while worker unions were concerned with the impact of the policies on workers, and discussed how workers would perceive the policies, policy-makers were interested in the potential support by the general public.

As for activists, they did not express concern for a specific target population. An example of the discrepancy between groups was on the GJG, with worker unions emphasizing the positive impact on workers, and policy makers worrying about how the policy would create unfair competition of the State with the private sector. Considering that effectively providing a minimum wage in the private sector through the GJG is an intended outcome of the policy, and one of the core demands of syndicates in Italy, rather than a drawback, this comment reflects a clear divergence of interests. Another worth-noting example is an activist's claim that WTR would harm small and medium entrepreneurs, who are often in difficult situations in Italy. This is another example of nuances that should be taken into account for coalition-building. While syndicates have a clear constituency they respond to, policy makers (even though we are only considering the Green Party here) and activists speak to a more varied segment of the population.

5.2.3 Implications for coalition-building

Reflecting on the potential for coalition-building of the policy package as a whole, it is worth noting that all three target groups aligned with the overall objectives. While the aim of the focus groups was to investigate participants' perceptions on the specific policies contained in the package, when presenting the latter the discussion also touched on its theoretical foundation and the core arguments behind the critique of economic growth. All groups were in line with degrowth and post-growth core ideas and fundamentally agreed with the necessity to overcome the growth imperative. When discussing the package, beyond the divergences on specific policies or aspects of them, a commonality of intentions emerged. This suggests that through persistent and active efforts at coalition-building, these common views could turn into a concrete, shared political strategy. However, coalition-building is constrained by the polarizing character of policies like UCI, which faced skepticism by labor unions and policy makers, and were supported by activists. These divisions highlight the importance of strategic sequencing: prioritizing WTR and GJG—which bridge environmental activists' and labor unions' demands—could build initial consensus, while deferring polarizing policies like UCI until trust is established.

The issue of fragmented audiences, explained above, demands coalition-building across diverse groups. For instance, by partnering with feminist organizations to frame UCI as a gender equity measure, or collaborating with housing activists to position UBS as a solution to Italy's rental crisis. Media campaigns humanizing policies—such as spotlighting caregivers benefiting from UCI or workers gaining flexibility through WTR—can replace technocratic jargon with relatable stories. These policies need to be anchored in local experiments, communicated through narratives that resonate across ideologies. For example, linking UBS to the *beni comuni* (commons) movement—epitomized by the 2011 water referendum—frames decommodification as a patriotic defense of shared heritage. Meanwhile, GJG can be framed as “rebuilding Italy’s economic pride” through green infrastructure, appealing to nationalist sentiments while advancing ecological goals. Tailored messaging is critical: activists might champion WTR as “Time to Live” to emphasize autonomy, while unions could adopt “Productivity Through Balance” to align with labor priorities. Localized pilots, such as testing WTR in union-protected sectors or launching municipal UBS cooperatives, can demonstrate tangible success while mitigating risks. Bologna’s experiments with reduced working hours or Naples’ community-managed water systems offer blueprints for scaling policies without triggering backlash. These incremental steps align with the concept of “non-reformist reforms,” ensuring policies prefigure systemic change rather than reinforcing capitalist logics.

5.2.5 Recommendations

As highlighted in the introduction and literature review, the transition to a post-growth society requires not only academic rigor but also actionable, accessible strategies for the actors driving change. This study’s findings—rooted in the lived experiences of activists, unionists, and policymakers—must be translated into digestible, practical recommendations to bridge the gap between theory and practice. By offering concrete steps tailored to each group’s priorities, we can foster coalition-building and advance the political viability of a Post-Growth Deal for Italy.

Worker Unionists could approach activists by framing shared struggles around material well-being and dignified work. For example, emphasizing how the Green Job Guarantee (GJG) could create stable, unionized jobs in renewable energy sectors while addressing climate breakdown, as seen in the EX-GKN factory occupation. Similarly, Working Time Reduction (WTR) should be framed as a response to widespread burnout and precarity, particularly among younger workers. They could approach Party Members by stressing the constitutional legitimacy of policies like Universal Basic Services (UBS). For instance, arguing that UBS fulfills Article 3 (social equality) and Article 32 (right to health), making it an extension of Italy’s welfare tradition rather than a radical break. They could present the GJG as a tool to modernize Italy’s economy in line with EU Green Deal job-creation targets, appealing to party members’ need for consensus and institutional credibility. They could use survey data showing public support for work-centered policies (e.g., 79% in France back job guarantees) to counter fears of unpopularity. They could also propose piloting DF in left-leaning municipalities to demonstrate feasibility and build public trust. Vice-versa, activists could approach worker unionists by connecting systemic critiques to immediate worker needs. They should avoid abstract degrowth rhetoric to focus on concrete benefits and highlight successful of policies to demonstrate its feasibility. To avoid dismissals of “productivity” concerns, they should reframe productivity as “well-being over output.” To introduce DF, Party Members could also propose piloting DF in left-leaning municipalities to demonstrate feasibility and build public trust. Similarly, Party Members could approach worker unionists by emphasizing how these policies guarantee stability and justice for workers during the ecological transition. Activists’ energies can be channelled to pressure local governments to pilot DF, creating tangible models of participatory democracy.

Limitations

This study is subject to several methodological and empirical limitations that may affect the generalizability and reliability of its findings. First, the qualitative focus on discursive nuance came at the cost of representativeness. Participants self-selected into the study, skewing toward individuals already sympathetic to post-growth ideas, which risks overestimating policy acceptability (Krippendorff, 2018). The mixed focus group exemplified this imbalance: last-minute cancellations resulted in a majority of activists (5) versus only one unionist and one policy-maker, distorting inter-group dynamics. Future studies could adopt stratified purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) to ensure proportional representation across ideological and institutional spectra.

Second, The survey's disproportionate activist majority (45 activists vs. 22 unionists and 33 policy-makers) limits generalizability. While surveys in qualitative research prioritize depth over breadth (Flick, 2018), the skewed sample risks conflating activist enthusiasm with broader societal trends. For example, activists rated Deliberative Forums (DF) 4.1/5 in popularity, whereas unionists scored them 3.2/5—a divergence obscured by the activist-heavy sample. Triangulation with nationally representative polls could contextualize these findings.

Thirdly, despite efforts to apply feminist moderation (Hesse-Biber, 2012) and non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2003), assertive participants often dominated discussions. For example, in the activists' focus group, two participants contributed 43% of coded statements. While our matrix documented non-verbal dissent (e.g., hesitations, silences), these nuances are inherently partial. Wilkinson's (1998) micro-conversation analysis helped disaggregate consensus, but future work could integrate real-time anonymized voting tools to democratize input.

Fourth, though transparent about positionality, the study struggled to fully avoid academic extractivism. Although efforts were made to be transparent about researcher positionality and to mitigate academic extractivism, maintaining ongoing communication and feedback with participants proved difficult. Adopting Smith's (2012) decolonizing methodologies framework—e.g., co-authoring findings with participants—could mitigate this.

Fifth, manual coding, while rigorous, lacked the reliability checks of software-assisted analysis. To compensate, patterns were validated through iterative peer debriefing and member-checking (Gibbs, 2018). However, as Krippendorff (2018) notes, manual coding risks "hermeneutic circularity," where prior assumptions shape interpretation. We want to employ hybrid coding (manual + software) to enhance transparency and further refine our findings.

A critical, final limitation lies in the study's geographic scope: all focus groups were held in Milan, and survey respondents are overwhelmingly from Northern Italy. This imbalance mirrors the authors' own Northern positionality, shaped by their networks, institutional access, and unconscious biases, which in turn privilege urban Northern perspectives. Consequently, the study risks reproducing Italy's entrenched North–South divide—rooted in historical economic disparities, political traditions, and colonial-like exploitation (Gramsci, 1926/2000, p. 171; Gramsci, 1926; Schneider, 1998). For instance, Southern Italy's higher unemployment, weaker welfare infrastructure, and widespread distrust of central institutions (ISTAT, 2023) likely foster distinct attitudes toward policies such as the Green Job Guarantee and Universal Basic Services, as also noted by focus group participants. By centering Northern voices, the research may inadvertently perpetuate what de Sousa Santos (2014) terms "epistemic colonialism." To redress these biases, future studies must adopt methodologies that foreground "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988, p. 583) and engage participatory action research co-designed with Southern communities, trade unions, and scholars critical of Northern-centric development models. Such an approach would not only challenge internal epistemic colonialism but also advance pluriversal post-growth visions informed by the lived experiences of Italy's marginalized regions (for similar approaches, see the recent interest in "Real Existing Degrowth", e.g. Kallis et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The present study explored how a post-growth policy package can serve as an emancipatory tool to form a trans-environmental, anti-capitalist, feminist, and decolonial alliance in Italy among grassroots environmental movements, worker unions and progressive politicians. To do so, it designed a Post-Growth Deal for Italy, comprised of the five following policies: Universal Basic Income (UCI), Working Time Reduction (WTR), Green Job Guarantee (GJG), Universal Basic Services (UBS) and Deliberative Forum (DF). Then, it analyzed the perceptions of these policies among the three groups, through a triangulation of focus groups and a survey. By doing so, it explored the points of (mis)alignment among the three groups on the policy package, testing its potential for facilitating coalition building. The analysis revealed that a Post-Growth policy package might serve as a unifying discursive tool, but its success depends on certain conditions that address the *political, cultural and communicative* barriers identified in the study.

The political barrier refers to the ability and willingness of actors to coalesce around a common objective despite their differences. The study found that the three target groups—social movements, worker unions, and political parties—were far from homogenous. Divergent views emerged both within and between groups, reflecting different personal perspectives and the interests of the constituencies they represent. For example, while worker unions expressed strong support for WTR and GJG, they were skeptical of UCI, fearing it could undermine the value of work. Similarly, political parties were divided on the feasibility of DF, with some viewing them as impractical in Italy's current political climate. These discrepancies could hinder coalition-building, as consensus is needed both within and between groups to form a durable alliance. To overcome this barrier, the study suggests creating a unifying tool—a refined policy package that reflects the positions of all parties involved. This could involve further internal consultations within each group to fine-tune the policies and build solid agreement around the package. For instance, worker unions could be more supportive of UCI if it is framed as a complement to WTR and GJG, emphasizing its role in valuing care work rather than replacing paid employment. Similarly, political parties might be more open to DF if they are presented as a means to enhance democratic participation in policy implementation, rather than as a replacement for representative democracy.

The cultural barrier is rooted in the ideological hegemony of capitalism, which frames any alternative economic model as either a dangerous communist threat or a naive utopia. This barrier affects even those who recognize the flaws of capitalism, as some participants expressed hesitation to support the policy package due to fears that it would be perceived as unrealistic. For example, UBS was often associated with communism, while UCI was linked to the failed citizenship income introduced by the Five Star Movement (M5S), which many viewed as overly simplistic and poorly implemented. To tackle this barrier, the study emphasizes the need to deconstruct capitalist narratives and build a counter-hegemonic discourse. This could involve highlighting the contradictions of capitalism, such as the false promises of meritocracy, and redefining work in terms of social value rather than monetary gain. For worker unions, this might mean framing WTR and GJG as tools to improve workers' well-being and job security, while for political parties, it could involve emphasizing the constitutional legitimacy of UBS and UCI as extensions of Italy's welfare tradition. By grounding post-growth policies in widely shared values—such as the Italian Constitution's emphasis on social equality and the right to work—the package could become more palatable to a broader audience.

The communicative barrier refers to the difficulty of conveying the policies' complexity and abstractness to the public. Participants across all groups noted that the policies might be hard to communicate effectively, particularly in a political climate dominated by simplistic slogans and soundbites. For example, UCI was often misunderstood as a handout rather than a recognition of care work, while DF were seen as overly abstract and difficult to implement. To address this barrier, the study recommends simplifying the messaging and grounding the policies in concrete, relatable examples.

For instance, UBS could be reframed as a “right to dignity,” emphasizing its role in ensuring access to essential services like healthcare and housing. Similarly, WTR could be marketed as “time for life,” appealing to workers’ desire for better work-life balance. Activists could play a key role in this process by using grassroots campaigns to connect post-growth policies to people’s lived experiences, such as the struggle for affordable housing or the fight against precarious work.

While this study provides valuable insights into the coalition-building potential of a post-growth policy package in Italy, it also highlights the need for further research. One limitation is the focus on three specific target groups—social movements, worker unions, and political parties—which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives within Italian society. Future research could expand the scope to include other stakeholders, such as small business owners, rural communities, and marginalized groups, to better understand how post-growth policies might impact different segments of the population. Another limitation is the study’s reliance on qualitative data from focus groups and a relatively small survey sample. Future studies could employ larger-scale surveys or experimental methods, crucially taking into account disparities and marginalization within Italy. Finally, the study raises important questions for further research, such as whether it is more effective to build a coalition around a shared critique of economic growth and then design policies collectively, or to start with pre-defined policy proposals. It also highlights the need to explore how the ideological hegemony of capitalism can be overcome through pedagogical work and public sensibilization, as well as the role of degrowth movements in relation to policymakers and other like-minded groups.

Italy stands at a crossroads: clinging to a broken growth model or pioneering a new path toward post-growth. The policies explored in this thesis—UCI, WTR, GJG, UBS, and DF—are not utopian blueprints but tools for a contested transition. As Gramsci reminds us, hegemony is won in the “trenches of civil society.” The task ahead is to forge a new common sense: one that prioritizes well-being over endless growth, equity over exploitation, and collective sovereignty over corporate control. By addressing the political, cultural, and communicative barriers identified in this study, a post-growth policy package could help build the power necessary to challenge the hegemony of capitalism and create a more just and sustainable future.

Bibliography

- Abad Frías, H. (2024). *Imagining and embodying possible futures: Creating the conditions for enacting degrowth* (Bachelor's dissertation). Carlos III University of Madrid.
- Acosta, A. (2017). *Buen vivir: Visions of development among indigenous peoples of South America*. Bloomsbury.
- Agar, M., & MacDonald, J. (1995). Focus groups and ethnography. *Human Organization*, 54(1), 78–86.
- Agarwal, A., & Narain, S. (1991). Global warming in an unequal world: A case of environmental colonialism. Centre for Science and Environment.
- Ajl, M. (2021). *A people's green new deal*. Pluto Press.
- Albertazzi, D., & McDonnell, D. (2010). Twenty-first century populism: The spectre of Western European democracy. Palgrave.
- ANSA.it. (2021, March 5). Politici per Caso, cittadini eletti a sorte per deliberare. ANSA Ambiente & Energia. Retrieved January 10, 2025, from https://www.ansa.it/canale_ambiente/notizie/istituzioni/2021/03/05/politici-per-caso-cittadini-eletti-a-sorte-per-deliberare_f2436723-9fc4-43b2-a643-c7e5b1482942.html
- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The new mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Arlotti, M., & Bernardi, L. (2022). Reddito di Cittadinanza e implementazione territoriale: un'analisi sul Nord Italia. *Polis*, 36(3), 339-368.
- Ascoli, U. (2002). *The Italian welfare state: Continuity and change*. Policy Press.
- Associazione Inquilini e Abitanti (ASIA). (2022). *La casa come servizio pubblico di welfare: Tra speculazione e diritto alla casa*. ASIA.
- Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing focus groups*. SAGE Publications.
- Barca, S. (2013). Laboring the earth: Transnational reflections on the environmental history of work. *Environmental History*, 23(4), 769–784.
- Barca, S. (2020). *Forces of reproduction: Notes for a counter-hegemonic Anthropocene*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barlow, N., Schulken, M., & Plank, C. (2024). How and Who? The Debate About a Strategy for Degrowth. *De Gruyter Handbook of Degrowth*, 109-128.
- Bärnthaler, T. (2024). Problematising degrowth strategising: On the role of compromise, material interests, and coercion. *Environmental Politics*, 33(4), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envpol.2024.03.004>
- Bell, S. E. (2021). Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda. *Sociological Forum*, 36(S1), 1122–1144.

- Bianco, L. (2024, May 8). Ma quale settimana corta: i lavoratori devono fare più straordinari. Le imprese non si smentiscono. *Huffington Post Italia*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.it/economia/2024/05/08/news/ma_quale_settimana_corta_i_lavoratori_devono_fare_piu_straordinari_le_impresa_non_si_smentiscono_mai-15827418/
- Bloor, M. (2000). *Focus groups in social research*. SAGE.
- Blyth, M. (2013). *Austerity: The history of a dangerous idea*. Oxford University Press.
- Boni, A., & Gobbo, F. (2023, June 5). *Breve storia delle politiche abitative in Italia*. Seize the Time. <https://www.seizethetime.it/breve-storia-delle-politiche-abitative-in-italia/>
- Bordignon, F., & Ceccarini, L. (2015). The Five-Star Movement: A hybrid actor in the net of state institutions. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 20(4), 454-473.
- Bordignon, Fabio, and Luigi Ceccarini. "The Five-Star Movement: A hybrid actor in the net of state institutions." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20.4 (2015): 454-473.
- Brand, U., & Wissen, M. (2017). The imperial mode of living. In *Routledge handbook of ecological economics* (pp. 152-161). Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brown, J., & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Café: Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. Berrett-Koehler.
- Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the demos: Neoliberalism's stealth revolution*. Zone Books.
- Bucci, L. (2024, March 15). Settimana lavorativa di 4 giorni? Sì, ma solo in aziende solide e ben organizzate. *Il Sole 24 Ore*. Retrieved from <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/settimana-lavorativa-4-giorni-si-ma-solo-aziende-solide-e-ben-organizzate-AFFpjD2C>
- Buch-Hansen, H. (2021). The prerequisites for a degrowth paradigm shift: Insights from critical political economy. *Ecological Economics*, 179, 106819. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106819>
- Büchs, M., & Koch, M. (2019). Challenges for the degrowth transition: The debate about wellbeing. *Sustainability*, 11(20), 5674.
- Büchs, M. (2021). Sustainable welfare: How do universal basic income and universal basic services compare. *Ecological Economics*, 189, 107–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2021.107152>
- Bufacchi, V., & Burgess, S. (2001). *Italy since 1989: Events and interpretations*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bull, M. J., & Newell, J. L. (2005). *Italian politics: Adjustment under duress*. Polity.
- Calise, M. (2003). *Il partito personale [The personal party]*. Laterza.

Camera dei Deputati. (2023, October 20). Proposta di legge C. 1505: Agevolazione contributiva per favorire la stipulazione di contratti collettivi volti a sperimentare la progressiva riduzione dell'orario di lavoro. Presentata da SCOTTO, Arturo ed altri.

Carocci, G. (2022). *Le disuguaglianze sociali in Italia: Analisi e politiche di intervento*. Carocci Editore

Carrieri, M. (1995). *L'altro sindacato: La CISL* [The other union: CISL]. Ediesse.

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., Dicenso, A., & Blythe, J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545–547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547>

Celesti, A. (2023, December 1). Anche Luxottica sperimenta la settimana lavorativa di 4 giorni. Forbes Italia. Retrieved [insert access date], from <https://forbes.it/2023/12/01/anche-luxottica-sperimenta-la-settimana-lavorativa-di-4-giorni/>

CGIL. (2013). *Piano del lavoro: Creare occupazione per dare un futuro allo sviluppo del paese*. CGIL. https://www.fiscoequo.it/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/documenti_pdf_piano_del_lavoro_cgil_gen13.pdf

COBAS Lavoro Privato. (2023, April 27). L'ultima corsa a ostacoli salario-reddito-povertà-riduzione dell'orario di lavoro. Retrieved from <https://www.cobaslavoroprivato.it/lultima-corsa-a-ostacoli-salario-reddito-poverta-riduzione-dellorario-di-lavoro/>

Collettivi Politici Veneti. (1973, April 1). Bollettino Organismi autonomi Fabbrica-Quartiere. Archivio Autonomia. Retrieved 10.11.2024, from <https://archivioautonomia.it/argomenti/salario-sociale/>

Comune di Rimini. (2024, August 6). Delibera di consiglio comunale n. 60 del 6 agosto 2024. Comune di Rimini. Retrieved [04.11.2024], from <https://www.comune.rimini.it/vivere-il-comune/partecipazione/quartieri-forum-deliberativi>

Coote, A., & Percy, A. (2020). *The case for universal basic services*. Polity Press.

Coote, A., Kasliwal, P., & Percy, A. (2019). *Universal basic services: Theory and practice*. Polity Press.

Cosme, I., Santos, R., & O'Neill, D. W. (2022). Assessing the degrowth discourse: A review and analysis of academic degrowth policy proposals. *Ecological Economics*, 195, 107361.

D'Alimonte, R. (2019). How the populists won in Italy. *Journal of Democracy*, 30(1), 114-127.

D'Alisa, G., & Sekulova, F. (2021). A Universal Care Income for Europe: A Degrowth Proposal. *Ecological Economics*, 180, 106–120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106832>

Degl'Innocenti, A. (2024, April). Cosa pensi (e provi) sul clima? A Milano un open forum per parlarsi e ascoltarsi a fondo. Italia Che Cambia. Retrieved February 10, 2025, from <https://www.italiachecambia.org/2024/04/open-forum-clima-milano/>

Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (Eds.). (2015). *The Oxford handbook of social movements*. Oxford University Press.

Dengler, C., & Strunk, B. (2018). The monetized economy versus care: A feminist critique of degrowth. *Feminist Economics*, 24(3), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2017.1383620>

- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Deriu, M. (2012). Democracies with a future: Degrowth and the democratic transition. *Journal of Futures Studies*, 16(2), 73–86.
- Deseriis, Marco. "Digital movement parties: a comparative analysis of the technopolitical cultures and the participation platforms of the Movimento 5 Stelle and the Piratenpartei." *Information, Communication & Society* 23.12 (2020): 1770-1786.
- Donati, P. (2023). *Il welfare familiare in Italia: Tra tradizione e innovazione*. Donzelli Editore.
- Drews, S., & Van den Bergh, J. C. J. M. (2015). What explains public support for climate policies? A review of empirical and experimental studies. *Climate Policy*, 16(7), 855–876. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2015.1058240>
- Dryzek, J. S. (2010). *Deliberative democracy and beyond: Liberals, critics, contestations*. Oxford University Press.
- Du Bois, B. (1983). Passionate scholarship: Notes on values, knowing, and method in feminist social science. In G. Bowles & R. D. Klein (Eds.), *Theories of women's studies* (pp. 133–145). Routledge.
- D'Alimonte, R. (2019). The Five Star Movement in government. *West European Politics*, 42(2), 423–442.
- D'Alisa, G., & Kallis, G. (2020). Degrowth and the State. *Ecological Economics*, 169, 106486. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.106486>
- D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Kallis, G. (2014). *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era*. Routledge.
- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Duke University Press.
- Eurobarometer. (2022). Attitudes of Europeans towards the environment (Report No. 97.2). European Commission. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2674>
- Europa Verde-Verdi. (2024). Statuto di Europa Verde-Verdi, Titolo I: Principi. Retrieved January 20, 2025, from <https://europaverde.it/statuto/>
- European Environmental Bureau (EEB). (2023). *The sustainability of economic growth in high-income countries: A report*. European Environmental Bureau.
- Eurostat. (2024, May 1). *EU workers: 7.1% worked 49 hours or more a week in 2023*. Eurostat. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240501-1>
- Eurostat. (2024, May 1). EU workers: 7.1% worked 49 hours or more a week in 2023. Eurostat News. Retrieved [insert access date], from <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240501-1>
- Extinction Rebellion Italia. (2023, December 13). Assemblea di Cittadini. Extinction Rebellion Italia. Retrieved March 11, 2025, from <https://www.extinctionrebellion.it/chi-siamo/assemblea-cittadine/>
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.

- Fana, M., Guarascio, D., & Cirillo, V. (2016). Did Italy need more labour flexibility? The consequences of the jobs act. *Intereconomics*, 51(2), 79-86.
- Fana, M., Guarascio, D., & Cirillo, V. (2016). The crisis and labor market reforms in Italy: A regional analysis on the Jobs Act. *Argomenti, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Department of Economics, Society & Politics*, 5(5), 1–28.
- Fana, M. (2017). Non è lavoro, è sfruttamento [It's not work, it's exploitation]. Laterza.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press.
- Federici, S. (2012). *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction, and feminist struggle*. PM Press.
- Feltrin, L., & Leonardi, E. (2023). Working-class environmentalism and climate justice. In *The challenge of the global ecological crisis for world politics* (pp. 49–).
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford University Press.
- First CISL. (2024, June 18). *Riduzione orario di lavoro, audizione di First Cisl in Parlamento sulla proposta. Il video*. FirstCISL. <https://www.firstcisl.it/2024/06/riduzione-orario-di-lavoro-audizione-di-first-cisl-in-parlamento-sulla-proposta-il-video/>
- Fisher, M. (2009). *Capitalist realism: Is there no alternative?* Zero Books.
- Fitzpatrick, N., Parrique, T., & Cosme, I. (2022). Exploring degrowth policy proposals: A systematic mapping with thematic synthesis. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 365, 132764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.132764>
- Fitzpatrick, N. (2024). Uniting the means and ends of degrowth transformation. In *De Gruyter Handbook of Organizing Economic, Ecological and Societal transformation* (pp. 189–208). De Gruyter.
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Forstater, M. (2006). Green jobs: Public service employment and environmental sustainability. *Challenge*, 49(4), 58–72.
- Fraser, N. (2013). *Fortunes of feminism: From state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis*. Verso.
- Fratoianni, N., Conte, G., Bonelli, L., & Schlein, E. (2024, March 11). Lavorare meglio, vivere meglio: La proposta delle opposizioni sulla riduzione degli orari di lavoro a parità di salario. Verdi Sinistra. <https://verdisinistra.it/fratoianni-conte-bonelli-schlein-lavorare-meglio-vivere-meglio-la-proposta-delle-opposizioni-sulla-riduzione-degli-orari-di-lavoro-a-parita-di-salario/>
- Fromm, E. (1941). *Escape from freedom*. Farrar & Rinehart.
- Fumagalli, A., & Lazzarato, M. (1999). *Tute bianche. Reddito di cittadinanza e disoccupazione di massa*.

- Galanti, M. T. (2016). Privatization in Italy: A critical review. *Public Administration Review*, 76(2), 256–268.
- Gale, N. K., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S., & Redwood, S. (2013). Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 13(1), 117. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-117>
- Gibbs, G. (2018). *Analyzing qualitative data* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Ginsborg, P. (2003). *Italy and its discontents: Family, civil society, state, 1980–2001*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Giuffrida, A. (2025, January 15). Italian police accused of making female activists remove underwear and do squats. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/15/italian-police-accused-of-making-female-activists-remove-underwear-and-do-squats>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.
- Gli Stati Generali. (2023). *Territori a Occupazione zero: The pilot project in Rome's neighborhoods under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan*. Gli Stati Generali.
- Gorz, A. (1967). *Non-reformist reforms*. Transgression.
- Graeber, D. (2018). *Bullshit jobs: A theory*. Simon & Schuster.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Eds.). International Publishers.
- Green European Journal. (2023). Youth climate activism in Italy: Between hope and repression. <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu>
- Halcomb, E. J., Gholizadeh, L., DiGiacomo, M., Phillips, J., & Davidson, P. M. (2007). Literature review: Considerations in undertaking focus group research with culturally and linguistically diverse groups. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 16(6), 1000–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2006.01760.x>
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2012). *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis*. Oxford University Press.
- Hickel, J. (2020). *Less is more: How degrowth will save the world*. William Heinemann.
- Hickel, J. (2021). What does degrowth mean? A few points of clarification. *Globalizations*, 18(7), 1105–1111.
- Hickel, J. (2022, March 18). *Surveys show strong public support for degrowth policies*. [Blog post]. *Jason Hickel's Blog*. <https://www.jasonhickel.org/blog/surveys-show-strong-public-support-for-degrowth-policies>
- Hickel. (2024, April 1). *How popular are post-growth and post-capitalist ideas? some recent data*. <https://www.jasonhickel.org/blog/2023/11/24/how-popular-are-post-growth-and-post-capitalist-ideas>

- Hornborg, A. (2017). *Global magic: Technologies of appropriation from ancient Rome to Wall Street*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hughes, D., & DuMont, K. (1993). Using focus groups to facilitate culturally anchored research. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 21(6), 775–806. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00942103>
- Imperatore, P., & Leonardi, E. (2023). *L'era della giustizia climatica: Prospettive politiche per una transizione ecologica dal basso*. Orthotes.
- ISTAT. (2021). Censimento Agricoltura 2020 [2020 Agricultural Census]. Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. <https://www.istat.it>
- Jackson, T., & Victor, P. A. (2018). Confronting inequality in a post-growth world: Basic income, factor substitution, and the future of work (Working Paper No. 11). Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP).
- Jacobin Italia. (2022). GKN: Il Piano per rifarla. 14 Maggio 2024, <https://jacobinitalia.it/gkn-il-piano-per-rifarla/>
- Jason Hickel. (2023, November 24). *Universal public services: The power of decommodifying survival*. <https://www.jasonhickel.org/blog/2023/3/18/universal-public-services>
- Joseph, M. (2002). *Against the romance of community*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Kallis, G., et al. (2018). *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era*. Routledge.
- Kallis, G., et al. (2025). *Degrowth policies in high-income countries: A path to post-capitalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Kallis, G. (2011). In defence of degrowth. *Ecological Economics*, 70(5), 873–880.
- Kallis, G. (2013). Societal metabolism, working time, and degrowth: A comment on Sorman and Giampietro. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 38, 94–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2011.11.028>
- Kallis, G. (2017). Economics without growth. In M. Castells et al. (Eds.), *Another economy is possible* (Chapter 2). Polity Press.
- Kallis, G. (2018). Degrowth. In G. Kallis, F. D'Alisa, & F. Demaria (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 1–17). Routledge.
- Katanich, D. (2024, May 3). Quali Paesi europei hanno registrato la disoccupazione più bassa a marzo? Euronews. Retrieved [insert access date], from <https://it.euronews.com/business/2024/05/03/quali-paesi-europei-hanno-avuto-la-disoccupazione-piu-bassa-a-marzo>
- Kelton, S. (2020). The deficit myth: Modern monetary theory and the birth of the people's economy. PublicAffairs.
- Khan, J., Emilsson, K., Fritz, M., Koch, M., Hildingsson, R., & Johansson, H. (2022). Ecological ceiling and social floor: Public support for eco-social policies in Sweden. *Ecological Economics*, 192, 107287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107287>
- Klein, N. (2014). *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate*. Simon & Schuster.

- Koch, M., & Kallis, G. (2017). Degrowth: A decade of debate. In *The Routledge handbook of post-growth studies* (pp. 142–154). Routledge.
- Kothari, A., Salleh, A., & Escobar, A. (2019). *Pluriverse: A post-development dictionary*. Tulika Books.
- Krämer, K., Forgione, M., Cardito, M., & Bonaiuti, M. (forthcoming). Degrowth in Italy: Early beginnings, political disputes, and a plural social movement.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. SAGE Publications.
- Leavy, P. (2020). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Lee, J., Koch, M., & Alkan-Olsson, J. (2023). Deliberating a sustainable welfare–work nexus. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 64(4), 825–844. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-023-00454-6>
- Limata, P. (2021). L'unità possibile: una storia della Federazione Cgil, Cisl, Uil. Sindacalismo: rivista di studi sull'innovazione e sulla rappresentanza del lavoro nella società globale: nuova serie: 46, 2, 2021, 69-75.
- Loreto, Fabrizio. Storia della CGIL. Dalle origini a oggi. Vol. 1. Ediesse, 2017.
- Malm, A. (2021). *How to blow up a pipeline*. Verso Books.
- Martínez, M. A. (2024). Activist research as a methodological toolbox to advance public sociology. *Sociology*, 58(4), 832–850.
- Martínez-Alier, J. (2022). Environmental justice and economic degrowth: An alliance between two movements. *Environmental Justice*, 15(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2022.0018>
- Mastini, R., Kallis, G., & Hickel, J. (2021). A Green New Deal without growth? *Environmental Politics*, 30(6), 1014-1035. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2021.1969356>
- Mastini, R. (2022). A Green New Deal without growth? Theoretical reflections and empirical studies (Doctoral dissertation, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/tesis/2023/hdl_10803_687722/rima1de1.pdf
- Mazzara, B., Arcuri, F., Aurigemma, K., Di Giulio, L., Domini, M., Marini Bellisari, L., & Paglia, C. (2024). La decrescita nell'immaginario e nelle pratiche: Una ricerca nel contesto italiano. *Quaderni della decrescita*, 1(3).
- Mete, Vittorio. Anti-politics in contemporary Italy. Routledge, 2022.
- Mies, M. (1986). Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour. Zed Books.
- Mirowski, P., & Plehwe, D. (2009). *The road from Mont Pèlerin: The making of the neoliberal thought collective*. Harvard University Press.

- Mitchell, W. (2019). Modern monetary theory and ecological sustainability. *Ecological Economics*, 160, 26–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.02.002>
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Mosca, L. (2020). Democratic vision and online participatory spaces in the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle. *Acta politica*, 55(1), 1-18.
- Mosca, Lorenzo, and Filippo Tronconi. "Beyond left and right: the eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement." *Varieties of populism in Europe in times of crises*. Routledge, 2021. 118-143.
- Mosca, M. P. (2024, March 13). A 4-days working week benefit employees and companies. Alley Oop - Il Sole 24 Ore. Retrieved [insert access date], from <https://alleyoop.ilssole24ore.com/2024/03/13/4-days-working-week/>
- Mouffe, C. (2013). *Agonistics: Thinking the world politically*. Verso.
- O'Dell, D., Contu, D., & Shreedhar, G. (2022). Public support for degrowth policies and sufficiency behaviours in the United States: A discrete choice experiment. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 108, 102458. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeem.2022.102458>
- Olk, C., Schneider, C., & Hickel, J. (2023). How to pay for saving the world: Modern monetary theory for a degrowth transition. *Ecological Economics*, 214, 107968. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.107968>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Dickinson, W. B., Leech, N. L., & Zoran, A. G. (2009). A qualitative framework for collecting and analyzing data in focus group research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(3), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800301>
- Parrique, T. (2019). *The political economy of degrowth* (Doctoral dissertation, Université Clermont Auvergne). <https://theses.hal.science/tel-02499463/document>
- Parrique, T. (2024). *The key elements of degrowth: A synthesis of definitions*. Routledge.
- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research*, 34(5 Pt 2), 1189–1208.
- Paulson, S., & Büchs, M. (2022). Post-growth policies: Exploring support and opposition across different socio-economic conditions. *Environmental Values*, 31(3), 269–291. <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327121X16328186623841>
- Person. (2024, May 16). *Memoria Audizione Su ddl per "Riduzione Orario di Lavoro."* CGIL. <https://www.cgil.it/ci-occupiamo-di/contrattazione/memoria-audizione-su-ddl-per-riduzione-orario-di-lavoro-f5szjvug>
- Piven, F. F. (2010). Reflections on scholarship and activism. *Antipode*, 42(4), 944–949. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00776.x>
- Pons, L. (2024, October 23). Come sta andando la proposta di legge sulla settimana corta. *Fanpage*. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <https://www.fanpage.it/politica/come-sta-andando-la-proposta-di-legge-sulla-settimana-corta/>
- Reich, W. (1970). *The mass psychology of fascism* (3rd ed.). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Reuters. (2023, December 5). Lamborghini introduces four-day week for production workers. Reuters. Retrieved [insert access date], from <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/lamborghini-introduces-four-day-week-production-workers-2023-12-05/>

Riva, P. (2023, May 30). Settimana corta: dentro il caso Intesa Sanpaolo. Secondo Welfare. Retrieved [insert access date], from <https://www.secondowelfare.it/parti-sociali/settimana-corta-intesa-sanpaolo-accordo-sindacati/>

Rosa, H. (2019). *Resonance: A sociology of our relationship to the world*. Polity Press.

Rosenberg, M. (2003). *Nonviolent communication: A language of life*. Puddledancer Press.

Sacchi, S., Ciarini, A., Gallo, G., Lodigiani, R., Maino, F., & Raitano, M. (2023). Sostegno ai poveri: quale riforma?: dal Reddito di Cittadinanza all'Assegno di Inclusione: analisi dell'Alleanza contro la povertà in Italia.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Saraceno, C. (2018). Reddito di cittadinanza tanta confusione sotto il cielo. *MicroMega*, (7), 9.

Saraceno, C. (2023). *Il welfare. Tra vecchie e nuove disuguaglianze*. Il Mulino.

Savini, F. (2024). Strategic planning for degrowth: What, who, how. *Planning Theory*, 14730952241258693.

Savini, F. (2024). Strategic planning for degrowth: What, who, how. *Planning Theory*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14730952241258693>

Savini, F. (2025). Degrowth as ideology: Making values for the soil of Amsterdam. *Environmental Values*, 09632719251318139.

Schmelzer, M., Vetter, A., & Vansintjan, A. (2022). *The future is degrowth: A guide to a world beyond capitalism*. Verso Books.

Schor, J. B. (2010). *Plenitude: The new economics of true wealth*. Penguin.

Secondo Welfare. (2023, March 29). *Territori a disoccupazione zero. Una sperimentazione per l'Italia*. Secondo Welfare. <https://www.secondowelfare.it/primo-welfare/lavoro/territori-a-disoccupazione-zero-una-sperimentazione-per-litalia/>

Sekulova, F., & D'Alisa, G. (forthcoming). A universal care income for Europe: A degrowth proposal. *Academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/121871511/A_Universal_Care_Income_for_Europe_a_degrowth_proposal

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.

Smithson, J. (2000). Using and analysing focus groups: Limitations and possibilities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 3(2), 103–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/136455799294302>

Smithson, J. (2007). Focus groups. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, & J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social research methods* (pp. 357–370). SAGE Publications.

Steinberger, J. K., et al. (2020). A post-growth economy for societal and planetary boundaries. *Nature Sustainability*, 3(3), 173–180. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-020-00637-0>

Stokoe, E. H., & Smithson, J. (2002). *Focus groups*. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, pp. 315–318). SAGE Publications.

Thorne, N., Yip, A. K.-T., Bouman, W. P., Marshall, E., & Arcelus, J. (2020). The terminology of identities between, outside and beyond the gender binary – A systematic review. In C. Richards, W. P. Bouman, & M.-J. Barker (Eds.), *Non-binary and Genderqueer Genders* (pp. 17–33). Routledge.

Toniolo, A., & Fontana, S. (2023, June 13). Young activism, old politics: Italy's divided climate movement. *Green European Journal*.
<https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/young-activism-old-politics-italys-divided-climate-movement/>

Tsoukatou, V. (2019). Examination of the correlation between working time reduction and employment. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 46(5), 594–609. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-03-2018-0141>.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). Unbecoming claims: Pedagogies of refusal in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 811–818. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800414530265>

Unti, B. J. (2017). The job guarantee and transformational degrowth. *Full Employment and Social Justice*, 63–82. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66376-0_3

UN Women. (2021). *Universal basic income: A tool for gender equality and women's empowerment* (Policy Brief). UN Women.
<https://unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Policy-brief-Universal-basic-income-en.pdf>

Van Parijs, P. (2004). Basic income: A simple and powerful idea for the twenty-first century. *Politics & Society*, 32(1), 7–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329203261095>

Vasapollo, L. (1999). Profit State, redistribuzione dell'accumulazione e reddito sociale minimo. In Profit state, redistribuzione dell'accumulazione e reddito sociale minimo. La città del sole.

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., Sinagub, J., & Sinagub, J. M. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. SAGE Publications.

Vega, C., & Torres Santana, A. (2022). Renta básica universal y renta de cuidados en los debates feministas. La perspectiva de la reapropiación de la riqueza. *Política y Sociedad*, 59(2), 363–384. <https://doi.org/10.5209/poso.76153>

Velotti, L. (2024). La decrescita come lotta di classe. *Quaderni della decrescita*, 0(0/2).

Vlandas, T. (2019). The politics of the basic income guarantee: Analysing individual support in Europe. *Basic Income Studies*, 14(1), Article 20180021. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bis-2018-0021>

Vogel, J., & Hickel, J. (2023). Is green growth happening? An empirical analysis of achieved versus Paris-compliant CO₂–GDP decoupling in high-income countries. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 7(9), e759–e769. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(23\)00160-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(23)00160-9)

Waring, M. (1988). *If women counted: A new feminist economics*. Harper & Row.

Weeks, K. (2011). *The problem with work: Feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Duke University Press.

Wilkinson, S. (1998). *Focus group methodology: A review*. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1(3), 181–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.1998.10846874>

Wray, L. R. (1998). *Understanding modern money: The key to full employment and price stability*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Wright, E. O. (2004). Basic income as a socialist project. *Basic Income Studies*, 1(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1932-0183.1002>

Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias*. Verso.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Zaslove, Andrej. *The re-invention of the European radical right: Populism, regionalism, and the Italian Lega Nord*. McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2011.