



# Decarbonizing energy intensive industries :

what are the risks and  
opportunities for jobs?

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Hybrid conference

2 June 2022, 09h30-15h30 CET

**etui.**

# TRADE UNIONS FACING THE ECO-SOCIAL-GROWTH TRILEMMA

PROSPECTS AND HURDLES FOR A JUST TRANSITION SOLUTION TO THE TARANTO CRISIS



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# THE RESEARCH IN A NUTSHELL

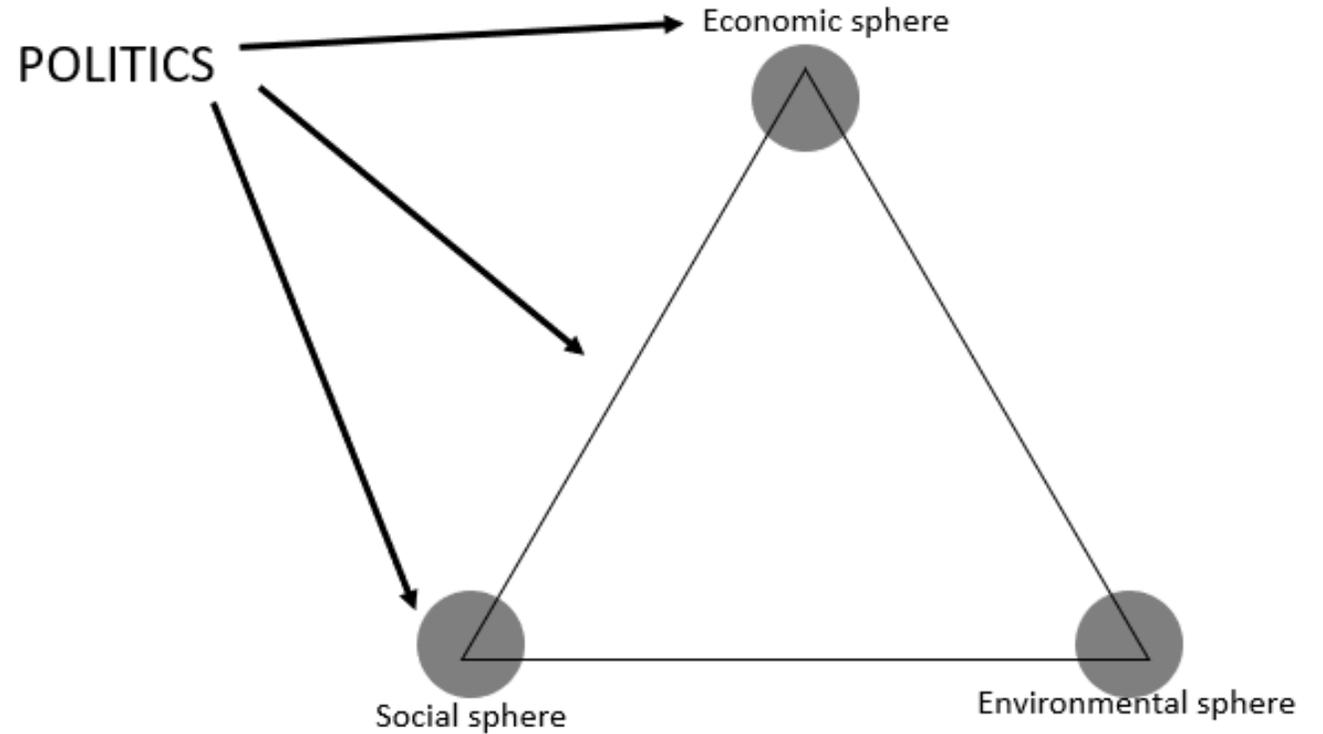


## Trade unions facing complex industrial crises:

- Analyzing unions' **economic, social and environmental objectives**
- Mapping the **solutions that they propose** to reconcile these objectives

## A qualitative case study: trade unions in Taranto

# *The eco- social- growth Trilemma*



- 3 policy goals in 3 separate spheres: economic growth, social protection, environmental protection
- The “trilemma” refers to the governance of the interconnections between the 3 spheres

# TRADE UNIONS & THE TRILEMMA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

## LABOUR ENVIRONMENTALISM

Trade unions' attitudes towards the *jobs vs. environment dilemma* → 2 opposite positions:

- **Purely industrialists (*treadmill of production*)**: opposition/lack of attention to environmental objectives
- **Just transition**: reconciling labour and environment

## JUST TRANSITION (JT)

*"A fair and equitable process of moving towards a post-carbon society"* (McCauley e Heffron 2018: 2)

Various conceptions of JT:

- **Affirmative (*technological fix*) vs. transformative (*ecologism*)** with respect to the prevailing model of industrial capitalism
- **Narrow vs. broad** depending on the (spatial-temporal) scope of the environmental challenges considered

# TARANTO AND FORMER ILVA: A PARADIGMATIC CASE

## A multi-faceted crisis



### **ECONOMIC**

25% of the total Italian steel production

(Picture source: Italiaoggi.it)



### **SOCIAL**

10.000 plus employees (2018) + High provincial unemployment (11.3%) & low employment (45%)

(Picture source: La Ringhiera)



### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

*“Pollutants emitted by the steel plant have caused [...] illness and death events”* (Forastiere et al., 2012: 23, authors' own translation).

(Picture source: Peacelink)

# THE TARANTO CASE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

YEAR	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN DEVELOPMENTS
2012	Inquiry <i>Ambiente Svenduto</i> : seizure of the plant, arrest of the heads of Riva company
2013	Letta government poses former ILVA under the government's supervision ("Commissariamento") until 2017
2018	ArcelorMittal purchases former ILVA
2019	ArcelorMittal announces its withdrawal from the location contract
2020	Conte government announces the nationalization of former ILVA, as well as i) a new industrial plan and ii) the aim to use hydrogen in steel production at former ILVA
2021	NRRP: 2 billion € investment in R&D for hydrogen technologies; Trade unions' mobilization & confirmation of the government's position

# STATE OF THE ART: TRADE UNIONS IN TARANTO

- Initial studies: «environmentalist» (USB) vs. «industrialists» (FIOM, FIM e UILM) (Barca & Leonardi 2016, 2018; Greco & Bagnardi 2018)
- More recent studies: beyond the dichotomy (Tomassetti 2020; Greco 2021)

## GAPS to be filled:

- Update to today's (dynamic) context: (EU) decarbonization & nationalization
  - Focus on concrete solution proposals beyond narratives/attitudes

# THE *ECO-SOCIAL-GROWTH* TRILEMMA IN TARANTO

**Economic sphere:** preserving steel production

*Maintaining jobs in steel industry*

*Greening steel production*

**Social sphere:**

- income through occupation
- health and safety at work

**(Green) job transition & healthcare**

**Environmental sphere:**

- reducing industrial pollution (narrow)
- cutting greenhouse gas emissions (broad)

# TRADE UNIONS' SOLUTIONS TO THE *ECO-SOCIAL-GROWTH* TRILEMMA IN TARANTO

	Social objective(s)		Environmental objective(s)		Economic objective
	Income through occupation	Health and Safety at work	Cutting GHG emissions (broad)	Reducing industrial pollution (narrow)	Preserving Steel production
<i>Status quo</i>	+	-	-	-	+
<i>Ambientalizzazione</i>	?	+	-	+	+
<i>Decarbonization (hydrogen)</i>	?	?	+	+	?
<i>Dismantling</i>	-	+	+	+	-

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Trade unions facing the eco-social-growth trilemma

- Economic objectives: convergence (**FIOM, FIM & UILM**) BUT critical **USB**
- Social objectives: convergence for **everyone**
- Environmental objectives: **narrow** for **everyone**

## Possible solutions:

- *Status quo* → no longer supported
- *Ambientalizzazione* → convergence **FIOM, FIM & UILM**
- *Decarbonization (hydrogen)* → Widespread skepticism: structural barriers and uncertainties
- *Dismantling* → **USB's** proposal until 2018, now abandoned due to lack of political support

Trade unions as political actors → widespread **distrust** in government: inertia, mismanagement & lack of transparency

# CONCLUSIONS

## Overcoming the *jobs vs. environment* dilemma:

- Usefulness of the **eco-social-growth trilemma** as an analytical framework
- Diffusion of **just transition** approaches

## Which just transition?

- **Narrow conception** of environmental challenges considered → what future for decarbonization in Taranto?
- Prevalence of **affirmative** positions (*technological fix*) BUT **USB** exception



THANK YOU

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