

Climate change and its politicization by and within Italian organized philanthropy

Paola Arrigoni

UNIVERSITY OF BOLOGNA

Abstract

The international research community has yet to thoroughly examine the role of organized philanthropy in climate transition policymaking, while no studies have investigated the positioning of Italian climate philanthropy. I address this knowledge gap by analysing the main climate-related networks that include Italian foundations and their justificatory grammars, using the conceptual pairing depoliticization/politicization as a heuristic key. My research hypothesis is that the involvement of philanthropic networks in climate policymaking contributes to shifting political responsibility from governments to non-political actors, and that this entails both a discursive depoliticization of public action and a governmental and social politicization in the practices of non-political actors. Drawing on a large corpus of official documents and a set of semi-structured interviews, I explore this hypothesis at two levels: the form and role assumed by Italian climate networks (social and governmental politicization) and the values and ideas they convey in the context of national and international climate governance (discursive depoliticization). My analysis appears to confirm the initial hypothesis: these networks function as political entrepreneurs and field-builders and as such they foster the depoliticization of public action at the discursive level, similarly to international philanthropy. Furthermore, at least at the network level, Italian philanthropy is internally in agreement on how to tackle climate change.

1. Introduction

‘Although we should be careful not to overstate our role, it is important to recognize that the climate philanthropy community’s activities prior to and at the [Paris] COP helped to lay the basis for the outcome’ (ECF 2016, p.2). In this statement, the ECF (European Climate Foundation) credits philanthropists with helping to shape the 2015 Paris Climate Accords. The ECF was set up in 2008 to help address the climate crisis by fostering the attainment of a net-zero emissions society at the national, European and global levels. It is the most prominent of the European pass-through foundations which specialize in redistributing funds from other foundations. Specifically, the ECF pools monies from some of the world’s largest climate foundations, including the Swiss-based Oak Foundation and the US-based Hewlett Foundation and ClimateWorks, another American pass-through foundation, whose funders include the foundations of billionaires Bezos, Gates, Zuckerberg, Bloomberg and Ford.

Although the role of organized philanthropy¹ in climate change policymaking has grown significantly over the past decade, few scholars have investigated the phenomenon

¹ This term refers to organizations endowed with their own financial resources, which are independently governed, make strategic use of their assets for the public good and are mostly foundations and more rarely associations (European Foundation Centre, 2016).



(Betsill et al. 2022; Monier, 2023). Furthermore, these few have mainly focused on the North American or international context, while the positioning of Italian organized philanthropy remains unexplored.

I set out here to address this knowledge gap by analyzing the main climate-related networks that include Italian foundations and their justificatory grammars – namely, the values and motives that actors evoke to legitimize their conduct (Mills, 1940) – using the conceptual pairing depoliticization/politicization as a heuristic key. My working hypothesis is that the involvement of philanthropic networks in climate policymaking shifts political responsibilities from governments to non-political actors, causing both a discursive depoliticization of public action and governmental and social politicization of the actions of these non-political actors.

The depoliticization of public action is known to be intrinsically political in nature. Indeed, as Burnham (2017) has noted, it is structurally associated with the complementary processes of politicization of non-political actors' actions. Burnham himself has offered a compelling definition of depoliticization as “the process of removing the political character of decision-making processes” (Burnham 2001, p. 128). This formulation reflects the fact that the political dimension of the decision-making process is sidelined as opposed to disappearing altogether. Indeed, depoliticization is actually a political strategy (Jessop 2014): shifting decision-making responsibilities from governments to non-political actors can boost the political control wielded by the latter, generating a system of governance in which political decisions are made without appearing to be such (De Leonardis 2013). Thus, the depoliticization of public action is structurally coupled with the corresponding politicization of a diverse range of social practices. Together, these two concepts can “serve as a valuable key to deciphering and understanding the evolving relations between society, politics and the economy” (Moini, 2019, p.219).

In this paper, I draw on the conceptual framework developed by Giulio Moini and Ernesto d'Albergo (2017, 2019) to examine the dual dynamics of depoliticization of public action and politicization of social practices, in relation to the involvement of Italian climate philanthropy in policymaking. Moini (2019) has clarified the key difference between public action and social practices: specifically, the former is action by various actors that inevitably produces structures for regulating social organization, while the latter comprises actions and values that are shared by various actors, making it possible to select some types of actions and exclude others without necessarily producing regulatory frameworks.

Moini and d'Albergo (2017, 2019) have proposed an analytical-interpretive schema of the three levels at which the twin concepts of depoliticization and politicization play out: 1) at the discursive level, when defining courses of action is portrayed as inevitable and when a framework put forward by nonpolitical actors (not legitimized via democratic-electoral processes) is assigned a central, if not dominant, role in identifying possible courses of action, with the approval of political actors; 2) at the governmental level, when power and responsibility are transferred from political institutions legitimated by elections to more technical agencies, or to bodies that are not democratically elected and that steer clear of contentious politics; 3) at the social level, when responsibility for collective problems is assumed by social actors, either without the involvement of public actors or in partnership with them.

Key to this line of reasoning is the political dimension acquired by organized philanthropy in recent decades and by extension philanthropy's relationship with the state and democracy. While organized philanthropy has often been accused of a lack of accountability or legitimization throughout its history (Hall 2006), such criticism has intensified in recent years given philanthropy's increasingly important role in orienting public policy. Theda Skocpol stated during the 2016 Opening Congress of the American Political Science Association: "Studies of rising inequality, declining democratic accountability and asymmetric partisan polarization none of these transformations can be fully understood without bringing organized philanthropy into the analysis" (Skocpol 2016, 435). Similar critiques are also beginning to emerge in Europe. From a French perspective, Sylvain A. Lefèvre and Anne Monier (2021) have questioned whether philanthropists are legitimized to manage matters of general interest, especially considering the recent rise in inequality and the erosion of trust in institutions and elites. Nevertheless, in Italy too, philanthropic foundations, especially banking foundations (Fob), have increasingly taken on political functions in recent decades, replacing the mechanisms of representation legitimized by democratic elections with the mechanisms of philanthrocapitalism (Arrigoni 2021, 2024).

Drawing on a large corpus of official documents², complemented by a smaller corpus of semi-structured interviews with representatives of climate networks³, and using the concepts of depoliticization/politicization, I explore the hypothesis that political responsibilities are shifting from governments to non-political actors at two different levels: the form and role assumed by Italian climate networks (social and governmental politicization) and the values and ideas these networks convey in the context of national and international climate governance (discursive depoliticization).

I have chosen networks as my unit of analysis for three reasons. First, the literature on the role of foundations in policymaking suggests that, because they have more limited resources to invest than governments, foundations strategically seek to maximise their impact by directing resources towards their policy priorities (Depecker et al., 2018). These priorities include – alongside producing and disseminating knowledge to inform policymaking and channelling funding to organisations with the potential to become key players in the field – mediating between public and private actors via the creation of networks, think tanks and research institutes. Second, Italian foundations, like their European counterparts (Monier, 2023), have been extremely active on the networking front in recent years. Third, from an analytical viewpoint, focusing on network documents enables us to identify the shared, and therefore dominant, justification regime, without prejudice to possible differences between the outlooks of individual foundations.

The paper is organized as follows. In the first section, I introduce the theme of the relationship between organized philanthropy and climate action by reviewing the existing literature on the foundations' contribution to policymaking and reconstructing philanthropic involvement in international climate governance from a socio-historical perspective. In the second section, I outline the salient features of four Italian networks. In the third section and in the conclusions respectively, I discuss this case study from a

² For a list of the documents consulted, as well as the details of how they were selected and how information was extracted from them, see Appendix Table A.

³ Specifically, between December 2022 and November 2023, I conducted seven interviews with managers at Assifero (2), Cariplo (2), FCmessina (1), Banca Etica (1) and Fondazione del Monte di Bologna e Ravenna (1).

politicization/depoliticization perspective and outline my main research findings and their implications.

2. Organized philanthropy and climate policymaking

Since the 1990s, organized philanthropy has been on the rise everywhere. Such is the extent of the phenomenon that some analysts view it as a new golden age of philanthropy⁴. It has also been referred to as the new philanthropy, given its combination of grantmaking and investment logics (Frumkin, 2003). While multiple terms have been used to describe this phenomenon, its shared core lies in its manifest intertwining of benevolence and business. Bishop (2011) coined the expression “philanthrocapitalism”, arguing that this offers the most comprehensive label, because it reflects the nexus between capitalism and the new trends in philanthropy. Operationally, this translates into a greater focus on the impact of interventions, while normatively, it expresses the notion that entrepreneurial and economic logics (e.g., measurability, risk-taking, innovativeness) may be virtuously wedded to the logics of gift and the common good (Arrigoni et al., 2020).

While organized philanthropy has historically gained more traction in English-speaking countries, the number of foundations in Europe, including Italy, has grown exponentially over the last two decades (Pierri, 2019). In 2015, there were 129,000 foundations in Europe, which distributed monies exceeding €53 billion; by 2020, this number had risen to 147,000, with allocations of around €60 billion. In Italy, the number of foundations almost tripled in under twenty years, growing from 3,077 in 2001 to 8,065 in 2019. These figures go hand in hand with greater public visibility of philanthropic actors, especially through the third (EU) and second level (nation states) associations that represent them and the various thematic networks to which they belong together with other foundations and public and private bodies. At the European level, foundations have been represented by Philea (Philanthropy Europe Association) since the merger in 2022 of the EFC (European Foundation Centre) and Dafne (Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe). In Italy, Acri represents the 86 foundations of banking origin, while Assifero represents the family, community and corporate foundations.

Multiple factors have underpinned the rapid growth in organized philanthropy. First, we have the emergence of new economic sectors and the relative accumulation of massive fortunes by some entrepreneurs, be they financial investors in the 1980s (Guillhot, 2006) or the founders of the new IT and internet multinationals since the 1990s (Abélès, 2002). Equally salient is the reorganization and outsourcing of the public sector since the neoliberal turn (King, Le Galès, 2017). The state has spread not only upwards and downwards towards supranational and local institutions, but also sideways towards the market and so-called civil society, fostering the entry of new private actors into policymaking (Mastro-paolo et al. 2022). In this context, the dynamism of philanthropic organizations has been boosted by the introduction of favorable legal frameworks, such as tax benefits for donations or simplifications of the legal framework for setting up foundations (Duvoux, 2015). Finally, we may also cite the stark rise in inequality seen in many countries since the 1980s, which has been facilitated by government policies incentivizing the accumulation of capital (Depecker et al. 2018).

⁴ Lane, R. (2013). A golden age of philanthropy. *Forbes*, December 1.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that philanthropic foundations globally have become involved in the fight against climate change. But what direction has climate philanthropy taken and with what outcomes? So far, with few – albeit significant – exceptions, scholars have not devoted much scrutiny to foundations as actors with the power to influence environmental governance systems (Morena 2021, Betsill et al. 2021, Monier 2023)⁵. Existing studies have mainly focused on US-based foundations or international climate philanthropy, which, again, is primarily led by the US foundations.

Furthermore, scholars of climate philanthropy have generally homed in on the foundations' efforts to shape policy via funding and, only more recently, on their role as organizational field-builders⁶ (Monier, 2023; Betsill, 2021). Researchers who analyze foundations as field-builders have explored their political role, which is based on the deployment of relational and cognitive resources in tandem with financial resources. More specifically, the latter group of scholars investigates the practices of advocacy, brokering, knowledge generation, goal setting, monitoring and reporting, and formal and informal diplomacy leveraged by foundations to gain political influence over environmental policy. The networking that is our key focus here undoubtedly falls within this second domain of inquiry. Let us therefore review the work of the few scholars who have addressed this domain to date.

Edward Morena (2016, 2021, 2023) stands out as the most active scholar in this area, having conducted in-depth research on the field-building role of foundations in the UN climate negotiations. In his book "The Price of Climate Action" (2016), Morena describes how a handful of liberal foundations (mostly US-based) helped to establish and drive the international climate regime and the United Nations Climate Change Convention (UNCCC) system. Using a socio-historical approach, he reconstructed the foundations' field-building activities, and how they placed themselves at the forefront of the climate debate by spreading ideas and repertoires of action. According to Morena, foundations were key allies and intermediaries between governments and civil society during the Paris Agreement negotiations. They were supported in this role by the International Policies and Politics Initiative (IPPC), a platform created in 2012 to coordinate foundations and "catalyze greater ambition on climate change by working at the intersection of national and international decision-making processes" (EFC, 2013, p. 26). Brulle et al. (2021), on the other hand, studied foundations as sources of funding for the Climate Change Counter Movement (CCCM), a complex network of organizations that work to obstruct climate action. These authors established that a small group of foundations provide the bulk of the financial support received by the CCCM. Between 2003 and 2018, the top 1% of grant makers accounted for 67% of allocated grants. The top grant-making positions have consistently been occupied by two Donor Advised Funds (DAF), "with a central role in coordinating donations to CCCM while keeping their core donors anonymous" (ibidem, p. 3), followed by the Scaife, Bradley, Koch and DeVos family foundations. Also active in this field of research is Anne Monier (2023), a scholar who has observed the climate-related work of the philanthropic sector from an environmentalist perspective. Her research focus is on the political role of

⁵ In a 2021 review, Betsill et al. identified only 23 academic publications on the role of philanthropic foundations in environmental governance.

⁶ DiMaggio and Powell define the organizational field as "those organizations which, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resources and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products" (1983, p.148).

philanthropy in environmental policy, especially the coalitions of foundations that have been set up in multiple countries since 2019. These are pioneering studies, but much remains to be done. Aware that a knowledge gap persists, Betsill et al. (2021) called for systematic research into philanthropic foundations as agents of environmental governance, especially in relation to three hitherto underrepresented themes: the foundations' role in environmental governance, their achievements and their sources of legitimacy.

Among the leading scholars in climate philanthropy, Edouard Morena also stands out for having convincingly reconstructed the genealogy of philanthropic intervention from the 1960s to the present. It is useful to read this account – together with the work of Pellizzoni et al. (2022) – in relation to the evolution of international climate governance and its discursive regimes.

The story begins in the 1960s and 1970s when, due to pressure from social movements and scientific communities, ecological issues came to the fore within national and supranational political agendas (Sinibaldi, 1992)⁷. According to Pellizzoni et al. (2022), during this phase and until the late 1980s, global climate governance discursively pitted economic growth in opposition to environmental protection. It viewed environmental protection as hindering capital accumulation, but also as a necessary “evil” that public actors were called on to regulate. Philanthropy also engaged in environmental protection but this only concerned a small group of foundations, mostly from the US (e.g., Rockefeller and Ford). Following in the liberal philanthropic tradition, the foundations were convinced that economic growth and environmental protection were compatible and confident that the ecological crisis could be overcome by applying a scientific approach (Morena, 2016). Consequently, seeing the ecological groups of the 1960s and 1970s as being too radical, they tended to fund more politically moderate groups promoting reformist agendas (ibid.).

The situation changed in the late 1980s, with the end of the stand-off between the Western-NATO and Eastern-Communist blocs and the rise of neo-liberal politics. Global climate governance moved closer to the logic of liberal philanthropy. With the emergence of the concept of sustainable development (Brundtland Report 1987), the previous opposition of growth and environment no longer applied. The leading view now became that climate change, although a historical failure of the market, could only be solved by the market, in terms of following the prescriptions of orthodox Western economics (Schöneberg and Ziai, 2020). This discourse took deeper root from the 1990s onwards, when the term “green economy” rose to prominence. The ecological question went from a crisis of capitalism to a crisis for capitalism: environmental limits were no longer seen as an evil to be borne but rather as an opportunity for the market to make new profits (Pellizzoni et al., 2022).

This change in discursive regimes was echoed in the parallel emergence of international climate governance based on the COP (Conference of the Parties) system. Provided for under the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), COP is based on market mechanisms. Emblematic of the COP system is the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which inaugurated trading in carbon permits and credits. In this new phase, several US foundations contributed to the establishment of the UN-led global climate regime, while also boosting the formation of a global climate civil society (Morena, 2016). A new generation of philanthropists linked to the tech industry in Silicon Valley and cities such as London and New York also came to the fore and several foundations – old and new –

⁷ “Ecologisti, Movimenti” in *Enciclopedia Treccani* (1992).

adopted a strategic approach that reflected the dictates of the emergent philanthrocapitalism (Frumkin, 2003). This approach, in addition to paying more attention to how grants were allocated, included the building of formal and informal networks for coordinating foundations' efforts to maximize their impact (Morena, 2021).

As the international climate change negotiations proceeded, the role of philanthropic foundations became stronger. As mentioned earlier, Morena (2016) shows that foundations acted as key allies and intermediaries between government and civil society during the 2015 Paris Agreement negotiations, relying particularly on the coordinating efforts of the IPPC (International Policies and Politics Initiative) to do so. Numerous European foundations joined the IPPC, as well as the leading international philanthropic climate networks. However, these networks have mainly been built and financed by US philanthropy, often via pass-through foundations. The latter, as illustrated in Parmar's (2014) studies on the involvement of the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations in US foreign affairs, seem instrumental to the exercise of soft power designed to maintain the United States' hegemonic role in guiding international climate governance. Morena (2016) offers a detailed account of how, through the IPPC and its initiatives – including much informal diplomacy – the foundations influenced the outcome of the Paris Agreement. The new agenda revolved around the concepts of sustainable development, the green economy and the belief that the market can solve the climate crisis produced by its negative externalities. This logic has guided global climate governance from the late 1980s to the present. It is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda adopted in 2015 by the United Nations. In light of the discursive convergence between the Paris Agreement and the SDGs, it is not surprising that SDGs – indicators that emphasize measuring growth rather than enhancing environmental protections – have since provided the main framework of reference for foundations promoting sustainable development, including sustainable climate-related development objectives. The SDG framework has held sway despite being contested from the outset (Munro, 2023). The main critiques see SDGs variously as: a way to promote and consolidate a neo-liberal variant of capitalist development (Gabay and Ilcan, 2017), the latest phase in the deep marketization of development (Carroll and Jarvis, 2015), or a means of undermining political aspirations to more socially just and ecological approaches to development (Weber, 2017).

Criticism has also been voiced by those who see sustainable development goals as at least potentially valid instruments. A 2022 report by an international team of 61 researchers coordinated by Utrecht University assessed the political impact of the SDGs (Biermann, Hickmann and S nit, 2022). Drawing on over 3,000 scientific studies, the report indicated that the political impact of the SDGs on global governance has been essentially discursive, without translating into transformative processes. On the contrary, the framework has been used by some governments to legitimize their previous policies, while some entrepreneurs, banks and investors have leveraged it to camouflage business as usual.

However, according to Pellizzoni et al. (2022), Greta's "blah blah discourse"⁸ put an end – at least symbolically – to the UNFCCC as the main driver of the UN-led governance process. These authors argue that, from the 1990s until Paris 2015, the UNFCCC process, by

⁸ "‘Green economy’ blah blah blah ... ‘Net zero by 2050’ blah blah blah.... ‘Net zero’ blah blah blah. ...” (Greta Thunberg to the Youth4Climate delegates gathered in Milan in advance of the upcoming Pre-COP 26, 2021).

ostracizing deniers, attracted radical imaginations linked to climate justice movements, helping to legitimize international climate governance. After Paris, however, the relationship between ecological issues and transnational governance changed due to the mass movements (Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion) inspired by Greta Thunberg. By denouncing the failure of the current system, these movements influenced not only the more radical actors within the climate justice movement, but also some of the largest environmental NGOs who had previously supported this system, even while advancing some criticisms of it.

Despite Greta, eight years after the Paris Agreement and the endorsement of the 2030 Agenda, efforts to tackle climate change have largely failed. The 2030 emissions target for limiting global warming to 1.5-2° remains elusive. This has been confirmed by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its latest report (2023): global emissions between 2010 and 2019 were higher than in any other decade in human history.

Given this situation, how will the actors who have hitherto supported the UN system and its technocratic and market-oriented approach react? And, above all, how will organized philanthropy, which seems to have played a major part in the creation of this system, position itself? So far, the 2015 Paris Agreement and the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda continue to be the benchmark for global climate policies. In line with the UN system, the justificatory grammars of mainstream climate philanthropy mostly support the idea of a new elite-led green capitalism, rooted in the belief that market-based solutions, innovation, technology and financial investments can resolve the crisis. Indeed, international climate philanthropy's support for green capitalism should not come as a surprise. As outlined by Morena, green capitalism is itself guided by some of the largest foundations owned by US billionaires, while philanthropic-capitalist logics drive most of contemporary organized philanthropy.

3. The “Italian” networks outside and within the international climate philanthropy ecosystem

As in international climate philanthropy, networking is one (if not the main) way that Italian foundations position themselves and influence public decision makers. This was recently reaffirmed by Carola Carazzone (General Secretary of Assifero and Vice-President of Philea) in her keynote speech to the 2021 F20 Climate Solutions Forum:

“Local dimensions today are more than ever directly intertwined with global ones. It is exactly at this intertwining of local and global (...) that lies a new horizon of power and impact for philanthropy networks. Today we know that to face the systemic challenges in front of us we need collective action. (...). If we want to enable influence on public policies, we need to intentionally and strategically invest in philanthropy networks.”

Indeed, Italian foundations have been highly active on the networking front in recent years. If we omit climate networks with a more specialized focus (e.g., cities or agriculture), there are four main networks involving Italian foundations (Table 1).

Nationally, the leading networks are the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), and, the Forum for Sustainable Finance (ItaSIF). These deal with climate change, although it is not their exclusive focus, and also include non-philanthropic actors. Notably however, ASviS is led by two representatives of the philanthropic sector: Pierluigi Stefanini,

president of the Unipolis Foundation⁹ and Marcella Mallen, president of the Prioritalia Foundation¹⁰. Meanwhile, ItaSIF includes, through Acri, all the Italian foundations of banking origin (Fobs). Internationally, the two leading climate networks for Italian foundations are the F20 Forum for Climate Solutions and the #PhilanthropyForClimate network, which also encompasses the national (Assifero) and European (EPCC and ECFI) scales. Both comprise mainly philanthropic actors.

To demonstrate the extent to which the networks contribute to shifting decision-making responsibility to nonpolitical actors, we must identify their salient features, including when, by whom and for what purposes they were set up, what they do, and how they interact among themselves and with other international networks.

ASviS was founded in February 2016 by the Unipolis Foundation and the University of Roma Tor Vergata. It is the brainchild of Enrico Giovannini, a professor of economic statistics at the university, who is currently ASviS's scientific director. The concept – which came to Giovannini while he was contributing to the formulation of the 2030 Agenda – was to federate in a single organization all private sector and civil society actors working to attain at least one of the 17 SDGs¹¹. The stated goal of the alliance is "to raise awareness that Agenda 2030 is important (...) and to mobilize with a view to achieving the SDGs"¹². It is an impressive cartel in terms of the size and variety of its membership: over 300 civil society affiliates, including around 80 foundations, plus a further 300 private organizations, cooperatives, associations and companies¹³. In keeping with its mission, ASviS formulates policy proposals to be submitted to public decision makers, conducts research and disseminates its positions through publications, conferences and webinars. It has stipulated two Memoranda of Understanding with the Italian Ministry of Education and Research (2016-2018, 2019-2021) on fostering the dissemination of a culture of sustainability. It has set up 13 working groups on specific SDGs and six working groups on crosscutting issues. The foundations in the network, in addition to participating in the working groups on individual goals, have set up their own transversal working group to strengthen their commitment to the SDGs. This includes Assifero, 34 foundations including Unipolis and Con il Sud which are in charge of coordinating the group's activities, three Fobs (CSP, Cariplo, MPS), the Sodalitas foundation linked to Assolombarda¹⁴. The other ASviS foundations – not in the working group – are mainly corporate or family ones. Such a "parterre", as a whole, represents a significant chunk of the Italian economy. Furthermore, ASviS has three partnerships with European networks involved in promoting and monitoring the SDGs: Europe Ambition 2030 and SDG Watch Europe, which are both networks of civil society actors, and ESDN-European Sustainable Development Network, which comprises institutional actors, associations and experts. At the global level, meanwhile, ASviS belongs to the multi-stakeholder UN-Partnership for SDGs, whose mission is to share knowledge concerning the SDGs.

⁹ A foundation of the UnipolSai Italian insurance group.

¹⁰ A foundation set up by Manageritalia and CIDA, two organizations representing Italian management executives.

¹¹ In "Cinque anni di ASviS. Storia di un'alleanza per l'Italia del 2030", ASviS, 2021.

¹² ASviS website, accessed 16 March 2023.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

Table 1. Italian foundations & climate transition networks

	Asvis	Itasif Forum Finanza sostenibile	Assifero #PhilantropyForClimate	F-20 Climate Solutions Forum
Level	National	National	International	International
Italian foundations in the network that are also connected to at least one of the other three networks	Unipolis (founder); Assifero; Itasif; Cariplo; CSP, Compagnia di San Paolo; Con il Sud; MPS Foundation; FC Messina; Socialitas; Global Thinking	ACRI; Cariplo; CSP; Unipolis via Unipol; MPS Foundation and Con il Sud via ACRI; Socialitas; Global Thinking	Unipolis; FC Messina; two CSP agencies: Uffici Pio and Fondazione 1563 per l'arte e la cultura	Cariplo; CSP; Unipolis; FC Messina
Main affiliations to European climate (or SDG-related) networks	Europe Ambition 2030 SDG Watch Europe ESDN, European Sustainable Development Network	Eurosif, European Sustainable Investment Forum	EPCC, European Philanthropy Coalition for Climate PHILEA ECFI, European Community Foundation Initiative	F20 includes over 80 foundations and philanthropic organizations with diverse backgrounds from all over the globe.
Main affiliations to international climate (or SDG-related) networks	F-20 through Cariplo; CSP; Unipolis Foundation, FC Messina UN-Partnership for SDG	Global Sustainable Investment Alliance F-20 through Cariplo; CSP	#PhilantropyforClimate-PHILEA and WINGS F-20 through CSP; Unipolis, FC Messina	These include the two 'pass-through' foundations; Climate Works and ECF, European Climate Foundation

Source: own elaboration.

ItaSIF was founded in 2001 to encourage the incorporation of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria into financial products and processes. This involves including environmental, social and governance factors in risk and opportunity analyses and targeting impact investing or SRI (Sustainable and Responsible Investment). The latter form of investment mainly allocates capital to organizations whose business plans prioritize SDGs. ItaSIF has over 140 members, mainly Italian finance players, including banks (e.g., Intesa San Paolo), insurance companies (e.g., Unipol), consultancy companies (e.g., Goldman Sachs), asset management companies and pension funds, trade associations, trade unions, some NGOs (e.g., WWF, UNICEF) and BlackRock, one of the world's leading investment companies. The partners from organized philanthropy are almost exclusively foundations of banking origin – including Acri, their representative association – plus Sodalitas and Global Thinking, other foundations that are also members of ASviS. ItaSIF is one of the founding members of the Eurosif (European Sustainable Investment Forum) network, whose mission is to foster socially responsible investment within European financial markets. About a fifth of Eurosif's members are foundations, NGOs and consumer associations, while the remainder are mainly financial services companies (investment managers, pension funds, banks, financial advisors) from the participating countries (UK, France, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, Spain, Belgium and Ireland). Eurosif is a founding member of the *Global Sustainable Investment Alliance*, which draws together the world's seven largest sustainable investment organizations. Today, ItaSIF is committed, like these other networks, to lobbying public decision makers on climate-related issues.

Foundations Platform F20 is an international network established in 2017 within the G20. It unites over 70 foundations including four Italian foundations: Unipolis, Cariplo, CSP and FCMessina. Notably, it includes some of the main foundations attributed with a dominant role in shaping global climate philanthropy and influencing international climate agreements (Morena, 2016). These are “only” a handful of foundations: the Swiss-based Oak, the Swedish IKEA group, British billionaire Anthony Hohn's Children's Investment Fund, the American Ford, Rockefeller Brothers and Bloomberg foundations, as well as the pass-through foundations ClimateWorks and the European Climate Foundation, whose supporters include billionaires Bezos, Gates, Zuckerberg and Hewlett. The network promotes the implementation of sustainable development under the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement through advocacy to the G7, G20, COP15 (biodiversity) and COP26 (climate change). It submits recommendations to governments and dialogues with G20 heads of state, finance ministers and central bank presidents. It supports the crucial role of civil society and non-state actors in climate policy by acting as a bridge between the public and private sector and civil society. In addition to collaborating with other G20 groups, F20 organizes the annual Climate Solutions Forum in the G20 host country, an international event where it delivers analyses and appeals to the G20 Heads of State.

The climate change network is represented globally by the #PhilanthropyForClimate movement. It is supported at the European level by Philea (along with EPCC, the European Philanthropy Coalition for Climate, and the ECFI, European Community Foundation Initiative) and at the Italian level by Assifero. Founded in the UK in 2019 at the initiative of the ESF (the association representing UK foundations), the network launched a declaration on climate change by foundations and philanthropic organizations. In 2021, Dafne (now

Philea), the association representing foundations at the European level, invited all European second-level associations to join the network and to launch “national” declarations modelled on that adopted in 2019 in the UK.

Simultaneously, in 2021, Philea and WINGS – a “community of thought leaders and changemakers who are committed to ensuring philanthropy reaches its fullest potential as a catalyst for social progress”¹⁵ – launched #PhilanthropyForClimate. This initiative, which embraces, in addition to the various national philanthropic commitments, the International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change, is aimed at foundations that do not have a national representative organization such as Assifero or ESF. Today, it numbers 79 foundations¹⁶. The movement espouses similar principles to the national declarations, which “are partially different in language and manner, but share the idea of integrating the climate lens into their organization”¹⁷. In 2021, Assifero in Italy responded to Philea's appeal by launching a national declaration based on six principles, whose broad nature was likely intended to enlist maximum support: 1) promote and create opportunities for training and exchange; 2) allocate financial, intellectual, relational and material resources; 3) foster a new interpretative perspective through the lens of climate; 4) promote responsible investment choices; 5) decrease the environmental impact of the organization; 6) disseminate the changes and results achieved.

Today, the declaration has 71 signatories, including the banking foundations Cariplo and CSP and 17 of the 37 community foundations. However, Assifero also promotes alignment with the SDGs both directly among its members and through the ECFI (European Community Foundation Initiative), a collaborative project aimed at strengthening and promoting the community foundation movement in Europe. Assifero is also a member of the two international promoters of #PhilanthropyForClimate – Philea and WINGS – which have long been committed to promoting the SDGs.

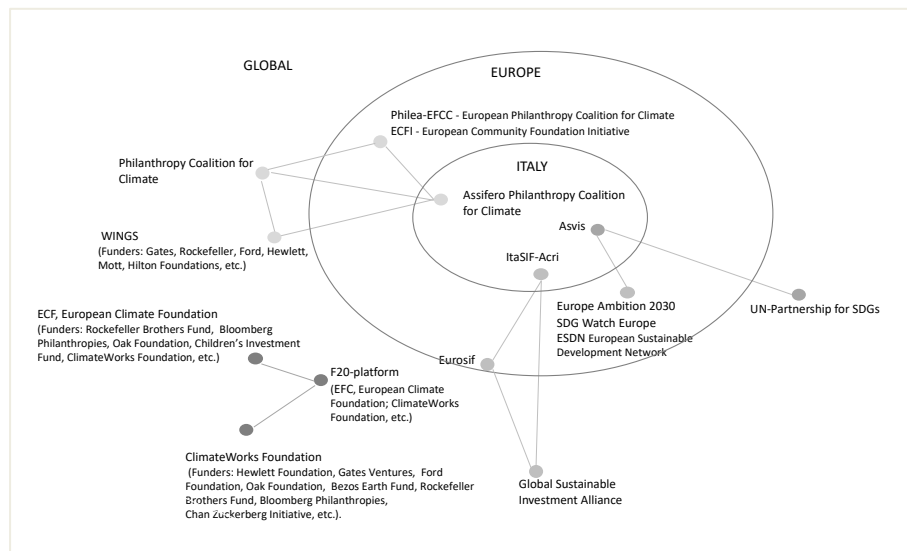
The four “Italian” networks are interconnected via cross-affiliations. For instance, the F20 and ASviS foundations both include Unipolis, FCmessina (via Assifero), Cariplo and CSP. The three latter foundations have signed Assifero's climate declaration. The Fobs, with Acri, are also part of ItaSIF. There are entanglements between philanthropic and financial actors, which is most evident in the case of ItaSIF but is also a feature of the other networks. The links between the four networks also prompt joint initiatives, such as the position paper “Foundations for Sustainable Development” with shared policy recommendations for the Italian government, G20, G7, COP15 and COP26 that was drafted for the 2021 G20 chaired by Italy. The networks are also connected to other international networks. Through these, they have ties with the larger, mainly US-based foundations that have contributed to shaping global climate governance, including by supporting the major European pass-through foundations (ClimateWorks and ECF) that specialize in climate. In other words, the networks under study are connected to an impressive number of other networks, comprising philanthropic and other actors, both Italian and foreign (Figs. 1 & 2).

¹⁵ It receives funding from, among others, the Gates, Rockefeller, Ford, Hewlett, Mott, Aga Khan and Hilton Foundations.

¹⁶ Website accessed 30 July 2024.

¹⁷ Interview with Assifero manager, January 2023.

Figure 1. The “Italian” networks within the international climate philanthropy ecosystem



Source: own elaboration. Note: this is my own account of the organizations committed to climate change action that are associated with the four networks under scrutiny. I aim to show that through these networks, the Italian foundations are connected to many of the leading international business, financial and philanthropic organizations and billionaires.

4. Networks in between depoliticization and politicization

Within the theoretical frame of politicization/depoliticization processes, the hypothesis advanced here is that the networks identified above and the Italian foundations that belong to them – along with other international networks and national (especially US) foundations – have gained a political role by taking collective responsibility for climate issues (social politicization), but also by crucially contributing to the global climate policy agenda from the UN System to the Paris agreement (governmental politicization). In practice, this is achieved by generating, supporting and legitimizing ideas, values and practices that help to elide the political nature of the issues at stake, thereby fostering the emergence of a conventional epistemic horizon of meaning that is difficult to challenge (discursive depoliticization). It is the ability of foundations and networks to construct and disseminate knowledge, reinforced by their international connections, that has earned them a prominent place in the shaping of international agendas and, via a trickle-down effect, of national and local agendas.

The discursive depoliticization of public action develops in parallel with the politicization of the philanthropic networks. This is most undeniably evident at the social level but may also be observed at the governmental level. The contours of the four main climate networks indicate that they act both as policy entrepreneurs promoting specific policy solutions and as field-builders, mobilizing in various ways to construct systems of meaning and discourses that permeate the institutional policy environment.

Both networks and individual foundations may be said to have taken on a political role at different levels. First, the networks and the Italian foundations themselves commission or curate in-house studies and position papers on climate policymaking. Furthermore, they have the capacity to disseminate their shared ideas, values and practices both globally and nationally by leveraging their convening, brokering and advocacy power to engage leading

political and economic actors. For an example, we need look no further than the F20's organization of the annual Climate Solution Forum in the G20 host country. The networks also offer webinars for public and private actors. For instance, Assifero organizes webinars on the climate crisis as part of its #PhilanthropyForClimate initiative, while Itasif runs webinars on sustainable finance and sustainable financial tools. Furthermore, the networks and their member foundations fund projects that are aligned with their policy perspectives, not only via the grant schemes of individual foundations, but also under the auspices of broader programs. For example, F20 and Assifero help organized philanthropy actors to identify opportunities for cooperation at the international and national levels, with the goal of fostering a shared vision and strategies and aligning members' grantmaking targets to achieve greater impact. ASviS pursues similar aims. It is led by a foundation, and its members include large corporate foundations such as Eni, Enel and A2A, which bear great responsibility surrounding climate-related issues. The networks and foundations can also partner with public actors at the national level. For instance, in addition to the two ASVIS-MIUR memoranda mentioned above, Acri (the association representing the Fob and an ItaSIF member) has publicly committed to deploying its resources and network connections at all levels "to ensure that the opportunity afforded by the Recovery Fund is not wasted" (Francesco Profumo, president of Acri, *Corriere della sera*, 30 August 2020) and has backed up its words with deeds.

In addition to the plans implemented by individual foundations, many Fobs have taken steps "to provide the necessary expertise" to local authorities lacking "adequate resources for managing the planning phase for applying for PNRR grants"¹⁸. Between 2021 and 2022, Fobs implemented multiple schemes with small municipalities and third sector organizations. They provided assistance and training during the planning stage of the grant allocation process and the drafting of preliminary project proposals, dispensing over €30 million. These initiatives were flanked by two systemic actions involving the entire Acri membership. In late 2021, the "Fund for the Digital Republic" was set up under the PNRR to bring Italians' digital skills in line with those of their European counterparts¹⁹. Although this project is not directly related to the green transition, it will impact it indirectly via the digital transition (e.g., in the agricultural sector). In 2022-2026, the Fobs are expected to contribute €350 million to the fund, in return for a special tax break. Finally, in May 2022, Acri signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry for Regional Affairs that envisaged collaboration between regional authorities and foundations during the implementation of the PNRR (Acri Report, 2022).

The data thus far also appears to support the theory that there is a highly connected global philanthropic system based on networks led by a handful of mostly US-based foundations. It is plausible to hypothesize that Italian philanthropy is also aligned with the narratives supported by this system, even before we analyze its documents. In other words, Italian philanthropic actors foreseeably contribute to upholding the discursive depoliticization fostered by the global philanthropic system. However, it is worth illustrating how this looks in practice by analyzing key documents emanating from the "Italian" networks.

The interweaving and overlapping of the organizations in the various networks, the joint drafting of many documents and the explicit commitment to emphasizing points of

¹⁸ Acri website, accessed 15 November 2023.

¹⁹ Law No. 233 of 29 December 2021.

agreement while omitting points of difference, help us to identify the main discursive stances of Italian climate philanthropy.

One principle recognized in the documents is that of a “just transition” as per the European Green Deal: this implies “combining environmental objectives – mitigation and adaptation to climate change, but also the protection of biodiversity and the circular economy – with social objectives – the reduction of inequalities, decent work, social cohesion”²⁰.

The most striking position, however, is the alignment of Italian (and international) organized philanthropy with the SDGs framework and the associated concept of sustainable development. These are mostly regarded as neoliberal variants of capitalist development, given their emphasis on growth rather than on environmental protection. Yet the documents invariably claim that “the direction identified in 2015 with the adoption of the UN 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement is still useful and appropriate”²¹. Assifero is part of “the national alliance to meet the Agenda 2030 objectives”²² and organizes workshops on the SDGs for local community foundations. Since it was set up in 2017, Platform F20 has been “calling and actively advocating for the implementation of the SDGs and for climate action by the G20 member states”²³. Even for specifically climate-related policies, SDGs remain the leading framework of reference. ASviS recommends policymakers “ensure the consistency of all climate policies (...) by adopting the required systemic outlook, as entailed in the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda (...).”²⁴. The SDGs have been adopted by ItaSIF as its reference framework for investment because they enable the use of internationally disseminated parameters as well as ex-ante identification and ex-post measurement of the outcomes achieved. ItaSIF has even published a handbook for “the finance industry, foundations and third-sector organizations to further explore impact investing's contribution to financing activities aligned with the SDGs that also offer a financial return”²⁵. This policy was confirmed by an interviewee: “in promoting environmental sustainability at the local level our projects contribute to the pursuit of the SDGs we have also assimilated the SDGs internally, for example with our suppliers. We have a huge handbook of practices.”²⁶.

A second hallmark of the networks' rhetoric is the framing of the climate change problem as solvable via a pragmatic, strategic, focused, nonpartisan and science-driven strategy. This is a classic approach for organized philanthropy, in keeping with a liberal tradition stretching back to the nineteenth century (Mitsushima, 2017). A targeted approach is seen as crucial given the high stakes and the scarcity of available resources. Such an approach is expected to maximize the impact of climate philanthropy and potentially allow it to be measured. Beneficiaries thus require close monitoring. Formal and informal platforms must coordinate their efforts (i.e., networking). Mobilization, including investment in research and communications, aimed at steering the public debate and signaling to businesses and investors to commit, is a further component of the strategy²⁷. This perspective may explain why the networks overemphasize problem solving to the detriment of

²⁰ ItaSIF (2022), p.2.

²¹ ASviS (2022), p.5.

²² Făgăraș (2023), European community foundations and SDGs, p.27.

²³ F20 (2023), p.2.

²⁴ ASviS (2023b), p.4.

²⁵ ItaSIF (2017), p.1.

²⁶ Interview with Cariplo executive, December 2022.

²⁷ ASviS (2021), position paper; Assifero (2023), Bilancio sociale.

problem setting. It also prompts a superficial reading of the problems that fails to question the capitalist logics responsible for generating them. In addition, the networks' countless policy proposals tend to list issues without establishing any clear order of priority and are vague when it comes to specifying how the stated objectives are to be attained.

Emphasis is also placed on the need for sustainable finance, again with a view to attaining the SDGs²⁸. However, rhetoric aside, how much pressure can foundations put on banks and financial actors to adopt sustainable finance? Consider ItaSIF. Its members, together with Acri, include the country's major financial players, such as the two largest Italian banks Unicredit and Intesa Sanpaolo (ISP). The latter bank is genetically linked to Acri. "Banking on Climate Chaos" (2023), a study conducted by a coalition of NGOs on the financing of the fossil fuel industry by the world's largest banks, shows that the 60 largest private banks have financed fossil fuels to the tune of \$5.5 trillion. The Italian banks Unicredit and Intesa Sanpaolo have respectively lent money to and underwritten fossil fuel companies to the tune of \$43 billion and \$22 billion since 2016 and are among the world's top 40 banking institutions financing the fossil fuel multinationals. ItaSIF's weakness was borne out in an interview with an executive at Banca Etica: "While the Forum was originally driven by good intentions, over time – with the inclusion of a growing number of actors, particularly finance ones – it has somewhat lost sight of its mission. And the current president seems to intend widening the 'parterre' even more (...). Now many organizations wear the sustainability hat even though their activities do not always reflect this"²⁹. Furthermore, as noted earlier, ItaSIF supports the inclusion of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria in financial products and processes. However, ESGs, as Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington (2023) have argued, lack a shared universal standard, leaving companies to choose, among the many ESG measurement systems, that most favorable to their practices and/or least detrimental to their other goals, such as profitability. Not to mention that even if universal metrics were adopted, "the climate crisis is so complicated (...) it is unlikely that criteria assessment methods would provide accurate information about the risks companies face in different markets" (ibid., p.223).

In sum, the Italian networks, like international philanthropy and the broader international regime, support an agenda based on selected devices within the mainstream neoliberal paradigm. This is guided by the market episteme (McMichael, 2009), which tends to depoliticize the issues at stake and to reinforce the role of private actors and finance instruments in development. The ecological crisis is presented as an apolitical problem requiring techno-managerial solutions, while market logics remain paramount. Defense of the environment and the liberal economic order mutually reinforce one another according to this agenda: the dominant economic order is seen as part of the solution and not the main perpetrator behind the worsening climate crisis. Philanthrocapitalism, far from breaking with contemporary financial capitalism, intervenes in climate policymaking to get a return on investment, leaving problems unresolved because it fails to question the underlying categories of the crisis (Mitchell and Sparke, 2016).

Overall, a uniform discursive stance on climate change response emerges from the network documents. This is due in part to the need to summarize the views of different foundations and in part to the Italian networks' close connections with international

²⁸ ASviS (2023a).

²⁹ Interview with Banca Etica executive, November 2023.

climate philanthropy. This does not mean that individual foundations or individual Italian climate philanthropy interventions cannot or do not take a less mainstream and more transformative direction in discourse or practice. However, the prevailing uniformity in the networks' discourses and modes of action and, to some extent, among foundations clearly indicates how internally homogeneous the field generally is. In Italy, there is not even a hard core of denialist foundations. This stands in contrast with the US, where several denialist nonprofits receive funding from charitable funds such as the Donors Capital Fund and the Donors Trust³⁰; and where, even more notably, the Climate Change Counter Movement (CCCM) is financed by large conservative foundations working across multiple political fields (e.g., the Heritage Foundation) and mid-sized climate and energy think tanks (Brulle, 2020; Brulle et al. 2021).

Beyond agreements and international commitments, the evolution of the climate crisis is not reassuring, as recent IPCC reports certify. If, indeed, international organized philanthropy has played such a decisive role in directing policies to counter climate change, we might borrow the words of well-known American columnist Mark Gunther: "If philanthropy is to be judged by its outcomes – and how else should it be judged? – climate philanthropy has failed".³¹

In light of these criticisms and the disappointing outcomes of climate policies, there have been some signs of openness in climate philanthropy towards non-mainstream practices.

A virtuous international example is the EDGE Funders Alliance commission to Edward Morena (2023) to draft a guideline document for philanthropic organizations on how to move away from mainstream climate philanthropy and towards climate justice philanthropy. EDGE Funders Alliance is a community of 320 donors, foundation officers, trustees and advisors from over 30 countries, who share the belief that equity and justice are critical to furthering environmental policies. This is reflected in the introduction to Morena's report by Sofia Arroyo, executive director of EDGE:

"We realize that, even though philanthropy has long been involved in the climate space, there is a need to reflect on the role it has played and, more importantly, on the role it needs to play in light of the multiple crises we are currently facing. We invite those funders who have been working for a long time in this space to think differently about their portfolios and approach [...]. Philanthropy can play a critical role in supporting a just transition towards alternative systems that support people and planet, but to do this, the sector needs to challenge itself and shift its approach. We hope this report sparks conversations that will ignite our collective power for change so together we can stand for climate justice everywhere".

At the European level, a recent report by Philea (2023) reviewed environmental funding by European foundations, identifying their main strategies. Hands-on conservation remained the most popular line of action, as in 2018; advocacy, community work and research occupied the next three positions. However, only €2.2 million had been earmarked to support activists and just under €6 million to support youth-led climate movements such

³⁰ Usuelli, M. (2021). I negazionisti della crisi climatica e le inserzioni milionarie su Facebook. *Altreconomia*. Retrieved from <https://altreconomia.it/i-negazionisti-della-crisi-climatica-e-le-inserzioni-milionarie-su-facebook/>.

³¹ Gunther, Mark (2018), "The Failure of Climate Philanthropy", *Nonprofit Chronicles*, accessed 17 March 2022.

as Fridays for the Future, a paltry 0.37 percent of the total funding available. Of interest is how the report interpreted the lack of philanthropic support for activism and grassroots activities, which also include climate mitigation grants:

“we wonder whether foundations are missing an opportunity by providing so little support to youth-led movements and activism. Both have been essential ingredients in social change all over the world, [...] The youth-led climate protests of 2018/19 moved the political dial and contributed directly to groundbreaking legislation and corporate commitments around the world, despite receiving a tiny amount of foundation funding. Imagine what could be achieved with more philanthropic support” (ibidem, p. 25).

The report observed that between 2018 and 2021, the tiny share of philanthropic grant funding spent on supporting radical discourses fell from 4.5% to 3.6%. Hence, after suggesting that social movements may be ahead of philanthropic foundations in terms of their values and discourses, with a greater focus on social justice in addressing environmental challenges, the report asks some questions: “Is this an optimal allocation of philanthropic capital? Has the time come for foundations to be bolder in the kinds of work they support with a view to accelerating system change? Should philanthropic foundations be stepping up more to fund work that actively challenges the status quo?” (ibidem, p. 30).

In Italy, some foundations and individuals within them have displayed openness to more transformative practices and sensitivity to ecological movements and climate justice: “We should move towards climate justice, beyond this sustainable development which is so market-oriented”³². At least this does not invalidate the hegemonic discourse underpinning understandings of environmental problems that justify market-based solutions. It remains to be seen whether and how these positive signals will encounter suitable conditions and resources in order to prosper within international and Italian climate philanthropy and governance.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to investigate how the involvement of philanthropic networks in climate policymaking contributes to shifting responsibilities from governments to non-political actors, causing both a discursive depoliticization of public action and a governmental and social politicization of the actions of non-political actors. To this end, we have examined the contours, ideas, and values of Italian climate philanthropy networks.

In our case study, depoliticization is reflected in the discourses with which Italian organized philanthropy interprets and proposes solutions for the climate crisis, which in turn serve to discriminate between effective and ineffective courses of action. Politicization on the other hand is reflected in the emergence of philanthropic actors as new policy entrepreneurs and field-builders. Finally, at least at the network level, Italian philanthropy appears to be relatively homogeneous in terms of its discursive positions and *modus operandi*.

Furthermore, Italian philanthropy – and indeed the entire international philanthropic movement – displays a degree of dependence – especially at the discursive level – on a handful of the largest foundations in the world, mostly led by US millionaires. These

³² Interview with Fob executive, April 2023.

foundations seem instrumental to the soft power that is applied by the United States to retain its hegemonic role in guiding international climate governance. These are actors of major economic-financial weight, with strong technical expertise, the capability to build wide-reaching action networks, and impressive planning capabilities. This set of features enables these foundations to build the climate policy field and play an influential role within it. Foundations use their discursive power to generate an organizational field with shared meanings. They play a convening role via partnerships and networks, conferences and policy platforms, also using their contacts to encourage stakeholders to work together (Delfin and Tang 2006, Morena 2016). Given the significant role played by science and expertise in legitimizing environmental policies (Lidskog and Berg, 2022; Pellizoni, 2015), as well as the active involvement of climate philanthropy in producing knowledge for policymaking, there is a need for further investigation into the specific types of expertise, experts and policy instruments that are financed and mobilized by philanthropic actors. With regard to the Fobs, which are often deeply rooted in their local communities, it would be valuable to explore whether they follow the international trend or whether they behave differently in some respects, for example by funding initiatives that are less market driven.

Overall, the justificatory grammars of Italian philanthropic networks are aligned with the mainstream intellectual and normative framework of international climate governance and philanthropy, which does not question the growth-environmental protection conceptual pairing. In addition to this current, the international philanthropic movement also includes a nationalistic-regressive current that is not mainstream at the discursive level but does not lack financial and positional resources. This second current denies climate change and will not forgo fossil fuels, a position that is entirely absent from Italian climate philanthropy discourses.

The transformative practices of the movements that have come forward to challenge both of these frameworks – which generally spring from political ecology and which have mainly been championed by global movements such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion – risk being stifled by the two more dominant currents. Who knows if the philanthropic sector will come to their rescue by shifting to more radical approaches? If not, the reason will surely not be a lack of resources.

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6. Appendix

Table A. List of documents analysed

1.	Assifero Philea, Wings, WE ACT #PhilanthropyForClimate, Guida pratica di attuazione della dichiarazione d'impegno delle fondazioni e degli enti filantropici italiani per il clima, marzo 2023.
2.	Assifero, Bilancio sociale 2022, 2023
3.	Assifero, Dichiarazione d'impegno delle fondazioni e degli enti filantropici italiani per il clima, settembre 2021.
4.	ASviS-gruppo di lavoro finanza, Finanza per lo sviluppo sostenibile. Un tema strategico per l'Agenda 2030, position paper, settembre 2020.
5.	ASviS-gruppo di lavoro finanza, Finanza per lo sviluppo sostenibile, position paper, gennaio 2023.
6.	ASviS-gruppo di lavoro fondazioni, Fondazioni per lo sviluppo sostenibile, position paper, settembre 2021.
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Note: For the purposes of this research, I analyzed eighteen key documents produced by the networks to which Italian foundations belong from among the most recent available at the time of study. The majority of these were from the 2020-2023 period. The discursive analysis involved identifying how the categories most widely used to frame climate policymaking (climate change, just transition, sustainable development, sustainable finance, SDGs) were articulated across the documents. These texts, along with the institutional websites of the networks, also helped me to define the contours of the networks, their national and international interconnections, and their endeavors to influence political agendas.