

## Editorial

# Eco-Social Work, Environmental Justice and Social Policy in Times of Ecological Crisis. New scenarios and transformative practices in a relational perspective

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*The growing ecological crisis — manifested through climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and increasing socio-environmental inequalities — has progressively become one of the most urgent challenges for contemporary social work. As highlighted in the Call for Papers for this Special Issue, ecological transformations are deeply interconnected with social vulnerabilities, requiring renewed theoretical perspectives, innovative professional practices, and integrated policy responses capable of linking environmental justice with social justice.*

*Within this framework, the Special Issue Eco-Social Work, Environmental Justice and Social Policy in Times of Ecological Crisis. New scenarios and transformative practices in a relational perspective aims to contribute to the ongoing international debate on eco-social work by exploring how relational approaches, community practices, and welfare transformations can support more sustainable and just societies in times of ecological crisis. In particular, the issue builds on the relational perspective of social work, emphasizing the interdependence between individuals, communities, institutions, and the environment, and highlighting the transformative potential of relational and participatory practices.*

*The Call received numerous contributions from scholars working in different disciplinary and geographical contexts, confirming the growing scientific interest in the intersections between eco-social work, environmental justice, sustainability, and social policy. The articles selected for this issue offer theoretical reflections, conceptual analyses, and empirical investigations that collectively enrich the contemporary eco-social debate and open new perspectives for research and practice.*

*The first contribution, written by Mairhofer from Germany, explores the connections between relational social work, eco-social approaches, and Caring Communities in addressing climate vulnerability among older adults. The article highlights the role of participatory and neighbourhood-based approaches in fostering community resilience and collective adaptation strategies.*

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*The second article, by Allegri and Pavani from Italy, presents findings from the Italian PRIN 2022 ECOSOW research project and conceptualises ecosocial community work as a dynamic and tension-filled field, shaped by negotiations between institutional constraints, transformative aspirations, and situated professional practices within local welfare systems.*

*A further contribution, authored by Mansueto from Belgium and Leskošek from Slovenia, critically examines how poverty is conceptualised within ecosocial work literature, emphasising the multidimensional nature of poverty and the need for integrated approaches capable of connecting economic, social, and environmental sustainability within community-based and solidarity-oriented frameworks.*

*Another article, written by Fato from Italy, shifts attention to everyday professional practice, proposing sustainability as a guiding operational competence for social work. From an eco-social and relational perspective, sustainability is interpreted not as an additional thematic area, but as an orientation capable of shaping organisational processes, professional relationships, and decision-making practices.*

*A more radical theoretical perspective is offered by Aschero from Italy, whose contribution critically discusses the human-centred foundations of social work through a post-anthropocentric and antispeciesist lens, opening the debate toward questions of multispecies justice within eco-social approaches.*

*The final contribution, authored by Pisu, Lovari and Cois from Italy, analyses community social work interventions developed in response to the devastating wildfires that affected Sardinia in 2021, underlining the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration, public communication, and community-based approaches in strengthening resilience in environmentally vulnerable territories.*

*Taken together, the contributions included in this Special Issue show how eco-social work is progressively emerging not only as a specialised field of intervention, but also as a broader ethical, political, and relational orientation capable of rethinking social work theory, practice, and policy in light of ecological interdependence. By bringing together different perspectives and methodological approaches, this issue seeks to foster dialogue among researchers and practitioners committed to promoting environmental justice, sustainability, and community resilience through relational and transformative social work practices.*

*We would like to sincerely thank all the authors who submitted their work to this Special Issue, as well as the reviewers whose valuable comments and critical engagement contributed significantly to the quality of the published articles.*

*Milan, April 2026*