Relational Social Work

Relational Social Work, Eco-Social Approaches, and Participatory Methods: Building Climate-Resilient Neighbourhoods with Older Adults

Sigrid Mairhofer
Munich University of Applied Sciences, Germany

CORRESPONDENCE:
Sigrid Mairhofer
e-mail: sigrid.mairhofer@hm.edu

Abstract

Climate change poses significant risks to older adults, who face heightened vulnerability to extreme heat. Yet climate vulnerability in later life is shaped not only by physiological factors but also by social isolation, neighbourhood conditions, and supportive community networks. This article develops an integrated theoretical framework connecting Relational Social Work (RSW), eco-social work, and Caring Communities to address climate-related challenges facing older adults at the neighbourhood level.

The analysis demonstrates how RSW's core concepts — coping networks, reciprocity, and relational goods — provide resources for understanding both climate vulnerability and community resilience. It examines the convergence between age-friendly and climate-resilient neighbourhood characteristics, and explores how participatory methods can build community capacity while engaging older residents as co-designers of adaptation strategies. The article positions older adults not primarily as vulnerable populations requiring protection, but as community members possessing knowledge and relationships that can be mobilised for collective resilience. Implications for eco-social policy, interdisciplinary collaboration, and future research are discussed.

Keywords

Relational Social Work, Eco-social work, Climate adaptation, Older adults, Participatory research.

Introduction

The ecological crisis confronts social work with fundamental questions about the profession's scope and responsibilities. While social work has long understood human wellbeing as shaped by social environments, the environmental dimensions of this re-

Vol. 10, n. 1, April 2026
(pp. 3-24)
doi: 10.14605/RSW1012601
ISSN: 2532-3814

lationship have received comparatively little attention (Boetto, 2017; Dominelli, 2012). Climate change disrupts this neglect: rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation increasingly affect the populations social work serves, with impacts distributed along the lines of existing social inequalities. Older adults, in particular, face heightened vulnerability to climate-related health risks while often possessing limited resources for individual adaptation.

This article develops an integrated theoretical framework connecting Relational Social Work (RSW), eco-social work, and Caring Communities to address climate-related challenges facing older adults at the neighbourhood level. The argument proceeds from a recognition that effective responses to climate vulnerability require more than individual-level interventions or technical solutions. They require relational approaches that strengthen community connections, mobilise local knowledge, and build the social infrastructure through which collective resilience emerges. This article draws specifically on Participatory Health Research (PHR) as a framework for participatory practice. While participatory methods have a long tradition in social work research, PHR — as developed through the International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research (ICPHR) — offers a systematic, quality-oriented framework that is particularly suited to health-related community challenges such as climate adaptation. Section 4 elaborates this approach and its application to work with older adults in neighbourhood contexts.

The relevance of this inquiry is underscored by recent evidence. European heatwaves in 2022 and 2023 caused over 100,000 excess deaths, with the vast majority occurring among people aged 80 and older (Ballester et al., 2023; Gallo et al., 2024). These figures will worsen as populations age and temperatures rise. Yet mortality patterns are not uniform: research consistently demonstrates that social connectedness, neighbourhood cohesion, and community support moderate climate-related mortality risk (Kim & Lee, 2020; Klinenberg, 2002; Liotta et al., 2018). This evidence suggests that building community capacity may be among the most effective strategies for climate adaptation — and that social work, with its expertise in facilitating relationships and strengthening networks, has a distinctive contribution to make.

The article addresses a gap in the literature at the intersection of several fields. Eco-social work scholarship has established the theoretical case for integrating environmental concerns into social work practice (Dominelli, 2012; Matthies & Närhi, 2017), but has given limited attention to ageing populations. Gerontological research has extensively documented older adults' heightened vulnerability to climate change, identifying physiological sensitivity, social isolation, limited neighbourhood resources, and reduced adaptive capacity as key risk factors (Bunker et al., 2016; Gamble et al., 2013; Herrmann et al., 2019; Mayrhuber et al., 2018; Rhoades et al., 2018). Social connectedness and neighbourhood-level support have been identified as particularly important protective factors that can buffer climate-related health risks (Gamble et al., 2013; Rhoades et al., 2018). However, this body of research has rarely engaged

with social work theory or participatory methodologies — leaving a significant gap between gerontological knowledge about vulnerability and the practice frameworks needed to address it at community level. RSW provides sophisticated conceptual tools for understanding how relational goods emerge from quality relationships, yet has not systematically addressed environmental challenges (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2017, 2023). By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, this article aims to generate conceptual resources that can inform both research and practice. A single integrated framework is proposed because the challenges of climate adaptation in later life cannot be adequately addressed by any one perspective alone. Gerontological knowledge about vulnerability requires relational practice frameworks to become actionable at community level; RSW's relational tools gain ecological direction through eco-social work; and participatory methods provide the methodological bridge that translates both theoretical frameworks into practice with older adults. Rather than applying these perspectives in parallel, their integration aims to generate conceptual resources that are more than the sum of their parts.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 develops the theoretical framework, examining how RSW's core concepts — coping networks, reciprocity, relational goods — can be extended through engagement with eco-social work and Caring Communities approaches. Section 3 analyses climate vulnerability in later life, emphasising its intersectional character and the convergence between age-friendly and climate-resilient neighbourhood characteristics. Section 4 explores participatory approaches in social work research as pathways for building community capacity while generating locally grounded knowledge about climate adaptation. Section 5 synthesises the argument and discusses implications for policy, interdisciplinary collaboration, and future research.

Throughout, the analysis maintains a dual focus: on understanding climate vulnerability as a relational and community-level phenomenon, and on identifying approaches that can address this vulnerability while respecting older adults' agency and knowledge. The goal is not merely to describe how older people are affected by climate change, but to develop frameworks for practice that position them as active participants in building resilient communities.

Relational Social Work as a Framework for Eco-Social Approaches

Core principles of Relational Social Work: coping networks, reciprocity, and relational goods

Relational Social Work (RSW) represents a distinctive approach to social work theory and practice that emerged from the relational paradigm in sociology developed by Pierpaolo Donati (2011). At its core, RSW conceptualises social work interventions not as services

delivered by professionals to passive recipients, but as collaborative processes in which both helpers and those seeking help actively contribute to shared improvements (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2017). This perspective fundamentally reframes the helping relationship as one characterised by mutual engagement and reciprocity.

The concept of the coping network is central to RSW methodology. A coping network consists of «a social aggregation in which several associated people identify and pursue a common aim» (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2023, p. 5). Rather than viewing the social worker as the sole agent of change, RSW positions professionals as relational guides who facilitate connections among diverse stakeholders — service users, family members, neighbours, volunteers, and professionals — all working toward shared objectives. This networked approach recognises that sustainable change emerges from relationships rather than from individual interventions.

The principle of reciprocity constitutes another foundational element of RSW. According to Donati (2019), there is a «third effect» that emerges from the interaction of human subjects: a whole that is «something more than the sum» of its initial components. Users can receive genuine help only if they can simultaneously contribute to helping themselves and others; likewise, social workers can effectively provide assistance only when they remain open to receiving insights and support from those they serve (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2017). This reciprocal dynamic challenges traditional hierarchical models of professional helping.

Perhaps most significantly for connecting RSW to eco-social concerns, Donati's concept of relational goods offers a powerful theoretical resource. Relational goods are defined as beneficial phenomena that can only be produced through the virtuous encounter of two or more acting subjects (Donati, 2019; Donati & Solci, 2011). Unlike private goods enjoyed individually or public goods accessed impersonally, relational goods — such as trust, mutual support, and solidarity — emerge from and exist within relationships themselves. They cannot be produced by isolated individuals nor distributed by institutions; they require active, reciprocal engagement. When social work interventions succeed, it is often because «people involved in the helping relationship have taken each other by the hand and together generated a certain additional human energy» that produces shared value (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2017, p. 14).

Donati and Archer (2015) further develop this perspective through the concept of the relational subject. They argue that human persons are constituted through their relations with others; we become who we are through webs of relationships that both enable and constrain our agency. This relational ontology has profound implications for social work: rather than treating individuals as isolated units requiring professional intervention, RSW recognises persons as embedded in networks of mutual dependence and contribution. The social worker's task becomes one of facilitating these relational webs — strengthening connections, building bridges, and enabling the emergence of relational goods that enhance collective well-being.

Eco-Social Work: from individualistic interventions to relational and territorial approaches

Eco-social work has emerged as a critical response to the profession's traditional focus on the socio-cultural environment while neglecting the natural environment (Dominelli, 2012; Matthies & Närhi, 2017). While social work has long embraced the «person-in-environment» perspective, this framework historically privileged social systems over ecological ones (Boetto, 2017). The contemporary ecological crisis — manifested through climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation — demands a fundamental reconceptualisation of social work's theoretical foundations.

Boetto's (2017) transformative eco-social model challenges inherent modernist assumptions within the profession that contradict environmental sustainability. She argues that social work's dual dependency on the welfare state and industrial capitalism has inadvertently contributed to environmental degradation. An ecologically centred approach requires congruence across ontological (being), epistemological (thinking), and methodological (doing) dimensions of practice, emphasising the interdependence between humans and the natural environment throughout.

Närhi (2025) identifies two main traditions within ecological theories in social work: a systems-theoretical approach and an ecocritical perspective. While systems theory extends traditional ecological thinking to include natural environments, ecocritical perspectives more radically question anthropocentric assumptions and advocate for justice toward all living beings. Both traditions share a recognition that human beings are integral parts of interdependent social and natural ecosystems (Matutini et al., 2023).

Crucially for this article's argument, eco-social work increasingly emphasises territorial approaches that locate interventions within specific places and communities. Rambaree, Powers and Smith (2022) demonstrate how ecosocial work in community practice builds resilience through place-based strategies that value local knowledge and strengthen community self-organisation. This territorial orientation aligns closely with RSW's emphasis on coping networks situated within particular localities and connected to concrete environments.

Caring Communities: mutual aid and co-responsibility as relational practice

The concept of Caring Communities provides a crucial bridge between relational social work and eco-social approaches by emphasising mutual aid, co-responsibility, and community-based support networks. Caring Communities represent organised expressions of solidarity in which citizens, professional services, and civil society organisations collaborate to address shared concerns — particularly those affecting vulnerable populations such as older adults (Scharlach & Lehning, 2013).

In German-speaking countries, the concept of Sorgende Gemeinschaften (caring communities) has gained significant traction, particularly through the work of Thomas Klie (2014, 2016). Klie argues that demographic change — characterised by increasing numbers of older people requiring care alongside decreasing familial care potential and professional workforce shortages — necessitates a fundamental reorientation of community-based support. The caring community model represents what Klie (2014) terms a «secular promise of care»: a collective commitment to creating conditions for a good life, particularly for vulnerable populations, through shared responsibility across generations and social groups. Crucially, Klie emphasises that caring communities require not only civic engagement but also supportive infrastructure and professional backing — they represent a complement to, not a replacement for, formal care systems.

Research on age-friendly community initiatives demonstrates how communities can be transformed into supportive environments where older people remain involved, valued, and supported (Alley, Liebig, Pynoos, Banerjee & Choi, 2007). Such initiatives promote person-environment fit by modifying both physical and social environments to support health, well-being, and the ability to age in place. The emphasis on mutual support, reciprocity, and active participation distinguishes Caring Communities from traditional service delivery models.

The values underlying mutual aid practices — reciprocity, shared humanity, and community-driven care — echo RSW's core principles while extending them toward collective and ecological concerns. In mutual aid, care is understood not as a professional service but as a relational practice in which giving and receiving are intertwined. This understanding aligns with Donati's conception of relational goods: mutual support emerges from relationships and strengthens them in turn.

Synthesis: connections among people, communities, and the environment

The theoretical frameworks of Relational Social Work, Eco-Social Work, and Caring Communities converge around a shared recognition: sustainable well-being emerges from a complex network of connections among people, communities, and the environment (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2023). Each framework challenges the individualistic assumptions that have historically characterised social work interventions, pointing instead toward relational, networked, and place-based approaches.

RSW provides the foundational insight that helping relationships should be conceived as collaborative processes generating relational goods rather than as expert services delivered to passive recipients. Eco-social work extends this relational understanding to encompass human-environment relationships, recognising that social and ecological systems are fundamentally intertwined. Caring Communities operationalise these insights at the neighbourhood level, creating structures of mutual support that enhance collective resilience.

The intersection of these frameworks has particular relevance for addressing climate-related challenges facing older adults. Climate adaptation requires precisely the kinds of resources these approaches generate: strong social networks that enable mutual assistance during extreme weather events; local knowledge about neighbourhood conditions and resources; collective efficacy that supports community-level action; and relationships of trust that facilitate information sharing and help-seeking. The following section examines how climate vulnerability intersects with ageing at the neighbourhood level, while Section 4 explores how participatory approaches in social work research can contribute to building these relational resources.

For work with older people in the context of climate adaptation, this integrated framework offers particular promise. Older adults possess rich local knowledge, established social networks, and deep place attachment — resources that can be mobilised through participatory approaches. Simultaneously, they face heightened vulnerability to climate impacts, making community-based mutual support essential. The relationship itself becomes a fundamental tool to activate awareness, co-responsibility, and practices of care toward both the environment and others. The challenge for social work research and practice is to facilitate coping networks that build climate resilience while generating the relational goods — trust, solidarity, sense of belonging — that sustain both individual well-being and community vitality.

Older People, Climate Vulnerability, and Neighbourhood Resilience

Climate vulnerability in later life: physiological, social, and intersectional dimensions

Climate change poses significant and growing risks to older adults, with heat extremes representing the most immediate and deadly threat. The European heatwaves of 2003 and 2022 resulted in over 70,000 and 61,000 excess deaths respectively, with the vast majority occurring among people aged 80 years and older (Ballester et al., 2023; Robine et al., 2008). Heat-related mortality among people over 80 is approximately 768% higher than among those aged 65-79 (Gallo et al., 2024). These figures underscore that older adults face disproportionate climate-related mortality — a pattern that will intensify as both populations age and temperatures rise.

The physiological basis for this vulnerability is well established. Older adults have diminished thermoregulatory capacity, reduced ability to sense thirst, higher prevalence of chronic conditions that impair heat adaptation, and frequent use of medications that compromise the body's response to temperature extremes (Kenny et al., 2010; Meade et al., 2020). Cardiovascular, respiratory, and cerebrovascular diseases are exacerbated by extreme heat, as are diabetes and mental health conditions (WHO Europe, 2024).

However, physiological factors alone do not explain the differential impact of heat events on older populations.

An intersectional perspective reveals that climate vulnerability in later life is shaped by the convergence of multiple social positions and inequalities. Age intersects with income, housing conditions, social isolation, migration background, and neighbourhood characteristics to produce differentiated patterns of risk (Mayrhuber et al., 2018). An older person living alone in a poorly insulated top-floor apartment, with limited financial resources and no social network to check on them during a heatwave, faces qualitatively different risks than an affluent older adult with family support and access to air conditioning. Research on environmental justice consistently demonstrates that low-income older adults, older people of colour, and older migrants are disproportionately exposed to climate hazards while simultaneously having fewer resources for adaptation (EPA, 2021).

This intersectional understanding has important implications for social work practice. Rather than treating «older adults» as a homogeneous vulnerable category, practitioners must attend to how age-related vulnerability is compounded by social inequalities. Climate-related interventions that fail to address these intersecting dimensions risk reproducing or even deepening existing disparities. An environmental justice approach to ageing therefore requires examining not only who is most exposed to climate risks, but also who has the resources — material, social, and institutional — to adapt and recover. This article focuses primarily on heat-related vulnerability, which represents the most extensively documented climate risk for older adults in European contexts, with heatwaves causing tens of thousands of excess deaths among people aged 80 and older in recent years (Ballester et al., 2023; Gallo et al., 2024; Herrmann et al., 2019). It is acknowledged, however, that older adults face a broader range of climate hazards, including flooding, air quality deterioration, and storm events. The extent to which the relational and participatory principles developed here translate to these other contexts — where the dynamics of vulnerability and community response may differ significantly — represents a productive direction for future research.

Converging goals: age-friendly and climate-resilient neighbourhoods

A striking convergence exists between the characteristics of age-friendly and climate-resilient neighbourhoods. The World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities framework identifies eight interconnected domains that support healthy ageing: outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, and community support and health services (WHO, 2007). Scholars have increasingly recognised that these domains overlap substantially with the requirements for climate

resilience, leading to calls for integrating climate considerations as a ninth domain within the age-friendly framework (Dabelko-Schoeny et al., 2024).

The practical overlaps are significant. Age-friendly neighbourhoods prioritise accessible green spaces with seating — these same spaces provide cooling during heat events. Short distances to essential services reduce both mobility barriers for older adults and transport-related emissions. Shaded walkways enable outdoor activity for people with limited heat tolerance while providing urban cooling. Accessible public buildings that serve as community meeting places can function as cooling centres during extreme heat. These convergences suggest that investments in age-friendly infrastructure simultaneously enhance climate resilience, and vice versa.

This alignment has profound implications for urban planning and social policy. Currently, age-friendly and climate adaptation initiatives often operate in separate institutional silos, despite relying on similar structures and processes (Dabelko-Schoeny et al., 2024). Robust public participation, accessible transportation, resilient housing, walkable streets, and protected outdoor areas are shared priorities across both agendas. By making these connections explicit, social work can contribute to more integrated approaches that address multiple policy goals simultaneously. The challenge is to move from recognising these overlaps conceptually to implementing them in practice — a task that requires bridging professional boundaries between urban planning, public health, environmental policy, and social services.

Social networks as protective infrastructure: from everyday support to crisis resilience

While physical infrastructure matters, the protective role of social networks during climate events may be even more consequential. The landmark analysis of Chicago's 1995 heatwave by Klinenberg (2002) revealed that social isolation was a key determinant of mortality: neighbourhoods with strong social ties and community institutions experienced significantly fewer deaths than demographically similar areas characterised by social fragmentation. This finding has been confirmed in subsequent research across diverse contexts. Studies from Korea demonstrate that higher levels of social gathering and mutual aid are associated with significantly lower heatwave-related mortality risk among older urban residents (Kim & Lee, 2020). Rome's «Long Live the Elderly» programme, which focuses on reducing social isolation among older adults through proactive outreach and community network strengthening, has achieved measurable reductions in heat-related mortality (Liotta et al., 2018).

Social networks function as protective infrastructure in multiple ways during climate events. Connected individuals are more likely to receive timely warnings and information about protective behaviours. Neighbours who know each other can check on vulnerable

residents when conditions become dangerous. Community organisations can mobilise resources and coordinate responses more effectively than isolated individuals. Perhaps most importantly, the regular social contact embedded in strong neighbourhoods means that changes in an older person's condition are more likely to be noticed before a crisis escalates. As Lubik and Kosatsky (2019) emphasise, intersectoral partnerships including local organisations and networks are crucial for effective heat-health interventions.

This understanding connects directly to the Caring Communities framework introduced in Section *Relational Social Work as a Framework for Eco-Social Approaches,* and resonates with community social work approaches that emphasise relational practice and network facilitation (Landi & Limongelli, 2020). The same mutual aid networks that provide everyday support — help with shopping, shared meals, informal companionship — become critical during climate emergencies. A neighbour who regularly checks in on an isolated older adult is positioned to recognise when that person needs assistance during a heatwave. Community organisations that maintain relationships with vulnerable residents can activate those connections for emergency outreach. In this sense, Caring Communities represent not merely a welfare model but a form of climate adaptation infrastructure.

The relational goods generated through everyday community life — trust, reciprocity, sense of belonging — constitute resources that can be mobilised during crises. This perspective shifts the framing of climate adaptation from a purely technical or infrastructural challenge to one that centrally involves social relationships and community capacity. It also positions social work, with its expertise in building connections and strengthening community networks, as a key profession for climate resilience. The following section examines how participatory approaches in social work can contribute to developing this relational infrastructure while simultaneously engaging older residents as active contributors to neighbourhood transformation.

Participatory Approaches as Transformative Practice

Participatory health research: principles and relevance for climate adaptation

The preceding sections have established that climate resilience for older adults is fundamentally a relational and community-level phenomenon. Building the coping networks, mutual trust, and neighbourhood solidarity that constitute protective infrastructure requires not only theoretical frameworks but also methodological approaches capable of engaging older residents as active participants rather than passive research subjects. Participatory Health Research (PHR) methods offer a distinctive pathway here: unlike conventional research that studies communities from the outside, PHR engages older residents as active co-researchers, and in doing so directly strengthens the social connections and collective capacities that constitute climate resilience. The research process

itself becomes a vehicle for community development. PHR has emerged as a distinctive approach that fundamentally reconfigures the relationship between researchers and communities. Rather than treating community members as objects of study, PHR involves them as active partners throughout the research process — from defining questions to interpreting findings and implementing solutions (ICPHR, 2013; Wright et al., 2010). This approach is grounded in the recognition that those most affected by health challenges possess essential knowledge for addressing them, and that sustainable change requires their meaningful involvement.

The International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research (ICPHR) defines PHR through eleven core characteristics, including democratic participation, collective knowledge production, iterative cycles of reflection and action, and commitment to addressing health inequalities (ICPHR, 2013). These principles align closely with both the relational orientation of RSW and the community-based ethos of the Caring Communities framework. PHR is distinct from, though related to, other participatory traditions in social work research. Participatory Action Research (PAR) combines theory and practice, action and reflection with the active participation of stakeholders, emphasising structural change and transformation as primary outcomes (Baldwin, 2012). Practice Research, as developed in Scandinavian social work traditions, foregrounds close, locally-bound collaboration between practitioners and researchers aimed at generating practice-relevant knowledge (Uggerhøj, 2011). PHR's distinctive contribution lies in its explicit focus on health-related contexts, underpinned by the systematic quality criteria developed by the International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research (ICPHR) — providing methodological rigour particularly well-suited to the climate-health challenges examined in this article. Where RSW emphasises the co-production of wellbeing through coping networks, and Caring Communities highlight the importance of mutual responsibility and neighbourhood solidarity, PHR provides methodological tools for translating these values into research practice.

Research on community-based health promotion with older adults in rural northern Italy has demonstrated how PHR principles can be implemented in practice while attending to ICPHR quality criteria (Mairhofer, 2022). This work illustrates that PHR requires not only ethical commitment but also transdisciplinary collaboration between researchers, practitioners, municipal actors, and older residents themselves. The significant role of voluntary engagement emerges as both resource and challenge in rural contexts, while the absence of adequate structural conditions underscores the need for policy-level attention to participatory approaches.

The application of PHR principles to climate adaptation with older adults is particularly promising. Climate-related health challenges such as heat vulnerability are shaped by local conditions — housing quality, green space availability, neighbourhood walkability, social network density — that vary significantly across contexts and are best understood by residents themselves. Generic, top-down interventions risk missing these contextual

specificities. By contrast, participatory approaches can generate locally grounded knowledge about climate risks and adaptation strategies while simultaneously strengthening the community networks that constitute protective infrastructure during climate events.

Recent research has begun exploring how participatory methods can be applied to climate adaptation in the context of ageing. Mairhofer, Paone, and Teti (2024) describe the implementation of PHR approaches in research on neighbourhood development with older adults, demonstrating how methods such as neighbourhood walks, sticker mapping, and photovoice can be adapted to engage older residents as co-researchers in identifying environmental barriers and resources. This work illustrates how participatory methodologies can generate actionable knowledge while building community capacity — a dual outcome particularly relevant for climate resilience.

Visual and spatial methods: photovoice, neighbourhood walks, and community mapping

Within the PHR tradition, visual and spatial methods have proven especially effective for engaging older adults in neighbourhood-based research. These approaches address key challenges in working with this population: they accommodate diverse literacy levels and communication preferences, make abstract concepts tangible through concrete images and places, and create shared reference points for collective discussion.

Photovoice, developed by Wang and Burris (1997), provides cameras to community members who photograph aspects of their daily environment relevant to the research focus. Subsequent group discussions explore the meaning and significance of the images, generating rich qualitative data while promoting critical consciousness about community conditions. Research has demonstrated photovoice's particular effectiveness with older adults for exploring neighbourhood perceptions, identifying environmental barriers and facilitators, and engaging participants who might be reluctant to participate in traditional interview-based research (Baker & Wang, 2006; Mahmood et al., 2012; Novek & Menec, 2014). The method's visual nature makes it accessible to participants with varying verbal fluency, while the concrete photographs provide anchors for discussing experiences that might otherwise be difficult to articulate.

Neighbourhood walks — sometimes called «go-along» interviews or walking interviews — complement photovoice by embedding data collection in the physical environment being studied. Rather than asking participants to recall their experiences of a neighbourhood from a stationary interview setting, researchers accompany participants through their local environment, with the walk itself prompting observations and discussions (Carpiano, 2009). For older adults, this method connects directly to their embodied experience of the neighbourhood — the gradient of a hill, the availability of benches for resting, the presence or absence of shade. When applied to climate adaptation, neighbour-

hood walks can reveal how older residents navigate their environment during extreme heat, which routes they avoid, and which spaces they experience as refuges.

Participatory community mapping methods offer another avenue for spatial participation with older adults (Fang et al., 2016). These approaches, which can include workshops where participants place markers on neighbourhood maps to indicate significant locations, enable older residents to articulate place-based needs and co-create solutions with researchers and service providers. Such methods can identify both risk factors (e.g., areas lacking shade or cooling infrastructure) and resources (e.g., air-conditioned public buildings, green spaces, locations of supportive neighbours) in ways that inform both research findings and practical interventions.

From research to intervention: participatory programme development for heat protection

The application of participatory methods extends beyond research to the development of climate adaptation interventions. A participatory approach to programme development involves community members not merely as beneficiaries of interventions designed by experts, but as co-designers who shape programme content, delivery methods, and implementation strategies. This approach has several advantages: it ensures interventions are culturally appropriate and practically feasible; it builds community ownership that supports sustainability; and it can itself strengthen the social networks that provide protection during climate events.

Existing programmes demonstrate the potential of community-based approaches to heat protection. The «Long Live the Elderly» (*Viva gli Anziani*) programme in Rome provides an instructive model of community-based heat protection. Initiated in 2004 by the Community of Sant'Egidio in partnership with the University of Rome «Tor Vergata» and the Municipality of Rome, the programme's primary aim is to reduce social isolation among older adults through proactive telephone outreach and home visits — maintained throughout the year, not only during heat emergencies. All residents over 75 are contacted and enrolled; their social and health needs are assessed, and contact frequency is tailored to individual risk levels. During heat waves, all enrolled participants are contacted by phone and visited at home if necessary. Evaluation research demonstrated an approximately 13% reduction in heat-related mortality in areas served by the programme compared to adjacent areas during the 2015 heat wave (Liotta et al., 2018). Key factors in its effectiveness included the continuity of year-round relationships rather than one-off emergency outreach, and the programme's capacity to strengthen both individual social networks and broader community social capital. A noted limitation of the study is that the analysis was based on administrative residence data, which may not fully reflect where older adults actually lived during the summer months. Building on such models, participatory

approaches could involve older adults themselves in designing and delivering similar interventions, potentially deepening community ownership and reach.

A participatory development process could include several elements: photovoice projects where older adults document places where they feel comfortable or uncomfortable during heat, and what helps or hinders their heat protection; peer research where trained older adults conduct interviews with other older residents about their heat experiences; advisory boards that include older community members alongside practitioners and researchers; and co-analysis sessions where participants help interpret research findings. Each element serves the dual purpose of generating knowledge and building capacity.

This approach responds to evidence that conventional heat warning systems and information campaigns often fail to reach or influence older adults (Wolf et al., 2010). Digital communication channels exclude many older people; generic advice may not account for individual circumstances; and crucially, many older adults do not perceive themselves as being at risk (Abrahamson et al., 2009). Participatory approaches can address these challenges by ensuring that messages are developed with input from the target population, delivered through trusted interpersonal channels, and grounded in the actual lived experiences of older residents.

Transformative potential: connecting participation to environmental justice and relational practice

The convergence of participatory methods with RSW, eco-social work, and environmental justice principles creates possibilities for genuinely transformative practice. All frameworks share a commitment to moving beyond individualised, deficit-based approaches toward relational, strengths-based engagement that recognises people as embedded in social and ecological contexts. Participatory methods provide concrete tools for enacting these commitments in research and practice, while environmental justice perspectives demand attention to how climate impacts — and the benefits of adaptation measures — are distributed across social groups.

From an RSW perspective, participatory research can be understood as facilitating the emergence of coping networks oriented toward climate adaptation. Folgheraiter (2024) emphasises that relational social work treats social problems not as pathologies requiring expert cure but as complex situations demanding awareness and participation from a community of actors. The research process itself — bringing older residents together to discuss their neighbourhood, share photographs, walk together through local spaces — can strengthen social connections and collective efficacy. These enhanced networks then constitute resources for mutual support during climate events. In this sense, the participatory process does not merely study community capacity but actively builds it.

From an eco-social work perspective, participatory approaches with older adults challenge the framing of this population as passive victims of environmental change. By positioning older residents as experts on their neighbourhoods and as co-designers of adaptation strategies, these methods recognise and mobilise the knowledge, experience, and social connections that older people bring. This reframing has important implications for how ageing is understood in the context of climate change: not as a source of vulnerability to be managed, but as a resource for community resilience to be activated.

Environmental justice perspectives add a critical dimension by highlighting how climate vulnerability is structured by social inequality. As Resnik (2022) argues, climate change is fundamentally an environmental justice issue because it causes disproportionate harm to low-income populations and communities facing multiple forms of marginalisation. Older adults in low-income neighbourhoods face compounded risks: less access to air conditioning, fewer green spaces, housing in poorer condition, and weaker institutional support. Participatory methods can make these inequalities visible and create pathways for affected communities to articulate their needs in policy processes. The combination of PHR's commitment to democratic participation, RSW's relational methodology, and environmental justice's focus on equity points toward climate adaptation governance that is not only more effective but also more just.

This transdisciplinary integration also has implications for the role of social work in climate adaptation governance. Currently, climate policy is largely developed without input from social work perspectives or from the communities most affected by climate impacts. Participatory methods offer pathways for community voices — including the voices of older adults — to inform policy development. When combined with RSW's emphasis on facilitating connections between different actors and Caring Communities' vision of shared responsibility, these approaches point toward more inclusive and effective climate adaptation governance that addresses both immediate protective needs and underlying structural inequities.

Discussion and Conclusion

Synthesis: building connections through relational and participatory approaches

The conceptual bridge built across the preceding sections yields three key insights for practice and research. First, climate adaptation with older adults is fundamentally a relational challenge: the protective factors that reduce climate-related mortality — social connectedness, neighbourhood cohesion, access to help during emergencies — are precisely the relational goods that RSW identifies as emerging from quality relationships. Approaches that treat older adults as isolated individuals requiring top-down intervention miss both the relational nature of vulnerability and the relational resources available for

adaptation. Second, the convergence of age-friendly and climate-resilient neighbourhood characteristics points toward integrated approaches that serve multiple policy goals simultaneously, with overlapping requirements — accessible green spaces, walkable neighbourhoods, strong social networks, responsive community organisations — enabling synergistic interventions. Third, participatory methods offer pathways for translating these theoretical insights into transformative practice: by engaging older adults as experts and co-designers, participatory approaches challenge deficit-based framings while mobilising the knowledge and social connections that older people possess, with the research process itself strengthening the community networks that constitute resilience resources. The implications for practice, policy, and research are developed in the sections that follow.

Implications for eco-social policy and integrated welfare approaches

The integrated framework developed in this article has significant implications for social policy at multiple levels. Current climate adaptation policies typically operate in institutional silos, separated from ageing policies and social welfare systems. This fragmentation undermines effectiveness: climate policies may neglect vulnerable populations, while ageing policies may overlook environmental dimensions of wellbeing. An eco-social approach demands integrated policy frameworks that recognise the interconnections between social and environmental challenges (Matthies & Närhi, 2017).

At the neighbourhood level, this analysis supports investment in community infrastructure that serves both age-friendly and climate-resilient goals. This includes physical infrastructure — shaded walkways, accessible green spaces, cooling centres in community buildings — and social infrastructure: community organisations with relationships to vulnerable residents, outreach programmes that maintain contact with isolated older adults, and volunteer networks that can be mobilised during emergencies. The evidence that social networks reduce heat-related mortality (Klinenberg, 2002; Kim & Lee, 2020; Liotta et al., 2018) suggests that investments in community-building may be among the most effective climate adaptation measures.

At the municipal and regional level, integrated planning processes should bring together urban planners, public health officials, social service providers, and community representatives. Social work's expertise in facilitating connections across sectors and engaging marginalised populations positions the profession as a potential bridge-builder in such processes. The participatory methods examined in Section 4 offer tools for ensuring that planning processes incorporate the perspectives and priorities of older residents themselves.

At the national and supranational level, policy frameworks should recognise climate adaptation as a social justice issue requiring attention to differential vulnerability. Environmental justice perspectives highlight how climate impacts fall disproportionately on populations already facing multiple forms of disadvantage (Resnik, 2022). Older adults with

low incomes, older migrants, and those in socially isolated circumstances face compounded risks that demand targeted policy responses. Universal approaches that fail to account for these intersecting inequalities risk reproducing or deepening existing disparities.

Interdisciplinary collaboration and the role of social work

The challenges examined in this article exceed the boundaries of any single discipline. Effective climate adaptation with older adults requires collaboration across social work, public health, urban planning, environmental science, and gerontology. The integrated framework developed here suggests specific contributions that social work can make within such interdisciplinary efforts.

Social work brings distinctive expertise in relationship-building, community engagement, and working with marginalised populations. These competencies are essential for climate adaptation approaches that seek to strengthen social networks and engage vulnerable communities. Where public health approaches may focus on epidemiological risk factors and urban planning on physical infrastructure, social work can attend to the relational dimensions that mediate how physical environments and health risks are experienced by real people in specific communities.

Moreover, social work's ethical commitment to social justice provides a critical lens for examining how climate adaptation measures are distributed and experienced across social groups. Environmental justice perspectives demand attention not only to reducing overall climate impacts but also to ensuring that adaptation benefits reach those facing greatest vulnerability. Social work's advocacy orientation positions the profession to voice these concerns in policy processes that might otherwise overlook distributional questions.

The transdisciplinary orientation emerging in eco-social work scholarship (Matthies & Närhi, 2017; Hermans, Stamm, Matthies & Elsen, 2025) points toward new forms of collaboration that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Rather than simply coordinating across separate fields, transdisciplinary approaches seek to develop shared frameworks that integrate diverse knowledge systems — including the experiential knowledge of community members. The participatory methods examined in Section 4 exemplify this transdisciplinary orientation by positioning older residents as knowledge-holders whose expertise is essential for effective research and intervention.

Research agenda: toward relational approaches for climate-resilient communities

This article has developed a conceptual framework, but empirical research is needed to test and refine its propositions. Several directions for future inquiry emerge from our analysis.

First, research is needed on the mechanisms through which social networks protect older adults during climate events. While the protective effect of social connectedness is well established, the specific pathways — information sharing, practical assistance, emotional support, monitoring of vulnerable individuals — require further investigation. Understanding these mechanisms can inform interventions that strengthen the most protective network functions.

Second, intervention research should evaluate participatory approaches to climate adaptation with older adults. The methods examined in Section 4 — photovoice, neighbourhood walks, community mapping — have demonstrated effectiveness for engaging older residents in neighbourhood research, but their application specifically to climate adaptation requires systematic evaluation. Research questions include: Do participatory processes strengthen the social networks that provide protection during climate events? Do co-designed interventions achieve greater reach and effectiveness than expert-designed programmes? How can participatory approaches be scaled while maintaining their relational quality?

Third, policy research should examine integrated approaches that simultaneously pursue age-friendly and climate-resilient goals. Comparative research across municipalities with different policy approaches can identify effective governance arrangements and implementation strategies. Research should also examine the conditions under which separate policy streams — climate adaptation, healthy ageing, social welfare — can be effectively integrated.

Several limitations of this analysis should be acknowledged. First, this article develops a conceptual framework rather than presenting empirical findings; the propositions advanced here require testing through empirical research. Second, the focus on heat-related vulnerability, while justified by the epidemiological evidence, means that other climate-related risks — flooding, storms, air quality deterioration — receive less attention, though the relational principles developed here may apply to these challenges as well. Third, the literature reviewed draws predominantly from European and North American contexts; further work is needed to examine how these frameworks translate to different cultural and institutional settings.

Fourth, research should explore the concept of «sense of belonging to ecological community» as both a potential outcome and a resource for climate adaptation. RSW's emphasis on relational goods suggests that climate adaptation might generate not only reduced vulnerability but also enhanced connection — to neighbours, to place, and potentially to the broader ecological community. Investigating whether and how participatory climate adaptation strengthens these relational goods could deepen understanding of the approach's transformative potential.

Conclusion

Climate change presents profound challenges for older adults and the communities in which they live. This article has argued that Relational Social Work, eco-social work,

and Caring Communities frameworks — when integrated — offer valuable conceptual resources for understanding and addressing these challenges. The convergence of these perspectives points toward approaches that recognise older adults not primarily as vulnerable populations requiring protection but as community members possessing knowledge, relationships, and capacities that can be mobilised for collective adaptation.

The participatory methods examined in this article provide concrete tools for enacting these theoretical commitments. By engaging older residents as co-researchers and co-designers, participatory approaches can generate locally grounded knowledge while simultaneously strengthening the community networks that constitute climate resilience. This dual function — knowledge generation and capacity building — makes participatory methods particularly well-suited to climate adaptation challenges that require both understanding local conditions and building local resources for response.

The implications extend beyond climate adaptation to social work's broader engagement with environmental challenges. As the ecological crisis deepens, social work will increasingly confront problems that transcend the boundaries between social and environmental systems. The integrated framework developed here offers a template for how social work theory and practice might evolve to address these interconnected challenges — maintaining its relational core while expanding its ecological awareness.

Ultimately, this article has argued for approaches that build connections: among older residents who might support each other during climate events; between communities and the professionals and policymakers who serve them; across disciplines that can contribute different forms of expertise; and between human communities and the broader ecological systems on which all life depends. In the face of climate change, such connections are not merely desirable but essential — constituting the relational infrastructure through which resilient communities can be built and sustained.

References

Abrahamson, V., Wolf, J., Lorenzoni, I., Fenn, B., Kovats, S., Wilkinson, P., Adger, W. N., & Raine, R. (2009). Perceptions of heatwave risks to health: Interview-based study of older people in London and Norwich, UK. *Journal of Public Health, 31*(1), 119-126. https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdn102

Alley, D., Liebig, P., Pynoos, J., Banerjee, T., & Choi, I. H. (2007). Creating elder-friendly communities: Preparations for an aging society. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 49*(1-2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1300/J083v49n01_01

Baker, T. A., & Wang, C. C. (2006). Photovoice: Use of a participatory action research method to explore the chronic pain experience in older adults. *Qualitative Health Research, 16*(10), 1405-1413. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732306294118

Baldwin, M. (2012). Participatory action research. In M. Gray, J. Midgley, & S. A. Webb (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social work* (pp. 467-481). Sage.

Ballester, J., Quijal-Zamorano, M., Méndez Turrubiates, R. F., Pegenaute, F., Herrmann, F. R., Robine, J. M., Basagaña, X., Tonne, C., Antó, J. M., & Achebak, H. (2023). Heat-related mortality in Europe during the summer of 2022. *Nature Medicine, 29*(7), 1857-1866. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-023-02419-z

Boetto, H. (2017). A transformative eco-social model: Challenging modernist assumptions in social work. *British Journal of Social Work, 47*(1), 48-67. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcw149

Buffel, T., & Phillipson, C. (2016). Can global cities be «age-friendly cities»? Urban development and ageing populations. *Cities, 55*, 94-100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.04.016

Bunker, A., Wildenhain, J., Vandenbergh, A., Henschel, S., Rocklöv, J., Hajat, S., & Sauerborn, R. (2016). Effects of air temperature on climate-sensitive mortality and morbidity outcomes in the elderly: A systematic review and meta-analysis of epidemiological evidence. *EBioMedicine, 6*, 258-268. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ebiom.2016.02.034

Carpiano, R. M. (2009). Come take a walk with me: The «go-along» interview as a novel method for studying the implications of place for health and well-being. *Health & Place, 15*(1), 263-272. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2008.05.003

Dabelko-Schoeny, H., Dabelko, G. D., Rao, S., Damico, M., Doherty, F. C., Traver, A. C., & Sheldon, M. (2024). Age-friendly and climate resilient communities: A grey-green alliance. *The Gerontologist, 64*(3), gnad137. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnad137

Dominelli, L. (2012). *Green social work: From environmental crises to environmental justice*. Polity Press.

Donati, P. (2011). *Relational sociology: A new paradigm for the social sciences*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203860281

Donati, P. (2019). Discovering the relational goods: Their nature, genesis and effects. *International Review of Sociology, 29*(2), 238-259. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2019.1619952

Donati, P., & Archer, M. S. (2015). *The relational subject*. Cambridge University Press.

Donati, P., & Solci, R. (2011). *I beni relazionali: Che cosa sono e quali effetti producono*. Bollati Boringhieri.

Environmental Protection Agency. (2021). *Climate change and social vulnerability in the United States: A focus on six impacts* (EPA 430-R-21-003).

Fang, M. L., Woolrych, R., Sixsmith, J., Canham, S., Battersby, L., & Sixsmith, A. (2016). Place-making with older persons: Establishing sense-of-place through participatory community mapping workshops. *Social Science & Medicine, 168*, 223-229. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.07.007

Folgheraiter, F. (2024). *The relational theory of social work: Phenomenological foundations*. Cognella.

Folgheraiter, F., & Raineri, M. L. (2017). The principles and key ideas of relational social work. *Relational Social Work, 1*(1), 12-18. https://doi.org/10.14605/RSW111602

Folgheraiter, F., & Raineri, M. L. (2023). The relational foundation of social work. *Relational Social Work, 7*(2), 2-21. https://doi.org/10.14605/RSW722301

Gallo, E., Quijal-Zamorano, M., Méndez Turrubiates, R. F., Tonne, C., Basagaña, X., Achebak, H., & Ballester, J. (2024). Heat-related mortality in Europe during 2023 and the role of adaptation in protecting health. *Nature Medicine, 30*(11), 3101-3105. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-024-03186-1

Gamble, J. L., Hurley, B. J., Schultz, P. A., Jaglom, W. S., Krishnan, N., & Harris, M. (2013). Climate change and older Americans: State of the science. *Environmental Health Perspectives, 121*(1), 15-22. https://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1205223

Hermans, K., Stamm, I., Matthies, A.-L., & Elsen, S. (Eds.). (2025). *Ecosocial work and sustainability transitions*. Policy Press.

Herrmann, A., Haefeli, W. E., Lindemann, U., Rapp, K., Roigk, P., & Becker, C. (2019). Epidemiology and prevention of heat-related adverse health effects on elderly people. *Zeitschrift für Gerontologie und Geriatrie, 52*, 487-502. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00391-019-01520-8

ICPHR (International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research). (2013). *Position paper 1: What is participatory health research?* ICPHR.

Kenny, G. P., Yardley, J., Brown, C., Sigal, R. J., & Jay, O. (2010). Heat stress in older individuals and patients with common chronic diseases. *Canadian Medical Association Journal, 182*(10), 1053-1060. https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.081050

Kim, Y.-O., Lee, W., Kim, H., & Cho, Y. (2020). Social isolation and vulnerability to heatwave-related mortality in the urban elderly population: A time-series multi-community study in Korea. *Environment International, 142*, 105868. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2020.105868

Klie, T. (2014). *Wen kümmern die Alten? Auf dem Weg in eine sorgende Gesellschaft*. Pattloch.

Klie, T. (2016). On the way to a caring community? The German debate. In K. Wegleitner, K. Heimerl, & A. Kellehear (Eds.), *Compassionate communities: Case studies from Britain and Europe* (pp. 198-209). Routledge.

Klinenberg, E. (2002). *Heat wave: A social autopsy of disaster in Chicago*. University of Chicago Press.

Landi, C., & Limongelli, P. (2020). «Let's stay tuned»: Analysis of a community social work project during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Relational Social Work, 4*(2), 61-68. https://doi.org/10.14605/RSW422006

Liotta, G., Inzerilli, M. C., Palombi, L., Madaro, O., Orlando, S., Scarcella, P., Betti, D., & Marazzi, M. C. (2018). Social interventions to prevent heat-related mortality in the older adult in Rome, Italy: A quasi-experimental study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15*(4), 715. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15040715

Lubik, A., & Kosatsky, T. (2019). Public health should promote climate adaptation strategies that benefit health now. *BMC Public Health, 19*, 1657. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-8020-1

Mahmood, A., Chaudhury, H., Michael, Y. L., Campo, M., Hay, K., & Sarte, A. (2012). A photovoice documentation of the role of neighborhood physical and social environments in older adults' physical activity in two metropolitan areas in North America. *Social Science & Medicine, 74*(8), 1180-1192. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.12.039

Mairhofer, S. (2022). Gemeinwesenbasierte Gesundheitsförderung mit älteren Menschen im ländlichen Raum – Ein Beitrag der partizipativen Sozial- und Gesundheitsforschung. In A. Teti, E. Nowossadeck, J. Fuchs, & H. Künemund (Eds.), *Wohnen und Gesundheit im Alter (Vechtaer Beiträge zur Gerontologie)*. Springer VS. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34386-6_13

Mairhofer, S., Paone, N., & Teti, A. (2024). Implementazione dell'approccio partecipativo (ICPHR) nella ricerca sociale e della salute. *Salute e Società*, 1/2024, 149-156. https://doi.org/10.3280/SES2024-001010

Matthies, A.-L., & Närhi, K. (Eds.). (2017). *The ecosocial transition of societies: The contribution of social work and social policy*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315615912

Matutini, E., Busacca, M., & Da Roit, B. (2023). Ready, steady, go? Obstacles to the spread of eco-social work approaches: An Italian case study. *Sustainability, 15*(4), 3050. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043050

Mayrhuber, E. A. S., Dückers, M. L. A., Wallner, P., Arnberger, A., Allex, B., Wiesböck, L., Wanka, A., Kolland, F., Eder, R., Hutter, H.-P., & Haluza, D. (2018). Vulnerability to heatwaves and implications for public health interventions—A scoping review. *Environmental Research, 166*, 42-54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envres.2018.05.021

Meade, R. D., Akerman, A. P., Notley, S. R., McGinn, R., Poirier, P., Gosselin, P., & Kenny, G. P. (2020). Physiological factors characterizing heat-vulnerable older adults: A narrative review. *Environment International, 144*, 105909. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2020.105909

Närhi, K. (2025). Theories of ecosocial work addressing the contribution of social work in sustainability transitions. In K. Hermans, I. Stamm, A.-L. Matthies, & S. Elsen (Eds.), *Ecosocial work and sustainability transitions* (pp. 15-32). Policy Press.

Novek, S., & Menec, V. H. (2014). Older adults' perceptions of age-friendly communities in Canada: A photovoice study. *Ageing & Society, 34*(6), 1052-1072. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X1200150X

Rambaree, K., Powers, M. C., & Smith, R. J. (2022). *Ecosocial work in community practice*. Routledge.

Resnik, D. B. (2022). Environmental justice and climate change policies. *Bioethics, 36*(7), 735-741. https://doi.org/10.1111/bioe.13042

Rhoades, J. L., Gruber, J. S., & Horton, B. (2018). Developing an in-depth understanding of elderly adult's vulnerability to climate change. *The Gerontologist, 58*(3), 567-577. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnw167

Robine, J. M., Cheung, S. L. K., Le Roy, S., Van Oyen, H., Griffiths, C., Michel, J. P., & Herrmann, F. R. (2008). Death toll exceeded 70,000 in Europe during the summer of 2003. *Comptes Rendus Biologies, 331*(2), 171-178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crvi.2007.12.001

Scharlach, A., & Lehning, A. J. (2013). Ageing-friendly communities and social inclusion in the United States of America. *Ageing & Society, 33*(1), 110-136. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X12000578

Uggerhøj, L. (2011). What is practice research in social work: Definitions, barriers and possibilities. *Social Work & Society, 9*(1), 45-59.

Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior, 24*(3), 369-387. https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309

WHO (World Health Organization). (2007). *Global age-friendly cities: A guide*. WHO.

WHO Regional Office for Europe. (2024). *Heatwaves*. https://www.who.int/europe/health-topics/heatwaves

Wolf, J., Adger, W. N., Lorenzoni, I., Abrahamson, V., & Raine, R. (2010). Social capital, individual responses to heat waves and climate change adaptation: An empirical study of two UK cities. *Global Environmental Change, 20*(1), 44-52. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2009.09.004

Wright, M. T., Roche, B., von Unger, H., Block, M., & Gardner, B. (2010). A call for an international collaboration on participatory research for health. *Health Promotion International, 25*(1), 115-122. https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dap043

Mairhofer, S. (2026). Relational Social Work, Eco-Social Approaches, and Participatory Methods: Building Climate-Resilient Neighbourhoods with Older Adults. *Relational Social Work, 10*(1), 3-24, doi: 10.14605/RSW1012601.