

Ecosocial Community Work: Tensions, Transformations and Situated Practices in Italian Local Welfare Services

Elena Allegri

University of Piemonte Orientale, Italy

Luca Pavani

University of Piemonte Orientale, Italy

CORRESPONDENCE:

Elena Allegri

e-mail: elena.allegri@uniupo.it

Abstract

Ecosocial work is increasingly presented as a response to intertwined social and ecological crises, yet its concrete configurations remain underexamined. Drawing on a national research project PRIN 2022 ECOSOW in Italy, this article explores how ecosocial principles are interpreted and enacted within local welfare systems, based on 54 interviews with social workers, coordinators and policy-makers involved in initiatives that combine social aims with environmental concerns. Through reflexive thematic analysis, the study conceptualises ecosocial community work as a field structured by situated tensions rather than as a predefined model. The findings identify tensions between episodic projects and lasting practices, individual responsibility and collective co-responsibility, restorative and transformative orientations, formalised and co-created processes, and passive and proactive professional roles. Ecosocial community work takes shape through the negotiation of these tensions, which drives its transformative potential. Despite instability and limited institutional support, favourable territorial conditions allow ecosocial orientations to consolidate into practices that connect social care with ecological responsibility. In this sense, ecosocial community work signals a shift in local welfare toward shared responsibility and ecosocial justice.

Keywords

Ecosocial work, Community work, Ecosocial community work, Italy.

Introduction¹

The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and depletion of vital natural resources has intensified interdisciplinary debates on how to prevent and address the social and ecological consequences of the unfolding environmental crisis (Purvis et al., 2019; Vogt & Weber, 2019; Longo et al., 2021). These debates consistently show that environmental degradation and social inequality are deeply interconnected. Ecological risks are distributed unevenly, disproportionately affecting those with limited resources to adapt, thereby exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and injustices (Dominelli, 2012; Sovacool, 2021).

These interconnected crises have made even clearer the limits of fragmented welfare systems and invite a deeper rethinking of social work, as discipline and as a profession. Within this context, the ecosocial work approach arises arguing that ecological concerns cannot be treated as separate or additional domains of practice. Instead, they must reshape the way social work understands its mission, its theories and its methods (Matthies et al., 2001). As a holistic, critical and anti-oppressive framework, ecosocial work shifts attention from the treatment of individual problems toward the social and environmental structures that generate them (Norton, 2012). It seeks to promote sustainable living environments through participatory and cooperative processes that link personal, collective, and ecological well-being (Boetto, 2017).

At the same time, contemporary societies appear to be experiencing an exhaustion of the social: a slow erosion of spaces of human relations that are not entirely shaped by market rationality or bureaucratic control (Latour, 2005; Livholts, 2022). Welfare systems increasingly governed by neoliberal logics have often been reduced to performance-oriented mechanisms, in which services are assessed through efficiency metrics rather than through the quality of the relationships they sustain (Schram, 2015; Siza, 2019). Within such a scenario, social work risks being confined to a reactive and emergency-driven role, focused on temporary responses rather than on the broader social and structural dynamics that underpin social issues (Dominelli, 2012).

Community social work represents one possible way to resist this reduction. By grounding practice in collective participation and civic engagement, it interprets individual difficulties as expressions of broader inequalities and seeks to foster belonging, cooperation, and shared responsibility in the construction of local well-being (Allegri, 2015). When connected to this long-standing tradition, the ecosocial perspective generates ecosocial

¹ This paper is the result of a collaborative effort, developed through ongoing dialogue and shared reflection between the Authors. In accordance with customary academic practice for specifying individual contributions, Elena Allegri authored the *Theoretical Framework* and *Methods* sections, while Luca Pavani was responsible for *Results* and *Discussion*. The *Introduction* and *Conclusions* were jointly written.

community work, a hybrid practice situated at the intersection of community work and ecosocial perspectives (Chang et al., 2025).

This paper draws on data collected within the PRIN 2022 ECOSOW project (Northdurfer & Fazzi, 2026) and examines how ecological and social perspectives intersect within everyday professional practices in local welfare systems. It investigates the emergence of ecosocial community work in Italy, focusing on how social workers integrate ecosocial principles into collective practices, and the role played by local communities.

In particular, the paper concentrates on how communities take part in the examined initiatives, on the factors that foster the establishment and maintenance of ecosocial community practices, and on the professional orientations that guide social work within these processes.

The article is organised as follows. First, the next section introduces the study and its conceptual basis. Next, a theoretical framework is presented to contextualise the analysis within relevant scientific debates. The methods section then outlines the research design and data collection processes. The results are then discussed through two analytical dimensions: the ethical-political and the theoretical-methodological. The discussion section relates these findings to broader theoretical perspectives. Finally, the article concludes by summarising the main contributions and outlining their implications for future research and practice.

Theoretical framework

Within the ecosocial work debate, an increasing number of studies have emphasised the relevance of community-based approaches (Coates, 2003; Dominelli, 2012; Nöjd et al., 2024). Notably, Boetto (2017) proposes a transformative model that overcomes the separation between micro, meso and macro levels by connecting five interrelated dimensions: personal, individual, group, community and structural.² This circular framework enables social workers to integrate professional action with processes of social change, linking

² Boetto (2017) distinguishes the five levels of the methodological dimension of the transformative ecosocial model as follows. The *personal* level refers to the practitioner's own growth as a subject, that is, the awareness of one's interconnectedness with the natural world and the adoption of sustainable lifestyle practices in the private sphere; in this sense, it translates the ontological dimension of «being» into everyday action. The *individual* level concerns direct work with service users and families, encompassing therapeutic, educational and advocacy interventions that reframe well-being in relational and ecological terms. The *group* level involves building networks among colleagues, organisations and communities of practice oriented towards sustainability. The *community* level activates situated participatory processes, grounded in culturally sensitive approaches and the equal involvement of local residents in planning and development. Finally, the *structural* level is conceived as a distinct dimension of political action and advocacy aimed at transforming the economic, institutional and normative structures that produce ecological injustice, the domain in which professional intervention becomes collective action and pressure on systems of power.

the personal, professional and political dimensions of practice beyond the boundaries of casework. The community dimension operates as a mediating theoretical-methodological device within this model, as it allows individual needs, demands and resources to be re-configured within a collective horizon. It activates situated participatory processes that can, over time, generate transformative effects on the structural arrangements shaping people's everyday life trajectories.

In this sense, community social work enables social work to transcend the confines of individual cases and focus on promoting ecosocial justice. However, this potential depends on the ability to establish effective collaborations with local stakeholders addressing inequalities and the institutional structures that perpetuate them. Nevertheless, much of the debate remains at a conceptual level, leaving the tension between ecosocial aspirations and their translation into concrete professional practices unresolved. Available empirical research confirms this, showing that ecosocial orientations rarely evolve into sustained collective or territorial interventions. Participatory research conducted in Australia reveals that practices are largely confined to personal, individual and group levels without community-based interventions being activated, even in contexts marked by significant environmental challenges (Boetto et al., 2020). A subsequent comparative analysis with Finland confirmed the scarcity of collective initiatives and the continuing centrality of casework (Boetto et al., 2022). The authors argue that this limitation stems from the dominance of institutional mandates, organisational fragmentation, and the scarcity of time and spaces required to sustain participatory processes.

Moreover, contributions by Matthies and colleagues (2020) provide a more structured understanding of how ecological and social aims can be combined within concrete collective interventions. Their work conceptualises ecosocial innovations as grassroots initiatives that integrate environmental goals with social inclusion, often through hybrid organisational forms located between the public sector, civil society and alternative economies. By examining fifty initiatives across five European countries and conducting six in-depth case studies, the authors show how experiences of recycling, sustainable food production, community gardening, cultural spaces and repair-based activities articulate ecological responsibility together with opportunities for employment, participation and collective action (Matthies et al., 2019; Matthies et al., 2020).

These studies highlight three key dimensions that characterise ecosocial innovations: a reorientation of economic purpose towards social and ecological well-being; the recognition of economic diversity beyond market-centric logics; and the pursuit of democratic and co-operative forms of organisation that support participation and shared decision-making. From this perspective, ecosocial innovations represent potential sites of collaboration for social work, especially in contexts where traditional labour-market integration is limited and where communities mobilise local knowledge to address intertwined social and environmental challenges.

However, despite their innovative potential, these practices tend to remain localised and fragmented. They are also rarely evaluated systematically and therefore struggle to generate structural or long-term change. Such fragility is further reinforced by opaque policy choices that fail to prioritise environmental and ecosocial concerns, limiting the institutional consolidation of these initiatives. This contributes to the overall scarcity of empirical research on ecosocial work at the community level (Boetto et al., 2020). Within this limited body of studies, the contribution by Chang and colleagues (2025) is particularly valuable, as it introduces the concept of ecosocial community work as a space where ecosocial and community work perspectives converge both analytically and empirically. Grounded in community participation, this approach seeks to promote sustainable and equitable living conditions for both human and non-human life forms, recognising the interdependence between social and ecological systems.

Ecosocial community work is rooted in the idea that transformation can unfold through local welfare practices oriented towards prevention, sustainability and inclusion. However, the activation of such processes requires the convergence of diverse interests and values, not through homogenisation but through the identification of minimal common objectives. Collective and situated forms of intelligence are essential to avoid formalistic approaches that legitimise participation at the normative level without effectively transforming institutional practices (Chang et al. 2025). Each shared experience of experimentation can strengthen collaborative capacities and reduce mistrust, particularly in contexts marked by fragmentation and increasing individualisation.

In Italy, ecosocial approaches have only recently entered academic and professional debate, and empirical research on emerging practices remains limited. Nevertheless, Landi (2023) highlights how community social work can serve as a key arena for integrating environmental and social concerns, showing that the care of shared spaces and the strengthening of community bonds can become drivers of local sustainability. Furthermore, Pavani and Ganugi (2024) investigate the meaning of social sustainability from the perspective of 140 Italian social workers, identifying equity, social justice, and inter-sectoral collaboration as its key components. Their findings highlight that socially sustainable social work requires participatory and network-based practices capable of regenerating local resources and fostering inclusion. Similarly, Matutini et al. (2025) emphasise the role of agency and advocacy as strategic dimensions for promoting environmental and epistemic justice. They argue that social workers can act as mediators and alliance builders between communities and institutions, facilitating participatory knowledge production and transformative territorial actions.

Overall, these contributions indicate that the ecosocial debate is gradually moving from conceptual elaboration toward the investigation of situated practices embedded in local contexts. Despite this shift, empirical research on how ecosocial community work takes shape within welfare systems is still limited. Existing international and Italian studies suggest that community work represents a crucial yet insufficiently developed dimension

of ecosocial practice. They highlight three interconnected challenges: 1) the persistence of individualising logics that continue to anchor the profession to casework; 2) institutional and organisational conditions that restrict the development of collective interventions and 3) the fragility of territorial alliances needed to sustain long-term transformative processes. These gaps call for closer attention to the operational conditions, constraints and transformative dynamics that shape collective ecosocial initiatives.

This paper contributes to this discussion by examining how social workers integrate ecosocial principles into community-based practices.

Building on these premises, the reflection on community becomes crucial for understanding how ecosocial practices can take shape within local welfare services.

The concept of community is multidimensional, encompassing both territorially rooted groups and symbolic or virtual configurations based on shared values and identities (Bauman, 2001; Ife, 2016). Beyond its spatial connotation, it refers to ongoing processes of belonging, participation and meaning-making through which individuals negotiate their positions within broader social and ecological systems (Rosa, 2019). In this sense, community cannot be understood as a fixed entity but as a dynamic and contested arena in which social bonds are created, maintained and sometimes eroded. Within social work, this notion acquires a dual meaning: it represents both a field of intervention and an epistemological lens through which professionals interpret needs, resources, and the conflicts that arise around them, in participatory and critical ways (Allegri, 2015).

At the policy level, community has become a central reference in welfare reforms and local development agendas, often invoked as a resource capable of linking public and civic dimensions and fostering ecological and social transitions. Yet, when celebrated uncritically as a universal remedy, it can legitimise the withdrawal of institutional responsibility and deepen territorial inequalities in access to rights. A critical understanding of community therefore requires attention to the power relations, governance arrangements and material conditions that shape participatory processes and determine their transformative potential.

In contemporary societies marked by identity fragmentation, relational instability and individualisation, community can still act as a dynamic and negotiated space that sustains social bonds and ecosocial justice (Hunter, 2018). Its value lies not in defining stable boundaries but in orienting collective practices towards inclusion, cooperation and democratic transformation.

If community is understood as a dynamic process of belonging and collective meaning-making, its practical translation frequently takes the form of participation and co-production within local welfare. These arrangements can strengthen trust, mobilise local knowledge and widen the spaces of democratic decision-making. However, their outcomes are context-dependent: in supportive policy environments they can foster equity and shared responsibility, while in austerity settings they risk reinforcing managerial logics and shifting burdens onto communities. Attending these ambivalences is essential

for assessing the ecosocial implications of community-based interventions. As Pill (2022) points out, participatory practices developed in contexts of austerity may assume an ambivalent character. Although they are often presented as instruments of empowerment, they can also function as mechanisms of responsabilisation that transfer accountability from the State to local communities.

Ultimately, the notion of practice becomes a key analytical lens for investigating how ecosocial principles are enacted in professional contexts. Ecosocial practices can be understood as situated interventions deeply rooted in local contexts, existing relationships, and forms of experiential knowledge. The notion of situated practice (Gherardi, 2000) suggests that social work cannot rely on standardised procedures but must be shaped through attentive listening and the recognition of historical, cultural and relational specificities. In this sense, professional practices are not applications of pre-established frameworks but active processes that both reflect and reshape the organisations and communities in which they unfold (Fook, 2016). From this perspective, ecosocial community work transcends service delivery and becomes a collective process of knowledge and care that intertwines the individual, the social and the environmental dimensions of everyday life.

Methods

This paper draws on qualitative data collected within the Italian National Research Project on Ecosocial Work (ECOSOW), an exploratory multi-case study aimed at examining how social workers integrate ecological and social perspectives into community-based practices.

The 18 cases analysed correspond to a set of ecosocial projects implemented within local welfare systems and can be grouped into four main types of initiatives: *a*) practices addressing the social consequences of environmental changes (2 cases); *b*) practices aimed at integrating migrants through the collective reuse and social requalification of lands previously controlled by organised crime (1 case); *c*) practices focused on the regeneration of degraded urban or peripheral areas (3 cases); *d*) practices of local development that combine environmental enhancement with employment opportunities and social cohesion (11 cases).³ Cases were purposely selected to ensure geographical diversity and to reflect ecosocial practices relevant to local welfare. Each case met three criteria: it involved social work objectives or actors; it combined social aims with environmental sustainability; and it included community-based or participatory local development elements.

³ While this article cannot provide a comprehensive overview of the case studies, readers seeking a fuller account, including their geographical distribution and fields of intervention, are referred to Allegri et al. (2026).

Within this broader context, the present paper focuses on a specific analytical angle and seeks to address the following research questions: 1) In what ways, and with what perspectives, are communities involved in the practices under analysis? 2) What conditions ensure the development and sustainability of ecosocial community work practices? 3) What conception of social work underpins the practices examined?

By addressing these questions, the paper aims to contribute to the debate on ecosocial community work as both a conceptual and methodological approach for ecosocial transformation.

Data were collected through document analysis, site visits, and semi-structured interviews with professionals, managers, public administrators and representatives of community organisations involved in ecosocial projects. In total, 102 interviews were conducted across the case studies, covering the broad spectrum of public and private stakeholders involved in the analysed projects. For the purpose of this paper, the analysis focuses on 54 interviews carried out with social workers directly engaged in fieldwork (30), service or project coordinators responsible for promoting ecosocial initiatives (17), and local policy-makers such as mayors and municipal councillors for social policies (7). These 54 interviews were distributed across all 18 case studies. The number of interviews per case varied according to the range of actors involved. These interviews explored how ecological concerns are articulated within social work practices and how participatory and collaborative processes contribute to social and environmental sustainability. All interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed and anonymised to ensure confidentiality. The unit of analysis is the ecosocial practice as enacted within local welfare systems. Interviews are treated as situated accounts that illuminate how actors construct and implement ecosocial community work.

The empirical material was analysed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) supported by NVivo 14 software. The process followed an iterative and inductive-deductive logic. First, a phase of immersion and open coding allowed an initial familiarisation with the corpus and the identification of relevant meaning units. Codes were then clustered into provisional themes, which were continuously refined through analytical triangulation between data, theoretical framework and emerging interpretations. The final stage involved the construction of conceptual maps to visualise the relations between themes and subthemes, and to identify the transversal tensions that characterise the cases.

To guide the interpretation of the themes, the ecosocial perspective was integrated with Allegri's (2015) framework, which distinguishes two complementary dimensions of community social work: 1) the ethical-political dimension, referring to the capacity of social work to foster collective responsibility and transformative participation; 2) the theoretical-methodological dimension, concerning the models, tools and practices through which community-based interventions are designed and implemented.

Results

The results of the empirical analysis are presented by drawing on a set of tensions observed throughout the material and organised around the two dimensions that underpin community social work (Allegri, 2015). These tensions are discussed in the following sections and are framed as dialectical poles located at the extremes of a continuum along which ecosocial community work practices are distributed with varying degrees of intensity. This approach does not present a dichotomous view of the phenomenon, but rather seeks to highlight spaces of ambivalence, negotiation, and coexistence among the transformative elements shaping everyday practices. From this perspective, the tensions illuminate the situated and processual nature of the examined dynamics, revealing their transformative potential and the contradictions that characterise them.

Ethical-political dimension

The ethical-political dimension refers to the capacity of social work to foster collective responsibility and to transform relations between institutions, citizens, and territories. Two main tensions capture this dynamic: between episodic and lasting practices, and between individual responsibility and collective co-responsibility.

Between episodic projects and lasting practices

The first tension concerns the temporal side of community-based initiatives. Many professionals pointed to the difficulty of sustaining ecosocial practices beyond the lifespan of temporary funding. As one director noted:

«We need to change how we think about projects: they cannot end the moment someone comes with a request and you give an immediate answer» (CS7_i53).

The culture of short-term project funding, combined with austerity and competitive calls, risks fragmenting ecosocial action and reducing innovation to isolated experiments.

Several interviewees lamented that economic sustainability often prevails over strategic continuity:

«It's not enough to clean the riverbanks and involve the community for a while. You need a long-term vision» (CS13_i7).

Others emphasised that lasting results are possible when institutions act as stable reference points:

«It was crucial that institutions did not give up on people. The process took time, and this continuity made a real difference» (CS5_i51).

In this context, several social workers insisted on the importance of building long-term alliances:

«Creating pacts around shared goods means sitting at a table with multiple actors, including those who bring cultural perspectives of care» (CS7_i54).

Nonetheless, the institutional context often forces services to operate within fragmented, project-based logics. Some interviewees pointed to the weight of bureaucratic routines and performance indicators that limit creativity. Others, however, described innovative strategies to turn temporary funding into structural opportunities. In one social service, for instance, public and third-sector professionals were integrated into a single working area to coordinate initiatives and secure continuity across projects:

«We used project resources to create something lasting, to strengthen ties and keep practices alive over time» (CS7_i53).

These accounts reveal both the fragility of ecosocial community work and its capacity to endure despite unstable conditions. Several professionals questioned a model focused on immediate responses and stressed the need for interventions capable of evolving over time. Continuity depends not only on resources but also on a collective vision and a shared commitment to community care. As one respondent put it:

«You can find the funds if you really want to; what matters is the synergy, putting yourself in play to look for alternative solutions» (CS7_i55).

This emphasis on continuity highlights the territorial aspect of ecosocial work, as lasting initiatives require individuals who recognise themselves as part of a shared space and take responsibility for it. This raises the question of how responsibility for community well-being is constructed and distributed. The following section explores the transition from individual to collective responsibility.

Between individual responsibility and collective co-responsibility

The second tension within the ethical-political dimension concerns the balance between individualisation of ecosocial issues and collective responsibility. While welfare systems often emphasise personal accountability, ecosocial practices invite a redistribution of responsibility across communities and institutions.

Many interviewees articulated a growing awareness of the climate crisis as a social and political issue:

«Social work has to be at the table with those who organise and those who act. We must be active participants, not just observers» (CS9_i64).

Others stressed the urgency of adapting professional tools to new ecological realities:

«The world has changed, and we need intelligent strategies that help us live through these changes in a resilient and proactive way» (CS8_i44).

Schools often emerged as privileged spaces for cultivating shared responsibility:

«We try to make children understand that taking care of common goods is everyone's task» (CS17_i21).

In other cases, businesses and associations became partners in regeneration processes:

«Even local companies have become interlocutors for social work; relationships have grown with them too» (CS5_i51).

This expansion of collaboration beyond the traditional welfare network suggests that social work is increasingly acting as a mediator among diverse actors, weaving together human and more-than-human relationships. Some professionals explicitly referred to interdependence:

«Realising our interconnectedness with plants helps us understand that we must care for our world» (CS7_i55).

Belonging to a place often underpinned this sense of collective responsibility.

«We try to cultivate co-responsibility not only toward fragile people but also toward the good things of the territory, including the quality of the environment, because it affects everyone's quality of life» (CS5_i51).

In this vision, caring for local spaces becomes a political and emotional act that redefines citizenship as participation in the life of shared environments.

Overall, these narratives demonstrate a gradual but significant shift from holding individuals responsible to fostering shared accountability and collective care. In the latter approach, social work acts as a connector among different stakeholders and a catalyst for shared commitments within local ecosystems.

Theoretical-methodological dimension

The theoretical-methodological dimension concerns the models, tools and professional position through which ecosocial principles are translated into practice. Three major tensions structure this axis: between restorative and transformative social work, between formalised and co-created processes, and between passive and proactive professional roles.

Between restorative and transformative practice

This tension addresses the way ecosocial practice is conceived, oscillating between a reparative orientation centred on individual cases and a transformative approach that seeks to act on the broader social and environmental contexts in which problems emerge.

In several cases, professionals acknowledged the limits of an individualised and reparative orientation:

«We were too focused on fragile cases. The goal was to give fresh air to our work, to focus on the strengths and resources of a community, not just its problems» (CS5_i51).

Others still conceived the collective impact of their work as a consequence of individual interventions:

«We mostly dealt with single cases. But if you help a family out of poverty, the city benefits as well» (CS8_i43).

By contrast, some interviewees intentionally tried to work at the community level to prevent crises:

«Working with the community allows us to anticipate problems instead of constantly managing emergencies» (CS7_i55).

This shift required creating leadership within the neighbourhoods themselves:

«We organised assemblies so that residents could take responsibility, like someone becoming the building representative» (CS5_i50).

These examples show how transformative social work depends on creating enabling conditions, both organisational and professional, that link individual well-being with community regeneration:

«If we manage to combine the well-being of people with that of the territory, we can do much more prevention» (CS7_i55).

Interestingly, some professionals challenged the assumption that limited funding necessarily blocks community action:

«When funds were missing, we found them anyway; we created synergies and alternative resources» (CS7_i55).

In these situations, collaboration and creativity became essential elements of transformation. However, the analysis also reveals the persistence of economically driven interpretations of sustainability. In a social enterprise focused on job inclusion through agri-food activities, community involvement was mainly instrumental:

«We are now seen as a local reference point. We even have regular customers from the central area: it's essential, because with tourists you only work for a few months» (CS1_i85).

In this case, the community was mobilised as consumers and shareholders rather than as collective agents of change. The initiative pursued ecological and social goals, but remained framed within market logic, illustrating the fragility of transformative intent when economic imperatives dominate.

By contrast, cases in post-disaster settings highlight a different pattern:

«The challenge is to arrive earlier, to help people become active protagonists of their territory so they can face environmental events proactively» (CS2_i81).

Here, transformation entails moving from emergency management to community preparedness, where local knowledge and agency are central.

In conclusion, shifting from a reparative to a transformative approach reshapes the goals of social work and the organisation of interventions, raising the question of whether community practices should be formalised from above or co-created with local stakeholders.

Between formalised and co-created processes

Another key tension concerns the degree of formalisation in participatory processes. Many projects were structured through rigid administrative procedures, often linked to funding calls and pre-defined objectives:

«There was a first technical phase to see what could be proposed, then meetings with municipalities; some joined, others did not» (CS13_i5).

Such processes guarantee transparency, but often exclude less organised actors, reducing participation to consultation.

Conversely, in other contexts social workers adopted a facilitative role, nurturing informal encounters and spontaneous collaborations:

«I felt increasingly legitimised to value the community's resources. The institutions never abandoned them again, and this had a deep impact» (CS5_i51).

The outreach function, which involves being physically and symbolically present in local spaces, was considered fundamental:

«Sometimes we work on the street or in any available structure; you cannot control everything like in the office, but that's where real connections happen» (CS2_i81).

These informal spaces, such as neighbourhood celebrations or shared gardens, often became the core of co-created regeneration:

«The Colours Festival was a beautiful moment of conviviality, bringing together associations, educators and local residents» (CS5_i49).

Professionals recognised that over-formalisation risks freezing creativity and flattening local specificities. Yet, when formal frameworks are open enough to include informal practices and narrative exchanges, they can support long-term collaboration. Several projects used participatory labs alternating reflective and operational phases, enabling social workers, citizens and institutions to design together. These experiences suggest that co-creation involves a flexible and reflexive use of structure, rather than its absence.

Between a passive and a proactive role of Social Workers

The final tension regards the professional role of social workers. Some practitioners described feeling trapped in bureaucratic roles:

«It's not always recognised that social services can act in this direction, as if it were someone else's duty. Yet if we work for people's well-being, we cannot ignore their living environment» (CS7_i55).

Others emphasised the need for political engagement:

«One of social work's roles is to stimulate politics, to bring attention to issues that are not yet on the agenda» (CS17_i21).

Several professionals described a deliberate effort to influence decision-makers:

«The question is how to raise awareness among administrators and technicians of what it means to work on the care of the commons and community» (CS8_i44).

These accounts portray social workers as boundary spanners who connect institutional spheres with environmental and civic concerns. They often create relations through their actions:

«I involve the environmental offices and make sure they stay in the process with us because they have to be part of it» (CS5_i51).

This proactive posture relies on recognising and combining different forms of knowledge:

«One of our aims is to create a space where the knowledge of local people and the expertise of professionals meet and compose together» (CS8_i44).

In this sense, ecosocial community work becomes a process of situated learning that blurs the distinction between expert and lay knowledge, promoting mutual responsibility and shared understanding.

When social workers act as facilitators rather than mere executors, they can transform bureaucratic systems from within. Their practice moves beyond service delivery toward the orchestration of alliances and the cultivation of collective intelligence. As one participant summarised:

«If you unite people, the social service doesn't have to solve everything: the community starts to act on its own» (CS7_i55).

In conclusion, the tensions portray ecosocial community work as a developing and contested practice, whose trajectory hinges on how responsibilities, resources and roles are negotiated, an understanding that opens the way to the discussion that follows.

Discussion

The analysis of the interviews portrays ecosocial community work as a field in movement that takes shape within institutional and territorial constraints and, at the same time, attempts to open spaces of ecosocial regeneration. The tensions reconstructed through the thematic analysis express the daily condition in which ecosocial community work unfolds and show how professionals and local communities try to connect care and politics, people and places, short term responses and long term transformations.

Redistributing Responsibility for Ecosocial Issues

A first set of results concerns the way responsibility for ecosocial issues is interpreted and distributed. The interviews confirm the pervasiveness of an individualising perspective that resonates with neoliberal paradigms and that tends to frame problems and solutions primarily at the level of personal behaviour and adaptation (Pavolini & Klenk, 2015; Sanfelici, 2024). Even when the ecological crisis is recognised as a structural and political phenomenon, social workers often describe expected responses in terms that return to the individual sphere, for instance through references to responsible lifestyles, virtuous consumption or personal ecological awareness. This orientation does not always take the explicit form of moralising discourses toward service users, but it keeps in the background a reading of change that relies heavily on what single persons are able or willing to do. In this way it can obscure the structural arrangements that generate ecosocial vulnerabilities and can limit the transformative ambition of ecosocial work to a set of micro practices of adaptation (Boetto, 2017).

At the same time, the empirical material shows that practitioners and other local actors are developing an alternative understanding of responsibility that takes the shape of co-responsibility. In these narratives, responsibility is no longer assigned to

isolated individuals, but is shared among public institutions, third sector organisations, associations, schools, enterprises and residents. Collective arrangements for the care of public spaces, shared gardens, local paths or urban commons are described as social infrastructures in which inhabitants and institutions assume together the maintenance and regeneration of places.

Territorial sense of belonging plays an important role in this process, as attachment to meaningful places motivates participation in their care and connects environmental quality with everyday well-being (Livholts, 2022). However, the interviews also illuminate the risks and ambiguities of this move. On the one hand, schools are consistently identified as key actors in environmental education and the promotion of ecological awareness. On the other hand, there is the danger that educational institutions and younger generations receive an excessive share of expectations and tasks, while adult citizens and political institutions remain comparatively less engaged. As argued in the literature on sustainability education, this dynamic can silently shift the responsibility for change onto children while concealing the accountability of those currently in positions of power and resource control (Mariani, 2006; Farné, 2018).

A similar pattern appears when people in vulnerable positions, for example those involved in labour inclusion schemes, are engaged in activities that repair environmental damage produced by other groups, such as waste abandoned by mass tourism, without adequate involvement of the wider community. In these situations, the rhetoric of participation and activation can translate into the expectation that marginalised subjects take on the physical and symbolic work of restoring compromised environments, while other actors remain in a spectator position. The interviews therefore confirm that ecosocial community work does not automatically overcome individualisation; rather, it constantly negotiates the boundary between individual responsibility and shared commitment. Practices become more clearly oriented toward ecosocial justice when they redistribute responsibility across a plurality of actors, recognise asymmetries of power and resources, and build collective devices that integrate the care of people with the care of territories, in line with proposals that call for territorial networks of co-responsibility in ecosocial work (Chang et al., 2025).

Temporal and Organisational Conditions of Ecosocial Practices

A second matter arose from the study concerns the temporal and organisational conditions that sustain or weaken ecosocial practices. The professionals interviewed describe a welfare environment strongly influenced by project logics and by the search for external funding, with consequences for continuity and strategic vision. Many interventions depend on time-limited grants and are governed by competitive calls that privilege visibility, measurable outputs and rapid implementation. This configuration favours the

multiplication of localised experiences that can show concrete results in the short term, but struggle to consolidate over time or to influence the broader organisation of services. The literature on ecosocial innovation has highlighted similar dynamics, emphasising how initiatives that integrate ecological aims and social inclusion often remain fragmented and vulnerable when they are not connected with supportive governance arrangements and stable alliances (Matthies et al., 2019; Matthies et al., 2020). The interviews confirm this pattern and show how social workers are aware of the limits of a project culture that treats innovation as a sequence of episodic experiments rather than as part of a long-term transformation. At the same time, some interviewees describe attempts to use project funding in a different way. In several contexts, the establishment of dedicated planning areas, where public social workers, educators and third sector professionals work side by side, has allowed a more strategic use of resources, with attention to the consolidation of networks, the fertilisation of different initiatives and the construction of ongoing community work. In these experiences, projects are perceived as tools to support what could be called ecosocial infrastructures, namely stable spaces, relationships and routines that enable communities and services to continue working together on shared environmental and social challenges beyond single funding cycles.

The role of public social services in this process emerges as ambivalent. On the one hand, they are recognised as necessary reference points that can guarantee the presence of institutions over time, sustain relational continuity with inhabitants and offer a basic organisational framework for collective initiatives (Pavani, 2024). On the other hand, they are themselves constrained by bureaucratic routines and managerial logics that limit their capacity to support long-term processes and to engage in community development (Dominelli, 2012). Some interviewees describe decisions by social enterprises or community organisations to keep a certain distance from public services in order to preserve autonomy and flexibility, which may open room for experimentation but also reinforces a pattern where responsibility for innovation shifts away from public institutions. Overall, the material suggests that the durability of ecosocial community work depends on a set of interconnected conditions that include institutional recognition, relative stability of resources, distributed leadership, dense territorial networks and professional capacity for alliance building and collective learning. Where these elements are weak, practices tend to remain episodic and dependent on individual enthusiasm; where they are stronger, ecosocial initiatives can gradually turn into more robust social intervention that influence the orientation of local welfare and contribute to the development of policies in a broader sense (Närhi, 2025).

Implications for Mandates and Methods of Social Work

A third area of discussion relates to the implications of ecosocial community work for the mandate and methods of social work. The tension between restorative and trans-

formative orientations reflects a wider debate on the role of social work in the context of ecological crisis (Boetto, 2017; Dominelli, 2012). The restorative orientation, linked to a strong focus on casework, emergency management and individualised intervention, remains prevalent in many of the professional accounts. This orientation responds to immediate needs and can offer essential support, but it tends to confine social work within the horizon of adaptation to existing structures and leaves little space for questioning the socio-economic and ecological conditions that produce marginality. The transformative orientation emerges when professionals explicitly aim to connect individual problems with collective processes and territorial changes. In these narratives, social workers seek to promote community participation, shared decision making and collective agency, for instance by organising assemblies in residential buildings, supporting the emergence of local reference persons, or co-designing projects that address environmental issues with social justice. The interviews show that such practices do not simply add a community dimension to casework; they reconfigure the professional role and require an organisational shift from a reactive to a transformative logic (Boetto, 2017) and the tension between formalised and co-created processes contributes to clarify this shift.

Many interviewees describe institutional procedures for planning and participation that are strongly structured by administrative requirements, planning cycles and funding criteria. These procedures can guarantee transparency and consistency, but often remain distant from the everyday life of residents and from the informal spaces where relationships and local knowledge are produced (Bobbio, 2019). The material indicates that ecosocial community work acquires transformative potential when social workers are able to inhabit both arenas. On one side they participate in formal planning tables, negotiate with technical offices and contribute to the inclusion of ecosocial aims in official documents. On the other side they practice outreach, spend time in streets, schools, associations and shared spaces, facilitate encounters and recognise emergent forms of collaboration that arise from below. In these contexts, social workers act as facilitators and connectors who help to compose institutional expertise and experiential knowledge, echoing the idea of an «ecology of knowledges» in which professionals and citizens co-create interpretations and responses (Pavani, 2024). This position can be interpreted with the notion of in-betweenness proposed by Lorenz (2025), which emphasises the capacity of social work to operate in liminal spaces between norms and lived realities, between institutional mandates and community expectations. The interviews suggest that ecosocial community work makes this in-between position more visible and more demanding, since it requires professionals to negotiate multiple accountabilities, to sustain conflicts and to bring environmental concerns into arenas that are traditionally focused on social issues. At the same time, the material confirms that this role cannot depend only on individual dispositions (Pavani et al., 2025). It requires organisational conditions that recognise community work, space for reflection, possibilities for collective planning and institutional support for advocacy and policy practice. Italian research on policy practice in

social work has shown that only a minority of professionals manage to engage structurally with political and institutional actors, even when regulatory frameworks open room for such engagement (Cellini & Sanfelici, 2025). The interviews analysed here indicate that ecosocial community work can provide a concrete terrain where this dimension becomes more tangible, yet its consolidation remains uncertain and vulnerable to managerial pressures and resource constraints.

Conclusions

This article examined how ecosocial principles are interpreted and enacted within community-oriented social work practices operating in Italian local welfare services. The findings show that social workers and other territorial actors are experimenting, often without explicitly naming it, with forms of ecosocial community work. Although still fragmented, these practices allow us to observe how the ecosocial perspective is beginning to influence the methods and meanings of social work, and how community-based approaches, in turn, provide concrete spaces in which ecosocial orientations take shape.

The analysis demonstrated that the three research questions are intertwined. The manner in which communities are involved, the conditions that allow ecosocial practices to endure, and the conception of social work underlying these interventions evolve together and generate tensions that reveal the complexity of the ecosocial transition.

The study has highlighted how responsibility for ecosocial issues is being renegotiated. While individualising perspectives persist, particularly when ecological concerns are framed within a reparative logic that treats the environment as a backdrop for rehabilitative interventions targeting vulnerable individuals, several interviews demonstrate attempts to construct shared responsibility. In this latter approach, institutions, associations, enterprises and residents participate in the care and regeneration of places. This shift is neither linear nor fully consolidated, but it does signal a move away from a logic centred exclusively on personal deficits, towards participatory governance and collective action based on territorial relationships.

On the theoretical level, the results suggest that ecosocial and community approaches influence each other. Their convergence gives rise to the ecosocial community work: a perspective that interprets social and ecological justice as interdependent and understands intervention as a situated process that connects people, environments and institutional arrangements (Chang et al., 2025). This does not correspond to the simple addition of an environmental component to traditional community work, nor to an ecological discourse detached from social relations. It represents a paradigmatic reorientation in which social work moves beyond individual problem-solving and develops practices that attend to the socio-material conditions of everyday life and the interdependence between human and more-than-human worlds (Dominelli, 2012; Boetto, 2017).

The contribution of this study lies in advancing this conceptualisation by showing that ecosocial community work is not a predefined model emerging from such convergence, but a field constituted through tensions that practitioners must continually negotiate. Rather than being obstacles to be overcome, these tensions surrounding responsibility, temporality, organisational arrangements and professional mandate are generative forces through which ecosocial community work acquires transformative potential.

The findings also show that, without its collective and territorial dimensions, the ecosocial perspective risks being absorbed into technical discourses on environmental management, losing sight of power dynamics, inequalities and the symbolic significance of places (Livholts, 2022). The ecological lens strengthens the ethical, methodological and political legitimacy of community social work, positioning it as a strategic connector among individuals, institutions and territories. Likewise, the community lens prevents ecosocial work from drifting toward a purely environmental orientation that overlooks social reproduction, cultural memory and the lived experience of vulnerability. The interdependence between these perspectives encourages a move beyond a predominantly restorative conception of social work toward transformative practices based on shared responsibility among territorial actors (Närhi & Matthies, 2018; Pavani & Ganugi, 2024).

However, the possibility of activating this transition depends on situated conditions that vary considerably across contexts. The interviews reveal uneven capacities to mobilise actors, build alliances and sustain participation. Some initiatives display collaborative configurations that extend beyond basic networking and operate as intentional communities capable of producing visions, negotiating conflicts and generating shared projects. In others, the social work profession assumes a more catalytic role, identifying spaces of opportunity, valorising local knowledge and encouraging political attention to environmental concerns. Where such conditions are missing, ecosocial orientations remain aspirational and confined to limited interventions with little structural impact.

Failing to engage in these processes risks confining social work to a marginal position in relation to ecological crises, where practitioners manage the consequences of environmental and social disruptions without influencing their causes. In this scenario, social work faces at least three possible paths: maintaining a reactive stance that focuses on the management of existing problems; aligning with performance-driven logics that privilege measurable outputs over collective processes; or choosing to engage in ecosocial transformation, supporting the emergence of sustainable, inclusive and participatory communities. This third direction entails recognising the relationship between social and ecological justice, resisting interpretations that individualise collective problems, and developing forms of territorial stewardship that treat places as shared resources shaped through collaborative practices (Eßer et al., 2025).

The material examined in this paper does not reveal fully developed organisational models or professional devices capable of institutionalising ecosocial community work.

The practices analysed are often partial, experimental and not always acknowledged as ecosocial by those who enact them. Yet this apparent lack becomes analytically productive, as it allows the research to name, conceptualise and make visible practices that carry ecosocial traits without an established vocabulary.

The consolidation of this approach requires the convergence of actors with different interests, resources and forms of knowledge. Normative provisions alone are insufficient to produce change; the capacity to activate alliances and to redistribute responsibilities depends on the quality of social practices, the willingness to address conflicts, and the degree of institutional support available at the local level (Vitale, 2009). Where these conditions come together, collaborative intelligence develops, enabling communities to transform occasional encounters into ongoing forms of cooperation and to challenge the fragmentation and individualisation that characterise contemporary welfare systems (Allegri, 2015).

At present, several obstacles limit the consolidation of ecosocial community work. The weak presence of ecosocial themes in political agendas and in the education and ongoing training of social workers, along with the persistence of sectoral policies, reduces the visibility and legitimacy of these practices. Addressing these limitations calls for closer collaboration between research, professional training and local actors, systematic comparison between territorial experiences, and alliances capable of weaving together different knowledges and disciplines.

Eventually, ecosocial community work emerges as a professional and conceptual orientation that intentionally integrates environmental and social dimensions within professional practices. It encourages social workers to interpret individual needs as expressions of structural inequalities and to promote shared responsibility among institutional and civic actors. It also invites them to regenerate living environments as commons and to develop collective arrangements aimed at addressing ecosocial crises in ways that surpass the boundaries of restorative intervention. The practices analysed in this study offer a first, situated insight into how this orientation is being constructed.

In conclusion, the exploratory nature of this study does not allow for broad generalisations. Rather, it has enabled a more nuanced understanding of a still underexplored phenomenon, thereby opening possible directions for future investigations and professional developments. Future research should further investigate how the tensions identified in this study evolve over time and across welfare regimes, and which organisational, educational and policy conditions enable ecosocial community work to stabilise rather than remain episodic. Developing evaluative tools that capture both social and ecological effects, and comparing territorial configurations capable of sustaining such practices, represent crucial steps for advancing this field. Its evolution into a consolidated approach depends on the capacity of institutions, professionals and communities to sustain reflexive and long-term transformations that link the care of people with the care of the worlds they inhabit.

Funding

This contribution was developed within the framework of the PRIN project «Social work and sustainable local development in Italy: towards ecosocial work? – ECOSOW» (2023-2025), Project 2022WY5Z7P. The project involves the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (PI. Prof. Urban Nothdurfter), the University of Eastern Piedmont (Vice PI: Prof. Elena Allegri), Roma Tre University, and the University of Trento.

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano and implemented by all participating research units. It was conducted in accordance with local legislation and institutional requirements.

References

- Allegri, E. (2015). *Il servizio sociale di comunità*. Carocci.
- Allegri, E., Accorinti, M., & Nothdurfter, U. (2026). Esplorare pratiche di lavoro ecosociale in Italia: Il progetto PRIN ECOSOW. In U. Nothdurfter & L. Fazzi (Eds.), *Il lavoro ecosociale in Italia: Sfide aperte e occasioni di cambiamento* (pp. 37-59). il Mulino.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world*. Polity Press.
- Bobbio, L. (2019). Designing effective public participation. *Policy and Society*, 38(1), 41-57.
- Boetto, H. (2017). A transformative ecosocial model: Challenging modernist assumptions in social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 47(1), 48-67. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcw149>
- Boetto, H., Bowles, W., Närhi, K., & Powers, M. (2020). Raising awareness of transformative ecosocial work: Participatory action research with Australian practitioners. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 29(4), 300-309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12445>
- Boetto, H., Närhi, K., & Bowles, W. (2022). Creating «communities of practice» to enhance eco-social work: A comparison between Finland and Australia. *British Journal of Social Work*, 52(8), 4815-4835. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcac092>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis. A practical guide*. Sage.
- Cellini, G., & Sanfelici, M. (2025). Le possibilità per la policy practice nelle organizzazioni dei servizi sociali italiani. In R. Guidi & S. Mordegia (Eds.), *Le policy practice degli assistenti sociali: Una ricerca nazionale*. FrancoAngeli.
- Chang, E., Sjöberg, S., Turunen, P., & Rambaree, K. (2025). A call for ecosocial community work: Challenges and possibilities for eco-social work in local neighbourhoods in Sweden. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2025.2510340>
- Coates, J. (2003). Exploring the roots of the environmental crisis: Opportunity for social transformation. *Critical Social Work*, 3(1), 44-66.
- Cuthill, M. (2010). Strengthening the «social» in sustainable development. *Sustainable Development*, 18(6), 362-373. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.397>
- Dominelli, L. (2012). *Green social work: From environmental crises to environmental justice*. Polity Press.
- Eßer, F., Jäde, S., & von der Heyde, J. (2025). Commoning by zoning? Social work's involvement in urban spatial conflicts. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2025.2486554>

- Farné, R. (2018). *Outdoor Education come orientamento per una pedagogia sostenibile*. Carocci.
- Fook, J. (2016). *Social work: A critical approach to practice*. Sage.
- Gherardi, S. (2000). Practice-based theorizing on learning and knowing in organizations. *Organization*, 7(2), 211-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050840072>
- Hunter, A. (2018). Conceptualizing community. In R. A. Cnaan & C. Milofsky (Eds.), *Handbook of community movements and local organizations in the 21st century* (pp. 3-24). Springer.
- Ife, J. (2016). *Community development in an uncertain world: Vision, analysis and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Landi, C. (2024). Prospettive di eco-social work nel lavoro sociale di comunità. *Welfare & Ergonomia*, 9(2), 225-240.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Livholts, M. B. (2022). *The body politics of glocal social work: Essays on the post-anthropocentric condition*. Routledge.
- Longo, S. B., Isgren, E., & Clark, B. (2021). Sociology for sustainability science. *Discover Sustainability*, 2, 47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-021-00056-5>
- Lorenz, W. (2025). Social work in a postgrowth society: Critical encounters with modernity's ambiguities. In K. Hermans, I. Stamm, A.-L. Matthies, & S. Elsen (Eds.), *Ecosocial work and sustainability transitions: Theories, methodologies and practices* (pp. 29-48). Bristol University Press.
- Mariani, A. M. (2006). *La scuola può fare molto, ma non può fare tutto*. SEI.
- Matthies, A. L., & Närhi, K. (2016). *The eco-social transition of societies: The contribution of social work and social policy*. Routledge.
- Matthies, A. L., Närhi, K., & Ward, D. (Eds.). (2001). *The eco-social approach in social work*. University of Jyväskylä.
- Matthies, A. L., Peeters, J., Hirvilampi, T., & Stamm, I. (2020). Ecosocial innovations enabling social work to promote new forms of sustainable economy. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 29(4), 378-389. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12423>
- Matthies, A. L., Stamm, I., Hirvilampi, T., & Närhi, K. (2019). Ecosocial innovations and their capacity to integrate ecological, economic and social sustainability transition. *Sustainability*, 11(7). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11072107>
- Matutini, E., Chiara, G., & Brondi, S. (2025). Agency and advocacy in social work: Promoting social and environmental justice through professional practice. *Sustainability*, 17(20), 9208. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17209208>
- Närhi, K. (2025). Theories of eco-social work addressing the contribution of social work in sustainability transition. In K. Hermans, I. Stamm, A.-L. Matthies, & S. Elsen (Eds.), *Ecosocial work and sustainability transitions: Theories, methodologies and practices* (pp. 11-28). Bristol University Press.
- Närhi, K., & Matthies, A. L. (2018). The ecosocial approach in social work as a framework for structural social work. *International social work*, 6(4), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872816644663>
- Nöjd, T., Kannasoja, S., Niemi, P., Ranta-Tyrkkö, S., & Närhi, K. (2024). Ecosocial work among social welfare professionals in Finland: Key learnings for future practice. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 33(3), 732-744. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12638>
- Norton, C. L. (2012). Social work and the environment: An ecosocial approach. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 21, 299-308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2397.2011.00853.x>
- Nothdurfter, U., & Fazzi, L. (Eds.). (2026). *Il lavoro ecosociale in Italia: sfide aperte e occasioni di cambiamento*. il Mulino.
- Pavani, L. (2024). Making social work more socially sustainable through participation: Rhetoric or innovation? *Società e Mutamento Politica*, 15(29), 179-188. <https://doi.org/10.36253/smp-15506>
- Pavani, L., Allegri, E., & Sanfelici, M. (2025). Coping strategies against oppression in social workers' everyday practice: Findings from a national study. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2025.2579966>
- Pavani, L., & Ganugi, G. (2024). Social sustainability: What implications for social work? *European Journal of Social Work*, 27(6), 1271-1286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2024.2330383>

- Pavolini, E., & Klenk, T. (2015). Introduzione. In E. Pavolini & T. Klenk (Eds.), *Ristrutturare la governance del welfare: Marketization, managerialism and welfare state professionalism* (pp. 1-5). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Pill, M. (2022). Neighbourhood collaboration in co-production: State-resourced responsiveness or state-retrenched responsabilisation? *Policy Studies*, 43(5), 984-1000. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2021.1892052>
- Purvis, B., Mao, Y., & Robinson, D. (2019). Three pillars of sustainability: In search of conceptual origins. *Sustainability Science*, 14(3), 681-695. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5>
- Rosa, H. (2019). *Resonance: A sociology of our relationship to the world*. Polity.
- Sanfelici, M. (2024). *Fondamenti del servizio sociale anti-oppressivo*. Carocci.
- Schram, S. F. (2015). *The return of ordinary capitalism: Neoliberalism, precarity, Occupy*. Oxford University Press.
- Siza, R. (2019). Le configurazioni di welfare emergenti. In L. Piga (Ed.), *Servizio sociale e comunità responsabile: Pratiche e strumenti per una formazione di qualità* (pp. 9-42). FrancoAngeli.
- Sovacool, B. K. (2021). Who are the victims of low-carbon transitions? Towards a political ecology of climate change mitigation. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 73, 101916. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.101916>
- Vitale, T. (2009). La programmazione sociale: Ovia ma non per questo scontata. In G. Costa (Ed.), *La solidarietà frammentata: Le leggi regionali sul welfare a confronto* (pp. 49-86). Bruno Mondadori.
- Vogt, M., & Weber, C. (2019). Current challenges to the concept of sustainability. *Global Sustainability*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2019.1>

Allegri, E., & Pavani, L. (2026). Ecosocial Community Work: Tensions, Transformations and Situated Practices in Italian Local Welfare Services. *Relational Social Work*, 10(1), 25-48, doi: 10.14605/RSW1012602.



Relational Social Work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License