



Special issue n. 1/2026 – April 2026

Call for paper “Eco-Social Work, Environmental Justice and Social Policy in Times of Ecological Crisis. New scenarios and transformative practices in a relational perspective”

Editors

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The current ecological crisis—manifested through phenomena such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation—represents one of the most urgent, complex, and multidimensional challenges of our time. Its consequences deeply affect the well-being of individuals, groups, and local communities, exacerbating pre-existing social inequalities and generating new forms of vulnerability. Beyond the threat to the natural environment alone, the ecological emergency produces unprecedented social risks that demand innovative and interdisciplinary responses.

In this context, in recent years the scientific community has initiated a critical and increasingly interdisciplinary reflection on how to address the socio-economic repercussions of the environmental crisis. There is growing awareness of the need for integrated policies and professional approaches—such as that of social work—that incorporate ecological dimensions and promote environmental justice (Healy, 2022). This process entails a redefinition of the social work theoretical foundations and practices, oriented towards a paradigm that recognizes the interconnection between environmental and social issues, and that fosters innovative relational, community-based, and territorial approaches (Dominelli, 2012).

Social work, as a discipline and profession committed to promoting human well-being, human rights, and social cohesion, is called upon to play a strategic role in addressing the social implications of the ecological crisis. In this scenario, the need to integrate a relational dimension into the ecological approach to social work emerges strongly—understood not only as the helping relationship between professionals and users, but as a complex network



of connections among people, communities, and the environment (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2023; Folgheraiter, 2024).

The ecological vision of social work emphasizes the idea that human beings are an integral part of interdependent social and natural ecosystems. From this perspective, relationship becomes a fundamental tool to activate awareness, co-responsibility, and practices of care toward both the environment and others. This requires a shift from individualistic interventions to practices based on building connections, intercultural dialogue, and the promotion of active community participation in the sustainable management of resources, in the prevention of environmental risks and in the coping with ecological crisis (Matthies & Närhi, 2017). Social work thus increasingly takes shape as a relational and transformative practice, capable of supporting processes of community resilience and empowerment (Rambaree et al., 2022). On an operational level, social work can facilitate the creation of spaces for dialogue and cooperation among different actors (citizens, institutions, non-profit organizations, local communities), promote partnerships for environmental justice, and support community self-organization processes by valuing local knowledge and mutual aid practices.

Through relational action, the social work professional contributes to reactivating a sense of belonging to an ecological community, overcoming fragmented views of social intervention and adopting an integrated perspective in which human and environmental well-being are inseparably connected.

This special issue invites contributions that explore the intersections between eco-social work, environmental justice, and social policy, with particular attention to transformative practices and relational perspectives in social work practices and construction of social policies. We welcome theoretical, empirical, and methodological papers that critically examine:

- The impact of environmental crisis on vulnerable communities;
- Emerging social risks and inequalities linked to ecological transformations;
- The role of social work in promoting community resilience and environmental justice;
- Eco-social approaches to welfare and integrated social policies;
- Innovative practices and participatory approaches in eco-social work;
- Interdisciplinary collaborations and policy frameworks coping with environmental crisis.



We aim to foster a space for dialogue among researchers, academics, and practitioners engaged in reimagining social work in light of ecological imperatives. Contributions may draw from diverse geographical contexts and disciplinary traditions and should offer insights into how social work can contribute to a just and inclusive ecological transition.

The Call for paper for **SPECIAL ISSUE “Eco-Social Work, Environmental Justice and Social Policy in Times of Ecological Crisis. New scenarios and transformative practices in a relational perspective”** in **Relational Social Work journal** to be published in April 2026 is open now! The Special issue will be published in the **VOL. 10, N. 1/2026**.

The Call for papers is open to academics, researchers, policymakers, managers and social workers from a variety of backgrounds. Contributors are welcome to submit:

- an Article on themes linked to the eco-social work approach, environmental justice and social policies in times of ecological crisis (theoretical contributions, empirical studies or research);
- a 'Voices from Practice' article focusing on innovative practical experiences related to the main topics of the Call for papers.

Deadline

Paper submission	15 December 2025
Conclusion of the peer review process	10 February 2026
Final revised paper submission	15 March 2026
Publication of the Special issue	April 2026

Manuscripts can be submitted through electronic submission at link [Submission](#) or by email as attachment (Word format) to relational.socialwork@unicatt.it.



All submitted manuscripts:

- must be in English. If English is not your first language, you may wish to have your manuscript professionally edited before submitting it to the Relational Social Work Journal;
- must follow the [Author guidelines](#);
- will be double-blind peer-reviewed;
- should also be original and not under review by any other journal or published elsewhere.

References

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

Folgheraiter, F. (2024). *Relational theory in Social Work. Phenomenological foundations*. San Diego, CA: Cognella Academic Publishing.

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Matthies, A. L., & Närhi, K. (Eds.). (2017). *The ecosocial transition of societies: The contribution of social work and social policy*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Rambaree, K., Powers, M. C., & Smith, R. J. (Eds.). (2022). *Ecosocial work in community practice: Embracing ecosocial worldviews and promoting sustainability*. New York: Routledge.