



Article

The Responsibilities of Social Work for Ecosocial Justice

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Abstract: The crisis of civilization we are experiencing unbalances the inter-relational, interdependency and intergenerational relationships of the planetary ecosystem, putting all species at risk. The current relationship between the unlimited economic development model and its social impacts in all regions, territories and communities is analyzed. These are more severe in the global South and the most impoverished populations, which often leads to conflicts, the deterioration of subsystems of life, and, as a result, movements of people. These challenges highlight the close interrelationship between social justice and issues of ecological injustice acting as a new source of inequality. The responsibility of social work, which is called on to incorporate the ecosocial perspective in all its areas and dimensions of practice, is becoming consolidated. To achieve this, five measures are proposed: expanding and strengthening the ethical and political basis of the profession; promoting the skilling-emancipatory models; cutting across all levels, methodologies and action areas; new fields of practice for ecosocial work; and introduction into social work curriculums. Social justice cannot be fully achieved without taking ecological justice into account.

Keywords: social work; ecosocial justice; environmental justice; crisis of civilization



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1. Introduction

We live in a time of transcendent social and environmental challenges throughout the world that can be considered as an existential crisis (Pyles 2020; Coates and Besthorn 2010). The Earth's natural resources are overexploited and the biodiversity of species is being damaged, while climate change, air pollution, armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions are compromising the habitability of the planet. These complex problems are usually associated with a development model focused on infinite economic growth, which is based on a neoliberal capitalist economy that extracts the value from nature and society for the benefit of a few (Berry 1990; Diprose et al. 2022), and intensive production with lifestyles determined by mass consumption. The complexity inherent in a globalized economy in the context of a materialistic society causes unequal social and environmental impacts, which affect people and the natural ecosystems on which humanity depends. The industrialized countries of the global North are mainly responsible for environmental deterioration, with more severe and disproportionate social impacts on the countries of the South. In addition, northern countries are imposing environmental conservation conditions on southern ones without the inhabitants of the North changing their priorities and consumption (D'Alisa et al. 2014; Martínez-Alíer 2003).

Different interrelated perspectives see that this crisis of civilization faced by we humans and non-humans alike (Whitmee et al. 2015) is specific to the development model of Western capitalist modern society, imposed by First World countries (Escobar 2017). This brings with it an increase in emergency situations and an overexposure to different kinds of crises, involving ecology, the climate, the economy, politics and energy. Pommier (2020) calls it a silent catastrophe because it accentuates a gradual, cumulative and unlimited appropriation of goods and resources of all kinds in a finite, limited world. This is driven by an economy that seeks individual profit and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. For this reason, Bauwens et al. (2019) and Matthies et al. (2020) emphasize the

necessary democratization, distribution and regeneration of common goods in economics. From an eco-philosophical viewpoint, [Zarka \(2016\)](#) suggests abandoning the notion of human ownership of the Earth, and [Naess \(1989\)](#) recovers the relationship of belonging to it—“being-in-the world” forming “a whole”, which is a common conception among different Indigenous peoples. This moves away from the object–subject relationship.

The roots of this crisis can be found during the long colonial expansion of the 18th–19th century to obtain the raw materials necessary for the progress of the industrial revolution. This was perpetuated during the 20th century in new postcolonial forms. After the Second World War, the notion of progress linked to economic growth took shape, based on a consumer society aimed at meeting the expectations of a comfortable life—well-being—that requires unlimited fossil resources. For [Escobar \(2018\)](#), a new political–cultural–economic world order appeared, based on the ontological–political dichotomy between developed and underdeveloped countries. This was to have devastating consequences. “The worlds of the South have in large part been an ontological designing consequence of the Eurocentric world of the North” ([Fry 2017](#); [Escobar 2018](#), p. 49). Since the 1960s, development programs focusing on eliminating poverty and exporting technology and capital to the “Third World” have expanded, following a logic of indebtedness and making a single form of progress appear natural throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the 1980s, this gave way to globalization, which involved relocating production to the global southeast without much awareness of the social and environmental costs that would be generated. According to [Ajl \(2023\)](#), the division of labor between the center and the periphery prevents basic needs being met at nation-state level, as countries’ labor forces and natural environments are exploited by others.

The logic of the development model described operates in a similar way locally, regionally and globally, with specific consequences at each level. Although there are important variations between urban and rural areas, including Indigenous ones, the latter are most affected by the loss of land ownership, the privatization of common goods (those that should be available to be used by the rest of the people), the overexploitation of resources, the intensive exposure to polluting industries and the export of waste from urban areas. These territorial imbalances, together with the loss of essential services, lead to severe depopulation phenomena. Inequalities related to the deterioration of living environments are also evident in urban contexts where significant spatial differences in environmental quality are found between marginal and non-marginal areas ([Matthies et al. 2001](#)).

Obviously environmental problems have an effect on the physical and biological world, but they also have clear social effects on people’s lives. For this reason, we can speak of an Anthropocene ecosocial crisis ([Peeters 2012](#)), as the global impact and the severe effects on the ecosystem affect both human and non-human elements. It has lost the ability to regenerate itself in the short term ([Panagiotaros et al. 2022](#)).

2. Multidimensional Impacts of the Planetary Crisis

Studies such as those by [Whitmee et al. \(2015\)](#) demonstrate that environmental hazards are an indicator of damage to the planet, increasing the risks and reducing people’s quality of life in three different ways depending on their degree of exposure to them and the correlation with social vulnerability:

- (1) Loss of human life due to war, threats and exposure to risks, starting with deaths directly and indirectly related to climate disasters deriving from global warming ([Oven et al. 2012](#)). For example, the increase in episodes of drought in different countries in central Africa puts the food security of the entire population at risk. [Broekeman \(2023\)](#) also warns that reductions in rainfall in the Mediterranean basin are occurring more frequently and for increasingly long periods. This scarcity is aggravated by the growing demand for water for different consumer and intensive industrial uses. This demand is a decisive factor in flow reductions affecting the volume of lakes, inland seas and river deltas. The studies by [Fenner et al. \(2019\)](#) identify how the lack of rainfall worsens heatwaves and increases ozone concentrations in central Europe,

with serious consequences for mortality and public health. Among the most iconic examples is the drying up of the Aral Sea in central Asia (Wang et al. 2020; Yang et al. 2020). This leads to serious salination of the soil and the disappearance of fresh water reserves. Other climatic phenomena, such as flooding, behave similarly, for example, on the coast of Nigeria and Mozambique in 2007 and 2011 (Adelekan 2011; Kehinde 2022), and the devastation caused by hurricanes such as Katrina 2005 on the west coast of the United States. This shows that ecocritical incidents and poverty also occur in the richest countries (Ife 2007; Hawkins and Maurer 2010). Another example is wildfires, which occur more frequently in forest masses like those in Victoria (Australia) 2009 (Gibbs et al. 2013) and Alberta 2016, 2023, with strong impacts on air pollution, affecting the mental health of children and the community, along with the resulting economic dispossession (Drolet et al. 2020; Hayes et al. 2018). Deaths resulting from direct violence and armed politico–environmental conflicts caused by the erosion and exploitation of natural and energy resources can be added to this, also extending to local environmental and resistance movements. The conflicts linked to international water rights over the reservoirs of the Mekong River (China), or the Nile in Ethiopia, which is in conflict with South Sudan and Egypt, could also be highlighted. There are also conflicts over natural resources related to cobalt extraction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has 73% of the world’s reserves (Institute for Economics & Peace 2022), and, in Chile, Bolivia and Argentina over lithium, an essential component for the manufacture of so-called green technologies. Once again, the colonialist shadows of structural violence reappear with the “new” extractivisms (Brand et al. 2016) concealed by the economics of the energy transition promoted by Western countries with the Paris agreements on decarbonization to mitigate climate change (Escobar 2017).

- (2) The effects related to the deterioration of natural ecosystems in all areas imply the loss of means and conditions of subsistence for all species. The acidification of marine habitats, air pollution due to carbon dioxide emissions, soil pollution due to the use of fertilizers, the loss of forest mass due to exploitation or fires, and the mass catching of schools of fish, or animals with market value, are leading to a drastic reduction or destruction of the biodiversity of species affecting groups like pollinating insects. When deterioration affects access to water, food production, their quality and nutritional value are altered, increasing the risk of humans suffering from certain infectious and respiratory diseases. The radius affected by malaria is also expanded, along with malnutrition, which affects child development and mental health of both individuals and the community (Hayes et al. 2018). Political and economic issues related to food waste, and increased prices of food products that unbalance accessibility for the entire population, are also involved. All these aspects cause considerable disruption to the agri-food system making basic subsistence difficult, and phenomena emerge such as the disappearance of fishing communities on the Gulf of Mexico and the coast of Galicia in Spain, where there has been mass extraction of fish. Together with the discharge of polluting oils from the DeepWater Horizon in Mexico 2010 and the Prestige in Spain 2002, this has drastically reduced fish schools and, in Mexico, damaged sensitive coral barriers.
- (3) The indirect consequences for human activity lead to the forced displacement of the population, as set out by Belchior Rocha (2018). Environmental effects mean a loss of conditions for subsistence, forcing the population to adapt their local economic activities. When this adaptation is not possible, internal population migrations occur, leading to the growth of urban areas and their peripheries and foreign migrations between countries. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, heat waves and droughts are currently the main cause of forced displacement between countries (Tester 2020; Palinkas 2020). The more intense the damage to the planet is, the greater the risk that vulnerability will affect marginalized populations (Hetherington and Boddy 2020). All of this will lead to a growing number of people

taking refuge from the effects of climate change and its sociopolitical consequences. (Powers et al. 2018). Other indirect consequences of ecosystem deterioration are the cultural impoverishment of populations due to their disconnection from the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions linked to the identity of the place where they live (Zapf 2005).

3. The Journey of Social Work: From Anthropocentrism to Ecocentrism and Ecosocial Justice

Historically, social work's concern for the environment has been a central element in its practice, but approaches have varied substantially over time. The "person and environment" view, understood as the social context in which people live and interact, has been present in social work thought since its beginnings. (Kondrat 2002; Matthies et al. 2001). The view of people and the environment is individualistic and anthropocentric because it was based on meeting human needs, and, although the effect of sanitary conditions on human health was taken into account and the economic and political structural aspects of society were emphasized, the biophysical environmental aspects were ignored (Coates and Gray 2012). Social work adopts an understanding that does not recognize the human environment as falling within a biological ecosystem and a natural environment with which it relates in a meaningful way (Närhi and Matthies 2016, 2018; Matthies et al. 2001).

Between the 1960s and 1980s, in a context dominated by global development plans, the adoption of feminist perspectives (Dominelli 1995) and anti-colonial and anti-oppressive practices (McLafferty Bell et al. 2019) facilitated a critical comprehensive framework to channel social work's growing interest in the deterioration of the physical habitat. It began to identify the fact that the relationships between people with the social environment also include the physical environment: "The physical environment includes both natural and man-made structures and objects, and time and space" (Gitterman and Germain 1976, p. 605). Also, Weick (1981) suggests considering a circular perspective, reciprocal exchanges and mutual influence between all humans, as we are part of the same ecosystem. Social work emphasizes the relationship between environmental problems and the impoverishment of the most vulnerable groups and communities and minorities, which are more exposed to environmental risks. These effects are amplified in the context of a globalized world (Belchior Rocha 2018). So, social work clearly locates the relationship between the natural environment and social injustices. At the same time, it shows that abuse of the natural environment is both caused by humans and negatively affects human well-being. "Environmental damage is inflicted by humans and it has negative consequences on their well-being" (Hoff and McNutt 1994). In this period, social work played a double role: Firstly, it denounced the dispossession of lands and cultural deprivation of Indigenous communities and promoted the appreciation of their knowledge and spirituality associated with the Earth (Billiot et al. 2019; Gray and Coates 2013). Secondly, it helped populations affected by emergency situations and environmental disasters, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups (Wu et al. 2023; Breen et al. 2023).

In the 1980s–2000s, there were two important milestones: the well-known Brundland report (1987), which considered that "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987, p. 54), and the establishment of environmental movements as political agents. This challenged social work to adopt a more politically active role, leading it to occupy a space in international forums where environmental issues are debated (Besthorn 2012). Lena Dominelli became a leader for this political practice, pointing out the traumatic effects suffered by members of different communities. Dominelli (2012) suggested the term Green social work to express:

A form of holistic professional social work practice that focuses on the interdependencies between people, social groups, institutions, and the physical environment. It aims to achieve environmental justice and fight environmental injustice by supporting people to take action to protect their physical environments" (Dominelli 2012, p. 25).

Although the modern anthropocentric, individualistic paradigm continued to dominate the discipline, considering nature as an instrument linked to the well-being of humankind (Ramsay and Boddy 2017), the existence of a deeper biophilic connection between nature and humanity was beginning to be accepted (Wilson 1984) “an innate attraction to life and to affiliate with living things—as a basis for a model of practice” (Lysack 2012, p. 48). This is the basis making it possible to support the motivation of ecologically conscious citizens for action. Environmental Social Work gradually became established. This was described for the first time in the works of Hoff and Polack (1993), Hoff and McNutt (1994) and Besthorn (1997), who determined the links between environmental problems and social work, particularly because the worst deteriorated environments are also the most impoverished. However, the role of social work continues to focus solely on addressing its traumatic consequences, concentrating on health (Lysack 2012).

Since the 2000s, the initial concept of person and environment has expanded and social work has increased its interdependence with the physical environment, the Earth and nature, seeing its place as a care, health and support system (Gray and Coates 2013; Billiot et al. 2019). What is now known as ecosocial work was established. “Ecosocial work is an approach and perspective that aims to promote ecological and environmental sustainability and justice within the context of sustainable development” (Rambaree 2020, p. 557). This links the ecological crisis and its devastating consequences for all people, especially the most vulnerable, with the social crisis. The ecological crisis worsens the inequality in a world where it is simultaneously impossible to meet the needs of a good part of humankind and possible for a small, privileged percentage of the population to enjoy opulence when it comes to material wealth and energy. This approach integrates a holistic perspective and an ecosophical view that understands life as fundamentally one, so that humans are inseparable from nature (Naess 1989). Our particular identity is not dissolved in the environment, but neither can it be isolated from it. This deeper ecological connection between land and place (Zapf 2019) brings deeper and broader meaning to the person–environment concept. Attention is paid to understanding that the characteristics of environmental biodiversity (whether natural or urban) make it possible to construct identities and lifestyles for its residents (Nowell et al. 2006). So, social work takes an ecological or biocentric approach aligned with Naess’s (1996) deep ecology and its application to social work through Ungar (2002). This holistic approach highlights the interdependence of the ecosystem as a “whole”. The boundaries of the community are expanded to include soil, water, plants and all living things. Added to this approach are ecocritical perspectives that highlight the structural causes of the development of modernity, which break the balance of biophysical ecosystems, leading to greater impoverishment. On this basis, the adoption of models of degrowth and good living is proposed.

Based on ethical positions, on one hand, Berger and Kelly (1993) raise the need for a new social work ethic to facilitate a practice linked to feminist postulates. On the other, Gray and Coates (2012), from a non-oppressive ethics point of view, wonder whether social workers have obligations and responsibilities to the non-human world. Does social work have to deal only with problems that affect humans? For these authors, human intervention is both the cause of these problems and the solution to prevent and restore the balance of the ecosystem we have damaged. Based on a humanitarian framework, Besthorn and Saleebey (2018), working with a post-human ethical framework, proposes that caring for the people of the Earth also means caring for the planet. For Ramsay and Boddy (2017), Environmental Social Work must focus on “helping humanity create and maintain a biodiverse planetary ecosystem which includes humans” (p. 82). On this basis, human well-being is interconnected with that of all living organisms, so that the well-being of some affects the others, and vice versa. Based on this paradigm, social work then asks: “What does it mean to live well in a place?” (Zapf 2005, p. 639), linking living well with the suppression of injustices that make this impossible and with the promotion of ecological sustainability as a form of justice.

This perspective is cautiously transferred into the international definition of social work, valuing Indigenous knowledge and specifying that the function of SW is to involve people and structures so they can face the challenges of life and achieve greater well-being. To achieve this, human rights need to be acquired through collective responsibility with the community and the environment. The definition also reveals a holistic approach, together with an emancipatory perspective to address the structural causes that generate social, economic and environmental injustice. Third-generation rights are also recognized, focusing on the protection of the natural world, the right to biodiversity of species and intergenerational justice (IFSW 2021).

As has been argued up to now, the focus of the research and practice of ecosocial work are the multidimensional impacts of the current crisis of civilization generating serious ecosocial injustices. These are understood as the results of human activity that become structural causes of unfairness in the distribution of environmental resources and they affect both people and biological ecosystems, threatening their future (Martínez-Alier 2003). According to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), environmental justice occurs when everyone equally enjoys the same levels of environmental protection and no group or community is excluded from the decision-making process on environmental policies or is affected by a disproportionate impact of environmental dangers. Stamm (2023) relates it to the fair distribution of environmental load, inclusive processes to achieve this, and the creation of healthy environments where marginalized groups feel secure. For Belchior Rocha (2018), the most vulnerable communities are most affected by environmental risks and their effects are amplified when it comes to children, elderly people, women and economically poorer populations. This is particularly important in the case of Indigenous populations according to Smith Ahern (2020). Studies like those by Kang et al. (2019) show that racial minorities, mostly those living in poverty, and, within those groups, women and children, face more environmental dangers than white people with greater economic power.

4. Conclusions and Implications for Social Work Practice

By way of conclusion, we can point out that ecosocial work is already sufficiently developed theoretically concerning the close relationship between ecological injustices and their devastating and unequal social impacts. There is also a clear basis for the profession's responsibility in the face of this ecosocial challenge, although we must point out that this issue is not and has not been a predominant concern for social workers (Boetto et al. 2020) as, when it does concern them, their participation is normally limited to personal political activism (McKinnon 2013). Although we would not question such commitment, the fact is that this situation reduces the possibility of achieving ecocritical social work (Garrido 2018), which includes investigating and acting together with socially impoverished populations to uphold ecosocial justice in order to reverse the order that generates socio-ecological inequalities.

Precisely to overcome this dissonance, Dwoskin (2003) suggests strengthening this ecosocial perspective by linking personal values with the ethical basis of the profession. Ungar (2002) suggests eight principles: stressing the intrinsic value of all creatures living in a community; accepting diversity and approaches with diverse solutions; sharing alliances with communities; developing interdependence and the joint construction of responses and services; reorientating resources for and with the community; public policies as a community prevention strategy; a development model based on justice, sustainability and far-reaching community empowerment; and ethical obligations overcoming the individualistic approach and focusing on structural change. Five strategies are proposed for placing social work within the ecosocial paradigm and being able to develop practices orientated toward ecological justice:

- (1) Expanding and strengthening the ethical and political basis of the profession. If social work is ethically committed to human rights and social justice, it must also develop and implement approaches to work for social justice, as these aspects are interrelated. Social justice cannot be fully achieved without taking into account ecological justice. The

task of broadening the ecosocial awareness of social workers has important humanistic and political implications. Accepting the former involves rethinking this existential crisis based on the collective responsibility for life in common and the deep interdependent relationship between nature and culture (Harcourt 2021) from an ontological and epistemological point of view (Boetto 2017). Recovering these values and humanist theories is fundamental for integrating concern for environmental deterioration and climate change into the profession (Gray and Coates 2015). Assuming the political dimension means identifying the structure causes of social and environmental injustice and incorporating concern for these into social work relationships and care actions, including all living creatures and the ecosystems they depend on. This involves stressing the prevention of ecosocial impacts, altering the structures that generate them; upholding the development of values and public policies advocating for rights and justice. On this point, Blühdorn (2017, 2020, 2022) and Boetto et al. (2020) emphasize the need to be alert to the dangers and traps protecting the materialism and individualism of the economic model also in the acclaimed ecosocial transition. The impacts of the ecosocial crisis cannot be detached from the ways in which neoliberal capitalism operates, impregnating all facets of social relations and, via the market, controlling access to the common goods that sustain life (Panagiotaros et al. 2022). The connection with the Earth cannot occur when it is considered as private property and a resource for exploitation using the structures of power and privilege that perpetuate unequal relations. Ramsay and Boddy (2017) and Dominelli (2012) consider that social workers must avoid accepting and adapting to the status quo of structures which, via their oppressive practices of anthropocentrism, speciesism, environmental racism and green-washing, damage the present and future welfare of the planet.

To facilitate the ethical and political dimensions of ecosocial justice, it is necessary to extend and update the professional codes so that they stress human symbiosis with nature (Bowles et al. 2018). Despite the considerable boost provided by this recognition in the AASW Code of Ethics (Australian Association Social Work 2020, sct. 1.2, 4.2, 5.2, pp. 6–16), social workers have a role in advocating for policy development and reform with regard to equitable access to environmental resources as integral to ethical practice" (Appleby et al. 2017, p. 87) and the pioneering codes in Australia and New Zealand, we insist that it is necessary to conceptualize them in greater depth, as in this area they are still scarce, dispersed and human-centric according to Liu and Flynn (2023).

(2) Promoting the skilling-emancipatory models. Social work professionals and employers must participate together in community initiatives and organizations supporting other locally based socio-economic and consumption models aligned with the social and solidarity economy; the community and communally based economy and communality (D'Alisa et al. 2014; Matthies et al. 2020). Social work makes a specific contribution for the inclusion of the most affected groups who continue to be excluded from socio-ecological transformation policies. Using these models and skills, the aim is to strengthen group and community skills in order to amplify local voices, thereby achieving greater political impact. Social work therefore cannot focus on individual deficits and must concentrate on more preventive, mobilizing strategies involving the community (Ungar 2002). To do this, it is important to promote community management models and support group and community organizations and their actions to defend and protect common goods and natural ecosystems to ensure the subsistence and care of environmental quality, whether this affects natural, urban or rural environments.

(3) Cutting across all levels, methodologies and areas. For Ramsay and Boddy (2017) the ecosocial approach is multidimensional in that it involves a multi-level assessment, holistic actions and more ecocentric relational practices aligned with the innate value of non-human life. Thanks to this, social workers can enrich their view of the consequences and interdependence of various issues involved in the structural changes and necessary individual subsistence in the context of the surroundings of local life (Närhi 2004). Incorporating the ecosocial perspective allows a seamless view of the traditional levels of practice (Apgar 2021; Powers and Rinkel 2017) and their specific methodologies running from the

micro (individuals and families), to the meso (groups and organizations) and the macro (communities and political action). At the same time, they include an integrating and complementary approach between the functions of prevention and resilience, mitigation, restoration of defense and social action. Concerning the first level, there are care practices in which professionals adopt a holistic approach and make it easier for people to reconnect with their natural surroundings to improve their welfare and sense of fulfillment and self-confidence. These use techniques to facilitate emotional regulation and meditation and deliberately use outdoor spaces (and adapted indoor ones) to provide these inter-relationships (Boetto et al. 2020). There are specific approaches to promote the mental health of children and families and mitigate the effects of climate change with natural disasters and environmental deterioration in rural and Indigenous-populated areas (Wu et al. 2023). Concerning the second level, group work is highlighted as the best positioned to bridge the gap between micro and macro practice, as our actions occur in connection with other people and it is this relationship of familiarity which brings out our agency as individuals alongside others (Granados-Sánchez 2023). Ecosocial work uses group methods in socio-educational programs promoting behavior that leads to more sustainable everyday life (Boetto et al. 2020) and groups to guarantee energy and food safety rights. Emphasis is placed on recognizing knowledge and linking natural resources to a special spiritual significance (Smith Ahern 2020). This particularly applies to social work with Indigenous groups, but not exclusively so. Group methodology provides a potential framework for organizing workers themselves. Professional practice groups promoted by professional bodies or universities are a promising example of social action and political development. These include the International Social Work Group on Ecological Justice (ISWGEJ-IASWG); Ecosocial Special Interest Group; the group promoting ecosocial work in Spain; the Social Workers for Climate Action (SW4CA) network in Australia and the green social work group of the Australian Association of Social Work (AASW). We stress this as an iconic achievement of growing and active interest among social work professionals for prevention and action, without underestimating their participation in interdisciplinary practice networks and communities in research and activism for solidarity with intersectional ecosocial justice. In relation to the third level, it is evidenced that greater efforts are needed in the field of social work with communities to address climate change issues in contexts of marginalization and socio-spatial segregation, both in towns and villages. This approach enables populations to connect the biophysical conditions of their local living environment embracing a broad notion of community that includes all forms of life. To this end, it is necessary to update Freirean assumptions to promote collective analyses of one's own reality, from which communities can build their own agendas, with an emphasis on determination, organization, creativity and local control.

(4) New areas of practice for ecosocial work. Planning in local development policies to promote community, social, solidarity and circular economic models, with specific emphasis on guaranteeing common goods and access to safe, healthy food, water, energy, air quality and natural areas for the whole population. Urban planning and territorial mobility together with friendly urban design to reduce the health and insecurity inequalities affecting certain groups; the study and prevention of ecosocial (physical and mental) health risks; research on the social and environmental impacts of large infrastructures linked to extraction, production and waste treatment involved in the new "green" transitions; and, last but not least, the development of the ecosocial responsibility of the professional and educational organizations where social work is carried out, covering everything from everyday levels with actions that stimulate coherent ecosocial behavior to levels with a political impact. The latter can come through institutional support and participation in ecological policies, forums for reporting problems to give visibility and, above all, developing forms of involvement, solidarity and activism involving other local and global groups and movements with an ecosocial vision of the world. In all these cases described, social work can provide a critical approach via research, methodologies and practical techniques strengthening relations at all levels and promoting community care, making it possible

for everyone, but particularly disadvantaged groups, to face up to the risks deriving from climate change and environmental degradation with greater strength (Appleby et al. 2017).

(5) Introduction to social work curriculums: The challenge of ecosocial justice has great implications for training (Forde et al. 2024). Ecosocial justice acts as an interdependent, intersectional and intergenerational prism, which means the social workers of the future need a specific vision, competences and skills. However, various studies confirm that ecosocial aspects are under-represented in social worker education and it is generally absent from both bachelor's and postgraduate qualifications across many different countries except for some Canadian (Smith-Carrier and MacArthur 2023), American (Council on Social Work Education 2015, 2021, 2022), Australian (ASWEAS 2023) and northern European universities. This makes curriculum reform an urgent task, but we would point out that this needs to be accompanied by measures to reduce the limitations and barriers identified by various studies in order to make its application effective. On the positive side, it is possible to discern the slow incorporation of decolonizing, antiracist, feminist and Indigenous critical perspectives, which, together with other educational initiatives investigated (standards, designing learning problems, educational tools, etc.) developed in different parts of the world, particularly the global South, suggest a more hopeful future, if we are not already too late.

As a result, if social work is ethically committed to addressing human rights and social justice, it must also develop and implement approaches to working for ecosocial justice, as these are interrelated. Social justice cannot be fully achieved without taking ecological justice into account.

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