

Book Review: Rights of Nature in Europe

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Introduction

The book *Rights of Nature in Europe* presents a compelling examination of ecological legal frameworks and environmental justice. Edited by Jenny García Ruales, Katarina Hovden, Helen Kopnina, Colin D. Robertson, and Hendrik Schoukens, the volume explores the multifaceted implications of recognising nature's rights within European legal and policy contexts. The book is structured into four parts, each addressing different dimensions of the Rights of Nature (RoN) discourse and practice.

The first section, "Landing and Grounding," examines how the concept of Rights of Nature travels to Europe. It begins with a chapter on the Ecuadorian experience and the fostering of dialogues as RoN is introduced to European contexts. The rest of this section examines RoN from European philosophical, spiritual, and Sámi perspectives. The section closes with the adoption of the Mar Menor as a landmark RoN case in Europe.

The second section, "Attuning to European Legal Landscapes," explores the challenges of embedding RoN within European legal systems. This part discusses key topics such as linguistic approaches to EU law, property rights concerning wild animals, and the role of human rights frameworks in supporting or limiting the recognition of Nature's rights.

The third section, "Encounters with the Rights of Nature", provides case stud-

ies of interactions between legal, ecological, and cultural systems across Europe. This includes discussions on invasive species, ecological restoration, and the legal recognition of non-human voices in decision-making processes.

Finally, the fourth section, “Visions for the Rights of Nature,” looks at future-oriented pathways for strengthening RoN in Europe. This part includes explorations of ecocide law as a legal mechanism, the psychological and cultural dimensions of RoN, and the integration of RoN principles into professional practices such as eco-social work.

This review focuses on Chapter 18, “Eco-social Work and the Healing and Transformative Powers of Nature: Towards an Eco-centric Practice,” the only contribution from a social work perspective in the book. Written by Anette Lytzen and Cathy Richardson Kineweskewêw, this chapter is particularly significant in its contribution to the emerging field of eco-social work. It explores how social work can incorporate ecological consciousness and utilise Nature-based interventions to support individual and community healing. This chapter is crucial in demonstrating how social work can transcend human-centred paradigms and integrate eco-centric approaches.

Core Themes and Arguments

The authors argue that eco-social work represents a paradigm shift, urging social workers to view social issues as inherently linked to ecological crises. They advocate for moving beyond the traditional Person-in-Environment model towards a Person-as-Place concept, reinforcing the interconnectedness between humans and their natural surroundings. This conceptual shift aligns with Indigenous knowledge systems, Earth jurisprudence/ecological jurisprudence and promotes the intrinsic value and inherent rights of Nature.

A key aspect of this chapter is its discussion of the Nature programme, a case study from Denmark designed to support women who have experienced partner violence. This initiative illustrates how Nature-based therapy—such as Shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), immersion in Nature, and circle work—can foster healing, resilience, a sense of belonging and increase Nature connectedness. The authors effectively highlight how being outdoor ‘connecting’ with Nature can serve as a therapeutic intervention, reducing stress, promoting well-being, and reinforcing social cohesion.

Relevance to Social Work

This chapter is particularly relevant to social work because it calls for a transformation of the profession's scope and ethical foundations. By recognising the interdependence of social and ecological systems, eco-social work expands traditional notions of care and advocacy. The authors propose that social work should integrate Nature-based assessments (eco-assessments) and intervention plans (eco-plans) to holistically address clients' needs.

Furthermore, the chapter aligns with the International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW) policy on eco-social work, which promotes sustainability and environmental justice as core social work principles. This shift is particularly pertinent given the increasing awareness of climate change's social impact, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities.

Strengths and Contributions

One of the chapter's greatest strengths is its interdisciplinary approach, drawing on ecopsychology, Indigenous perspectives, and environmental ethics. The Nature programme case study offers a tangible example of how eco-social work can be implemented in practice, moving beyond theoretical discussions to real-world applications.

Moreover, the chapter effectively articulates the parallels between environmental destruction and social injustices, particularly gender-based violence. By linking violence against women to the exploitation of Nature, the authors underscore the need for holistic, systemic change.

Future Directions

The chapter makes a compelling case for integrating eco-social work into the profession, highlighting its potential for transformative practice. Future work could expand upon this by further exploring institutional barriers to implementing Nature-based interventions within mainstream social services, enhancing the practical applicability of these approaches. Additionally, examining how eco-social work can be adapted to urban environments, where access to outdoor spaces is limited, would provide a more nuanced and inclusive perspective on its implementation across diverse settings.

Conclusion

Chapter 18 in *Rights of Nature in Europe* is a vital contribution to the discourse on eco-social work. It successfully challenges the anthropocentric focus of traditional social work and provides a roadmap for integrating Nature-based interventions into practice. By advocating for an eco-centric worldview, the chapter not only enhances social work's ethical framework but also fosters a deeper sense of ecological responsibility. As climate change and environmental degradation continue to shape global social issues, this chapter's insights are more relevant than ever.

Overall, *Rights of Nature in Europe* is a thought-provoking and comprehensive volume that provides an in-depth exploration of the Rights of Nature from multiple disciplinary and practical perspectives. Rather than presenting RoN as a simple solution to ecological crises, the book fosters a nuanced engagement with its challenges, different interpretations, and evolving applications. By bridging academic analysis with activist perspectives, the book effectively captures the complexities and possibilities of RoN as it takes shape in European contexts. Through diverse contributions, this volume underscores the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to fostering meaningful ecological and social transformation.