

ASTRA PROJECT

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Summary of theoretical-methodological framework of social sustainability (WP4)

The theoretical-methodological research focus in WP4 on Social Sustainability especially addresses the connection of TSTR with Social Work. Social work as a discipline and practice have long served as an expert in social sustainability. The demand for ecosocial transition of societies has questioned social sustainability as the only sufficient dimension of sustainability, and thus social work needs a broader framework and understanding of multidisciplinary sustainability research to address sustainability challenges in the lives of vulnerable people and communities. However, in the theoretical frame of WP4, the major societal challenge of social inclusion requires a radical participatory approach of social sustainability, underlining contributive justice and environmental justice.



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Social sustainability transition (WP4) focuses on social work with vulnerable communities and explores the challenges of social sustainability and its interconnectivity with environmental and economic sustainability. Previous research shows (Raworth 2017; O'Neill et al. 2018) how a sustainable social foundation of human life can only develop in an inherent interdependence with the overall ecological boundaries and regenerative and distributive economy.

Human activities have been identified as having an impact on changes in ecosystems, such as advancing climate change and biodiversity loss. The challenge is to steer this change and move towards a more sustainable future at the local and global levels. (IPCC 2018; Global Sustainable Development Report 2019.) The debate on the concepts of green, ecological and ecosocial social work emphasizes the interdependence between social and ecological sustainability and strives to define the role of social work in the ecosocial transition of society (Gray et. al. 2012; Dominelli 2012; Matthies et. al. 2020; Närhi and Matthies 2016, 2018). Ecosocial work is understood in WP4 as a social work practice that considers ecological sustainability as a prerequisite for social and economic sustainability in the practices of social work (Boetto 2017; Boetto et al. 2020).

Contributive justice (Sayer 2009, 2011; Gomberg 2016) looks beyond the distributive justice of standardised services and tools of labour market inclusion. It searches for justice in the individuals' opportunities and capabilities to become socially and culturally recognised members of their communities through their own activity. Thus, people in vulnerable situations are not to be regarded as objectives, but social sustainability means that social work needs to search for a strong subjectification and participatory means also in environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability.

WP4 Social Sustainability Transition explores the pathways for strengthening social sustainability transition by focusing on concepts like ecosocial work and contributive justice to obtain more knowledge on their usefulness in social work research and practice for vulnerable people and communities. The five WP4 research topics are: Social work's role regarding local environmental issues as transdisciplinary challenges about environmental induced displaced people (ESR1), Contributive justice for young migrants in rural environments as a challenge for sustainable social work knowledge and practice (ESR3), Exploring the value and the sustainable impact of socio-professional integration centres aimed at supporting vulnerable young people to gain contributive justice (ESR4), The contributions of social inclusion projects to ecosocial development: cases of at-risk and migrant youth of Germany, Finland, and Ljubljana (ESR5), and Participatory and inclusive social work practice promoting social, economic and/or environmentally sustainable communities. (ESR7).



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