

SPRINGER BRIEFS IN SOCIAL WORK

Wolf Rainer Wendt

Ecology of Common Care

The Ecosocial
Approach as a Theory
of Social Work and
Human Service



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The Ecosocial Approach as a Theory
of Social Work and Human Service

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Abstract Ecology is usually understood as a science that has its objective outside the existence of humans and their social life. Ecology is considered environmental science. Ecologically, however, it is also possible to study the life contexts in which human existence and provision of care take place. The texture of our common and individual existence and the economy of its supply can be inspected. The objective here is the scope of the *social* in the setting of its occurrence. This understanding stems from the ancient *oikos* – the concept of living together in the domestic sphere. It is from there that the *ecosocial approach* has been developed in the theory of social work. The approach deals with where and what is being worked on socially. It is applicable to the whole economy of care at the levels of individuals, organisations, societal processes and political decision making. The treatise describes and reflects the main features of that concept.

Preface

Social work is primarily direct practice. It consists of caring activities alongside other human services and commitments to people. The daily job routine does not require theory. In scientific discourse, social practice is offered orientation beyond mere functioning. The theory places action in relation to the closer and further conditions and contexts in which it fulfils its purpose.

There are different theoretical approaches to social work. The ecosocial concept developed from reflection on stationary, outpatient and domestic care for people. The interactions and arrangements that take place in the processes must be studied in their spatial and temporal contexts and dependencies. Material and immaterial, natural and social-structural factors have an impact. Welfare calls for permanent and versatile disposition. With regard to the resources we dispose of, concern for well-being is based on the ecology of their occurrence, and with regard to the effects of our dispositions, concern is passed on to the ecology of the local and global coherences of life.

The ecological frame of reference of human existence includes its social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. The ecosocial approach presented in this treatise, therefore, integrates lines of thought in social, behavioural, economic and political sciences that are usually separate. The concept takes into account that many and various fields of activity belong to social work and human services and that they are included in an ecosystem of provisioning and involved in a mixed production of welfare. It can only move forward sustainably with common welfare in a resource-conscious way, towards which the theory orientates ecologically.

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About the Book

The book presents the ecosocial approach as a core concept of social work and professional care. Within the ecological framework, the care for welfare and the function of human services are discussed. In an era of crisis, the ecological anchoring of welfare and cautious care is an essential contribution to the study of sustainable social provision. The treatise embeds dispositions about it in the ecology of the protection and securing of common life.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
	References	5
2	What to Think of in the Ecosocial Concept	7
	Reference	9
3	The Genesis of the Ecosocial Paradigm	11
	References	14
4	The Scope of the Theory	17
	References	19
5	The Central Concept of the Household and the Principle of Householding	21
	5.1 The Concreteness of the <i>Oikos</i>	22
	5.2 Resources Matter	24
	5.3 Householders as Carers and Managers	25
	References	27
6	A Comprehensive Field of Study	29
	References	32
7	Differentiations Are Necessary: Domestic and External Relations ...	33
	References	37
8	A Multilevel Construct	41
	8.1 The Micro Level: Ecology of Personal Life	42
	8.2 The Meso Level: Actors and their Networks	44
	8.3 The Macro Level: Ecology of Political Decision-Making	45
	References	47
9	An Ecological Orientation for Human Services and the Social Profession	49
	References	52