

ECOPIA

An invitation to collaboration

The ECOPIA Manifesto is not a final statement, but a process in motion.

The promoters of ECOPIA are committed to ensuring that individuals, institutions, and networks that share the same principles join ECOPIA and contribute to the collective construction of a new paradigm of cooperation among academic, institutional, communities and civil societies, within transformative and territorial processes. ECOPIA is a platform that fosters open listening, experimentation, and shared transformation.

This manifesto is open to endorsement by universities, public and private institutions, research centres, civil society organizations, social movements, and individuals who wish to participate in the ECOPIA network actively.

Manifesto

A living manifesto for an open alliance of international research and dialogue

WHERE WE COME FROM...

This ECOPIA manifesto stems from the *journey* begun in 2012 with the international academic network Routes Towards Sustainability. This initiative promoted academic cooperation among more than twenty universities across five continents, through a multidisciplinary approach to sustainability.

The era we live in, as many of the past times, is marked by multiple and interconnected crises – humanitarian, environmental, social, political, and epistemic – as well as by growing inequalities (Stocchiero & Morgante, 2023), the erosion of common goods (Ostrom, 2008), biodiversity loss and, finally, the climate crisis (IPCC, 2023; Ivanova & Serrano, 2022). These conditions have led the Routes network to evolve and renew itself, reaffirming its decade-long commitment while updating and expanding its scope.

Thus, ECOPIA – *Eco Partnership for Interdisciplinary Action* was born: an open and dynamic alliance uniting universities, research centers, public institutions, non-profit organizations, grassroots movements, and private actors. What binds these diverse actors is a shared vision: to co-construct, inclusive, generative, and sustainable futures through dialogue between knowledge systems, territories, and transformative practices. This vision is in constant evolution, able to adapt to different contexts and changing circumstances, and aims to offer a positive interpretation of sustainability – one that reintegrates humanistic, cultural, and artistic knowledge – as a counterpoint to traditional apocalyptic or guilt-based narratives.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY...

Despite thirty years of sustainability rhetoric – launched with the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 – the tangible impact of the many good practices implemented has remained limited. The concept of "sustainable development," which was consolidated too quickly, has failed to deeply transform collective behaviours, production systems, and power structures (Sachs, 1992; Valera & Salazar, 2020; Franz, 2020, 2022).

The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (James, 2015; Ferrara, 2016) marked an important step, but have not been able to trigger the necessary structural, cross-sectoral, and multilevel change.

No discipline, territory, or community can face the complexity of today's challenges alone. What is needed is a choral convergence, capable of weaving together knowledge, practices, and visions across geographical, institutional, and epistemic boundaries (Morin, 2005). In this spirit, ECOPIA presents itself as a generative and inclusive space, where partners might co-construct shared imaginaries and pathways of transformation.

Failures, setbacks, and unsatisfactory results should not lead to resignation but instead drive renewed commitment and action toward more just, relational, and desirable ways of living. ECOPIA borrows from this tension: as a collective space of thought, action, and imagination, where diverse actors can build real alternatives, starting from the territories and the relationships that inhabit them.

At the heart of this vision lies the idea of a *common home* to be inhabited and regenerated together. The reference to the Greek term *oikos* – understood not only as a physical space but as a living web of relationships – evokes a collective responsibility to care for the conditions that make life possible. From this also arises a tension toward a concrete utopia: an ever-shifting horizon that doesn't promise certainty but invites movement, construction, and collaboration. As Eduardo Galeano reminds us:

"Utopia is on the horizon. I walk two steps, and it moves two steps away. I walk ten steps, and the horizon runs ten steps further. No matter how far I walk, I'll never reach it. So what's the point of utopia? The point is: it keeps us walking." (Galeano, 1993).

ECOPIA aims to be exactly that: a shared, open, pluriversal community where knowledge, practices, and visions come together to shape futures that do not yet exist – but which we can build together.

WHERE WE ARE GOING...

ECOPIA wish to move toward a future in which:

- social and ecological justice should be at the center of transformative processes;
- territories should be protagonists in the regeneration of social, environmental, and economic systems;
- knowledge is plural, situated, and shared;
- universities, public and private institutions, social movements, civic associations, and businesses should act as platforms for mutual learning, solidarity, and public engagement;
- ecological transition is understood not only as a technological shift, but as a cultural, transformative, and even a spiritual change;
- knowledge should be oriented toward change, innovation, collective empowerment, and the creation of shared imaginaries and concrete practices for inhabiting the world in a just and generative way;
- international relations-should be based on dialogue, respect, and co-construction among different worldviews;
- knowledge, collaboration, and justice are pursued as the only paths toward peace.

Principles of guide ECOPIA:

- Systemic interdependence: understanding and acting in complexity requires shared tools, dialogue between knowledge systems, holistic vision, and systemic thinking – since every crisis is interconnected, every solution must be as well.
- Social and ecological justice: aiming culturally and ethically to reduce the inequalities that cut across territories, genders, and generations, taking into account historical and structural power dynamics.
- Transdisciplinarity: overcoming academic and disciplinary boundaries to build knowledge with and among communities, valuing co-production and collaborative methodologies.
- Decolonizing knowledge: acknowledging and challenging epistemic and cultural hegemonies, and making space for marginalized, silenced, and resistant perspectives – such as indigenous, feminist, and community-based worldviews, and all those intellectual, political, and economic traditions that have long been excluded.
- Territorial regeneration: seeing territories not as resources to exploit, but as relationships to nurture; promoting a relational ecology that interweaves nature, culture, economy, and affectivity.
- Participatory democracy: building inclusive, transparent, and transformative decision-making processes that recognize the autonomy and self-determination of social actors.
- An economy of justice and care: supporting alternative economic models grounded in reciprocity, mutualism, care, and integral well-being – including social and solidarity economies, agroecology, ethical finance, subsistence and communal practices.

WITH WHICH TOOLS...

- Promoting international cooperation among universities, public and private institutions, social movements, research centers, and communities.
- Generating transformative knowledge through co-research, shared learning, and collective action.
- Facilitating knowledge transfer and know-how, mobility, exchange, and intercultural dialogue between researchers, students, and social actors.
- Developing joint projects on key themes such as: ecological transition; the rights of nature and all living beings; the construction of just and resilient food systems; sustainable, circular, and inclusive cities and human settlements; critical thinking and ecological citizenship education. [Other themes may emerge in situated and dialogical ways, in response to the priorities of the territories and communities involved.]
- Sharing practices, results, and narratives that nourish alternative imaginaries of the future.
- Creating collective learning spaces where it is possible to fail, experiment, and rethink the role of research, education, and social engagement.
- Educating toward the very possibility of change.

ECOPIA is an open space for anyone who wants to contribute, in a shared and concrete way, to the construction of fairer and more sustainable futures.

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