



A response to Daniel Marra Magnabosco's "Integrating scales and disciplines to promote climate-resilient forests" – From awareness to action: the role of groups in climate challenges

Una respuesta a Daniel Marra Magnabosco "Integrating scales and disciplines to promote climate-resilient forests" – De la concienciación a la acción: el papel de los grupos en los desafíos climáticos

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Introduction

Forests, like people, organize themselves to survive in community. They are not simply collections of trees; they are living, interdependent systems in which countless beings rely on one another to thrive. As Dr. Daniel Magnabosco Marra emphasized, forests play a vital role in sustaining human life. Nowadays, however, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent worldwide, and their consequences are profound—not only for ecosystems, but also for our emotional lives. We feel the loss of biodiversity and the disruption of our daily existence, and many of us are grieving, even if we do not always have the language to express it.

When forests are under threat, ecological systems and human communities suffer in parallel. The question that guides this discussion challenges us to revisit a relationship that is both ancient and urgently contemporary: the bond between human beings and the forests that have shaped our biological, evolutionary, and cultural development. As group workers, we are called to illuminate aspects of this relationship that scientific knowledge alone cannot restore. Forest scientists can measure carbon fluxes, biodiversity patterns, and ecological thresholds, but they cannot, by themselves, rebuild the emotional, symbolic, and communal ties that once made forests central to our sense of belonging.

The concept of resilience—defined as the capacity to maintain or quickly recover well-being despite adversity (Kalisch et al., 2017)—applies equally to ecological systems and human communities. Resilience is best understood as a dynamic process shaped by interactions among biological, psychological, social, and ecological systems. It depends not only on individual thoughts and feelings, but also on culturally meaningful resources and social structures (Ungar & Theron, 2020).

A review of 44 studies involving 556,920 participants highlights the effectiveness of resilience-promoting interventions. Protective factors such as social support, cognitive skills, community cohesion, positive self-perception, religious engagement, and self-regulation enhance adaptive responses to stress. These findings underscore the need to foster resilience at personal, familial, and community levels (Abate et al., 2024).

Group interventions are uniquely positioned to cultivate resilience in the context of climate disruption. These facilitated spaces offer opportunities for reflection, learning, and collaboration, while also transforming attitudes, integrating knowledge, and inspiring systemic change. Group processes build resilience by providing emotional support, shared meaning-making, collective problem-solving, and a sense of belonging—transforming individual struggles into communal

strength. As such, group workers play a crucial role in promoting the protective mechanisms that mitigate stress-related disorders and enable successful adaptation to environmental challenges (Kalisch et al., 2017).

This article presents three pathways through which group interventions can strengthen both forest vitality and human resilience in the face of climate disruption.

Promoting community engagement and collective action

Groups elevate awareness of climate change and motivate behavioral shifts by fostering dialogue and education. Many individuals perceive climate change as distant or believe that their personal actions are inconsequential, while others struggle with forms of negationism that minimize, deny, or emotionally defend against the reality of environmental disruption. Group processes are particularly powerful in helping people move beyond these defenses by creating supportive spaces where fears, doubts, and conflicting narratives can be named and worked through collectively.

Sinclair et al. (2025), in a study with 7,624 participants, demonstrated that interventions emphasizing personal relevance, future thinking, and response efficacy significantly increase motivation to act. When groups collectively imagine future scenarios and recognize their shared agency, they foster ownership, reduce negationistic tendencies, and strengthen commitment to meaningful climate action.

A practical example comes from a sociodrama in Manaus, Brazil, where community members symbolically enacted the relationship between humans and the forest. This encounter reframed the forest from being external to becoming part of “us,” planting seeds for community-led environmental stewardship—seeds that often endure longer than top-down strategies.

Building resilience through knowledge integration

Forests are dynamic, multilayered systems, and the knowledge surrounding them is equally diverse. Indigenous and local communities offer ancestral ecological wisdom, while scientists contribute with contemporary research. Group interventions serve as bridges between these forms of knowledge, fostering ethical and equitable collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and local representatives. Such groups not only generate more effective strategies for climate resilience but also cultivate shared responsibility and long-term commitment beyond the confines of written policy.

Promoting systemic change and influencing policy

Group interventions can also catalyze systemic change, functioning as seeds of collective movements. Through facilitated dialogue, they form coalitions that advocate for sustainable land use, defend Indigenous territories, and promote climate-resilient policies. These spaces create trust, amplify diverse voices, and distribute responsibility for ecological well-being.

Forests themselves offer a powerful metaphor for group processes. Just as forests flourish through diversity, interdependence, and robust communication networks, groups build resilience through mutual support, inclusivity, and shared purpose. They also provide a forum for addressing ecological grief and intergenerational trauma, transforming unspoken emotions into collective healing and renewed engagement with the living world.

Conclusion

Forests are not only ecological systems but shared responsibilities. Their protection requires more than technical solutions; it demands collective care, imagination, and sustained human commitment. Group facilitation offers powerful tools to connect diverse knowledge systems, cultivate resilience, and inspire coordinated action. By strengthening awareness, nurturing empathy for the natural world, and supporting processes of collective meaning-making, we can contribute to the societal conditions necessary for valuing and protecting forests as the foundation of human well-being and long-term survival.

Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

Availability of data and material

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