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Call for paper



SOUTHERN TRANSITIONS

Facing climate change and ecological degradation in the Global South

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The ecological transition represents one of the most complex and urgent challenges of our time. Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and environmental degradation are severe consequences of a socioeconomic system in need of a radical rethinking. Although this is a matter of global significance, profound imbalances exist between the Global North and the Global South in terms of both impacts and responsibilities. Due to historical, geographical, and demographic reasons, the countries of the Global South are more exposed to the risks associated with the climate crisis and possess fewer resources to implement adaptation strategies, despite having contributed less to greenhouse gas emissions and unsustainable resource demands.

These disparities, in addition to limiting the capacity of institutions and citizens to promote effective policies and interventions, are reflected in scientific research, which often focuses on Western contexts and is biased toward theories developed in the Global North. However, greater awareness of the challenges and the crucial role played by cities and territories in the Global South is not only essential to achieve true sustainability but also to embrace a justice-oriented horizon. We believe that a post-colonial approach is necessary to investigate the differentiated responsibilities and impacts of these processes on communities and territories marked by centuries of exploitation and domination. At the same time, such an approach promotes participatory and place-based methods that value endogenous epistemologies, knowledge, and practices.

To broaden the academic debate on transition processes in the Global South and foster greater collaboration between the North and South, the LabPSM – Laboratory on Cities and Territories

in the Global South at the University of Florence proposes this issue of *Contesti* with the aim of inviting contributions inspired by the following reflections:

Plans and Projects for Ecological Transition. Urban and metropolitan areas are the places where the contradictions between the current socioeconomic system and the environmental crisis are most evident. These areas, in the face of rural expulsion and ecological and social desertification, concentrate unsustainable consumption patterns and greenhouse gas emissions, while the effects of climate change and ecological degradation are particularly pronounced.

Despite the growing environmental and social vulnerability that characterizes urban areas, the availability of economic and cultural resources allows them to play a leading role in promoting sustainable policies, climate change mitigation and adaptation actions, and interventions to reduce risks linked to natural disasters. These challenges are even more pressing in the Global South, where vulnerabilities are exacerbated by persistent forms of poverty, segregation, and inequality, within a context shaped by rapid urbanization and suburbanization processes. Here, the built environment is often informal and precarious.

Promoting sustainability and adaptability—without negatively impacting existing inequalities and vulnerabilities—requires a careful understanding of the local context and the involvement of all stakeholders. Of particular interest is the use of participatory and place-based processes capable of uncovering the specific environmental and social characteristics of the area.

Non-Extractive Knowledge Systems and Co-Production. The creation of participatory processes aimed at acquiring local knowledge can serve as a functional tool for gathering information to develop a plan or project. However, when interpreted more profoundly and reflexively, it can also be a way to reveal plural and contextual knowledge that challenges the dominant techno-economic paradigm and existing power dynamics between groups and knowledge systems, potentially producing new epistemologies.

Local, rural, and Indigenous communities possess essential knowledge that transcends technical expertise, especially in the Global South. Interpreting these practices and situated processes through a post-colonial lens not only fosters reflection on the relevance of different systems of interaction with nature in defining projects and territorial transformations but also nurtures the pursuit of planetary justice.

Studying the responses of local, rural, or Indigenous communities as they attempt to counter the disastrous effects of climate change and environmental degradation—including practices identifiable as Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) or community-driven governance systems—must acknowledge the imbalances between those causing the problems and those suffering the consequences.

North-South Relations Through the Lens of Planetary Justice. Even the promotion of ambitious policies for ecological transition can generate distorted effects and negative externalities in countries that have historically suffered from centuries of domination and exploitation. Europe, through the European Green Deal, has launched a series of environmental policies aimed at positioning itself globally as the first Climate-Neutral continent—a goal that has also become central in cooperation initiatives with Global South countries.

However, achieving carbon neutrality relies significantly on the development of a global carbon credit market that often shifts actions and impacts elsewhere, undermining seemingly virtuous practices by imposing land-use restrictions or expropriating areas—such as agricultural land—critical to local communities. Given its relatively recent emergence, limited research has been conducted on the impacts of large-scale areas allocated to carbon credit generation via NBS in Global South countries. Yet, phenomena such as displacement and land grabbing also arise in the context of seeking land for food production and pseudo-sustainable biofuels, driven by Global North or highly industrialized countries. The call invites further contributions on these topics.

INFO

The call is open until **March 15, 2025**.

To submit your full paper, please go to our submission platform:
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Registration and login as Author with the CONTESTI system is required to submit and follow the submission process online. Later, the account is necessary for following the status of your submission.

The proposals have to be unpublished and written in Italian, English, French or Spanish; the article length has to be between **4000 and 7.000 words**, including spaces, title, authors, abstract, keywords, captions and references.

Please pay attention on how to ensure a **Double Blind Review** when submit your paper.

The proposals can include a maximum of **10 pictures** with good definition (at least 300 dpi/inch and 25 cm the smallest side) free from publishing obligations or accompanied with the specific permission.

The selected papers will be published in the **1 | 2025** issue of CONTESTI.