

## Long Abstract – Monographic Section

*SOCIAL AGRICULTURE BETWEEN NEW AND OLD SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY INNOVATIONS.*

*edited by Angela Genova and Tiziana Tarsia*

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### *Between mirror games and ladybugs in progress: Viticulture as a care practice at the intersection of mental health, territory and community*

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This paper presents and discusses the findings of a case study centred on the “Vineyard Project”, a nature-based intervention designed to support the recovery of young adults using mental health services in northwest Italy. Developed collaboratively by a psychiatrist and a sociologist, the project was grounded in the theoretical framework of therapeutic landscapes and social agriculture, aiming to create enabling spaces that foster well-being through embodied, relational, and symbolic dimensions of care.

Following a pilot study with a small group of mental health service users collaborating with professional vine growers in manual vineyard work, the intervention was subsequently extended to an agricultural secondary school, where students and service users participated together in viticultural activities. The peer training approach facilitated a sense of equality, mutual learning, and social connection, which proved vital in counteracting isolation, self-stigma, and disrupted life trajectories commonly experienced by young people with mental health challenges.

An ethnographic study was conducted alongside the project to explore its processes and impacts. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group with students. Findings indicate that the vineyard, as a learning environment fostered by emerging trust, humour, and shared practice, became a therapeutic landscape, enabling participants to engage meaningfully with others, reclaim agency, and reimagine their role within the community.

The results suggest that combining mental health care with inclusive, territory-based agricultural practices can activate regenerative dynamics for individuals and local systems alike, promoting a form of community-oriented, integrative welfare.

**Keywords:** therapeutic landscape; mental health; recovery; social inclusion; ethnography

*Cite me: Eleonora Rossero, Andrea Barbieri, “Tra giochi di specchi e coccinelle in fieri: La viticoltura come pratica di cura all’intersezione tra salute mentale, territorio e comunità” in “Welfare e Ergonomia (ISSN 2421-3691, ISSN 2531-9817), 2025, 1”, pp.139-149.*

*Doi: 10.3280/WE2025-001009*