

Afterword

Weaving Together Voices, Places, and Futures

On behalf of the working group for the 21st EOE Conference held in Rimini in 2025 and hosted by the University of Bologna, I am delighted to offer this postface to the book of presentation abstracts. The texts gathered in this volume offer more than a record of the EOE Conference: they form a mosaic of perspectives, practices, and reflections that collectively illuminate the evolving landscape of outdoor education in Europe.

If the introduction to this volume highlights the EOE Network as a transnational community of practice – rooted in collaboration, trust, and shared inquiry – the contributions that follow render this identity tangible and vivid. Beyond the richness of the individual papers, several thematic streams run through the proceedings, reflecting the concerns, aspirations, and pedagogical imagination of the contemporary outdoor education community.

A powerful theme is the renewed centrality of *urban outdoor education settings* – a theme explicitly present in the title of the conference itself. Many contributions explore how places close to home, such as streets, parks, coastal areas, schoolyards, and neighborhoods, can become meaningful educational environments. This shift from remote wilderness settings to nearby natural and cultural places, reflects an awareness of the ecological, social, and cultural complexities of urban life, and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals that frame our collective commitment to more equitable and healthy societies.

Another major theme concerns *inclusion, disability, and access to nature*. Several authors show how outdoor spaces can become sites of care, well-being, and relational support. Their work demonstrates that outdoor education is not only about adventure, but increasingly about participation, dignity, and belonging. The emphasis on inclusive practices resonates deeply in an Europe shaped by inequalities, demographic changes, and the need for compassionate educational responses to urgent social challenges.

Closely connected is the emerging field of *gender, intersectionality, and social justice*. Through feminist and queer perspectives, autoethnographic accounts, and collaborative inquiries, the proceedings reveal a growing commitment to understanding how identities shape experiences of the outdoors. These contributions challenge traditional narratives and invite practitioners and researchers to reimagine outdoor learning as a space of empowerment and transformation.

A further thread running across the volume is the focus on the *body, play, and ecological well-being*. From children's spontaneous exploration to the embodied practices of educators, many papers remind us that learning is always rooted in movement, perception, and sensory engagement with place. This embodied dimension is not an accessory but a foundation for mental health, creativity, and the cultivation of ecological awareness.

Taken together, the contributions in these proceedings illustrate a field responsive to the urgencies of our time: climate change, migration, technological acceleration, and widening inequalities. They show that outdoor education can be a powerful response to these challenges – not through heroic narratives of adventure, but through everyday practices of attention, care, justice, and co-presence with human and more-than-human worlds.

This volume is therefore both a snapshot and a pathway: a collective map and a shared set of fieldnotes documenting our community's journey. It is a record of what the EOE community has achieved, and an invitation to continue imagining, researching, and practicing new forms of outdoor education across Europe and beyond. May these pages inspire readers to cultivate connections, question assumptions, and embrace practices of care, creativity, slowness, and attentive listening in

place, as we work to build communities and imagine futures that are more just, inclusive, and sustainable.

Hosting the conference for the first time in a Mediterranean context such as Italy adds a unique layer to these reflections. Rimini, with its rich history and vibrant urban and coastal landscapes, offered a compelling setting for exploring outdoor education and learning within cultural, historical, and climatic specificities. The Western North Mediterranean – Adriatic perspective that emerges from these proceedings is neither homogeneous nor fully defined; rather, it opens a fertile space for new questions, new collaborations, and new pedagogical insights.

More importantly, we wish to emphasise that if the EOE community aims to cultivate new perspectives, it is essential to engage with new contexts, such as the Mediterranean, to foster innovative viewpoints.