

Article

# Promoting the Eco-Dialogue through Eco-Philosophy for Community

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**Abstract:** The premises of the emergence of concepts about nature and the environment led to the emergence of new directions of philosophy, represented by eco-philosophy and ethics applied to the environment. These ideas result from the interference of philosophy with fields dedicated to studying nature and the environment, all of which have led to new currents of thinking that have shown tendencies toward the development of pro-ecological movements, such as the deep ecology movement or ecological humanism. The paper identifies how philosophy can support humanity, and especially communities, to protect the environment and planet in general through a new specialization—the practice of eco-philosophy applied to communities, supporting the need to promote ecological concepts, based on principles and tools taken from philosophy. In order to achieve the objective of the paper, three research questions were stated, and the methodology used consisted of a comparative study of the concepts and a bibliometric analysis of the literature identified for the analyzed fields. The results showed that in previous research, a network was created between the concepts of ecology, philosophy, and ethics. This fact confirms that, to put them into practice, a training program is needed for philosophical consulting practitioners who will apply the knowledge learned in dialogue with individuals or groups, as well as with organizations and the community. The conclusion of the paper supports the development of a dialogue between various areas as a necessary component for developing a sustainable community by implementing new counseling practices for communities, called Eco-Philosophy for Community (EP4com).

**Keywords:** eco-philosophy; ecology; ethics; philosophy; environment ethics; sustainable community; philosophical practice



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## 1. Introduction

The topic of the paper derives from the interdisciplinary approach to the global environmental crisis, which also requires a reconsideration of the main ecological theories regarding the relationship between humans and nature, and ethical and moral norms related to the environment. This fact can join with philosophical practices to be applied together in achieving a community goal, of improving the human-environment relationship, deeply affected by human action and the technological evolution of humanity. Ecology is part of the general field of environmental sciences and is increasingly oriented toward finding ways to protect the environment through specialists called environmentalists or environmental activists, whose actions have influenced major decisions in this regard, thus showing its importance and role in society [1].

Initially, the definition of ecology was limited to the study of “the relationships between organisms and their environments” [2] through its current collaboration with other fields. Other directions of action have developed, leading to the emergence of new branches such as environmental ethics and other concepts that compete for the goal of protecting the environment and life on the planet. Thus, there is a greater concern for building a so-called ecological civilization, which will place ecology at the center of these

concerns of humanity, to work together to achieve this goal with other areas of life sciences, philosophy and applied ethics, sociology, and politics [3].

From an economic perspective of the need for ecological survival, primarily for humans as the dominant species on planet Earth, it is found that it is excluded from the concerns of many decision-makers, and leaders of contemporary economic organizations are concerned only with profit or adapting to globalization trends manifested in the business environment. Thus, sustainability remains a secondary goal, and ignoring the effects produced by climate change generated by excessive technological development is to the detriment of the environment. Environmentalists, along with environmental activists, were the first to draw the attention of leaders and management teams in organizations about the possibility of developing natural capital based on the natural resources offered by the planet, advocating for the inclusion of ecosystems in this new type of capital. This can generate an economic potential that can influence the sustainable economic development of each organization [4] in their attempt to show that protecting the environment is a real necessity, not a luxury, and that humanity should be increasingly concerned.

For interpreting and analyzing data, we took a look at previous studies on the use of intelligent systems such as IIEEE and Big Scholarly Data for Community Detection [5,6] to include all aspects, including emotional, if they occur in communities, thus supporting the ecological approach proposed in the paper, with application in the communities.

In the analyzed context of the interference of ecology with other fields, the opportunity appears with the orientation of philosophy toward the applied field of practice, manifested by the appearance of the first philosophical practice offices. This fact led to the emergence of new specializations of applied practice philosophical consulting and applied ethical counseling, practices that can also have an ecological orientation, starting from the premises outlined by some philosophers, who have developed some concepts on this topic. We will refer to concepts and movements to support life and the environment, coming from some thinkers of philosophy, and more recently by researchers who have manifested themselves in the field of ethics and environmental protection, who use philosophical arguments and concepts to promote ideas that pursue the major goal of protecting and preserving life on the planet.

The paper aims to find practical ways to put philosophy together with branches or fields of ecology, and to identify new options for philosophical practice and consulting to be applied at the community. To achieve this objective, we aim to answer the following research questions (RQ):

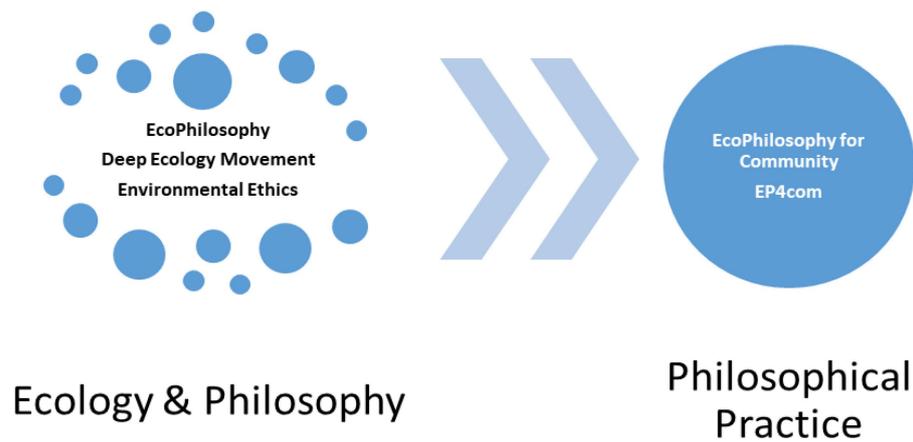
RQ1: What is the evolution of the literature on the concepts of philosophy, ecology, and ethics?

RQ2: Are there connections between the analyzed concepts, which can highlight the interdisciplinary links that can be made between philosophy and specific fields of environmental sciences?

RQ3: Is it possible to identify a solution that brings together the areas analyzed, to be applied to communities?

Figure 1 shows us the opportunity through which these areas can work together, in the sense that philosophy can be put into practice with ecology and generate together a new specialization of the philosophical practice, Eco-Philosophy for Community (EP4com). Thus, we will refer to eco-philosophy, showing its various approaches; some of these have manifested in Europe, such as the Deep Ecology Movement (DEM) [7,8], initially promoted in Norway and continued with policies of environmental ethics or through the concept of environmentalism, with the subsequent approach.

The paper continues with Section Two in which the theoretical background is presented, followed by Section Three, which describes the methodology used. Section Four presents the results of the comparative study on concepts chosen to be studied and of the bibliometric analysis regarding the fields analyzed in the paper. Section Five discusses the results obtained and presents the identified solution, followed by Section Six outlining the conclusions and future directions of research.



**Figure 1.** The representation of the purpose of the paper.

## 2. Theoretical Background

To present some theoretical approaches to the subject, we start from three fields considered fundamental by the fact that research of this subject is based on concepts and theories of the basic fields: philosophy and ecology. They lead us to the identification of specific sub-domains in accordance with the aim pursued, that of developing research and action directions, having as a major concern the protection of the environment, nature, and life in general, both being applied for the benefit of communities. The existence of interdisciplinary connections is indirectly highlighted, which can generate solutions and programs that can be applied to communities, in order to achieve the goal of developing a culture oriented towards nature and environmental protection, developed within each human community.

The concept of eco-philosophy is considered by some authors equivalent to “ecosophy”; recently, Russian researchers included the concept in the thematic dictionary on the ecology of human existence, developed in 2020 in a research project, showing that “today Ecosophy is an interdisciplinary and comprehensive field of knowledge that develops a general spiritual-specific theoretical image of the natural and social conditions of the human being on the planet and in space, as well as a methodology for overcoming critical situations from the environmental perspective, to create favorable conditions for a radical expansion of the individual human being” [9]. However, before the emergence of this concept of eco-philosophy, there were other approaches, one being the philosophy of nature developed in the 1600s by Baruch Spinoza, who stated that “nature is worthy of love . . . as an extension of God” [10]. In the same century, the British Francis Bacon argued that all nature exists for us to use, and people “have the power to conquer and subdue it, to shake it from its foundations”. To highlight the fact that ecology is part of human life, Aldo Leopold published in 1949 the Sand County Almanac, which promoted the saying “think like a mountain”, an idea that shows that humans are part of the biosphere and aware that through this membership, they have responsibilities to other living things; both ideas generate long-term interests in the environment as a whole [11]. Leopold’s idea was later taken up by the philosopher Arne Naess in his concept of “deep ecology”, which means an “identification with the wider environment and awareness of its role in our lives” [11]. The philosopher Renee Descartes, who attempted to combat Renaissance humanism by promoting a special individualism in which nature is mastered and possessed by humans [12], which led to the elimination of some interpretations, also joins this direction on the relationship between humans and nature, a trend amplified with technical progress that has provided humans with the prerequisites of environmental supremacy, with effects that all of humanity feel, and one of the causes of the current ecological crisis derives from the spiritual foundations of humanity [13]. The proposed solution to ecological problems derives from the same field, the research militating for the rediscovery of some spiritual

practices, which can indirectly support the taking of firm measures for the restoration and protection of nature [13].

A solution against individualism, which can actively support the restoration of man's primordial connection with nature, is given by voluntary social actions, which have the role of reuniting people and reconnecting with nature without seeking to obtain individual benefits (especially in material form)—these can only be of an emotional nature, manifested by the joy of “being-together-with- others” being a “selfless action to do good without expecting any reward” [14], actions that have been successfully developed by activists who support the restoration of human connections with nature. Another concept worth mentioning is the “Gaia hypothesis” initiated by the British James Lovelock in the early 1960s as another way of understanding nature, in which the natural world can be seen as a unique system of self-regulation [15].

### *2.1. European Approaches to the Concept of Eco-Philosophy*

In Europe, the first announcement of the Deep Ecology Movement (DEM) was made in Bucharest (Romania) in 1973 by the Norwegian Arne Naess, who participated in the world conference on the future of research [16], from which time he was considered the first promoter of the concept of ecosophy or “ecological wisdom” [17], a concept to which the author added the letter T, becoming Ecosophy T, where the letter added to the concept is an association with the name of his hut in the mountains in Norway, called “Tvergastein” [18]. Naess supports the idea of protecting the environment if it is subjected to the type of transformation that Leopold was talking about. His ideas refer to the fact that we are part of the whole biosphere, which is why we must be in harmony with nature: “thinking for nature must be loyal to nature” [18]. His concept of “Deep Ecology” includes another concept called the “ecological self”, which is an initiative for developing environmental philosophy and activism in the world. Naess stated that the natural world cannot be manipulated or controlled for our own gain and “to live well means to live as an equal with all the elements of our environment”, continuing to refer to eco-philosophy, “which is not a philosophy in any proper academic sense, nor is it institutionalized as a religion or ideology” [19] and which it assimilates within an ecological movement.

An analysis of this current was made by a group of researchers from Canada and the USA [20], who start from the identification of the origins of the two concepts—Eco-Philosophy and Deep Ecology initiated by Naess [21,22]—and show the relationship between this ecological movement and a division created in psychology, called ecopsychology, showing the premises for shaping the concept of “Transpersonal Ecosophy”, noted by Naess in 2009 in a commentary on the book about the “Transpersonal Ecology” concept [22]. DEM uses the concept of “Transpersonal Ecosophy” [23] regarding the relationship between the deep ecology movement and eco-psychologists, taking advantage of several ideas, such as the fact that natural diversity has its own value, equating value with value for people is nothing but destruction, plants should be saved because of their intrinsic value, and reducing pollution takes precedence over economic growth [24]. The framework of philosophy for ecology faces two directions, one of which is given by DEM and initiated by Naess, a climber who is part of naturalists who have had their own experiences in nature, and who use philosophical concepts in support of humanity's efforts to protect the planet. The second direction is that of rationalist academics, who have not had their own experiences in nature, and who are followers of ethics, to the detriment of natural experience [25].

Those who analyzed the Naess movement conclude that it is an unfinished philosophy, in the sense that the platform of the ecological movement can be improved with the help of ecosophy, to encourage social and political changes in contemporary society, to achieve a global ecological worldview [26]. Naess's critics point to eight principles underlying DEM, but criticize anthropocentrism and ecological humanism, as well as the ontological approach in ecosophy, to the detriment of ethics, which must be impartial to move homocentrism to ecocentrism over eco-impartiality. One of the editors of the

mentioned collection, Rothenberg, sees DEM “as a completely new philosophy, a new horizon, a direction of progress in ontology, a poetic way of being in the world” [26]. Considering ecology a science, some authors bring philosophy closer by developing new fields of application of the philosophy of science, the approach being defined as Philosophy of Ecology [27] or as a component of philosophy dedicated to biology [28]. In Europe, the orientation toward ecological philosophy is given by the Polish philosopher Henryk Skolimovski, who published a book on eco-philosophy [29], followed later by other works in which he associates the philosophical concept with humanity’s response to the crisis of environment. His works are reviving the idea of applied philosophy, referring to the contemporary crisis of philosophy, an idea that can successfully take on the role of *vitae magistra* (teacher) in the process called “school of life” [30]. Humanism is an expression of human philosophy, and both are parts of a broader vision, also called ecological humanism, as an alternative to the industrial society.

Among the countries of Eastern Europe, Romania stands out as one where the links between philosophy and ecology were studied as a humanistic discipline based on the extension of the human-nature relationship, initially existing only in ecology, and later correlated with other complementary relationships. Developed by humankind (individuals, family, community) and presented in the form of ecosophy, this concept is a compound term whose translation from Greek (*oikos* and *sophia*) is “the home of wisdom” [31], and is considered a frontier discipline, which can easily interfere with other areas. A Romanian researcher subscribes to this term, defining ecosophy as the “wisdom of coexistence” that can be applied to all the relationships created between people and the environment in which they live [32].

Starting from the two mentioned approaches, the status of ecosophy and ecology were analyzed by trying to identify their rank in the perspective of relations with philosophy, reaching the conclusion that ecology remains a particular science belonging to the field of biology, without humanistic or spiritual landmarks, but which can be compensated by the intervention of ecosophy; their relationship is one of genus-species types, where “the genus being represented by ecosophy, and the species by ecology” [33]. From the study of the relationship between ecosophy and philosophy, it was highlighted that the two are not placed at the same level, even if both have humanistic approaches, and philosophy is placed at a higher level, characterized by some researchers as a metadiscipline. Eco-philosophy is positioned with a lower rank, at the level of multidisciplinary sciences connected with philosophy, the relationship of the two being similar as a parental type, in which the role of the child is taken over by eco-philosophy [33]. In the same research framework, we identify the concept of ecological awareness as part of a social consciousness that can be developed in each person, which can be achieved through the interdisciplinary cooperation of specialists and practitioners alike, whose actions can influence the development of this type of consciousness of a social nature. Philosophy, through a distinct branch called eco-philosophy, can successfully contribute to this evolution by promoting the values of nature, which can contribute to the development of an ethical attitude toward nature, with implicit effects on the formation of ecological consciousness. The values that contribute to the realization of this type of consciousness are those of a cultural, historical, spiritual, or religious nature, of an ethical and aesthetic nature, with the knowledge acquired by humanity about nature and the environment, which will generate ecological [34]. This trend indicates another concept, ecological humanism, which has become an important component of ecology field.

## 2.2. Other Ecological Concepts and Approaches

A special approach was expressed more recently by an American researcher, Ricardo Rozzi, who proposes the integration of philosophy and ecology, which can work together, and seen by him as bio-cultural interfaces [35]. The author introduced the concept of bio-culture, seen as a link between the two areas [36]. The concept of ecological humanism explained by Skolimovski [29] contains three important ideas, namely: the fact that the

future age must be seen as an age of administration, the world must be conceived as a sanctuary, and knowledge must be conceived as an intermediary between us and the creative force of evolution.

Eco-centrism is a current of ecology-oriented philosophy that supports the granting of moral rights to all beings in the planetary biosphere—called by some ethicists to be eco-centric rights—but does not imply the application of another concept, bio-egalitarianism, which refers to the right of the existence of every living thing on the planet. The conclusion is that ethics can be extended to ecology to broaden the sphere of moral interest from the human being to the ecosphere, ensuring the conditions of life on the entire planet [37].

The role of philosophy in this framework can also be that in which philosophical practices will focus on this area of environmental awareness to discover the human self in its relationship with nature. This goal can be achieved with the help of specific philosophical practices, such as the practice of philosophical walks in nature, the development of Socratic dialogues, or the practice of contemplative exercises, which can be hosted in nature by choosing places that ensure optimal conditions for philosophical reflection to the participants. Caring for the planet will thus become an ecology of care, and responsibility toward the environment becomes a real virtue, being part of an “ecology of virtue”, which contains other virtues considered eco, such as simplicity, temperance, walking in nature, or efficiency [37]. Among environmental activists, there is often a view of a so-called “earth ethic” considered just action by the intrinsic value given to nature [38], later contradicted by proponents of altruistic theory, for whom nature gains value through positive conscious experiences with nature of those engaged in nature protection [39].

A biological perspective also appears in recent research in the field of physics, with the discovery of quantum physics, where researchers were tempted to analyze the implications of human life and consciousness in studying phenomena, through the concept called biocentrism, achieved because of the interdisciplinary study of elements from physics and biological sciences [40].

Robin Attfield is one of the contemporary researchers dedicated to philosophy and environmental ethics, indicating in his works the concepts and principles related to the relationship between humanity and nature, as well as the practical implications of this interaction, manifested at the level of person and society. [41,42]. It highlights some key concepts that deserve everyone’s attention: morality, value, environmental aesthetics, ecofeminism, governance, sustainable development, environmental policy, and the ethics of climate change [43]. A global approach to Global Governance on the environment was initiated by Robin Attfield in the late twentieth century, outlining the concept of global citizenship and arguing that these are not abstract concepts, that they are based on ethical norms that must be applied by citizens in their relationship with the environment [44]. The field has been consistently studied and developed by other researchers, who have dealt with the identification of ecological objectives, which can be used in environmental ethics [45] or philosophical approaches in the form of introductory essays, designed to draw attention to the importance and involvement of philosophy, and through ethics applied to the environment [46,47]. An analysis between eco-philosophy and sociology was introduced in the late twentieth century, called “sozology”, and defined as the science of protecting the biosphere from the destructive effects of the anthroposphere [48], both recommended to be introduced as a new discipline in the contemporary education system.

Other eco-philosophy approaches have been noted by other researchers, who have identified other forms specific to eco-philosophy, which they recommend be introduced in educational programs concerned with the environment, named as follows: philosophy of ecology, ecology of humanity, humanistic ecology, ecological philosophy, philosophy of ecological crisis, system of eco-development, universalist ecology, practical philosophy of nature, culturalist philosophy of ecology, and environmentalism [49,50]. In the same research context, it was analyzed how the concept of eco-philosophy can be included in educational programs for sustainable development, identifying it in research on the applied field of philosophy, through several approaches [49] that were systematized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Other approaches to eco-philosophy and its references \*.

Eco-Philosophy Approaches as:	Comments-Referring to:	References
the philosophy of ecology	the methodology of ecology and environmental protection.	Dudzik [49]
the ecology of humanity	the environmental anthropology,	Dudzik [49]
the humanistic ecology	Research about the life of man	Dudzik [49]
the deep ecology	the philosophical solutions to the ecological crisis and the moral crisis of man.	Dudzik [49]
the ecological philosophy	new field in philosophy	Skolimowski [29]
ecosophy	the philosophy from pantheistic movements	Dudzik [49]
the philosophy of ecological crisis	the ecological crisis	Philips [51] Holse [52]
the system of eco-development	the sustainable development.	Dudzik [49];Piatek [50]
the universalist ecology	the part of universalist philosophy	Dudzik [49]
the practical philosophy of nature	practical and bioethical issues about ecological crisis	Dudzik [49]
a part of the philosophy of nature	philosophy of nature oriented to cosmophilosophy, biophilosophy, and philosophy of natural environment	Dudzik [49]
culturalist philosophy of ecology	the culturalist approach	Papuziński [53]
environmentalism	the environment development	Dudzik [49]
individual philosophical science	Use an epistemological/methodological status	Dołęga [48]

\* Author elaboration based on reference [49].

If in the first column of the Table 1 other approaches are identified that led to the support of ecology to join philosophy, through the eco-philosophical concept, presented in the second column of the table are the main ideas derived from the comments of the authors cited in the third column, and which support these ecological approaches, presented by the Polish researcher Dudzik [49], who is also one of the proponents of the various ways of approaching the concepts studied.

Presented in Table 1 are a multitude of approaches, which show in fact the interdisciplinary links of philosophy—and especially of eco-philosophy, as its distinct branch—with areas representing nature, the environment, and life in general, with major interests in common between them, now through the concept derived from philosophy. This concept can be included in proposals to be developed and applied to communities and organizations with an active role in protecting the environment and life on planet Earth by joining the concept of eco-philosophy to the concept of sustainability developed at the community level, but which can be extended globally to the human society.

An approach to environmental philosophy was made by Australian researchers who published a volume dedicated to environmental philosophy containing Richard Routley's declaration of a "new, an environmental, ethic" [54], a topic that has generated debate among researchers of the time [55] which illustrated the uncomfortable place of eco-philosophy in late twentieth century academia. The debates being resumed periodically [56] indicated a concern for the environment, which also attracted philosophy in the debates, thus emphasizing in this way a constant concern of humanity for the protection of the environment, as a support for life.

### 3. Materials and Methods

In order to highlight the objective of the paper, qualitative research was performed based on a comparative study of some characteristics of eco-philosophy and contemporary philosophy, followed by a bibliometric analysis of the main theoretical concepts analyzed in the paper.

In order to highlight the differences in the approaches—eco-philosophy and contemporary philosophy—as well as the specific characteristics of each, a comparative study

was made based on the research of Henryk Skolimowski [29]. Starting from studying the role that philosophy can have in the fields of ecology and the environment, he identified some features of the concept of eco-philosophy, which can be studied compared to those of contemporary philosophy elements expressed by it in the form of two diagrams (called mandalas) in which the identified features are arranged radially.

The bibliometric study aims to identify the interdisciplinary links manifested between the analyzed concepts in order to establish their relevance in the literature. The study of the theoretical resources existing in Europe and presented in Section 2 resulted in numerous approaches of some researchers who published the research results in books and author volumes, which were not indexed in Web database of Science Core Collection from Clarivate Analytics (WoS). As a result, these papers were not taken in this study, which makes the analyzed data not overlap.

The data were collected from the WoS, which is a database that includes journals close to the topic studied. The keywords proposed for the bibliometric analysis were those derived from the basic domains, but the most relevant information resulted only from the basis keywords: philosophy, ecology, and ethics. Initially, 194 papers published in the last 30 years were identified, from all fields of research. Considering that the paper follows the social and humanistic aspects of the analyzed concepts, in order to increase the relevance of the analyzed papers, 15 papers published in the indexed journals in the Science Citation Index Expanded category were eliminated. Thus, 179 papers remained in the other categories, published in the period 1992–2020, which were included in the sample for bibliometric analysis.

Considering the rather small number of identified papers, no other selection criterion was applied, so that the sample was studied by performance analysis and science mapping techniques. Regarding the performance analysis, the analysis of the general trend of the concepts and the number of publications or citations of the papers and their sorting by authors and their affiliation was taken into account, as well as the scientific categories of the journals in which the papers were published.

VOSviewer software was chosen for data processing because it is an open source computer program for creating, viewing, and exploring bibliometric maps [57] and has been previously used in research in various fields to obtain relevant results. Pauna et al. [58] and Anand and Gupta [59] conducted bibliometric analyzes of ecosystem services, Sant et al. [60] conducted research on innovation ecosystems, and Robertson et al. [61] focused on entrepreneurial ecosystems in the public sectors. The construction of science mapping used co-occurrence analysis and co-citation analysis, following the highlighting of the existing realities between different nodes adopting the association strength normalization [62].

The performed analysis will be limited only to the identification of the clusters and the connecting relations with the three domains analyzed in the paper, without entering other analyses offered by the software tools.

#### 4. Results

In order to answer the first research question in the first stage, we identified the differences between the concepts assimilated to philosophy—which, in the second stage, was the object of bibliometric analysis together with the concept of ethics—applied to the environment.

For the synthesis and restructuring of information on the approach to eco-philosophy and contemporary philosophy, we chose to present Skolimowski's research [29], he being considered among the first researchers concerned in this field. The results are presented in Table 2, which highlights the differences in the specific characteristics of the two concepts.

In order to highlight the differences between the two forms of philosophy analyzed in Table 2, the key words that differentiate are marked in italics. In the comments column are some quotes considered significant to illustrate the classification in each category and to highlight the arguments for delimiting eco-philosophy from contemporary philosophy, as reported by the author [29].

**Table 2.** Comparative study of some characteristics of eco-philosophy and contemporary philosophy \*.

Eco-Philosophy	Contemporary Philosophy	Comments
Oriented to the <i>life</i>	Oriented to the <i>language</i>	“all philosophy has justification: the enhancement of life” (p. 29)
The <i>commitment</i> to humans’ value, to nature, to the life	The objectivity, <i>detachment</i> to facts	Life “does not recognize objectivity and detachment; objectivity [ . . . ] does not exist in nature” (p. 29)
Is <i>spiritually alive</i>	Is <i>spiritually dead</i>	first “spell out the life of the spirit” and second “exclude the life of the spirit” (p. 35)
Is <i>comprehensive</i> and global	Is <i>piecemeal</i> and analytical	eco-philosophy is “self-actualizing with regard to the individual” and is “symbiotic with regard to cosmos” (p. 36)
Pursuing <i>wisdom</i>	Pursuing <i>information</i>	Wisdom is “essentially unquantifiable”/“is the possession of right knowledge” (p. 38)
Is environmentally and ecologically <i>conscious</i>	Is environmentally and ecologically <i>oblivious</i>	“we are an extension of nature and nature an extension of us” (p. 39)
Related to economics of the <i>quality of life</i>	Related to the economics of <i>material progress</i>	“an economics which undermines the quality of life is in conflict with life itself” (p. 40)
Is politically <i>aware</i>	Is politically <i>indifferent</i>	“we make political statement not so much by the way we vote as by the way we live” (p. 41)
Socially <i>concerned</i>	Socially <i>unconcerned</i>	“eco-philosophy is vitally concerned with the well-being of society” (p. 42)
Is <i>vocal</i> about individual responsibility	Is <i>mute</i> about individual responsibility	“we are responsible for everything” (p. 43)
Is <i>tolerant</i> of transphysical phenomena	Is <i>intolerant</i> to transphysical phenomena	“eco-philosophy signals the beginning of a new epistemology” (p. 45)
Health <i>mindful</i>	Health <i>mindless</i>	“to be in a state of positive health is to be on good terms with the cosmos” (p. 46)

\* Source: Author elaboration based on reference [29].

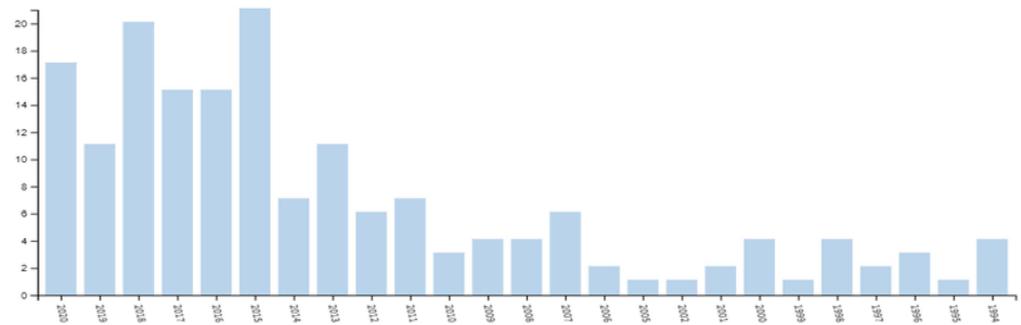
Eco-philosophy is distinguished from traditional philosophy by several essential characteristics—its orientation towards life and nature, with a tendency towards global but pursuing wisdom, developing an awareness of the environment, including political and social involvement for the benefit of the community and society in general.

Eco-philosophy supports actions specific to social responsibility, manifested individually or organizationally, with guidelines for protecting the quality of life and for the development of human and spiritual values of the person and community. It can be considered that these characteristics can be highlighted through philosophical practices manifested in the field of services in the form of specialization in philosophical counseling, which can develop specialized practices in the field of eco-philosophy by including the concept and a tool derived from it in training existing specialists in the field of consulting for individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.

These approaches were continued by Skolimowski [29] with a comparative analysis of two other concepts that emerged in the late twentieth century, namely eco-philosophy and sociology, the latter being defined as the science of protecting the biosphere against the destructive effects of the anthroposphere [48], recommending that both concepts be introduced as disciplines in the contemporary education system. Skolimowski’s research was continued by other Polish researchers [63] who proposed approaches inspired by issues considered from the perspective of Catholic theology, creating Polish Environmental Ethics (PEE).

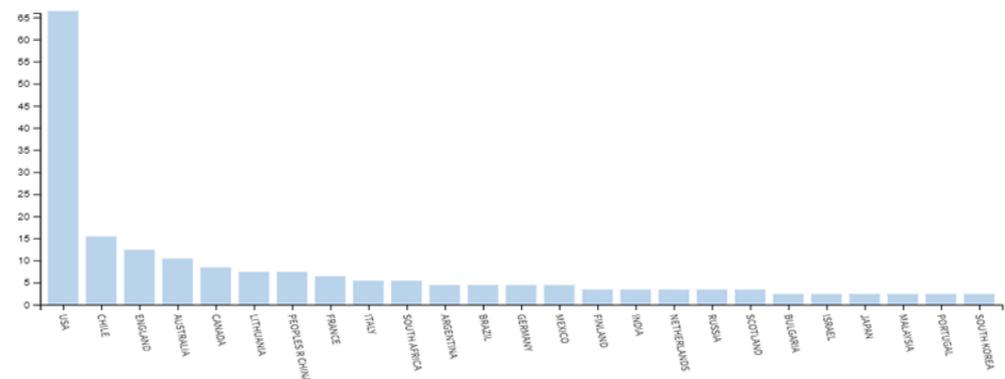
The mentioned characteristics are a premise of identifying other works that have studied the concepts, and in order to establish the connection between them, a bibliometric

analysis was performed. Figure 2 shows the evolution of the literature for the analyzed period, which shows an increasing of the number of publications manifested mainly in the last six years of the analyzed period. In the first years of the analyzed period, the interest was a minor one, given the sporadic publication of some papers, after which we notice a significant increase starting with 2013, with the tendency to maintain this increasing trend.



**Figure 2.** Evolution of the number of papers published in the analyzed period.

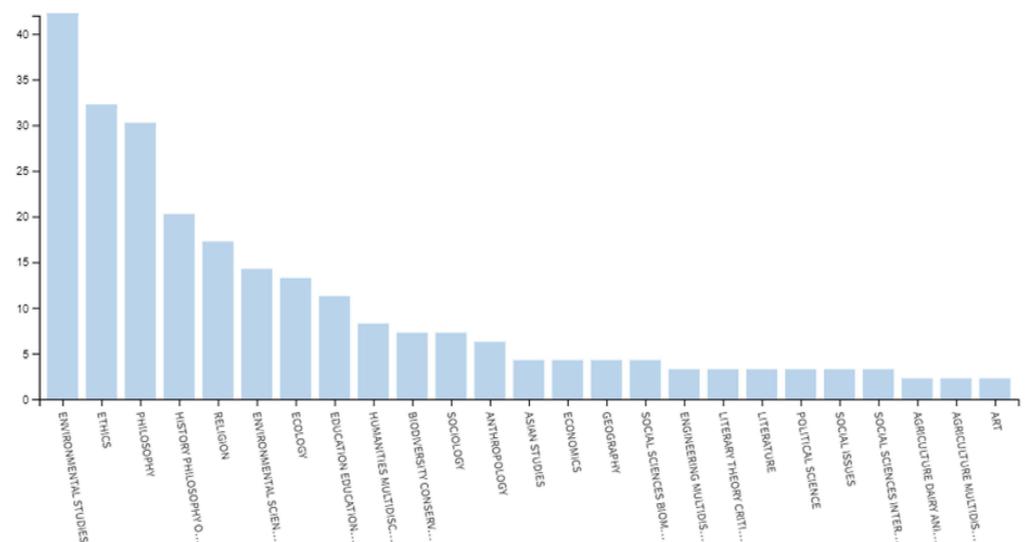
Next, we analyzed the origin of the authors of these published papers—from which geographical areas and countries they come—a fact reflected in Figure 3, which shows the distribution by country of origin after the affiliation declared by the authors to the publication of the paper, the graph indicating only the first 25 countries from 40 countries highlighted in the study.



**Figure 3.** The situation by country of the authors' origin.

The papers that are the subject of this bibliometric study were made by 284 authors belonging to research organizations from 40 countries, and the graph shown in Figure 3 shows that most papers were written by authors with affiliation in the USA (66), followed by authors affiliated with Chile (15), England (12), Australia (10), and Canada (8). At the opposite pole, we notice authors with a single paper, made by affiliated authors from 13 other countries, located in different geographical regions. The conclusion of this geographical dispersion made after the affiliation of the researchers who published papers, is that there is a global interest manifested in several countries, a special one in the North American continent or in English-speaking countries, which are presently exceeding half of the analyzed papers, followed by other regions where concerns have been expressed in this field of research.

The distribution of papers by authors resulted in a large majority of authors (258) who have published a single paper on the analyzed topic. Therefore, less than 10% of the number of authors published at least two papers; the only one that diverges from this trend is the author Rozzi Ricardo, affiliated with the University of North Texan Denton US, who published 14 papers in the field. The analysis of the papers published on categories classified according to WoS is presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Classification of the papers on WoS categories.

The analyzed articles were classified in 54 categories, where the first place is occupied by the Environmental Studies category, followed by Ethics. Philosophy is in the third place, and Ecology is on the seventh place, which shows a major interest in these fields, all being at the top of the rankings. To answer the second question of the paper, regarding the identification of interdisciplinary links between the analyzed concepts (ecology, philosophy, and ethics), the results obtained from science mapping are presented below. The data were processed using the VOSviewer program by the bibliographic data co-occurrence method using the full counting selection.

In Figure 5, the results are outlined four clusters, marked by different colors, where philosophy and ethics are marked by yellow, ecology by green, environmental ethics by blue, and biodiversity by red. It is observed that although initially only three concepts were introduced in the analysis, the network also expresses the connection with a fourth concept, namely environmental ethics, which is a derivative of the concept of ethics. The keywords used with the most co-occurrences are found in the network in its center, being dominantly positioned at the interference of two clusters marked in yellow and green, which validate the links between the keywords entered, being consistent with the areas analyzed. Co-occurrence analysis obtained 21 nodes with a minimum number of 5 occurrences of a keyword. Thus, several keywords were identified, with a minimum cluster frequency of 3.

It is noted the existence of interdisciplinary links between philosophy, ethics and ecology. Unfortunately, the data processed show that the concept of eco-philosophy was not identified as having a significant connection with the analyzed keywords. The explanation consists in the fact the research were not mainly published articles in journals indexed in WoS but more in books, respectively in printed manuscripts.

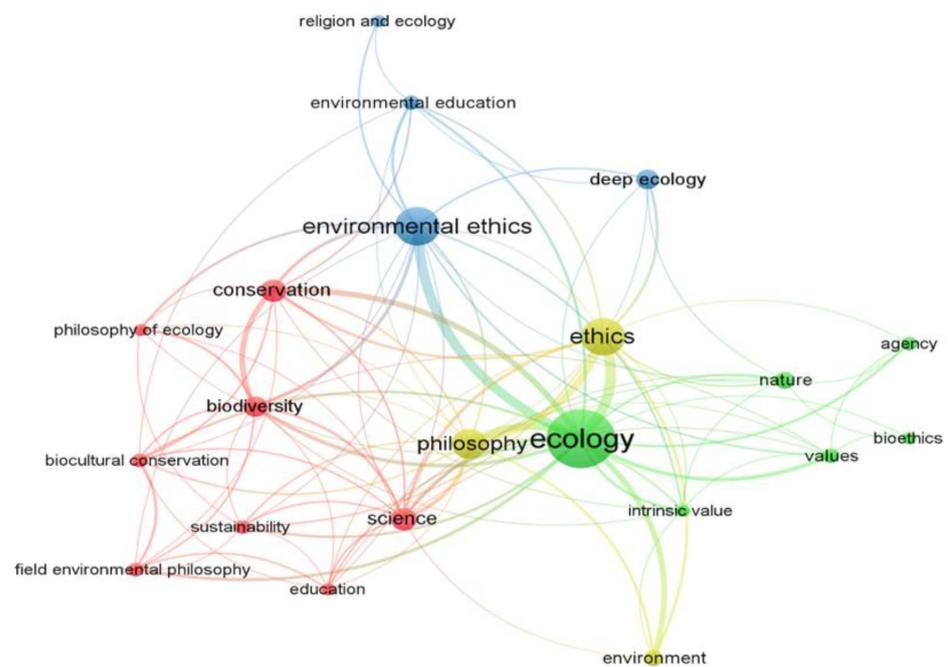


Figure 5. Science mapping of keywords.

In order to create the network, papers written by at least one author and had at least 20 subsequent citations were taken into account. The data processing resulted in 62 authors, but only 23 papers had connections among the references used and the keywords included in the abstracts of the papers.

Figure 6 shows that two clusters have been identified, in which the distribution of the authors is unequal, with the red cluster having 14 authors and the green cluster having 9 authors; the latter compensates by the number of papers published by an author, which includes the author Rozzi, mentioned above [35,36,45,47]. The red cluster features the work written by Callicott et al. [64], which accumulated the most citations, the theme being about the pragmatism manifested by Aldo Leopold, about which reference was made to the theoretical background.

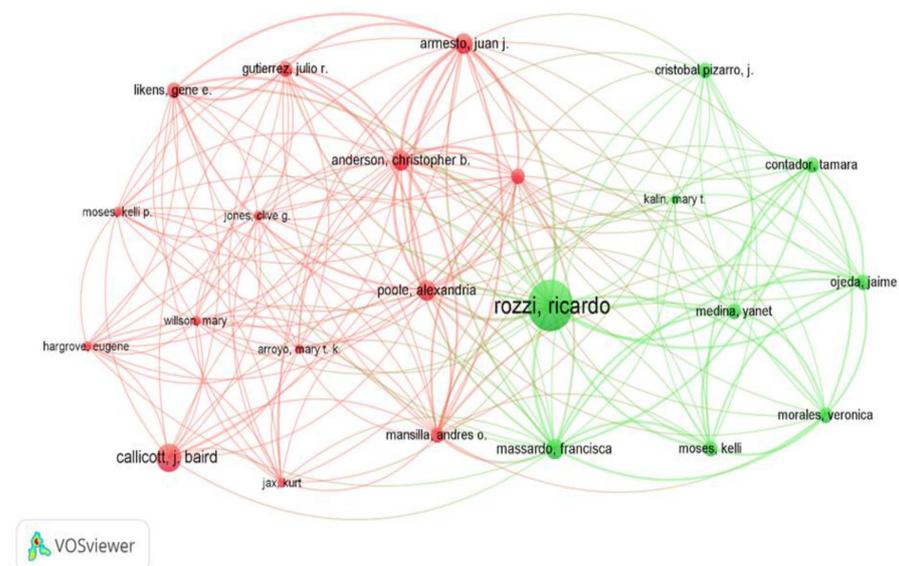


Figure 6. Science mapping of author's citations.

The analyzed papers were published scattered in various journals, with 152 publications in total, resulting in an average of 1.18 papers per publication; the details are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The journals that published on the topic.

Name of Publications	Number of Papers	Publisher	WoS Core Collection *
Environmental Ethics	12	Environmental Philosophy Inc., Univ North, Denton, TX, USA	SSCI
Linking Ecology and Ethics For a Changing World	5	Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands	Book Citation Index
Magallania	4	Univ Magallanes, Punta Arenas, Chile	SSCI
Earth Stewardship: Linking Ecology and Ethics in Theory and Practice	3	Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands	Book Citation Index
Environmental Values	3	White Horse Press, Winwick, UK	SSCI
Filosofija-Sociologija	3	Lithuanian Acad Sciences, Vilnius, Lithuania	SSCI, AHCI
Acta Koreana	2	Academia Koreana Keimyung Univ, Daegu, Korea	AHCI
Biology & Philosophy	2	Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands	SCIE, SSCI, AHCI
Worldviews-Global Religions Culture and Ecology	2	Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands	ESCI
Other 143 publications, each with one paper	143		
Total	179		

\* SSCI—Social Sciences Citation Index, AHCI—Arts & Humanities Citation Index, SCIE—Science Citation Index Expanded, ESCI—Emerging Sources Citation Index.

Table 3 shows that the papers were published in journals and volumes indexed in WoS. The most reputable journal was Environmental Ethics in which 12 papers were published. The analyzed publications were indexed in all sections of WoS, which shows that the topic is of major interest in both science and humanities.

The concept of ecology has also been analyzed in previous research, which showed the evolution of the network over time [65], or the situation in countries [66]. Additionally, bibliometric analyzes were performed on the connection of ecology with environmental science [67] and with economics [68]. Therefore, the results of our research complement the previous studies and confirm that ecology is also related to philosophy and ethics, especially to environmental ethics.

## 5. Discussion and Implications

From the presented results it was found that the objective of the paper was achieved by highlighting the involvement of philosophy with ecology, by sharing concepts and tools within communities. Thus, the answer to the first question regarding the evolution of the literature (RQ1) was outlined, with bibliometric analysis finding that there was an increased research interest in the fields of ecology, philosophy, and ethics during the analyzed period. The next question of the paper (RQ2) aimed to identify some connections between the analyzed theoretical concepts, as they are represented in science mapping (Figure 5) from which resulted a strong network. The third question (RQ3) referred to the identification of pragmatic solutions to bring together the areas analyzed, to apply them for the benefit of the community and society in general, drawing attention to the

involvement of philosophy through its practices. To make this possible, we turned our attention to a branch of philosophical practice and we refer to philosophical counseling and consulting, which is a specialization developed in the 1980s in several countries, by practitioners and specialists in philosophical practice, counseling, and applied ethics. The philosophical practices have applications in individuals' lives, to clarify life situations or solve dilemmas [69], being a field that can interact well with ecology by attracting specific concepts, one being DEM, which has its origins in philosophy [70], or by connecting with the field of ethical approaches to the environment, with real tendencies toward eco-centrism, but also toward globalization, with the introduction of the idea of global ethics [71].

To highlight the major approaches of the analyzed concepts, we used the comparative analysis presented in the form of Table 2, in which we marked the different characteristics of the two analyzed concepts, which underline the importance of introducing ecology in the applied philosophy with positive effects on the observed trend. The philosophy can be involved in this field, through new ecological approaches and environmental ethics, which can be included in the sphere of concern of its new practices, with helping the program destined for communities.

Presented in Figure 7 is a working proposal in which each analyzed field can provide a working sequence, which together can form a common area of interaction—represented schematically in the form of a puzzle—to work together in a new concept that can be supported through the active involvement of eco-philosophy, along with deep ecology and environmental ethics, and where it is observed that each concept that joins the project derives from the main fields studied.



Figure 7. Proposed ways of collaboration.

To create a new ecological section from the philosophical practice area, the concepts and tools from Philosophy must be put together with the one from the Ecology and Environment areas, and this fact leads us to the idea of creating a training program dedicated to eco-philosophical practitioners, as shown in Figure 8.

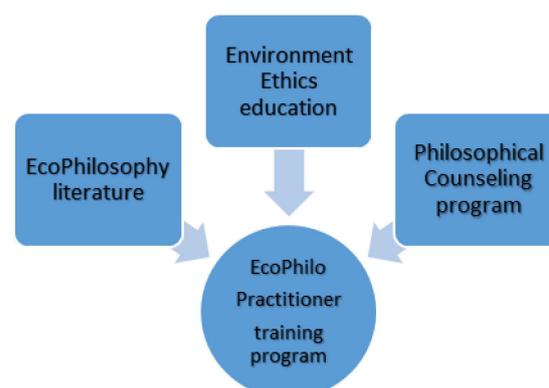


Figure 8. Components of the proposed program.

Figure 8 presents the option of bringing together the three areas, which have only sporadically manifested related interests to each other, usually only through conceptual and theoretical approaches, without exceeding this sphere of connections. From the comparison of philosophy with the three subsequent domains, and the analysis of the major differences identified, we consider that they can interact and work together to achieve a common goal. Practically, we propose to bring them together in programs that can be derived from joining the project of philosophical practice, through the program in philosophical counseling, already existing in many countries, and which along with approaches derived from literature on eco-philosophy and environmental ethics, it can outline and define a new training program, as a practice based on eco-philosophy. An educational approach has been recently supported by the introduction of the concept of Environmental Education, which manifests some specific eco-centric trends, which are the basic feature that differentiates it from other forms of education, and for the development of an educational program with this theme. The concept was analyzed in terms regarding the use of principles specific to eco-philosophy, which are recommended to be taken into account when creating such a program [72].

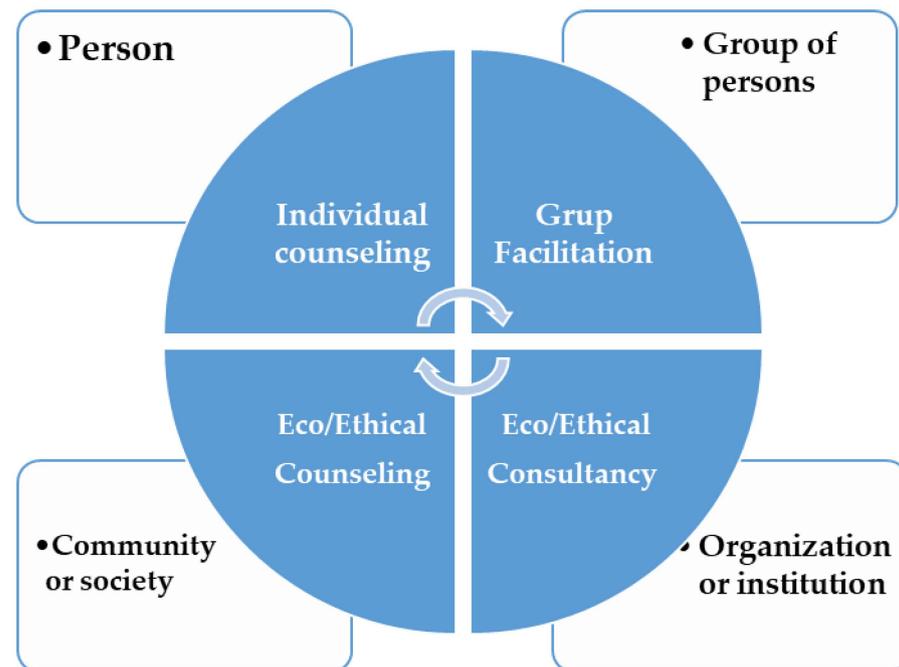
Philosophical practices address both individuals and groups of people interested in philosophical practices manifested in the form of group facilitation, or are already successfully applied in organizations or institutions, in the form of organizational philosophical consulting and ethics applied to theme [73]. A representation of the recipients of the philosophical practices introduced in the proposed solution is presented indirectly in Figure 9 in which we propose the extension of specialization in the field of eco-philosophy, which can be superimposed with the fields of application of philosophical counseling, being derived from philosophical practices, which can be applied to the different levels. Thus, we refer to the field of people and groups of people, organizations, and institutions, with the next area of interest being represented by local communities or regions, and finally the application can be extended to society, thus reaching a global character, given the changes climate change at the same global level [74].



**Figure 9.** Areas of application for eco-philosophical practice.

Figure 9 shows the degree of inclusion of each level in a larger one, to highlight their interconnection and how they can work together, having the same common interest, and where each component becomes an important link in achieving the common goal of contemporary society, that of protecting nature and life on the planet by caring for the environment and the community as a whole.

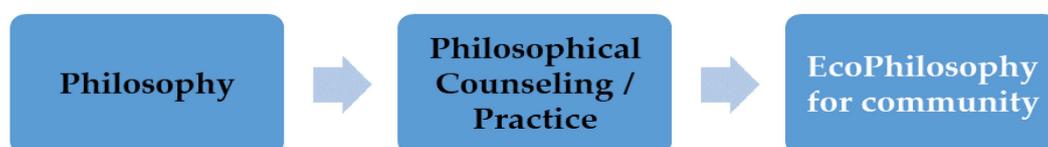
In order to detail the way in which all these interactions take place, we have marked in Figure 10 the recipients and the forms of work that we propose to be, which can act as philosophical practices, under various forms of consultancy manifested in according with beneficiary of the practice.



**Figure 10.** Forms and recipients of ecological counseling.

In Figure 10, a first manifestation of eco-philosophy at the level of the person, which takes place through the individual consultancy applied, can be observed. The next dimension is given by groups of people, who can participate in the counseling process through a process of philosophical practice also called group facilitation, reflected in the figure in another dial. The process is continued by its application within organizations and institutions in the form of ecological consulting and environmental ethics, which can be applied within these entities in the form of organizational practices. The last quadrant of the figure refers to the last two levels of the recipients of these practices, the community level and that of society as a whole, which can benefit under the same formal conditions applied by eco-philosophical practices and environmental ethics, adapted to these areas and fields. The increasingly ecological role of organizations and institutions in a community also brings to mind the concept of sustainability as an important moral goal that can be achieved much more easily through the philosophy dedicated to the environment called Philosophy of Ecology [75]. Usually, philosophical counseling is developed within philosophical practices through the way of working concepts, tools, and methods used that can be identified by the new specialization, with a different role from the consecrated occupation by the philosopher [76] or by any other form of psychotherapy intended for the person or groups [77].

Starting from the theoretical manifestation of philosophy that studies the analyzed concepts, along with those provided by ecology and environmental ethics, we reach philosophical practice, which is how philosophy can be expressed and applied in the ecological field or for environmental protection. Thus, the philosophical counseling can be applied in various fields, as they are presented in Figures 10 and 11, now with an ecological and environmental focus.



**Figure 11.** The evolution of philosophical practice through the proposed specialization.

To illustrate the philosophical origin of the concepts and practices supported in the paper, Figure 11 shows the evolution of philosophical counseling/practice in the field of philosophy from which EP4com is derived.

The practical implications derive from the fact that recipients of this specialization may be identical to those of philosophical practices mentioned in Figure 11 and can thus start the initiation process applications at the community level. This proposal can be a model of practice that can be tested more easily at a local level, to be improved or adjusted because of its implementation, using concepts from philosophy, ecology, and environmental ethics alike, along with specific practical tools or methods for the community, using EP4com.

## 6. Conclusions

The research validates the objective of the paper in which we propose the interaction of philosophy and ecology with the social field, represented at the community level, by achieving and implementing an applied current leading to the initiation of new specializations in philosophical practice and counseling, called Eco-philosophy for Community (EP4com).

Bibliometric analysis was performed based on the applied analysis techniques, the scientific performance of the analyzed works and their mapping. Thus, it was found that interest in this topic increased during the analyzed period, mainly on the North American continent and in English-speaking countries. Most of the papers have also been published in journals in the fields of Environmental Ethics, Ethics, and Philosophy. The scientific mapping was performed with VOSviewer software by co-appearing the keywords and historical analysis of the citation of relevant papers in the investigated field. Thus, four clusters were identified: ecology, philosophy and ethics, environmental ethics, and biodiversity and conservation, with close links between them.

Through this approach, we emphasize the importance of the involvement of practitioners and philosophers in bringing concepts from ecology and environmental sciences to the applied field of counseling and consulting, which can also become a practice for communities. We conclude that the discussion on the topic remains open to any options regarding the ecological concept, both within the philosophy and for its development in the field of environmental sciences, depending on the tools and working methods applied, which will place the concept in one of the analyzed areas together interdisciplinary links.

We consider it more and more current that all communities invest more in education for the formation of current and future generations in the spirit of respect for nature, by being aware of all aspects of habits, lifestyles, and mentalities, all in accordance with international environmental policies, as defined in the European Union's Green Deal decisions [78].

The limits of the paper result from the bibliometric analysis, in which data were used from a single database (WoS), but the goal was to obtain high quality results. Additionally, in order to identify the closest possible links, only the fields of ecology, philosophy, and ethics were chosen as the unit of analysis. The mentioned limitations can be developed in future research on the role and importance of philosophy in people's lives.

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