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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CRITIQUES
TO THE 2030 AGENDA FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE
CONTRIBUTION OF THE
ENCYCLICAL LAUDATO SI'
OF POPE FRANCIS

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*A tutti i sognatori, che ancora
credono in un mondo migliore*

Abstract

The year 2015 was characterized by the approval of two important documents for the issue of sustainability and environmental protection: the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Despite the global consensus raised by the two documents, from the Governments to the civil society, they have been subject to some criticisms.

Considering the criticisms raised to the 2030 Agenda and the obstacles to achieving the SDGs, this study aims to determine whether the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, through its integral ecology paradigm, contributes to the SDGs' achievement. If the encyclical provides a theoretical and practical contribution, it is investigated in which fields and disciplinary areas it is mobilizing actors to support the SDGs implementation, and in which it does not provide a practical contribution, making an alliance necessary to fill the respective gaps that hinder their achievement.

With qualitative analysis, the Agenda and the encyclical are examined, through reference to authors' studies, opinions and interviews of experts of different disciplines (economic, religious, educational), being multidisciplinary documents; furthermore, the concrete initiatives activated by the two documents are examined.

The results obtained demonstrate that at the political level, a political project, a political movement, or a law around integral ecology has not materialized until now. However, the encyclical contributes to the SDGs' achievement in other fields of action, that flank political action. This was an expected result. The integral ecology is taking shape in educational programs, in a different economic paradigm, in the spiritual dimension, in lifestyles, in a common thought for community development projects. An alliance between the 2030 Agenda and the encyclical *Laudato Si'* therefore is possible and urgently needed for the mobilization of all the actors.

Keywords: sustainable development, integral ecology, criticisms, alliance, paradigms, bottom-up actions.

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Table of acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
AHRC	Art and Humanities Research Council
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
COP	Conference of the parties
CREDO	Christian Relief and Development Organization
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
DANE	National Administrative Department of Statistics
DNP	National Planning Department
EADI	European Association of development research and training institutes
ELARD	European Leader Association for rural development
FEMP	Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces
FOCSIV	Federation of Christian Organizations International Voluntary Service
FUR	Follow-up and Review
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDR	Human Development Report
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
JPOI	Johannesburg Plan of Implementation
LAG	Local Actions Groups
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOI	Means of Implementation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

ODA	Official Development Assistance
OWG	Opening Working Group
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDM	Sustainable Development Mechanism
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solution Network
SEN	National Statistical System
TFM	Technology Facilitation Mechanism
UN	United Nations
UNCCCD	United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department on Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNRIC	United Nations Regional Information Center
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WCED	World Commission for Environment and Development

Introduction

In a global geopolitical context of instability and uncertainty, the year 2015 was characterized by the approval of two documents of extreme importance for sustainability and ecology. On the one hand, on 25 September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a political agenda, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The Agenda provides an ambitious set of 17 Goals and 169 associated targets, defining a global action program. On the other hand, on 24 May 2015, the encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis was addressed to all people of goodwill, to educate on environmental and social issues according to the social doctrine of the church. Despite their different origin and intent, (the 2030 Agenda defines programmatic objectives while the encyclical has an educational role) they share the concern for many issues. This has stimulated the need to seek an alliance between the documents, which can fill their respective gaps. Research often focuses on the differences between the two documents, placing them in antithesis. The intent of this research is instead to seek mutual compensation: it starts from the critical points of the Agenda, as it is the document that can be monitored in its progress, and evaluates the contribution of the encyclical, that can mobilize different actors but has no programmatic value.

Considering the critical aspects of the 2030 Agenda which slow down the SDGs achievement, it will be investigated whether and to what extent the encyclical *Laudato Si'* contributes to the SDGs' achievement, providing a theoretical contribution that can be translated into practice. If the encyclical is activating concrete initiatives, it is necessary to understand its impact: in which fields of action or disciplinary areas and for which actors it turns from a document of ambitions to a document that starts initiatives and activates actors. The research's objective is to verify if the encyclical contributes to speed up the SDGs' achievement. An alliance between the two documents could fill each other's respective critical points.

The starting hypothesis is that the encyclical, at the political level, has not lead

until now, to a political project, a movement, or a law based on integral ecology. It has only a persuasive role between Governments on the climate change debate. The encyclical *Laudato Si'* can not be considered a political alternative to the 2030 Agenda. The Church can denounce a situation of extreme gravity, it can sensitize consciences, but it has no means to intervene. Only politics can play a global transformative role.

There are other areas and fields where integral ecology can activate concrete initiatives. The impact of the encyclical can take place in numerous disciplinary areas and fields that flank political action and can pressure it. Integral ecology can be an educational program, a different economic paradigm, a spirituality, a community development project, a lifestyle. This does not mean that a political project, a movement, or a law around the integral ecology paradigm can not take shape in the future.

A qualitative analysis guides this research. The collection of information has included analysis of documents critical towards the Agenda and the encyclical and experts opinions of different disciplines, given the multidisciplinary nature of the Agenda and the encyclical. Some aspects they address are compared, such as the paradigms and the actors involved in the implementation of these documents. The analysis of the 2030 Agenda criticisms is therefore functional to the search for a theoretical, but above all, a practical contribution of a religious document, that could appear distant from the objectives of a secular document. In light of the authors' contributions and looking for concrete initiatives that have been launched, all the necessary tools to understand if the documents can be united in a common effort towards sustainability will be provided.

This research is structured in three parts.

The first chapter reconstructs the main historical stages that led to the approval of the 2030 Agenda and the signing of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. In particular, the 2030 Agenda discusses how the concept of sustainable development has evolved over the years, up to the tripartite definition of sustainability. Concerning the

encyclical *Laudato Si'* instead, the chapter reconstructs the positions of previous Popes on the environmental issue, in the light of the catholic church social doctrine. Finally, further documents will be mentioned which enriched the 2015 debate on the topic, the Addis Abeba action plan on financing for development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The second chapter deals with the paradigms that guide the two documents. The 2030 Agenda is based on the interconnection between the economic growth paradigm, the human development paradigm, the human rights paradigm, the ecosystem integrity paradigm. It analyzes the criticism of the economic growth paradigm and its conflict with the other paradigms. It discusses how the integral ecology paradigm that guides the encyclical addresses economic growth. Then, the chapter considers the causes that hinder the realization of the human development paradigm and human rights paradigm. The integral ecology paradigm, according to Pope Francis, is also a paradigm of social justice. In the light of this analysis, the chapter presents the theoretical and practical contributions of the encyclical derived from the research. It considers if the possible theoretical contribution of the integral ecology paradigm has been translated into concrete initiatives and expanded beyond the religious sphere.

The third chapter deals with the SDGs' criticism to be distant from the local needs. Authors complain that their top-down approval at the international level has made the Goals distant from the local needs; furthermore, the fact that their implementation is often led by national governments or by technical experts, hinders the active involvement of local actors and local communities. The chapter investigates whether the *Laudato Si'* can support actions aligned with sustainability from below and in which fields of action. It presents the theoretical and practical contributions that the integral ecology paradigm can give in activating local actors and supporting the SDGs' implementation in local contexts. At the end of this tripartite analysis, it will be demonstrated which fields and which actors, integral ecology has activated for SDGs' achievement.

Chapter I

2015, the year of sustainable development and integral ecology

Introduction

The principle of sustainable development in the last three decades has reached a pivotal role in international and national policies at the crossroads between economic development, social development and environmental protection.

The principle is now at a crucial turning point, which has been determined by the concurrent occurrence of three independent, concatenate events, which have happened during 2015:

- Pope Francis's encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*- On care for our common home (May 2015), that has brought back at the center of the stage the inherent ethical dimension of sustainable development, which has remained quite underdeveloped so far.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (September 2015), which dictates the global agenda for the promotion of sustainable development patterns for the next fifteen years.
- The conclusion of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (December 2015), which recognizes the need to integrate climate change and sustainable development considerations, especially to promote the increase of climate change related international investments¹.

The chapter deals with the historical steps and the evolution of the debate on sustainable development and environmental issues, both on the side of the United Nations, both on the side of the Catholic Church, concluding with the 2015 initiatives.

It starts by discussing the path of the United Nations that has conduct to the 2030 Agenda and the evolution of development, sustainable development and

¹ Massimiliano Montini and Francesca Volpe, «Sustainable Development at a turning point», *Federalismi*, (2 November 2016), p.2

environmental sustainability concepts.

Subsequently, the research is going into the positions of the Catholic Church – from Pope John XXIII to Pope Francis – on the topics of development and environment.

Finally, the chapter ends by presenting the 2015 initiatives and documents, with a focus on the 2030 Agenda and the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, but also on the Paris Agreement and the Addis Abeba Conference on financing for development. During the Addis Abeba Conference, the Action Agenda was adopted. The Action Agenda established a strong foundation to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It provided a new global framework for financing sustainable development by aligning all financial flow and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities.

1.1. The evolution of the concept of development.

The idea of development has been primarily conceptualized as a linear process of economic transformation, social modernization and technological progress. Although welfare is the ultimate goal, it is common ground that economic growth is a sufficient and necessary condition for achieving this objective².

From 1950 to 1970, development strategies emphasized public investment as levers for economic growth and social change³. However, in the seventies, the adoption of the basic needs approach, promoted by the ILO, implied an idea of development that went beyond the growth of the national product and was oriented to the promotion of employment and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population, whose contribution to the decision-making processes concerning the launch of ad hoc national strategies was of fundamental importance⁴.

In 1986, the UNGA *Declaration on the Right to Development* defined the right to development as an inalienable human right thanks to which every human person

2 Annarosa Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development measures: the quality challenge for Italian cooperation» (PhD dissertation, University of Rome, 2017), p.40

3 *Ibidem*

4 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.41

and all people are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, where all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized⁵.

The Declaration on the right to development anticipated the concept of human development promoted from the nineties by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The new concept of development included: a human-centered growth process; a holistic approach that includes the economic, social, environmental and political dimensions in which human action unfolds; a system that provides for the active participation of man who is both participant both beneficiary⁶.

In the meantime, starting from the '70s, a new principle was becoming increasingly important: the sustainability of development. It is commonly agreed that the starting point for the analysis of the principle of sustainable development ought to be the definition contained in the 1987 Brundtland report⁷(it will be discussed later in detail). The principle of sustainability has been developed at the international level. A large group of soft-law acts has gradually emerged; the Declarations of principles and the Programs of Action played a relevant role. These soft-law acts are generally programmatic and fundamental for the subsequent planning of policies and negotiations, although they are not mandatory. The 1972 Stockholm Declaration was the first of many soft-law initiatives, followed by the 1987 Brundtland Report, the 1992 Rio Declaration and many other initiatives.

Sustainability has become relevant because, although global economic well-being had increased, also inequalities between and within countries had increased, and the number of people living in extreme poverty continued to be high. Awareness has emerged that development cannot be discussed without considering the sustainability of its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

It would be useful to divide the evolution of the principle of sustainable

5 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Development*, A/RES/41/128, (4 December 1986), par.1

6 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.41

7 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.4

development into some stages, concluding with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development:

- From the first initiatives on sustainable development to the nineties.
- The 2000 Millennium Declaration: eradicating poverty as the main goal.
- From the 2000 Millennium Development Goals to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

1.1.1. The main historical stages towards the 2030 Agenda.

Since the first years after the foundation of the United Nations, discussions about population, environment and development have taken place. In 1947, these topics have been discussed in the first meeting of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development and have remained recurrent topics in the work program of the United Nations⁸.

In 1972, during the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, the issue of the environment and how to ensure that development is sustainable has become a subject of international concern. The Conference affirmed for the first time the duty to take actions, considering not only the objectives of peace and socio-economic development in the world, for which «the protection and improvement of the environment is a matter of paramount importance⁹», but also having as «imperative objective to defend and improve the environment for present and future generations¹⁰».

The result of the Conference was an *Action Plan*, containing one hundred and nine recommendations and a *Declaration on principles on the Human Environment*, approved by one hundred and ten participating delegations.

The Declaration recognized environmental protection as one of the primary targets for the entire population. Principle one of the Declaration affirms that: «Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of

8 UNDESA- Population Division, *Population, Environment and Development: the Concise Report*, ST/ESA/SER.A/202, (New York: 2001)

9 UNITED NATIONS, *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1, (Stockholm:1972), p. 1

10 Report A/CONF.48/14/Rev.1, p. 2

life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations¹¹». The environment began to be considered as one of the essential dimensions of development and human rights.

In 1987, the Brundtland report *Our Common Future* of the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED) gave for the first time the definition of sustainable development, recognizing the indissoluble link between development and environmental protection. The report has defined sustainable the «development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs¹²».

The Brundtland report definition is based on two basic concepts. On one side, there is the concept of need, which refers in particular to the needs of the future generations, in an intergenerational perspective, and the needs of the poorest people on Earth, in an intra-generational sense. On the other side, there is the concept of limits, which refers not so much to the necessity to impose absolute limits on economic development, but rather to the necessity to take into account the limitations imposed by the present state of technological development and by the socio-economic organization on the best use of natural resources and on the capacity of the biosphere to absorb the negative effects of the anthropogenic activities¹³. Within the Brundtland report, sustainable development was not considered as a fixed state of harmony to be reached once for all, rather as a dynamic process of change, which was characterized by the need to find a balance between socio-economic development and environmental protection, both in the short and in the long term¹⁴.

The awareness of the relationship between development and environment led to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the *Earth Summit*, that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The Governments aimed to establish a new global partnership, through the

11 *Ibidem*

12 UNITED NATIONS, *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, A/42/427, (New York: 1987), p. 41

13 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.4

14 *Ibidem*

creation of new levels of cooperation between the States, key sectors of society and people, proceeding towards the conclusion of international agreements that respect the interests of all and that protect the integrity of the global environment and development system¹⁵.

The resulting documentation from the two-week deliberations and meetings included Agenda 21, the Statement of Forest Principles, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the following Conventions:

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The parties to the Convention have met gradually since 1995 in Conferences of the Parties (COP). COP is the decision-making body that monitors and reviews the implementation of the UNFCCC. The COP meets every year unless the Parties decide otherwise.
- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

All countries had to make an effort to achieve the principles of the Rio Declaration, fulfilling their rights and responsibilities in the pursuit of human development.

The Declaration transformed the binomial 'development-environment' in a trinomial 'peace-development-environment', as elements considered interdependent and indivisible¹⁶. The Rio Declaration stated some important principles that support and integrate the principle of sustainable development:

- The precautionary principle: to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States, according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation¹⁷. This principle protects those who are most vulnerable and whose ability to defend their

15 UNITED NATIONS, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I), (Rio de Janeiro: 1992), p.1

16 Mancini, «Integral environmental development», p.3

17 Mancini, «Integral environmental development», p.2

interests is limited.

- The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities for environmental degradation: each country assumes the responsibilities arising in proportion to the technology and financial resources at its disposal and the pressure that their respective societies exert on the environment¹⁸.
- The principle of equity: it has a twofold meaning since it must be pursued both between the human community, both between future generations. As far as human communities are concerned, fairness must be understood as referring to access to natural resources; as far as, on the other hand, the generations, the equity is called to ensure that future generations can enjoy, like those present, a wide natural and cultural heritage. The principle of equity is perfectly in line with the principle of sustainable development, in which the component of access to resources and responsibility towards future generations has a fundamental role¹⁹.

The Agenda 2021 instead, was a non-binding action plan to be undertaken at the national and local levels on all the areas of sustainable development²⁰. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was then created to monitor and report on the implementation of the Earth Summit agreements.

All agreed that a five-year review of Earth Summit progress would take place in 1997 by the United Nations General Assembly meeting in special session. The 19th Special Session of the UNGA, the *Earth Summit+5*, has underlined the growing interest in sustainable development, but the continuing disparities in the achievement of the objectives set were emphasized²¹.

In the same year, at the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Japan, the *Kyoto Protocol* was adopted. The Protocol has transformed the commitments signed in Rio de Janeiro into binding decisions. The

18 *Ibidem*

19 *Ibidem*

20 UNITED NATIONS, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, A/CONF.151/26/(Vol. II), (Rio de Janeiro: 1992)

21 «United Nations - Earth Summit+5», United Nations, retrieved September 18, 2020, <https://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/>.

Kyoto Protocol operationalizes the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change, by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions under agreed individual targets²².

It concerns the emissions of six greenhouse gases: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride. The Protocol asks those countries to adopt policies and measures on mitigation, to achieve their reduction targets primarily through national measures.

It also established a rigorous monitoring, review, and verification system, as well as a compliance system to ensure transparency and hold Parties to account.

The activity of reporting is done by Parties: they submit annual emission inventories and national reports under the Protocol at regular intervals.

A compliance system ensures that Parties, through their actions, are meeting their commitments and helps them to meet their commitments if they have problems doing so.

Finally, the Kyoto Protocol is also designed to assist countries in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change: it facilitates the development and deployment of technologies that can help increase resilience to the impacts of climate change²³.

The States' will to collaborate has been confirmed at the 2000 Millennium Summit in New York. On that occasion, the Heads of State and Government came to define the six fundamental values that should have characterized international relations for the twenty-first century – freedom, equality (of individuals and nations), solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility²⁴ – and affirmed their duties not only to their respective peoples but to the entire human species, defining a series of ambitious goals to be achieved by 2015: the *Millennium Development Goals*, set out in the Millennium Declaration²⁵.

22 UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, 3rd Session, *Kyoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on climate change*, FCCC/CP/1997/L.7/Add.1, (11 December 1997)

23 «What is the Kyoto Protocol? | UNFCCC», UNFCCC Sites and platforms, retrieved September 18, 2020, https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol

24 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, A/RES/55/2 (18 September 2000), par. 6

25 Ilaria Lenzi et al., *A global pact for sustainable development: processes and actors on the 2030*

The 8 Goals were:

- *Goal 1:* Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- *Goal 2:* Achieve universal primary education.
- *Goal 3:* Promote gender equality and empower women.
- *Goal 4:* Reduce child mortality.
- *Goal 5:* Improve maternal health.
- *Goal 6:* Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- *Goal 7:* Ensure environmental sustainability.
- *Goal 8:* Develop a global partnership for development.

Policy-makers, analysts, and academics have put considerable efforts toward identifying the strengths and the limitations of the MDGs. Higgins, in her research report, has summarized them. The main limitations identified were: they adopted a top-down process reflecting a North-South paradigm; they ignore the distribution of progress (namely, inequality); they lack specific commitments to industrialized countries; they have poor linkages to country-level policy process; they oversimplify complex development processes. Their strengths, however, were: they were simple, limited and measurable; they were time bound to support accountability and outcomes-oriented; they supported improved data collections; they focused on areas of global consensus; they were framed around a multidimensional notion of poverty, being termed anti-poverty goals²⁶.

The attention towards poverty was already emphasized in 1996 when the United Nations celebrated the International Year for the Eradication of poverty. Poverty is a complex and multidimensional problem; it has origins in both the national and international domains and that its eradication in all countries, with a focus on developing countries, has become one of the priority development objectives for the 1990s to promote sustainable development²⁷.

agenda, (Milan: FEEM Press, 2015), p.16

26 Kate Higgins, «Reflecting on the MDGs and Making Sense of the Post-2015 Development Agenda», *The North-South Institute, International Development Research*, 29 May 2013, retrieved September 19, 2020, <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/post-2015-development-agenda/>, p.9

27 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *International Year for the Eradication of Poverty*,

The MDGs adopted a limited approach because they were mainly devoted to the social pillar, maintaining a narrow focus on poverty reduction, but the economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development didn't achieve the same relevance (the tripartite definition of sustainable development in pillars was officially stated in 2002 in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development).

However, the strengths of the MDGs were:

- First, the formulation of the MDGs in quantitative and temporal terms made clear the objectives to achieve for eliminating poverty²⁸.
- Secondly, the MDGs declined the multiple dimensions of poverty to combat, such as the minimum income per capita, education, gender equality, maternal and child health, access to natural resources²⁹. The sensibilization of the different aspects of poverty was promoted by media campaigns, such as the Millennium Campaign *End poverty 2015*³⁰.
- Third, even if the Declaration was the result of an agreement between the States, it became the reference point for all the actors involved in the promotion of human development³¹. For example, in 2005, the Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, drawn up by the UN Millennium Project, clearly indicated that the MDGs were at the heart of international cooperation policy³². An extensive consultation across the UN, the international financial institutions, donor and developing country governments, civil society and regional organizations helped hone the Millennium Project's final 10 key recommendations.

The confrontation and the common work between countries on the theme of sustainability continued in 2002 in Johannesburg. The Johannesburg Summit – the

A/RES/48/183, (16 March 1994), p.1

28 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.45

29 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.44

30 Kate Higgins, «Reflecting on the MDGs and Making Sense of the Post-2015 Development Agenda», *The North-South Institute | International Development Research*, 29 May 2013, retrieved September 19, 2020

<http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/post-2015-development-agenda/>, p.9

31 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», pp. 44-45

32 UN Millennium Project, *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, (New York: UNDP, 2005)

World Summit on Sustainable Development – brought together tens of thousands of participants to discuss the state of implementation of the decisions taken in Rio and to take note of new experiences and knowledge developed in the meantime.

In Johannesburg, the principle of sustainable development was characterized by a progressive change in its understanding, as primarily supporting the need for integration and balancing. The Parties embraced a tripartite definition of sustainable development, which was based on three interlinked and interdependent pillars, namely the economic, the social, and the environmental one³³.

The result of the Summit was the adoption of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) of the World Summit for sustainable development³⁴. The JPOI was a legally non-binding plan, which should serve as a reference for government activities. The Declaration indeed was a political Document signed by the Heads of State and Government, with obligations and proposals for implementation for sustainable development.

Some years later, during the 2010 MDGs Summit and the 2012 Rio Conference, United Nations Member States mandated how the process for preparing the Development Agenda should take shape. The 2010 MDGs Summit – officially called High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly – concluded with the adoption of a global action plan, *Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, and the announcement of several initiatives against poverty, hunger and disease³⁵.

The United Nations has taken on the task of creating a new framework that, starting with consultative and inclusive processes, would have been able to comprehensively gather the perspectives of all stakeholders and address them in an organic and shared development plan.

Five working groups and networks have been commissioned by the Secretary-

33 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.5

34 UNITED NATIONS, *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, A/CONF.199/20, (Johannesburg: 2002)

35 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, A/RES/65/1, (17 September 2010)

General of the United Nations to collect the stimuli received and to develop, based on a review process of the MDGs, summary reports providing sufficient input to intergovernmental consultations and negotiations.

1. UN SYSTEM TASK TEAM: in January 2012, the Secretary-General established the UN System Task Team, co-chaired by UNDESA and UNDP, composed of representatives of more than sixty international organizations and bodies of the United Nations³⁶. Six months after its establishment in June 2012, the team drafted the report *Realizing the Future We Want for All*³⁷, which outlines the principles and the key themes of the new framework of reference.
2. HIGH-LEVEL PANEL OF EMINENT PERSONS: nominated in July 2012, it's constituted by a group of twenty-seven leaders and experts from government, private sector and civil society, to present a report providing precise guidance on the vision and form of the Post-2015 Development Agenda³⁸.

The report *A New Global partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development*³⁹, was presented during the 68th General Assembly held in September 2013. If the Agenda aimed to be universal, five transformative turning points were needed: leave no one behind; put sustainable development at the center; transform economies following an inclusive and work-based growth model; create peaceful, efficient, open and reliable institutions for all; forge a new global partnership. These changes, according to the High-Level Panel, must be at the head of an Agenda that is based on objectives and targets defined SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and limited in time⁴⁰.

3. GLOBAL COMPACT: the UN System Task Team involved the United

36 Lenzi et al., «A global pact», p.24

37 UNITED NATIONS System Task Team, *Realizing the Future We Want for All: Report to the Secretary-General*, (New York: 2012)

38 Lenzi et al, «A global pact», p. 25

39 High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda, *A new Global partnership: eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development*, (New York: UN, 2013)

40 Lenzi et al., «A global pact», p.26

Nations Global Compact (UNGC), to engage the business world to recognize its role in the Agenda. In June 2013, the Global Compact issued a document entitled *Corporate Sustainability and the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda*, to provide an overall design of themes essential to define the new development objectives. The members of the Global Compact have adopted a vision that aimed to promote the creation of a more inclusive and sustainable global economy, through the implementation of Ten Principles, related to the fields of human rights, labor, environment, fight against corruption, which must become an integral part of the daily operations of companies⁴¹.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK: to represent universities, research centers, foundations and civil society, the SDSN was established in August 2012, mobilizing all relevant scientific and technological knowledge toward the elaboration of solutions for the global challenges. That network led in June 2013 to the realization of an agenda of contributions, the *Action Agenda for sustainable development*⁴², which contains a set of priority actions to be implemented by 2030.
5. THEMATIC AND NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS THROUGH THE UN DEVELOPMENT GROUP AND REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS: these consultations were based on a multi-stakeholder approach involving governments, civil society, the private sector, universities and research institutes, to stimulate the discussion between national stakeholders. The national consultations have been coordinated by the United Nations Development Group and have been concluded in the first semester of 2013. These discussions served as an incentive to produce in January 2013 a series of eleven 'Fact Sheets', one for each team addressed, containing the main results that

41 UNITED NATIONS Global Compact, *Corporate Sustainability and the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda*, (New York: 2013), p. 1

42 Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (2013), retrieved September 22, 2020, <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/be6d1d56/files/uploaded/140505-An-Action-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf>

emerged⁴³. The results of the Regional Economic Commissions have been reflected in the document *A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda*⁴⁴, a report seeking a differentiated approach by region, sensitive to its specificities and local needs.

Twenty years after the Earth Summit, in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20 – took place. It resulted in a focused political outcome document, the resolution *The future we want*⁴⁵, which contained clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development.

The tripartite definition of sustainable development has been restated in the document, where it was affirmed the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their interlinkages, with the aim to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions⁴⁶. In Rio, Member States launched a process to establish a set of Sustainable Development Goals, which will build upon the MDGs and converge with the post-2015 development agenda. The concluding document recognized as a central challenge the eradication of poverty, identifies the Green economy as an important tool for achieving sustainable development, and indicates some basic features of the SDGs: action-oriented, concise, easily communicable, of a limited number, of a global nature and universally applicable to all countries while taking into account the different national situations⁴⁷.

The document also indicated that SDGs should be assessed in light of specific indicators and targets. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, set up by the Rio+20 Conference to replace the UN Commission on

43 Lenzi et al., «A global pact», p.31

44 UNITED NATIONS Regional Commissions, *A Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda*, E/ESCWA/OES/2013/2, (Beirut: 2013)

45 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *The future we want*, A/RES/66/288, (27 July 2012)

46 Resolution 66/288, par. 3

47 Alberto Mazzali and Marco Lupi, «The post-2015 Development Agenda and the climate change agreement», *CeSPI*, September 2015, retrieved September 22, 2020, <https://www.cespi.it/it/ricerche/laagenda-di-sviluppo-post-2015-e-laccordo-sui-cambiamenti-climatici-settembre-2015>, p.8

Sustainable Development, has been tasked with guiding development work⁴⁸.

The most relevant aspects of the final document were:

- The multidimensional vision of sustainable development is further strengthened with Rio de Janeiro⁴⁹.
- Globalization is evaluated in a world document on the environment: it should be fair and regulated, with the participation of developing countries, through a system of trade liberalization that can benefit all⁵⁰.
- The contribution that the private sector, through business activities and public-private partnerships can offer to the achievement of sustainable development in a long-term logic: «We recognize that active private sector involvement can contribute to sustainable development, also through public-private partnerships⁵¹».
- The need for a multilateral institutional structure based on democratic foundations, on peace and security and the rule of law, to achieve a real sustainable development in every country⁵².

On 22 January 2013, the United Nations General Assembly instituted the Open Working Group (OWG). The OWG, composed of thirty members appointed by the five Regional Groups, based on fair geographical representation, was appointed to draw up a proposal on the new Sustainable Development Goals.

In August 2014, the Open Working Group produced a proposal made of 17 goals and 169 targets⁵³. On 10 September 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution making the Open Working Group's proposal the main basis for integrating SDGs into the post-2015 development agenda, while recognizing that other inputs will also be considered in this process at the 69th session of the UNGA⁵⁴.

48 *Ibidem*

49 Mancini, «Integral environmental development», p.3

50 *Ibidem*

51 UNITED NATIONS, *Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, A/CONF.216/16, (Rio de Janeiro: 2012), p. 8

52 Mancini, «Integral environmental development», p.3

53 Lenzi et al., «A global pact», p.34

54 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Report of the Working Open Group on Sustainable*

The Open Working Group's result received positive feedback from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who stated in his synthesis report *The Road to Dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet*⁵⁵: «We recognize that people are at the center of sustainable development [...] and we commit to work together to promote sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection and thereby to benefit all⁵⁶».

The report proposed six essential elements – dignity, people, prosperity, planet, justice, partenariats⁵⁷ – that have to be respected and integrated into the implementation phase of the Agenda. The final 2030 Agenda for sustainable development consisted of 17 global Goals, declined in 169 targets to be reached by 2030⁵⁸.

1.2. Popes' encyclicals on environment and development: what is an encyclical?

Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si': On care for our common home* carries the date of 24 May 2015, the solemnity of Pentecost, but the text was made public only on 18 June following.

The first question to answer when discussing the document is 'what is an encyclical?'. An encyclical is an important letter from the Pope, in the origin sent to all bishops around the world, providing vital information relating to Catholic social teaching.

It contains important guiding principles to be taken seriously and it should challenge people to grow personal knowledge and faith⁵⁹. Lately, encyclicals are

Development Goals established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/288, A/RES/68/309, (10 September 2014)

55 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet: synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development Agenda*, A/69/700, (4 December 2014)

56 Report A/69/700, p.3

57 Report A/69/700, p.16

58 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015)

59 «What Is an encyclical?», The Global Catholic Climate Movement, 28 March 2015, retrieved

addressed to Catholics, other Christians, people of other faiths/belief systems.

Pope Francis clarifies in *Laudato Si'*: «faced as we are with global environmental deterioration, I wish to address every person living on this planet⁶⁰».

Some journalists noted that Pope Francis is the first Pope to address ecological issues.

Tilche and Nociti, for example, stated: «The encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, addresses for the first time in the Church's history, the subject of protection of the environment⁶¹». However, by analyzing the encyclical letters of Pope Francis' predecessors, the interest of the Catholic Church emerges on the theme of protection of the environment, with a critique of a development model based only on economic growth.

1.2.1. The positions of Pope Francis' predecessors.

Even if the encyclical *Laudato Si'* might require a significant political, economic and societal change to realize Francis' vision, the ideas themselves are not radical, or at least not for the Catholic Church.

In 1963, Pope John XXIII, in the encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, addressed his message to the whole Catholic world, but also to all men of goodwill. He emphasized the world's growing interdependence and he discussed problems emerging which the traditional political mechanisms could no longer address. The Pope extended the traditional principle of the common good from the nation-state to the world community: «Ecological concern has now heightened our awareness of how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and everyone is responsible, although those most responsible are often the least affected. The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental

September 20, 2020, <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/what-is-an-encyclical/>

60 FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*: *On care for our common home*, (24 May 2015), par.3

61 Andrea Tilche and Antonello Nociti, «*Laudato Si'*: The Beauty of Pope Francis' Vision», *S.A.P.I.EN.S. Surveys and Perspectives Integrating Environment and Society*, n. 8.1, 26

November 2015, retrieved September 21, 2020, <http://journals.openedition.org/sapiens/1704>

ethic⁶²».

In 1971, Pope Paul VI talked about the ecological issue as a consequence of unchecked human activity: «Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature, he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation⁶³». He also spoke to the FAO, about the possibility of a real ecological catastrophe, stressing the urgency and the need for a radical change in the conduct of humanity because «the most extraordinary scientific progress, the most astounding technical feats and the most amazing economic growth, unless accompanied by authentic moral and social progress, will in the long run, go against man⁶⁴».

Pope John Paul II, in his first encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis*, warned that: «Man often seems to see no other meaning in his natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption⁶⁵». Subsequently, in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, he called for global ecological conversion, but at the same time, he pointed out that «little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic "human ecology"⁶⁶». Every aspiration to cure and improve the world «requires above all a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies⁶⁷». The authentic human development has a moral character and presupposes full respect for the human person, but it must also pay attention to the natural world and «to take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the cosmos⁶⁸».

In 2007, Pope Francis' predecessor Benedict XVI invited «eliminating the structural causes of the dysfunctions of the world economy and correcting models of growth which have proved incapable of ensuring respect for the

62 «Catholic social teaching and environmental ethics», Webofcreation, (n.d.), retrieved September 22, 2020, <http://www.webofcreation.org/DenominationalStatements/catholic.htm>

63 PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens* (14 May 1971), par. 21

64 PAUL VI, Address to the FAO on the 25th anniversary of its institution (16 November 1970), par.4

65 JOHN PAUL II, encyclical Letter *Redemption hominis* (4 March 1979), par.15

66 JOHN PAUL II, encyclical letter *Centesimus annus* (1 May 1991), par.38

67 JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus annus*, par.58

68 JOHN PAUL II, encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (30 December 1987), par. 34

environment⁶⁹». In the encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate*, he recognized that: «The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa. The deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: when "human ecology" is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits⁷⁰».

Many theologians and historians refer to Pope Benedict XVI as 'The Green Pope', because of the frequency and passion with which he preached on the importance of caring for the environment and those affected by its mistreatment⁷¹. The lack of a major document on climate change does not diminish the action Benedict XVI took to speak against the onset of climate change.

The positions of the Popes demonstrate that also inside the Catholic Church, the debate on the environment and the risks of a model of development merely focused on economic growth, has been a central theme.

1.3 2015, a milestone year.

The whole path towards sustainable development culminated in 2015, defined 'the year of sustainable development', because it is characterized by a series of events, which might exercise a relevant influence on the future shaping of sustainable development, by decisively changing its course⁷²: the evaluation of the MDGs' results and the approval of the following 2030 Agenda (September 2015), the encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis (May 2015), the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Abeba (July 2015) and the Paris Agreement on climate change (December 2015).

1.3.1. Evaluating the MDGs' results and discussing the financing for development.

69 BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See (8 January 2007)

70 BENEDICT XVI, encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate* (29 June 2009), par. 51

71 William L. Patenaude, «The “Green Pope” and a Human Ecology», *Catholic World Report*, 22 April 2014, retrieved September 24, 2020, <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2014/04/22/the-green-pope-and-a-human-ecology/>.

72 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.9

The global mobilization behind the MDGs has produced a successful anti-poverty movement in history. Although significant achievement has been made in many of the MDGs worldwide, progress has been uneven across regions and countries.

The 2015 *Millennium Development Goals Report* identified some critical aspects that continue to persist: gender inequality, gaps between the poorest and the richest households and between rural and urban areas, climate change and environmental degradation, conflicts, millions of poor people who still live in poverty and hunger (in 2015, about 800 million people still lived in extreme poverty and 57 million children of primary school age were not in school)⁷³.

The experience of MDGs and the recognition of their limits offered numerous lessons for the following 2030 Agenda. The Agenda, starting from MDGs' results, proposes an idea of holistic development, going beyond the mandate to finish the work started with the MDGs.

Moreover, in 2015, the debate about financing for development was revitalized.

In July 2015, in Addis Abeba (Ethiopia), the Third International Conference on Financing for Development took place⁷⁴. The result of the Conference, the Addis Abeba Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, provided a foundation for implementing the global sustainable development agenda that world leaders were expected to adopt in September⁷⁵.

The Action Agenda was a document of thirty-one pages divided into two main parts. The first part established the global framework for financing post-2015 development, while the second part was dedicated to Areas of Action that included national public resources, companies and the private financial sector national and international, international development cooperation, international trade as a driver of development, debt sustainability, systemic issues, scientific

73 UNDESA, *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, (New York: 2015), p.8

74 The First International Conference, which launched the debate on financing for development, took place in Monterrey (Mexico), in March 2002. It has established the target of 0,7% RNL/PIL about the APS of the donor countries. The Second Conference took place in Doha (Qatar) between November and December 2008 and it aimed to relaunch the agreements taken in Monterrey. In June 2009 another Conference was held in New York to address the repercussions of the global financial crisis on development finance.

75 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)*, A/RES/69/313, (17 August 2015)

and technological innovation, capacity building, data collection and monitoring and follow-up⁷⁶.

The document recognized that official development aid – known as Official Development Assistance (ODA) – alone is not sufficient for sustainable development. It should be accompanied by all sources of funding that can be deployed for this purpose, public and private, national and international.

On one side the document adopted in Addis Abeba defined what public finance contributions should be, emphasizing the growing role of national, international and multilateral development banks; on the other side, it sought to identify specific initiatives that can support the implementation of the SDGs and encourage private investment, especially those oriented to the long term⁷⁷.

The Action Agenda provided for:

- a new international framework for financing sustainable development that aligns financial flows and policies according to economic, social and environmental priorities.
- More than 100 concrete measures addressing all sources of finance and covering cooperation on a range of issues including technology, science, innovation, trade and capacity building, to support the implementation of sustainable development goals⁷⁸.

The United Nations Secretary-General, in the Report on the Addis Abeba Conference, remembered that the Action Agenda is a guide for actions by Government, civil society, international organizations, the business sector. Alongside the Action Agenda, the results announced at the Conference's sideline meetings and additional initiatives will be added. He is aware that it is difficult to quantify the commitments made in the Addis Abeba Conference, because of the differences in methodologies used. But according to estimates, he affirmed, «a total amount of between half a trillion dollars in resources could be made available for investment in sustainable development, much of it through

76 Mazzali and Lupi, «The post-2015 Agenda», p.20

77 Lenzi et al, «A global pact», p.58

78 Mazzali and Lupi, «The post-2015 Agenda», p.20

development banks, with additional resources from the private sector⁷⁹».

The Action Agenda required a significant effort to concretize the SDGs, involving a massive financial investment.

1.3.2. The encyclical *Laudato Si'*: on care for our common home.

In June 2015, two months before the United Nations released the 2030 Agenda, Pope Francis published what would become, concerning international politics, an impactful papal encyclical in recent times, the encyclical letter *Laudato Si': On care for our common home*. The title *Laudato Si'* is an Umbrian phrase from the famous religious song *Canticle of the Sun* by Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron Saint of ecology.

Tilche and Nocini affirmed: «This e letter is the most innovative among the many proposals put forward by world leaders in recent years on the road that should lead us to take common decisions on climate change and on the road that recently led the United Nations to agree on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals⁸⁰».

Pope Francis expressed his convictions on the day of the 2030 Agenda release.

He was a guest speaker at the United Nations. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, he stressed that a "right of environment" exists. The first reason is that «we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits that human activity must acknowledge and respect. Any harm done to the environment is harm done to humanity». The second reason is that «every creature, particularly a living creature, has a value, in its existence, its life, its beauty, and its interdependence with other creatures⁸¹».

Then, he focused on the social consequences of the destruction of the environment, namely a process of exclusion. The search for selfish power and an

79 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Outcome of the third International Conference on Financing for Development. Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/320*, (13 August 2015), p. 3

80 Tilche and Nocini, « The beauty of Francis' vision», par.3

81 FRANCIS, Address of his holiness Pope Francis to the seventy-fifth meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations, (25 September 2020)

accumulation of material goods leads to an abuse of natural resources and the exclusion of the marginalized groups. Economic and social exclusion is a consequence of the denial of human solidarity and an offense against human rights and the environment. According to the Pope, the poorest are the most affected by such acts of violence, for three reasons: the poor are cast off by society, they live off what is discarded and suffer from the abuse of the environment. They are part of today's widespread and quietly growing "culture of waste"⁸²».

The same convictions have been reaffirmed in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

The question that is driving the document and is the heart of the discussion is 'What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?'⁸³. The thesis of the encyclical is that the world is not facing two separate crises, one environmental and one social, but one single complex crisis, due to the deep connection between environment and poverty.

The encyclical Letter does not focus directly on the concept of sustainable development. However, it contains a severe critique of the current development model based on a technocratic paradigm dominated by purely economic considerations and affected by the failure to take into proper account the environmental damage that the dominant logic of maximization of profits brings about.

Sustainable development is mentioned as an inevitable goal to be pursued within the required quest for the necessary change⁸⁴. According to the appeal launched by Pope Francis, the call to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development⁸⁵.

In paragraph 16 of the encyclical, the Pope personally indicates some themes that recur, resumed, in-depth, seen from a different point of view. He cited the relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of

82 *Ibidem*

83 FRANCIS, encyclical letter *Laudato Si: On care for our common home* (24 May 2015), par. 160

84 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.10

85 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.3

power derived from technology, the necessity to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each culture, the human meaning of ecology the need for honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policies, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle. These themes will be addressed, reworked and analyzed from different perspectives⁸⁶.

In the first chapter, *What is happening to our common home*, Pope Francis presents his assessment of the state of the world. There is a broad consensus among scholars, community leaders, and activists that problems about energy and environment, climate change, inequity, violence and war cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems, and so they require corresponding systemic solutions.

In the second chapter, *The Gospel of Creation*, Pope Francis is discussing how «faith convictions offer to Christian, and in part also to other believers, high motivations to take care of nature and the most fragile brothers and sisters⁸⁷». He is going inside what the Bible offers: «the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man "dominion" over the earth has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature». However, according to the Pope, this is not the correct interpretation as given by the Church.

The third chapter, *The human roots of the ecological crisis*, examines the human origins of our current situation and explores the use and the dangers of overuse of technology. Pope Francis stresses that «in modernity, there has been a considerable anthropocentric excess, which today continues to undermine any reference to something common and any attempt to strengthen social ties⁸⁸».

Chapter four, denominated *Integral ecology*, is the heart of the encyclical. It affirms the inseparable relationship between environmental issues and social and human issues. The Pope affirms that we are faced with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. At the beginning of the chapter, he affirms that

86 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.16

87 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.64

88 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.122

integral ecology is «a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis⁸⁹».

Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature⁹⁰». He is calling for preferential opportunities for people who live in poverty, those most harmed by ecological degradation.

Chapter five, denominated *Lines of Approach and Action*, assesses the achievement of efforts at international and local levels to protect the environment. Worldwide, the ecological movement has made significant advances, especially due to the actions of many organizations of civil society⁹¹». But the Pope decries the lack of political leadership to achieve the urgently needed global consensus. He criticized politics focused on immediate results because this impedes a far-sighted environmental agenda within the public agenda of the Governments. At the end of this chapter, he clarifies that «the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But it is concerned to encourage honest and open debate⁹²».

Finally, chapter six, *Ecological Education and spirituality*, emphasized that human beings above all, need to change. This lifestyle change can put pressure on those who wield political, economic and social power. Pope Francis proposes once again the challenge of the Earth Charter⁹³: as never before in history, common destiny asks to seek a new beginning. There is the need for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life⁹⁴».

Overall, the encyclical *Laudato Si'* addresses many social issues, embedded within their economic and environmental contexts, such as unemployment,

89 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.137

90 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.139

91 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.166

92 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.188

93 The Earth Charter, approved in 2000, is an internationally approved declaration of fundamental ethical principles, that aims to build a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century.

94 FRANCIS, encyclical Letter, *Laudato si'*: *On care for our common home* (24 May 2015), par.207

barriers to people leading a dignified life, injustices, the deprivation of basic human rights. The document is calling people and society as a whole to defend and promote the common good.

1.3.3. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

From the Conference on Sustainable Development of Rio de Janeiro in 2012, the SDGs have been built following the framework of the MDGs, about the eradication of poverty, socio-economic inequalities, social inclusion, promotion of equal opportunities, sustainable use of natural resources, good governance and peace and stability.

The Agenda was adopted in 2015 by the Head of State at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, held from 25 to 27 September in New York.

In the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the 2030 Agenda is universal, transformative and integrated and has the potential to be a historic turning point for the world, the result of an open, transparent and inclusive process. Ban Ki-moon affirmed that «this is the People's Agenda, a plan of action for ending poverty in all its dimensions, irreversibly, everywhere, and leaving no one behind. It seeks to ensure peace and prosperity, and forge partnerships with people and the planet at the core». He considered the 17 SDGs as «people's goals», confirming the ambition of the 2030 Agenda⁹⁵.

The structure of the Agenda is the following:

- The Preamble.
- The Declaration.
- The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets to be achieved by all countries by 2030.
- The Means of implementation (MoI), which specify the resources and

95 UNITED NATIONS Secretary-General, *Statement by the Secretary-General following agreement on the Outcome Document of the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, 2 August 2015, retrieved September 27, 2020, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2015-08-02/statement-secretary-general-following-agreement-outcome-document>

partnerships that are necessary to reach the agreed goals and targets.

- The Follow-up and Review (FUR) processes and mechanisms will monitor and guide the implementation, including global indicators framework⁹⁶.

The final text contains these five parts that include the 17 SDGs and the 169 targets proposed by the OWG in 2014, only partially modified.

The description of objectives and targets is preceded by a Preamble, centered on five keywords – the five P – which introduce an action plan for People, Planet and Prosperity. It emphasized the strengthening of universal Peace and recognizes the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, as the biggest global challenge and the fundamental premise for sustainable development.

The Preamble indicates the universal and cooperative nature of the Agenda – the Partnership – and the commitment to ensure that no one is left behind⁹⁷. It contains a commitment of the parties to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner⁹⁸.

The Preamble is followed by a Declaration in fifty-three paragraphs divided into sections: first, a general introduction and the vision behind the Agenda, that reaffirms the will to build an inclusive world, fair, free from poverty and which gives well-being and development opportunities to all human beings in respect of the environment and in harmony with nature.

Then, the Declaration reaffirms a series of principles shared by the member countries as the basis of the renewed commitment, including the Rio+20 Declaration and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities⁹⁹.

A reference to the MDGs and the challenges still open precedes the body of the Declaration, represented by 'The new Agenda', which is the section with several paragraphs and outlines the commitments enshrined in the objectives and targets, recalling some key elements of the approach, including the recognition of the

96 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015)

97 Mazzali and Lupi, «The post-2015 Agenda», p.11

98 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.12

99 Mazzali and Lupi, «The post-2015 Agenda» p.12

importance of attention to sustainability and the role of some actors such as women and migrants¹⁰⁰. The following section of the Declaration stresses the need to build a new partnership and revitalize the Means of Implementation. The text refers to the results of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development concluded in Addis Abeba on 16 July 2015¹⁰¹, reaffirming the role of Official Development Assistance as a catalyst for the mobilization of resources – not only financial – from other sources including the private sector, civil society and philanthropic organisations¹⁰².

In the penultimate section, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is assigned the central role at the global level for the management of the follow-up to the adoption of the Agenda, with governments as the first responsible¹⁰³. To this end, the capacities of statistical institutions, especially in African countries, need to be strengthened to ensure an adequate and reliable flow of data on indicators. Joint efforts to develop indicators complementary to GDP for measuring progress are also mentioned¹⁰⁴.

The last section calls for action the various actors including, in addition to governments and international institutions, also parliaments, local authorities, indigenous people, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific community and the entire population¹⁰⁵.

The Declaration is followed by the central part of the Document, entitled Sustainable Development Goals and Targets, with the list of 17 Goals and 169 targets, with some modifications to the proposal presented by the OWG in July 2014. These are mainly technical reviews that can be identified in Goal two (nutrition), three (health), four (education), six (water), seven (energy), eight (economic growth and employment), nine (infrastructure), eleven (urbanization), fourteen (oceans and seas), fifteen (territorial ecosystems) and seventeen (Moi)¹⁰⁶.

100 *Ibidem*

101 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015), par. 40

102 Resolution 70/1, par.43

103 Resolution 70/1, par.47

104 Resolution 70/1, par.48

105 Resolution 70/1, par.52

106 Mazzali and Lupi, «The post-2015 Agenda», p.12

The 17 SDGs are:

- *Goal 1:* End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- *Goal 2:* End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- *Goal 3:* Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- *Goal 4:* Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- *Goal 5:* Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- *Goal 6:* Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- *Goal 7:* Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- *Goal 8:* Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- *Goal 9:* Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- *Goal 10:* Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- *Goal 11:* Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- *Goal 12:* Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- *Goal 13:* Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.¹⁰⁷
- *Goal 14:* Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- *Goal 15:* Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- *Goal 16:* Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective,

¹⁰⁷ Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

- *Goal 17*: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The fourth part of the Agenda deepens the topic of the Means of Implementation and the Global Partnership. It specifies the relationship between the Addis Abeba Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda and reiterates that SDGs can only be implemented in a context of revitalized global partnership, supported by policies and concrete actions outlined in the Addis Abeba Action Agenda. Furthermore, it states that «the Addis Abeba Action Agenda supports, complements and helps contextualize the 2030 Agenda's means of implementation targets¹⁰⁸». The Agenda reproduces also Paragraph 123 of the Addis Abeba Action Agenda, establishing the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), to support the achievement of objectives based on multi-stakeholder collaboration between the Member States, the scientific community, the private sector, civil society, United Nations entities and other stakeholders. It will be composed of a United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the SDGs, a collaborative multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for SDGs and an online platform¹⁰⁹.

Finally, the last part of the document defines the framework for the follow-up and review at national, regional and global levels.

A specific commitment is made for support to developing countries, particularly African countries, least developed countries, small islands and landlocked developing countries, in strengthening the capacity of national statistical offices and data systems to ensure access to high-quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data¹¹⁰. At the national level, States have to conduct a regular and inclusive review of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven¹¹¹.

108 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015), par.62

109 Resolution 70/1, par.70

110 Resolution 70/1, par.76

111 Resolution 70/1, par.79

At the regional level, follow-up and review can provide useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets¹¹². Finally, at the global level, the High-level political forum will receive from the Secretary-General the annual SDG Progress Report based on national and regional statistics, as well as the Global Sustainable Development Report, which shall strengthen the science-policy interface¹¹³.

Though the goals are broad and interdependent, in July 2017 the SDGs were made more "actionable" by a UNGA resolution. The global indicator framework for SDGs was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDGs Indicators and agreed upon at the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission held in March 2017. The global indicator framework was later adopted by the General Assembly Resolution on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development¹¹⁴. It identifies specific targets for every goal, along with indicators that are being used to measure progress toward each target. The global indicator framework is complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels and the Member States have the responsibility to develop them.

If we compare the SDGs with the MDGs, the effort to promote a commitment in full continuity with the 2000 Objectives, renewed and strengthened, is clear.

For example, the two documents pass from halving absolute poverty – MDG1 – to its total elimination – SDG1. There has been also an enlargement of the agenda, based on the three pillars (social, economic and environmental), and no longer just on the social pillar as in the case of the MDGs, which explains the more than doubled number of objectives¹¹⁵. Given that the realm of the SDGs is more comprehensive than that of the MDGs, it is normal that they need significantly more words to spell out than the original MDGs. They also include more targets (169 vs. 48) and require substantially more indicators to monitor (231 vs. 48)¹¹⁶.

112 Resolution 70/1, par.80

113 Resolution 70/1, par.83

114 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/71/313, (6 July 2017)

115 Jan Vandemoortele, «SDGs: The Tyranny of an Acronym?», *Impakter*, 13 September 2016, retrieved October 1, 2020, <https://impakter.com/sdgs-tyranny-acronym/>.

116 *Ibidem*

With the Agenda, the attempt has been to avoid a sectorial logic, that is limited only to adding to each other a list of distinct and numerous objectives, some connected with the social dimension of development, others with the economic dimension and others with the environmental dimension¹¹⁷. In the intentions, the logic should be that of the integrated approach of the three dimensions, which captures the complexity of the real in which they coexist¹¹⁸, because the challenges linked to dignity, socio-economic inequalities and sustainable development are global and interrelated.

While those of the millennium were considered goals to be pursued for the poor countries of the world, the new goals are for everyone, rich and poor, because all the countries are to be considered developing if we think about a fair and sustainable growth¹¹⁹. The SDGs do not have a binding regime, but only a reputational one. They don't provide for any penalty measures for countries if they fail to keep a commitment¹²⁰. The SDGs are a declaration of aspirations, framed with a voluntary agreement, but not an obligatory accord.

The United Nations' position on the voluntary nature of the agreement is that governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of outcomes of the goals.

The SDGs give the national Governments the responsibility to translate the universal priorities about equality, fundamental rights and common goods in national plans. They recognized the primacy of the States in the definition of their policies, in conformity with what has been established at the international level¹²¹.

The Report of the World Social Situation of UNDESA states that only Governments can establish inclusive and secure legal, administrative and regulatory environments at the national and local levels. Their action is crucial in curtailing the excessive concentration of power and influence that ultimately

117 Mazzali and Lupi, «The post-2015 Agenda», p.14

118 *Ibidem*

119 Cristiana Pulcinelli, «Agenda 2030: the steps of global challenges», *Rivistamicon*, 15 November 2019, retrieved October 1, 2020,

<https://www.rivistamicon.it/approfondimenti/agenda-2030-i-passi-delle-sfide-globali/>.

120 *Ibidem*

121 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.57

results in exclusion¹²².

However, in addition to the role of Governments, the 2030 Agenda emphasizes the important contribution that civil society, the private sector and the system of the United Nations can provide to the States. The SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development – promotes cooperation in strategic sectors such as finance, technology, development capacity and trade¹²³.

It recognizes the cooperation at North-South, South-South and triangular levels, at the regional and international levels, but also the cooperation at the public, public-private and civil society levels, as strategic for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda¹²⁴.

The multi-stakeholder partnership is necessary for reaching the universal value of the new objectives, to reduce the inequality that affects even the most advanced countries. Even if with the MDGs the level of poverty declined, inequality continues to persist in the regions and States¹²⁵. The 'To leave no one behind' of the Agenda is, therefore, about whether a person's characteristics (inherent or perceived) exclude them from the opportunities enjoyed by others. These characteristics may fuel each other¹²⁶.

Furthermore, the dimension of environmental sustainability is the leitmotif of all the SDGs and SDG 13 is specifically devoted to combating climate change.

The 2030 Agenda states that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change. COP 21 led to a global agreement that brought all nations into a common cause, to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.

122 UNDESA, 2016, *Leaving no one behind. The Imperative of Inclusive Development. Report on the World Social Situation 2016*, ST/ESA/362, (New York: 2016), p. 136

123 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.57

124 Mezzasalma, «The effectiveness of development», p.58

125 World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016)

126 Elizabeth Stuart et al., *Leaving no one behind. A Critical Path for the First 1,000 Days of the Sustainable Development Goals* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2016), p.17

1.3.4. The last 2015 initiative: the Paris Agreement.

During the 21st annual session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change, in December 2015, one hundred and ninety-seven States have adopted the Paris Agreement, a global commitment to face the climate crisis.

During their address to the COP, six nations mentioned Pope Francis: out of these six, five – Italy, the Holy See, Mauritius, Paraguay and Ecuador – quoted Francis's Encyclical, and Guatemala mentioned the Pope and his environmental ideas¹²⁷.

Because of their proximity to the Pope and the extent to which Catholicism is ingrained in their culture, it is not at all surprising that Italy and the Holy See mentioned Pope Francis and his encyclical. Mauritius, an island nation to the east of Madagascar, is an interesting case. It has neither a link with the Pope nor a significantly Catholic population¹²⁸. Perhaps, the urgency of Mauritius's need for dynamic action to combat climate change or its geographic isolation led it to be more influenced by *Laudato Si'*. In her speech, President Gurib-Fakim reminds the COP of the considerable danger that Mauritius faces from rising ocean levels because they are surrounded by water¹²⁹.

The other three, Ecuador, Paraguay and Guatemala, are Latin American countries with large Catholic populations. All of these nations speak French, the Pope's first language.

Culturally, these three nations have much in common with Pope Francis.

It would be interesting to discuss why the rest of Central and South America did not cite Francis in their statements. These three Latin-American nations are poorer and emit less carbon dioxide than the rest of Central and South America. Francis's words, so focused on the poor, have a stronger effect on the nations that embody these characteristics. Furthermore, he personally visited two of these three nations (Ecuador and Paraguay). Pope Francis shared *Laudato Si'* ideas with President

127 Jack DiSorbo, «Pope Francis and *Laudato Si'*: An Evaluation of Papal Influence in Global Environmental Policy», (PhD dissertation, University of Texas, 2017), p.83

128 *Ibidem*

129 DiSorbo, «Evaluation Papal influence», p.85

Correa and President Cartes and these two men relayed the message at COP 21¹³⁰. For example, President Horacio Cartes of Paraguay cited *Laudato Si'* during his intervention: «In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, his holiness Pope Francis has made a dramatic warning to face this crisis and protect the sources of our life, supported by the fact that we have never hurt and mistreated our common home like we have in the last centuries»¹³¹. The encyclical had a strong influence on political leaders during COP 21.

The Paris Agreement shows a completely new approach concerning the relationship between climate change and sustainable development, which fully and strongly recognizes the need to integrate climate change and sustainable development considerations¹³². The signatory Parties to the Paris Agreement, on the one side, in the Preamble, affirm in general terms the close link between climate change and sustainable development, by «emphasizing the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty¹³³» and, on the other side, in article 2, state that the Agreement, «in enhancing the implementation of the Convention, including its objective, aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty¹³⁴».

Sustainable development will not be an indirect and accessory objective in the climate change and initiatives, but will rather be a direct and integral constitutive element of the efforts made by the international community, in particular concerning the future implementation of the new economic instrument introduced by the Paris Agreement, namely the mechanism for sustainable development¹³⁵. Article 6.4 establishes a centralized governance system for countries and the private sector to trade emissions reduction in the world. The system, known as the Sustainable Development Mechanism, (SDM) replaces the Clean

130 DiSorbo, «Evaluation Papal influence», pp.86-87

131 DiSorbo, «Evaluation Papal influence», p.36

132 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.14

133 UNFCCC Conference of the parties, 21st session, *Paris Agreement*, FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1, (12 December 2015), p. 21

134 UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement*, p. 22

135 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.15

Development Mechanism (CDM), established under the Kyoto Protocol¹³⁶.

The Paris Agreement brought all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. It has established:

- Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change¹³⁷;
- Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production¹³⁸;
- Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development¹³⁹.

The Paris Agreement represents an effective and long-term international commitment to face climate change. Governments have agreed to meet every five years to discuss the strategies undertaken and the progress made, through a process based on transparency and responsibility.

The implementation of Goal 13 of the SDGs ("to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts") which will take place alongside the implementation of the Paris Agreement, creates an important opportunity to promote successful integration of the related goals of climate change on the one side and sustainable development on the other side¹⁴⁰.

The challenges for COP 21 are very similar to those of the post-2015 agenda: it is necessary to understand whether these documents are unrealistic and rhetorical utopias or if they can really be implemented in practice. The encyclical itself has been subject to criticism, to the point of being defined an "ecological utopia".

136 «What Is Article 6? The Issue Climate Negotiators Cannot Agree», Climate Home News, 2 December 2019, retrieved October, 7, 2020
<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2019/12/02/article-6-issue-climate-negotiators-cannot-agree/>.

137 UNFCCC, *Paris Agreement*, p. 22

138 *Ibidem*

139 *Ibidem*

140 Montini and Volpe, «Sustainable development at a turning point», p.16

Of course, sustainable development is now at the center of the scene and the next few decades will be crucial to determine whether a turning point for its meaningful implementation will be reached or not.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to reconstruct the main historical stages of sustainable development. In fact, the important initiatives adopted in 2015 are the result of an increasingly articulated discussion on the subject.

At the international level, the United Nations declarations of principles and programs of actions have played a programmatic role in guiding the actions of the States. The same principle of sustainable development has evolved until reaching the tripartite definition based on three interdependent pillars, namely the economic, the social and the environmental, that has been adopted in the Agenda too. At the same time, papal encyclicals and their speeches to the United Nations General Assembly influenced international politics: a significant example was the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

The next chapters will focus on the criticisms raised to the 2030 Agenda. It will be considered a possible theoretical and practical contribution that Pope Francis' encyclical can provide to the SDGs implementation.

The main aspects addressed will be:

- The critical aspects of the paradigms that guide the 2030 Agenda. It will be discussed the contribution of the integral ecology paradigm to the paradigms of the Agenda.
- The critical aspects of the SDGs for their implementation, since they are distant from the local needs. The capacity of the encyclical in activating initiatives and mobilizing the actors from below in support of SDGs achievement will be considered.

Chapter II

Economic and social criticisms to the 2030 Agenda: the contribution of the integral ecology paradigm

Introduction

This chapter discusses the criticism raised to the 2030 Agenda paradigms and investigates whether the encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis can promote SDGs achievement, through its integral ecology paradigm. It will be considered if it provides a theoretical but above all a practical contribution, starting initiatives inspired by integral ecology. It will be analyzed the criticism raised to the economic growth paradigm about its incompatibility with the other paradigms. It will be presented the integral ecology paradigm, which contains the Pope's position about economic growth. Another criticism concerns the impossibility to fully concretize the paradigms of human development and human rights without adopting a more critical perspective on the causes of poverty and inequality that the social targets ignore. This criticism will be confronted with the integral ecology paradigm, that according to the Pope, is also a paradigm of social justice. The last part of the chapter is going to analyze the contributions, theoretical and practical, that the *Laudato Si'*, with integral ecology, has provided to the 2030 Agenda. The chapter concludes by presenting Kate Raworth's socio-economic model and Jeremy Rifkin's proposal of a new paradigm, that incorporates some aspects of the integral ecology paradigm. The integral ecology paradigm can stimulate actions that support the transition towards sustainable development.

2.1. Agenda 2030 and *Laudato Si'*: elements of difference and elements of comparison.

Sustainable development, originally outlined in the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* and expanded upon in the intervening decades, has been largely conducted in secular terms. According to Christie, M.Gunton and Hejnowicz,

«little acknowledgment has been given to the role potentially played by religious faiths as major social systems offering narratives, ethics and practices that can give powerful expression and support to value shifts and behavioral changes»¹⁴¹. The role of religion ought to be considered into analyses of value shifts¹⁴²». Christie, M. Gunton and Hejnowicz believe that the actions towards sustainable development have to consider the massive demographic, cultural and political presence of faith institutions and communities, because religious institutions and communities, especially the Christian, are aware of the necessity to transition towards sustainable development. The most important example of this development within the faith traditions and communities came in 2015, when Pope Francis published his Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*¹⁴³.

Even if international relations and human rights scholars show little interest in the papacy, the role of the Pope, who is the leader of the largest transnational religious group, the Church, cannot be ignored. According to Jodok Troy, «religious actors and their political views are commonly assumed to be conservative, static and aligned with the private contemplative world. However, Popes always engage with politics: religious ideas and configurations change in relation to macro-political developments because they are inherently political»¹⁴⁴. The Pope stated his position in the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* and later, in his address at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. Troy remembered that the United Nations General Assembly is an important forum to promote a message in the global political arena and has been the stage where Francis exposed his vision

141 Ian Christie, Richard M. Gunton and Adam Hejnowicz, «Sustainability and the common good: Catholic Social Teaching and the Integral Ecology as contributions to a framework of social values for sustainability transitions», *Sustainability Science* 14 (1343-1354), September 2019, retrieved December 23, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332884678_Sustainability_and_the_common_good_Catholic_Social_Teaching_and_'Integral_Ecology'_as_contributions_to_a_framework_of_social_values_for_sustainability_transitions, p.1344

142 Christofer D. Ives and Jeremy Kidwell, «Religions and social values for sustainability», *Sustainability Science*, 14 (1355-1362), 2019, retrieved February 1, 2021, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11625-019-00657-0>

143 Ian Christie, Richard M. Gunton and Adam Hejnowicz, «Sustainability and the common good: Catholic Social Teaching and the Integral Ecology as contributions to a framework of social values for sustainability transitions», p.1344

144 Jodok Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1 February 2019, retrieved December 6, 2020 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331062731_The_Papal_Human_Rights_Discourse_The_Difference_Pope_Francis_Makes, pp.67-69

on human rights and environmental collective goods, the day of the approval of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations General Assembly¹⁴⁵.

The 2030 Agenda and the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* are two documents from very different genesis and with a different design plan.

The SDGs are born from a fifteen-year effort to implement the Millennium Development Goals, but are marked by a deep financial crisis and strong social and political upheavals on the planet. The 2030 Agenda is an action program, signed by the Governments of the 193 member countries of the United Nations. There are some aspects, proper of the 2030 Agenda, that the encyclical does not present, given the different nature of the documents:

- The follow-up and review mechanism: all countries are called upon to commit themselves to define their sustainable development strategy. Each country is assessed annually at the UN through the activity of the High-Level Political Forum, which has the task of evaluating progress, results and challenges for all countries¹⁴⁶. Every country is monitored through Goals, Targets and over two hundred forty indicators. Furthermore, paragraph seventy-nine of the Agenda encourages the Member States to conduct regular reviews of progress at national and sub-national levels, voluntarily.
- Financing and mobilization of resources: the financial framework, consistent with the achievement of the SDGs, was outlined with the Addis Abeba Action Plan. It establishes a catalog of measures thanks to which it will be possible to ensure the financing of the 2030 Agenda, such as mobilization of natural resources, private financial resources, targeted use of public development cooperation, non-financial measures (scientific and technological research and innovation) for the implementation of the objectives¹⁴⁷.

145 Troy, « The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.78

146 «Agenda 2030 for sustainable development», *Agenzia per la coesione territoriale* (blog), retrieved 30 November 2020, <https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/comunicazione/agenda-2030-per-lo-svilupposostenibile/>

147 «Financing and implementation», *Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Swiss Confederation*, retrieved 30 November 2020, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/agenda2030/it/home/internationale-ebene/finanzierung-und->

Encyclicals have neither a review mechanism nor a funding mechanism. Encyclicals indicate high papal priority for an issue at any given time and are elaborated in light of the social doctrine of the Church. The *Laudato Si'* presents the attitude of the Catholic Church about pressing ecological and social issues, in continuity with previous Popes' positions, but with certainly new elaboration in the overall proposal¹⁴⁸.

In fact, the Pope directed the Encyclical message to every person who inhabits the planet, not only to the members of the Catholic Church¹⁴⁹. Troy remembered that «from the time when Francis addressed the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, it has been argued that he is "doing away with human rights" as set out in the Universal Declaration of human rights of 1948»¹⁵⁰, unlike his predecessors did there¹⁵¹. Rather than only referring to individual human rights, he referred to «social justice, structural problems, the periphery, and collective solutions, which individual rights do not solve»¹⁵².

Although Francis' distance from the mainstream discourse, his message was welcomed by different economists, journalists and religious leaders as a contribution from the Holy See in support of an active commitment to the Heads of States and Government. Many world leaders, such as Barack Obama, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Kofi Annan, have seen in the Pope's announcement the firm determination to work around a common table for the protection of the planet.

The Church does not have a catalog of solutions to offer, because in terms of institutional responsibility, the 2030 Agenda indicates the priority SDGs to be pursued¹⁵³, but the Pope aims to elaborate these solutions together since we are all

[umsetzung.html](#)

148 Salvatore Monni and Massimo Pallottino, «Sustainable Development Goals? Better the *Laudato Si'*», *Menabò di Etica ed Economia* (blog), 16 November 2015, retrieved November 9, 2020, <https://www.eticaeconomia.it/sustainable-development-goals-meglio-la-laudato-si/>

149 Laura De Gregorio, «*Laudato Si'*: for an authentically Christian ecology», *Stato, Chiesa e pluralismo confessionale*, n.41/2016, retrieved November 30, 2020, https://www.statoechiese.it/images/uploads/articoli_pdf/degregorio.m_laudato.pdf?pdf=laudato-si- unecologia-autenticamente-cristiana

150 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.74

151 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.78-79

152 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.74

153 Walter Ganapini, «*Laudato Si'* Community: designing actions, evaluating implementation,

involved.

Despite the different origins of the documents, this does not mean that they do not have comparable dimensions. It is not the task of an encyclical, as stated also by the Pope, to replace politics. But some dimensions can be compared and are subject to discussion. These comparable dimensions are:

- the paradigms, namely the reference models that guide and inspire the documents. The challenges posed by sustainable development require the evolution of the economic, social and cultural paradigms expressed by our current model of development. The 2030 Agenda proposes its paradigms to achieve sustainable development, however, the proposed paradigms have been defined by some authors as not completely transformative, especially in relation to the economic dimension, or its targets are sometimes not complete and specific. The chapter is going to discuss the main paradigms that guide the 2030 Agenda compared with the integral ecology paradigm of the Encyclical.
- The second comparable dimension refers to the capacity of the two documents to mobilize the actors. Achieving sustainable development requires the involvement of national governments and experts, but it is equally important the involvement of local governments, local communities and individuals. The criticism of some authors is that SDGs implementation is often top-down, driven by higher levels of authorities, who are unable to understand the real need of the local communities. Therefore, it will be analyzed if the encyclical *Laudato Si'* calls local communities and individuals to promote initiatives from below, in line with the integral ecology paradigm and with the SDGs.

Paradigms have been debated with contrasting visions.

Some authors, affirm that «the SDGs are not fresh, or paradigm-shifting». They sustain that «the SDGs are staid, timid and mired in a business-as-usual mentality,

certifying results», *Vita*, 12 March 2020, retrieved November 30, 2020, <http://www.vita.it/it/blog/walter-g/2020/03/12/comunita-laudato-siprogettare-le-azioni-valutare-lattuazione-certificare-i-risultati/4822/>

while the Encyclical is visionary, bold, uncompromising and radical¹⁵⁴».

Other authors recognize that «the SDGs, despite their shortcomings, are the main driver for the global development agenda up to 2030 and are meant to represent an unprecedented attempt to contribute to "transforming our world" towards a more sustainable future». They believe that «such a transformative change will be possible only if underpinned by the deep ecological conversion advocated by Pope Francis, both at individual and societal level»¹⁵⁵. A complete paradigm-shift will only be possible through mutual integration of the two documents.

Finally, the last group of authors criticizes the Pope's position, as «wrong about climate change and ignorant about economics and pro-market forces»¹⁵⁶. This position denies the transformative potential of the integral ecology paradigm advocated by the Pope.

In the field of development studies, the concept of paradigm is often used to indicate a net change that affects the different dimensions of development action. The concept underlines a profound change that has taken place over time: there is a before and an after, radically changed. The concept of paradigm applied to the field of development is derived from the use of the term introduced by Thomas Khun in the philosophy of science: a series of postulates, beliefs, methodological rules, explanatory models, criteria for solving problems that limit (or broaden) the field of questions that can be asked and that orient research practices¹⁵⁷.

Marco Bassi, however, emphasized that «there is a substantial difference between the scientific field and that of development. In the first case, the reference public, the one that proposes changes and takes decisions, is a highly specialized community of practice restricted to a particular scientific discipline, a community that essentially shares the principles and reference models. In the second case, it is

154 Hickel, Kirk and Brewer, «The Pope v the UN»

155 Massimiliano Montini and Francesca Volpe, «In Praise of Sustainability: The Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* and its Legal-Economic Implications», *Italian Yearbook of International Law* XXV(2015) (1 January 2016): 311–24, p.20

156 Bruce Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis: The Australian Newspaper and *Laudato Si*», in *Economic and Ecotheological Responses to *Laudato Si** (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2017), p.55

157 Giacomo Costa, «The new gaze of the Encyclical» in "*Laudato Si*" of Pope Francis, *Quaderni per il dialogo e la pace*, Anno XIII, n. 1/2016, retrieved December 15, 2020, <https://www.aclimilano.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Laudato-si-web-vero.pdf>, p.19

a process related to society as a whole, in which certain actors tend to play a differentiated role, based on non-shared considerations and interests»¹⁵⁸. The concept of paradigm presupposes the existence of coherence between the ideological dimension of a given approach and its practical results.

Development needs the definition of specific and measurable objectives, for the achievement of which targeted actions are put in place¹⁵⁹. Bassi remembered also that «while in the scientific field one paradigm takes over from another when the accumulated evidence demonstrates the inadequacy of the current paradigm to the reference scientific community, in the field of development the different paradigms coexist over time and can be in contradiction with each other»¹⁶⁰.

The paradigms confront each other in a dynamic field. The 2030 Agenda is a recent example of how the pillars of sustainability are guided by different paradigms, and their mutual interaction, leads to the pursuit of sustainable development. The SDGs derive from the hybridization of the different basic paradigms, with the mutual consideration of economic, social and environmental aspects¹⁶¹.

Allegri and Perulli affirmed that to achieve a real change, sustainable development requires a paradigm shift concerning the current unsustainable modality assumed by world growth in an economic, ecological and social sense: «starting to produce the crisis of a paradigm does not mean, however, having already produced a viable alternative to the previous paradigm. Indeed, it is necessary to look at the old in a new way and not only collect new data or create new tools, but provide new interpretations; to bring together pieces of experience within the old paradigm and transform them into useful fragments for the construction of the new paradigm»¹⁶². They ask if the 2030 Agenda could be

158 Marco Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», *Antropologia Pubblica*, 4 (1) January 2018, ISSN: 2531-8799, retrieved December 3, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338297705_Paradigmi_dello_Sviluppo_e_Approccio_Relativista, pp.68-69

159 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.69

160 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.70

161 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.88

162 Elena Allegri and Paolo Perulli, «A network of "new regularities" for sustainable development», in *Extracampus*, July 2018, retrieved December 10, 2020, https://multiblog.uniupo.it/sites/default/files/extracampus_2.pdf, p.7

considered as an announcement of desired paradigm change towards sustainability.

The three dimensions of sustainability of the 2030 Agenda are inspired by different paradigms:

- The environmental dimension: it has ecosystem integrity as the main paradigm; the aim is the guarantee of the preservation of the survival of ecosystems. A system subject to external disturbance will retain its integrity if it preserves all its components as well as the functional relationships among the components¹⁶³.

An ecological system has integrity when its ecological characteristics can withstand and recover from perturbations imposed by natural environmental dynamics or human disruptions¹⁶⁴. This paradigm includes ethical considerations: the utilitarian interest in the immediate exploitation of resources is contrasted with attention for future generations, other living organisms and the Earth¹⁶⁵.

- The economic dimension: the economy has growth as the main paradigm. Stagnation and underdevelopment are not considered compatible with the survival of economic systems and with the well-being of men. Economic sustainability is understood as the ability to generate income and work for the livelihood of the population¹⁶⁶. Economic growth, especially measured through the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), constitute the primary objectives of this approach¹⁶⁷.
- The social dimension: it has human development as the main paradigm; the aim is to fight against inequalities and conflicts caused by privileges and differentials between sexes, ages, groups, races and countries. Human

163 Giulio A. De Leo and Simon Levin, «The multifaced aspects of ecosystem integrity», *Conservation ecology*, [online]1(1): 3, 1997, retrieved December 10, 2020, <https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol1/iss1/art3/>

164 Zachary Wurtzebach and Courtney Schultz, «Measuring ecological integrity: history, practical applications, and research opportunities», *Bioscience*, Volume 66, Issue 6, 1 June 2016, pp. 446-457, retrieved December 10, 2020, <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/66/6/446/2754289>

165 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.77

166 «The theories of sustainable development », *Padova Net*

167 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.71

development is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live¹⁶⁸. With the launch of the first Human Development Report (HDR) in 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an alternative narrative of development became available to contrast the prevailing emphasis on income growth¹⁶⁹. According to Bassi, «the theoretical elaborations of the Nobel Prize in Economics Amartya Sen, built around the concepts of equality, attributions (entitlements, in the sense of positive capacity, possibility) and freedom have been fundamental in outlining the characteristics of human development. The approach consists of creating social and economic conditions that can allow people to take action to improve their living conditions»¹⁷⁰.

- The three dimensions: all present the human rights paradigm. The human rights paradigm does not refer to a single pillar, since it is transversal to all pillars of the 2030 Agenda. The human rights paradigm is motivated by the application of basic human rights principles, including equality and non-discrimination, participation, empowerment of the people. The 2030 Agenda “seek to realize the human rights of all”, and the vast majority of the targets reflect provisions of international human rights instruments. Therefore, human rights norms and mechanisms offer guidance for the implementation of the Agenda¹⁷¹. The 2030 Agenda explicitly references the Universal Declaration of human rights and international human rights treaties. 92% of the 169 targets are linked to international human rights instruments. The Agenda covers dimensions related to civil, political,

168 UNDP Human Development Reports, «About human development, what is human development?», retrieved December 5, 2020, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>

169 Jacob Assa, «Rethinking human development in the context of the SDGs», *Development Issues*, September 2019, retrieved December 6, 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335665935_Rethinking_Human_Development_in_the_Context_of_the_SDGs, p.2

170 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.76

171 Nadja Filskov and Birgitte Feiring, «Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», *the Danish institute for human rights*, 2018, retrieved February 2, 2021 https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/dokumenter/sdg/hr_and_2030_agenda-web_2018.pdf, p.7

economic, cultural and environmental rights¹⁷². The 2030 Agenda and human rights mutually reinforce: on the one hand, the 2030 Agenda bases sustainable development on human rights. On the other hand, the objective of development is to realize human rights. As affirmed by the 11th President of the Human Rights Council, Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli: «the question of how States can respect, protect and fulfill human rights within the implementation efforts towards the 2030 Agenda can also be inverted in the sense that the fulfillment of the SDGs has a positive impact on human rights. Greater levels of development can lead towards greater levels of achievement of human rights¹⁷³». The cross-cutting principle of “leaving no one behind”, strongly reflects the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination. These principles have the potential to overcome some of the gaps left by the Millennium Development Goals because even if they reduced extreme poverty rates globally, they neglected some of the poorest and most marginalized groups¹⁷⁴.

Despite the mutual fertilization and the syntheses realized at the international level (the Agenda is an important example of this synthesis), the paradigms are based on deeply different values. They involve the identification of different objectives orienting the actions of development. In the paradigm of economic growth man is as a productive animal and, as such, mainly uses the neoclassical economy. Human development instead considers man as a social animal, with great space for sociological disciplines. In the environmental paradigm, ethics and morals play a fundamental role, flanked, by the life sciences¹⁷⁵. The different paradigms, affirmed Bassi, «continue to confront each other, for the achievement of operational decisions within complex organizations»¹⁷⁶.

172 Nadja Filskov and Birgitte Feiring, «Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», pp.9-10

173 Statement at Event on Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, June 2017, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=21814&LangID=E>

174 Nadja Filskov and Birgitte Feiring, «Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», p.14

175 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.89

176 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.90

It is necessary to discuss how the paradigms have been declined in Goals and targets. To ensure full implementation of the human development paradigm and human rights paradigm, obstacles such as poverty and inequality must be eliminated. However, some social targets of the Agenda have been criticized for leaving out important aspects. The paradigm of ecosystem integrity is pursuing an aspiring objective, but it conflicts with the economic paradigm. The economic growth paradigm is more under attack. Although the 2030 Agenda promotes sustainable economic growth, some authors asked how economic growth can be compatible with the social and environmental dimensions.

2.2. The economic criticism of the 2030 Agenda: points of conflict with the other paradigms.

Since the introduction of neoliberal policies in the 1980s, a new development movement has been consolidated, based on collective initiatives and specific and localized identities, whose objective is the search for an alternative to development. However, more than an integrated set of correlated theories, models, values and practices, the post-development field is of a cluster of heterogeneous theories, models, values and experiences, held together by opposition to the paradigm of economic growth¹⁷⁷.

As highlighted by Federico Demaria and Ashish Kothari, «they are characterized not so much by the idea of obtaining something less than what is currently offered in the context of economic growth, but by the aspiration to well-being based on profoundly different values, not being the current model sustainable. The alternatives are still fragmentary»¹⁷⁸.

After the 2007-08 world economic crisis, several economists, politicians and sociologists affirmed that the main cause of this crisis is attributable to Neoliberalism because the economic growth paradigm is still dominant. The

177 Bassi, «Development paradigms and relativistic approach», p.72

178 Federico Demaria and Ashish Kothari, The Post-Development Dictionary Agenda: Paths to the Pluriverse. *Third World Quarterly*, 38 (12): 2588-2599, 16 August 2017, retrieved December 1, 2020, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2017.1350821>

economic doctrine of neoliberalism tends to reduce the influence of the state on the economy, letting the forces of the market, guided by the rules of competition, regulate the equilibrium of the economic system¹⁷⁹. As George Monbiot has affirmed: «The central idea of neoliberalism is that there is a form of natural relationship within human society, competition and that each of us tries to maximize our wealth and power at the expense of others¹⁸⁰». However, affirmed Felice, «neo-liberal thought is in crisis today, grappling with three historical failures: the environmental question; the increase in inequalities in the advanced world; the fact that the new economic giants do not seem interested in a democratic evolution»¹⁸¹. In light of these failures, we need to understand if economic growth, which still guides the 2030 Agenda, is compatible with the other dimensions of sustainable development.

The SDGs call for a significant increase in the size of the global economy in Goal 8, with its focus on sustained, sustainable and inclusive growth. This growth needs to be inclusive, focusing on those who have traditionally been left out, including young people and women¹⁸². Goal 8 affirms: *"Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all"*. Goal 8.1 states: *"Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries"* and Goal 8.2 establishes: *"Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labor-intensive sectors"*. Also, target 9.2 indicates that this growth should be primarily industrial: *"Promote inclusive and*

179 Franco Mattarella, «Neoliberalism is the ideology of our time: a system of cultural hegemony that has conquered the world», *Pensiero Critico*, retrieved December 1, 2020, <http://www.pensierocritico.eu/neoliberismo-culturale.html>.

180 *Ibidem*

181 Emanuele Felice, «The three historical failures of neoliberalism», *L'Espresso*, 16 January 2020, retrieved December 1, 2020, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2020/01/16/news/fallimentoneoliberismo-1.342840>

182 «Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si», *Caritas Europa* (blog), January 2018, retrieved November 10, 2020, https://www.caritas.eu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/engaging_in_the_2030_agenda_through_the_lens_of_laudato_si.pdf, p.42

sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries"¹⁸³. Finally, the 2030 Agenda considers the role of technology in Goal 9 as central to meeting all of the goals and targets and has a specific section in Goal 17. It should be focused on human progress, and contribute to more sustainable consumption and production¹⁸⁴.

The main critical issue is how to combine economic growth with environmental protection and social indicators. Economic growth is essential to get out of poverty, but its consequences in environmental terms and in inequalities prevent a collective benefit.

In fact, although the authors' criticisms present different facets, they all revolve around the points of conflict between the paradigms.

Hickel has highlighted that two sides of the SDGs appear at risk of contradiction: «one calls for humanity to achieve "harmony with nature", to protect the planet from degradation, and to take urgent actions on climate change, with specific targets laid down in Goal 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15; the other calls for continued global economic growth at existing levels or higher through 2030, as outlined in Goal 8, on the assumption that growth is necessary for human development and the eradication of poverty and hunger»¹⁸⁵. He sustained the position that the SDGs do not justify the demand for global GDP growth in Goal 8. Growth is essential for achieving the human development objectives on poverty, hunger and health, but this is only justifiable in the case of low-income countries. Past a certain threshold, additional GDP is no longer necessary for achieving these objectives¹⁸⁶. Hickel provided the example of Costa Rica, which has ended extreme poverty and posts high levels of nutrition, life expectancy, education, sanitation, and access to energy (exceeding SDGs thresholds) with a GDP per capita of only \$11.000, less

183 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015)

184 «Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si», p.38

185 Jason Hickel, «The contradiction of the Sustainable Development Goals: Growth versus ecology on a finite planet» *Sustainable Development*, April 2019, retrieved November 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1947> pp.1-2

186 Hickel, «The contradiction of the Sustainable Development Goals», p.8

than one fifth of that the United States¹⁸⁷. He believed that «it makes little sense to call for growth in nations where GDP is already significantly above the basic level. In such cases, human development objectives can be achieved by distributing existing GDP more fairly, and by investing in social services, such as healthcare and education»¹⁸⁸. There is no reason to call for continued growth in every nation and past the point at which it delivers social benefits: «It is reasonable to call for growth in poorer nations, but it makes sense only if coupled with a commitment to pro-poor bias in the distribution of new income, to be accomplished directly by giving the poor more economic power, or indirectly by distribution»¹⁸⁹.

Sachs affirmed that «progress has largely turned out to be a regress, because the economy of the north of the world persists to exploit nature. The analyzes, from Limits to Growth of 1972 to Planetary Boundaries of 2009, speak for themselves: development understood as growth leads to the inhospitality of the planet Earth for men»¹⁹⁰.

Other authors focused on the position of industrialized countries about sustainable resource use: «socioeconomic development and increasing income are important aspects of the SDGs in several countries, regions and social groups. However, industrialized countries with already high levels of well-being and at the same time, high levels of resource use have to put the priority on an absolute reduction of the environmental burden to preserve ecological integrity»¹⁹¹. According to the authors «with their strong focus on economic growth, the SDGs direct industrializing countries towards known trajectories of development. This may

187 Daniel O'Neill, Andrew L. Fanning, William F. Lamb, et al. «A good life for all within planetary boundaries», *Nature Sustainability*, 5 February 2018, retrieved November 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-018-0021-4>, pp.88-95

188 Hickel, «The contradiction of the Sustainable Development Goals», p. 7

189 Hickel, «The contradiction of the Sustainable Development Goals», p.9

190 Wolfgang Sachs, «Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si: examples of post-development?», *Syculorum Gymnasium*, January 2017, retrieved November 11, 2020 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341029447_Sustainable_Development_Goals_e_Laudato_si'esempi_di_Post-sviluppo, p.24

191 Nina Eisenmenger, Melanie Pichler, Nora Krenmayr et al. «The Sustainable Development Goals prioritize economic growth over sustainable resource use: a critical reflection on the SDGs from a socio-ecological perspective», *Sustainability Science* 15: 1101–1110, 10 May 2020, retrieved November 14, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-020-00813-x>, p.1104

alleviate some social and economic while aggravating other, mostly ecological sustainability challenges, similar to those created by historical industrialization processes in the Global North»¹⁹².

Spaiser, Ranganathan, Bali Swain and Sumpter suggest some common factors that contribute to beneficial effects on one SDG dimension without having simultaneously adverse effects on other dimensions, such as, extensive health programs for reducing child mortality, government spending on education and environmentally friendly technologies. Their models identify factors, which can contribute to socio-economic development (health programs, government spending) on the one hand and ecological sustainability (renewable energy) on the other, without triggering the conflict between incompatible SDGs¹⁹³.

Other positions focused on the difference between development and growth. Despite the reference to sustainable development contained in the Preamble “to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner”, the 2030 Agenda is very much focused on the pursuit of economic growth as its paramount objective. Montini and Volpe sustain that «the 2030 Agenda and the related SDGs do not contain any clarification on the difference between the two concepts of development and growth». They believe that a clear distinction between the two concepts should have been a prerequisite of the SDGs. On the one side, «growth, which essentially refers to a "quantitative" dimension, should be defined as an increase in throughput, which is the flow of natural resources from the environment, through the economy, and back to the environment as waste»; on the other side, «development, which is characterized by a "qualitative" dimension, should be defined as a qualitative change, the realization of potential, the evolution toward an improve but not larger structure or system – an increase in the quality of goods and services (where quality is measured by the ability to increase

192 *Ibidem*

193 Viktoria Spaiser, Shyam Ranganathan, Ranjula Bali Swain et al., «The sustainable development oxymoron», *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology* 24, n. 6 (2 November 2017): 457–70, retrieved November 14, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504509.2016.1235624>.

human well-being) provided by a given throughput»¹⁹⁴.

The economic sustainable development dimension is harshly criticized by Serge Latouche, professor emeritus of economic sciences at the University of Paris, and by the movements belonging to the theory of degrowth, a current of political, economic, and social thought favorable to the controlled, selective and voluntary reduction of economic production and consumption, to establish relations of ecological balance between man and nature, as well of equity between human beings themselves¹⁹⁵. Degrowth starts from the assumption¹⁹⁶ that economic growth, intended exclusively as an increase in the Gross Domestic Product, is not sustainable for the earth's ecosystem. And therefore not reconcilable¹⁹⁶. Often, the concept of "degrowth" is confused with that of "recession or negative growth". Degrowth is a project whose main objective is to leave the consumer society, to achieve what Serge Latouche defines as "frugal abundance". In a society of "frugal abundance" basic needs can be satisfied by all people, while superfluous ones are eliminated; social and relational goods take precedence over individualism and the consumption of material goods¹⁹⁷. Very different is the case of the absence of growth in a society based on growth, which has very different and negative effects. In today's society of growth, welfare (social spending) is used to tackle economic inequalities. However, without growth, social accompaniments aimed at reducing degradation are reduced.¹⁹⁸ According to Latouche, there are four factors on the basis of which the degrowth full employment program should be implemented: a reduction of global theoretical productivity (due to the reckless use of machines and energy from fossil sources);

194 Massimiliano Montini and Francesca Volpe, «Sustainable Development at a turning point», *Federalismi*, (2 November 2016), retrieved November 14, 2020,

<https://www.federalismi.it/nv14/articolo-documento.cfm?Artid=32698>, pp. 12-13

195 Federica Alimede, «Environmental sustainability, ecocentrism and happy degrowth», *ImpreseResponsabili TVBL*, 12 February 2016, retrieved December 3, 2020,

<https://www.impreseresponsabili.tvbl.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Sostenibilit%C3%A0-ambientale.pdf>

196 La Camera, «Skill Project for development-Sustainable Development»

197 Serge Latouche, *For a frugal abundance, misunderstandings and disputes over degrowth*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2012)

198 Dario Ruggiero, «Because the economy of growth cannot last indefinitely», *Long Term Economy*, 12 January 2014, retrieved November 22, 2020 <http://www.lteconomy.it/it/articoli-articoli/perche-l-economia-della-crescita-non-puo-durare-all-infinito>.

the relocation of activities and the end of exploitation of the South; the creation of environmentally friendly jobs in all sectors of activity; a change in the model of life with the elimination of unnecessary needs (the other three points would amply compensate for this reduction in jobs)¹⁹⁹.

Some authors, when discussing how economic growth is discussed in the 2030 Agenda, have involved another major document of 2015, the Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*.

In the article of the Guardian "The pope v the UN: who will save the world first?", the authors affirm that «the SDGs are a paean to consumption-driven economic growth». They deny that poverty and inequality can be eradicated through GDP growth. They affirm that «SDGs want at least 7% GDP growth per year in the least developed countries and higher levels of economic productivity across the board. In fact, an entire goal, number eight, is devoted to this».

Their critique is evident: «It is bizarre: we are all acutely aware of the need to dethrone GDP growth as a measure of human progress, but the SDGs carry on as though this isn't even an issue²⁰⁰».

On the other side, the authors affirm that «the Pope tackles the irrationality of endless GDP growth and consumption head-on, and he does so from the understanding that the economy and the environment are part of the same system; that endless extradition from one feed growth of the other is not just a physical impossibility but ultimately self-defeating and immoral». They concluded: «We have to confront the core of the problem, which is an economic model that relies on ever-increasing consumption²⁰¹».

While these positions present the two documents as antagonistic, others seek an integrated approach²⁰². The following step is to discuss if the integral ecology paradigm proposed by *Laudato Si'* can stimulate the desired paradigm shift, or if it can help empower the actors who act in the current economic paradigm.

199 Latouche, *For a frugal abundance, misunderstandings and disputes over degrowth*

200 Hickel, Kirk and Brewer, «The Pope v the UN: Who Will Save the World First?»

201 Hickel, Kirk and Brewer, «The Pope v the UN: Who Will Save the World First?»

202 «Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of *Laudato Si'*», *Caritas Europa*

2.2.1. Laudato Si': the integral ecology paradigm.

The Pope's economic growth views have been sharply contested, particularly by special interest groups and advocates of the neoliberal economic policies. However, as some authors have noted, Pope Francis explicitly acknowledges and rejoices in the benefits of modern science, technology and creativity which have resulted in advances for humankind²⁰³. In *Laudato Si'* he affirmed that: «In order to continue providing employment, it is imperative to promote an economy which favors productive diversity and business creativity²⁰⁴». The Pope well knows that economic growth is needed to lift millions more out of poverty, but he is calling urgently for greater equity and sustainability, with less waste and more moderate consumption²⁰⁵.

The Pope is urging for smarter growth, with much less extreme concentrations of wealth, in an environmentally responsible way to ensure adequate resources for current and future generations²⁰⁶. The Pope is not against economic growth a priori. He is against the techno-economic paradigm that has been fatal for modernity. Today, economics and politics have become completely independent from ethics and consequently, the technocratic paradigm tends to exert its dominion over economics and politics as well²⁰⁷.

The Encyclical assumes that plundering of the planet has already crossed the ecological limits. Safeguarding nature is always overshadowed by economic growth. He talks about limits, both ecological and social, and he believes that the industrial growth model is responsible for many deficits in development²⁰⁸.

The Pope affirms that in any event, if in some cases sustainable development were to involve new forms of growth, then in other cases, given the insatiable and

203 Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis», pp.55-56

204 FRANCIS, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si: On care for our common home* (24 May 2015), par. 129

205 Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis», p.56

206 Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis», p.57

207 Maurizio Moscone, «The ethics of the future in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* », *ZENIT - Italiano - Il mondo visto da Roma* (blog), 14 August 2015, retrieved December 2, 2020
<https://it.zenit.org/2015/08/14/1-etica-del-futuro-nell-enciclica-laudato-si-terza-parte/>.

208 Sachs, «Sustainable Development Goals and *Laudato Si*: examples of post-development?» p.31

irresponsible growth produced over many decades, we need also to think of containing growth by setting some reasonable limits and even retracing our steps before it is too late. Unsustainable is the behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity²⁰⁹.

In a passage of the encyclical, the Pope affirms that we need to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at time gives rise to another form of progress and development, building fair and sustainable development²¹⁰. That is why the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth. This statement is very strong, especially in a model of development that still makes economic growth one of its foundations.

The Pope associates the illusion of unlimited growth with the linear, one-dimensional notion of progress. But growth in nature is not linear and unlimited. While certain parts of organisms, or ecosystems, grow, others decline, releasing and recycling their components which become resources for new growth.

The technology that, linked to finance, is presented as the only way of solving problems, proves incapable of seeing the networks of relations that integral ecology recognizes, and so sometimes solve one problem only to create others²¹¹. With the expression "technocratic paradigm", *Laudato Si'* means the assumption of an attitude that sees in every reality – physical, biological, human or social – only an objective infinitely available to manipulation by the human being²¹². While the 2030 Agenda talks of technological advances to solve environmental challenges, *Laudato Si'* warns of an overreliance on technology to solve the

209 FRANCIS, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si: On care for our common home*, (24 May 2015), b par.193

210 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par. 91

211 Fritjof Capra, «*Laudato Si'*: The Pope's Ecoliterate Challenge to Climate Change», *Ecoliteracy*, 23 September 2015, retrieved November 21, 2020 <https://www.ecoliteracy.org/article/laudato-si-popes-ecoliterate-challenge-climate-change>.

212 Paolo Foglizzo, «An economy for the care of the common home», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, September 2016, retrieved 2 December 2020, <https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/un-economia-per-la-cura-della-casa-comune/>.

world's problems, and challenges a throwaway culture based on increased consumption and production²¹³.

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* clearly states that the problem is not technology as such. He criticizes the form of power that derives from technology. Technology is not neutral, but implies human behavior. He affirms that we have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral. Liberation from the dominant technocratic paradigm happens, for example, when cooperatives of small producers adopt less polluting means of production and opt for a non-consumerist model of life, recreation and community. Or when technology is directed primarily to resolving people's concrete problems, truly helping them live more dignity and less suffering²¹⁴. Pope Francis takes a clear stance against the belief that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems: «The idea of promoting a different cultural paradigm and employing technology as a mere instrument is nowadays inconceivable. The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic²¹⁵». Some positions argue that economics and technology can solve problems such as hunger in the world and poverty. In this respect, Montini and Volpe have underlined that the position of Pope Francis echoes the warnings raised in the scientific literature by many scholars, such as Schumacher, Tiezzi, Daly, Costanza, Georgescu-Roegen, Capra and Luisi. According to such authors, it is well demonstrated that limitless economic growth can hardly be sustainable in a Planet characterized by limited natural resources²¹⁶. The Pope proposes the integral ecology paradigm as a new driving paradigm. Ecology studies the relationships between living organisms and the environment in which they live. It also requires us to stop and think and discuss the conditions of life and survival of a society, with the honesty of questioning models of

213 Gordon «Does the Pope like the SDGs?» <https://www.caritas.eu/pope-like-sdgs-considering-2030agenda-lens-laudato-si/>.

214 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*, par. 112

215 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*, par. 108

216 Montini and Volpe, «In Praise of Sustainability», p.16

development, production and consumption²¹⁷. Integral ecology thus becomes the paradigm capable of holding together environmental phenomena and problems (global warming, pollution, resource depletion, deforestation) with issues that are not normally associated with the ecological agenda in the strict sense. The power of the integral ecology paradigm fully appears in its ability to analyze, and therefore to trace a common root to phenomena that, taken separately, cannot really be understood²¹⁸.

The term ecology is not a generic "green" concern but is an appropriate approach to a complex system, the understanding of which requires putting the relationships of each of the individual parts with the others and with the whole to the fore²¹⁹. The Pope presents the different facets of integral ecology: environmental, economic and social, but also cultural and of daily life.

Integral ecology has an environmental dimension because it takes into account the relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it²²⁰.

It has a social dimension because the health of society's institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life. If men violate solidarity, they also violate the environment. Social ecology is necessarily institutional and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national and international communities²²¹.

It has an economic dimension because the protection of the environment is an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it. This suggests the need for an economic ecology, capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality, at the service of a more integral and integrating vision²²².

217 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.138

218 Giacomo Costa and Paolo Foglizzo, «The integral ecology», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, September 2015, retrieved December 2, 2020 <https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/l-ecologia-integrale/>.

219 Giacomo Costa and Paolo Foglizzo, «At the heart of *Laudato si'*: integral ecology», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, 18 June 2015, retrieved December 2, 2020 <https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/al-cuore-della-i-laudato-si-i-l-ecologia-integrale/>

220 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par. 139

221 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par. 142

222 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.141

The two dimensions added by the Pope to the three main dimensions are the cultural one and that of daily life.

It is a cultural ecology because it also involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. When dealing with environmental problems, attention should be paid to local cultures, fostering a dialogue between scientists and technicians and local cultures. A consumerist vision of human beings, encouraged by the mechanisms of today's globalized economy, has a leveling effect on cultures²²³. Finally, it is an ecology of daily life, because authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the settings in which people live their lives.

Thus integral ecology becomes a challenge to the personal integration of those who, as volunteers or as professionals, have to do with the environment or with social dynamics: scientists and technicians, activists and militants, researchers and teachers, social workers and public officials, entrepreneurs and politicians are invited to get involved with all their intellectual and professional, emotional and spiritual skills, resources and competences. Equally, for institutions and businesses, civil society organizations and religious communities, integral ecology requires never reducing the richness of reality to one's perspectives or, worse, ideologies²²⁴. The previous sectors are called upon to produce integration also in the operational and planning level of interventions.

Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the problems that arise about environmental degradation, depletion of natural reserves and pollution. It should be a different outlook, a thought, a policy, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality that give shape to a resistance in the face of the advancing technocratic paradigm²²⁵.

Integral ecology calls for a radical change in the values and principles that guide the economy. It does so by making economic actors responsible, but at the same time, it involves local actors and individuals, introducing the dimensions of

223 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.143-144

224 Costa and Foglizzo, «At the heart of *Laudato si*': integral ecology»

225 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.111

cultural ecology and ecology of daily life. The Pope wants to empower all the actors who, in pursuing growth and profit, cause socio-environmental degradation. This leads us to face another relevant aspect for the Pope, social justice.

2.3. The social criticism to the 2030 Agenda: addressing inequality and poverty.

There is another serious consequence of the technocratic paradigm, that is the difference in wealth between the rich and the poor, not only between the rich countries of the north and the poor countries of the south but also within the individual countries between the rich social groups and the poor social groups. Poverty and inequality recur in both documents. The paradigms that inspire them are the paradigm of human development and human rights for the 2030 Agenda and the paradigm of social justice for the encyclical. These two paradigms are grounded in a common motivation to enhance human freedom, dignity and equality. Despite the human rights paradigm conceptualized this in terms of human rights and the human development paradigm in terms of capabilities, they are complementary paradigm²²⁶. According to Mahbub ul Haq, the architect of the concept of human development, development is a process that creates an enabling environment that expands opportunities for people, and that expands the capabilities that people have to lead lives that they value²²⁷. Rather, the human rights paradigm includes a struggle for a process of development that can be positive for human rights and does not take human rights backwards²²⁸.

On one side, the 2030 Agenda offer a solid framework to support integral human development. The SDGs prioritize the following factors as pathways to participation and human flourishing; the aim is to expand human capabilities by addressing basic human deprivations. On the other side, by aiming to "leave no

226 Sakiko Fukuda Parr, «Human rights and politics in development», retrieved February 2, 2021 <http://sakikofukudaparr.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Human-Rights-and-Politics-in-Development.pdf>, p.175

227 Mahbub ul Haq's, «Reflections on Human Development», (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)

228 Sakiko Fukuda Parr, «Human rights and politics in development», p.171

one behind" and "to reach the furthest behind first", the Agenda reflects the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination. Adhering to these principles ensures that the promotion of sustainability accommodates the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, women, LGBTQI, migrant workers²²⁹.

Goal 1, entitled *End poverty in all its forms everywhere*, aims to eradicate extreme poverty, currently measured at target 1.1 as people living on less than \$1.25 a day, and to ensure social protection for the poor and vulnerable. Goal 2 is strictly related to the one, because it states to *End hunger; achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*. Also the third objective – *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages* – is related to the first two. These paradigms guide also Goal 4 – *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* – and Goal 5 – *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*²³⁰.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes the need to tackle inequality both between countries and within countries. Goal 10 – *To reduce inequality within and among countries* – at target 10.1 established by 2030 progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average²³¹. Although income inequalities are the most evident, the Goal aims to eliminate all kinds of inequalities, even those concerning age, sex, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic status, or others. Finally, Goal 16 affirms to *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*.

These objectives identify the areas of intervention so that human development can flourish. The 2030 Agenda is committed to directly strengthening human capabilities (such as the guarantee of a decent standard of living and long and healthy life), as well as creating conditions for human development (for example

229 Nadja Filskov and Birgitte Feiring, «Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», p.15

230 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015)

231 *Ibidem*

the participation in political and community life, gender equity, social justice, environmental sustainability)²³². It pays special attention to the hardest-to-reach groups to leave no-one behind, no nation, group, or part of society²³³. The idea of basing all the elaboration of the document on the principle of leaving no-one behind requires a global commitment: it is necessary to work so that all the poorest and most vulnerable can escape from extreme marginality; but also so that all those who have no voice in the choices that affect them can become protagonists of a new season of global change, which must involve all the peoples on the earth²³⁴.

Human development focuses on enlarging the capabilities of people, as people are both the beneficiaries of development and among its principal means. Human development is indispensable for implementing the SDGs (in all dimensions) given the need for human capabilities to undergird institutional capacities²³⁵. Advancing human development would in turn translate to a greater ability of people to promote other economic, social and environmental goals²³⁶. The SDGs are an operational plan for realizing human rights. They pay special attention to the hardest-to-reach groups to leave no-one behind, no nation, group, or part of society²³⁷. The idea of basing all the elaboration of the document on the principle of leaving no-one behind requires a global commitment: it is necessary to work so that all the poorest and most vulnerable can escape from extreme marginality; but also so that all those who have no voice in the choices that affect them can become protagonists of a new season of global change, which must involve all the peoples on the earth²³⁸.

232 Selim Jahan, «Human development and the 2030 Agenda: Effecting policy change in people's lives», *OECD-Development matters*, 10 November 2016, retrieved December 5, 2020, <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2016/11/10/human-development-and-the-2030-agenda-effecting-positive-change-in-peoples-lives/>

233 «Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si», *Caritas Europa*, p.14

234 «Africa, Latin America, Asia- An alliance between the planet and humanity», *Caritas Italiana*, Number 10, December 2015, retrieved December 6, 2020, https://www.caritas.it/materiali/Mondo/ddt10_dicembre2015.pdf, p.18

235 Jacob Assa, «Rethinking human development in the context of the SDGs», p.16

236 Jacob Assa, «Rethinking human development in the context of the SDGs», p.25

237 «Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si», *Caritas Europa*, p.14

238 «Africa, Latin America, Asia- An alliance between the planet and humanity», *Caritas Italiana*, Number 10, December 2015, retrieved December 6, 2020, https://www.caritas.it/materiali/Mondo/ddt10_dicembre2015.pdf, p.18

The 2030 Agenda rightly identifies poverty and inequality among the main obstacles to human development and the realization of human rights.

What is missing is a more critical perspective on the causes of poverty and inequality. Conventional development approaches rarely acknowledge the root causes of inequalities or pinpoint responsible actors, instead of blaming agentless processes such as globalization or free-market competition for undesired social outcomes.

The growing divide between the rich and the poor is still one of the most pressing global challenges of our time. According to Oxfam, twenty-six people now own the same wealth as 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity, down from forty-three people in 2018, with men owning 50 percent more of the total wealth than women²³⁹. As the United Nations Institute for Social Development stated, «in considering how to reduce inequalities, the time has come to adjust our focus to include not just the bottom of the pyramid, but also the top²⁴⁰».

Jan Vandemoortele, in this proposal, highlighted the need to tackle inequality going beyond the poor sectors of the population: «the 2030 Agenda is based on the premise that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge», as affirmed in the first target. However, numerous experts and observers argue that extreme poverty no longer constitutes the principal challenge the world is facing today. Due to the rise in inequality that has occurred within most countries over the past decades, the greatest global challenge is extreme inequality. Vandemoortele affirmed that whilst the SDGs pay attention to inequality, they do so nominally. Considering target 10.1, Vandemoortele believes that one cannot claim to deal with inequality by only covering the bottom 40 percent of the population. To really focus on inequalities, it must include all income spectrum, not only the poorest groups neglecting the richest. It is perfectly possible for the bottom 40 percent to see faster income growth than the others and, at the same time, witness

239 Oxfam, *Public Good or Private Wealth*, (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2019)

240 UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for social development), «Overcoming inequalities in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development», February 2019, retrieved December 6, 2020, <https://www.unrisd.org/inequality-insights> , p.1

an increase in inequality in the country. Vandemoortele affirmed: «if income transfers flow from the middle 50 percent of the population to the bottom 40 percent, whilst leaving the top 10 percent unaffected, then target 10.1 will be met but inequality will not have decreased»²⁴¹.

Target 10.1 has been discussed also by Chancel, Hough and Voituriez. They affirmed that the metric for measuring inequality in Target 10.1 has potential descriptive drawbacks. By ensuring that the bottom 40 percent does not lose out, the target reflects the SDG principle to leave no-one behind. However, the indicator is blind to changes at the apex of the distribution (in situations where top earners' and bottom earners' income grow while the middle shrinks)²⁴².

UNRISD's work seeks to make the case that to address inequalities one must look to formal and informal institutions that perpetuate unequal power relations. Elites, as a social group has disproportionate control over resources, be they economic, political, cultural - and their are able to translate those resources into power and influence. Elites often wield their influence to preserve and perpetuate a system that benefits the few at the expense of the many²⁴³. Elites perpetuate inequality, but also have the power to ameliorate it. Elites tend to hold key positions in political, economic and cultural domains of society, which allows them to act as enlightened leaders and drivers for progressive change²⁴⁴.

To truly achieve human development requires an approach that attacks inequality at the structural level, addressing root causes and rearranging power structures²⁴⁵. However, neoliberal policies, as well as economic and natural crises have taken a toll on middle classes, reversing decades of social struggle for an inclusive development model, while parts of the new middle classes in emerging economies

241 Jan Vandemoortele, «SDGs: The Tyranny of an Acronym?», *Impakter* (blog), 13 September 2016, retrieved December 6, 2020 <https://impakter.com/sdgs-tyranny-acronym/>

242 Lucas Chanel, Alex Hough and Tancrede Voituriez, «Reducing inequalities within countries: Assessing the potential of the Sustainable Development Goals», *Global Policy*, 2017, retrieved December 8, 2020, <https://agritrop.cirad.fr/587356/1/Chancel%20Hough%20Voituriez%20gpol12511.pdf>, p.6

243 UNRISD, «Overcoming inequalities in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development», p.2

244 UNRISD, «Overcoming inequalities in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development», p.3

245 UNRISD, *Policy innovations for transformative change*, (Geneva: UNRISD, 2016)

in the Global South are still vulnerable and living in precarious situations. New forms of social movements, alliances and coalitions are emerging to counteract these tendencies. Social movements and civil society organizations alone cannot activate the necessary changes to overcome inequalities and discrimination; their demands need to be taken up by political actors, governments and the business sector²⁴⁶.

Other authors have based their reflections on the meaning of equity. When we reflect on global imbalances, we run the risk that – by defining the differences in wealth between countries as an element of inequality and injustice – we end up believing that all countries must be part of the same economic system. The idea conveyed is that social equity can be achieved thanks to accelerated and permanent economic development, leveling the positions of individual countries upwards, never downward²⁴⁷.

By doing so, equity is pursued in the sense of similarity or homogeneity, rather than in terms of justice or fair treatment, forcing all the peoples of the world into a single economic and cultural system. The idea that prevails today is that of a world in which all cultures can be compared with a single measure of "standard of living"²⁴⁸. The issue of social equity has for a long time been considered as solvable only through the effects (and policies aimed at) of economic growth. Growth is overestimated: it does not achieve the objective of human development, as long as it is not distributed in terms of equity. Since money is useful where it also allows access to a series of rights – not just consumer goods – it can be said that poverty is not only a lack of money but also and above all a lack of security and political influence. Not a deficit of money, therefore, but a deficit of power²⁴⁹. It is interesting to consider the proposals of the members of Initiative for Equality (IfE), a network of civil society and academics partners working towards greater

246 UNRISD, «Overcoming inequalities in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development», p.4

247 Douglas Lummis, *Equality*, in *Development Dictionary*, edited by W. Sachs (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1998) pp. 410-411

248 Simona Pisanelli, «Development, inequalities and environment. In search for a new paradigm», *Dialettica e filosofia*, 19 March 2018, retrieved December 7, 2020, <http://www.dialetticaefilosofia.it/public/pdf/26pisanelli.pdf> p.11

249 Pisanelli, «Development, inequalities and environment. In search for a new paradigm», p.19

social, economic and political equality in more than eighty countries. The Initiative for Equality's proposals addresses the concerns they hear when they take input from poor and marginalized communities around the world, as they conduct Field Hearings to learn what these community members are experiencing and thinking. Already in 2013, IfE President Deborah Rogers spoke about economic growth, poverty reduction and inequalities to the UN Open Working Group as one of the civil society speakers. She discussed redistribution as the best and faster route to sustainable development. Transfers from the very rich to the very poor could have an enormous impact on reducing poverty: we could bring everyone over the \$2/day level if we taxed just 1.2% of the income of the richest 10% of people. They developed a mathematical model to compare the efficiency of distribution versus economic growth at reducing poverty rates: for poor countries, it took a 45% increase in the size of the economy to bring everyone above \$1/day, but the same results could be achieved with just 3% redistribution from the top 20% to the bottom 20%; for rich countries, it took a 110% increase in the size of the economy to bring everyone above \$ 10000/year, but the same results could be achieved with just 2% redistribution from the top 20% to the bottom 20%: for the entire world, it took a 110% increase in the size of the economy to bring everyone above \$ 10000/year, but the same results could be achieved with just 1% redistribution from the top 20% to the bottom 20%²⁵⁰. Furthermore, in 2014 IfE made some comments and proposed revisions to the wording on Goals related to inequality and poverty to the UN's Open Working Group. IfE reaffirmed that taxation and redistribution is a much more efficient and effective mechanism for poverty reduction than is economic growth²⁵¹. IfE emphasized some aspects that would have been better to include in the targets: it supported to achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population, but it would be added with the share of national income going to the richest 10% of the population

250 Deborah Rogers, «Presentation to the UN Open Working Group 5th Session on Sustained and Inclusive economic growth», retrieved December 8, 2020
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4433women.pdf>

251 «Strengthening Targets to achieve greater reduction of poverty and inequality. Recommendations of Initiative for Equality», *Initiative for Equality*, 13 June 2014, retrieved December 9, 2020, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=9502&menu=1565&nr=22>, p.1

reduced to not more than 5 times larger than the share going to the poorest 10% of the population. Other aspects would have been included, such as that every person has access to influencing public decision-making on economic and social benefits policy²⁵²; nations have to transition to economic systems and fiscal and monetary policies that generate increasing equality rather than inequalities. Inequalities between nations have to converge, not to exceed a 10-fold difference between the richest and poorest nations, for metrics including per capita income, resource use and carbon output²⁵³. IfE also remembered that inequalities between nations are one of the primary barriers to forging strong agreements that will address climate change in an effective and timely manner. Nations are not interested in entering into agreements that protect the well-being of others at the expense of their right to benefit from development, or that demand them to share in the burdens, when they do not receive the benefits. For this reason, nations in the developed world will pay for their share of the burdens and costs of climate and other environmental change, calculated as their fraction of the benefits achieved through the economic activity that generated the burdens and costs. Finally, IfE remembered also that inequality is one of the primary drivers of conflict and suggests as a means for implementation for proposed Goal 10 to use progressive taxation and public spending mechanisms to minimize economic inequalities²⁵⁴. Despite these IfE proposals have not been included in the final draft of the 2030 Agenda, each of them may have strengthened the goals by providing meaningful, necessary and achievable endpoints. Without ethical and moral dimensions, even good regulations, policies and targets are unlikely to prove effective.

2.3.1. Integral ecology as a paradigm of justice.

The Pope's priority is to address the roots rather than merely the symptoms of these interrelated problems. The techno-economic paradigm ends up destroying

252 «Strengthening Targets to achieve greater reduction of poverty and inequality. Recommendations of Initiative for Equality», p.2

253 «Strengthening Targets to achieve greater reduction of poverty and inequality. Recommendations of Initiative for Equality», p.4

254 «Strengthening Targets to achieve greater reduction of poverty and inequality. Recommendations of Initiative for Equality», p.5

not only politics but also freedom and justice. He said that the connection between the technocratic paradigm and the pursuit of profit is the origin of the throwaway culture: we throw away what is considered worthless because it is not longer able to produce a profit, regardless of its intrinsic value as a creature or human being. The culture of waste, which derives precisely from the culture of consumerism, does not only mean a waste of resources or goods, but it is also a waste of people. For this reason, integral ecology is also a paradigm of social justice. The Pope affirms: «We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment»²⁵⁵.

The power of the integral ecology paradigm appears fully in its ability to analyze, and therefore to trace a common root to phenomena that, taken separately, cannot be really understood. This implies recognizing that there are not two separate crises, one environmental and another social, but a single and complex socio-environmental crisis. The guidelines for a solution require an integral approach to combat poverty, to restore dignity to the excluded and at the same time to take care of nature²⁵⁶. Therefore, the integral ecology paradigm is proposed as a paradigm of justice that points: to the care of nature, which is not considered an object of our property, to be dominated and plundered; to justice for the poor, the weak and the sick; to active commitment to eradicate poverty, for a more equitable distribution of wealth and for equitable access to natural resources²⁵⁷. The Catholic Church's social tradition has generated a body of practical principles of action to guide all efforts at human development. The major principles are human dignity, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity, the universal destination of the goods of the earth, and justice²⁵⁸.

255 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.49

256 Giacomo Costa and Paolo Foglizzo, «The integral ecology», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, August-September 2015, retrieved December 19, 2020, <https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/l-ecologia-integrale/>

257 Carlo Marazzi, «Pope Francis's *Laudato Si*: ecology as a new paradigm of social justice», *Bottega p'Artigiana*, 30 July 2017, retrieved December 2, 2020 <http://bottegapartigiana.org/laudato-si-di-papa-francesco-lecologia-come-nuovo-paradigma-di-giustizia-sociale/>

258 Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, «Beyond sustainable development- A framework for a new paradigm in human development», *Cirsid-Center for international relations and sustainable*

The Pope, as IfE proposed, emphasizes the need for a redistribution of wealth. The theme of redistribution is addressed in the social doctrine of the Church, to which the Pope is aligned. The Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church affirmed about redistribution: an equitable distribution of income must be pursued on the basis of criteria not only of commutative justice but also of social justice, that is considering, in addition to the objective value of work services, the human dignity of the subjects who perform them. An authentic economic well-being is also pursued through adequate social policies of income redistribution²⁵⁹. It continues: the widening of the gap between rich and poor countries has pushed the Magisterium to recall the importance of the ethical criteria that should guide international economic relations²⁶⁰.

The Church's social doctrine recalls the social responsibility of the economy. At this proposal, already John Paul II affirmed that the Church does not propose economic and political systems or programs, nor does she shows a preference for capitalism or communism, provided that human dignity is properly respected and promoted. The Church's social doctrine constitutes a category of its own²⁶¹.

As Lawrence emphasized, Catholic social teaching on economics is based on principles, not on ideology. In Catholic social teaching, the fundamental issues about the economy are whether the economy serves people, promotes the common good and supports the marginalized²⁶². Catholic social teaching supports a market-based economy, but argues that the markets need to be circumscribed by a strong juridical framework that protects those who are disadvantaged within particular markets and protects collective goods that fall outside the market process²⁶³.

development, retrieved December 6, 2020, <https://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-summer-2015—issue-no4/beyond-sustainable-development-a-framework-for-a-new-paradigm-in-human-development->

259 Giovanni Tridente, «Pope Francis, Benedict XVI and the Church Social Doctrine», *documentazione.info*, 19 December 2014, retrieved December 27, 2020, <https://www.documentazione.info/papa-francesco-benedetto-xvi-e-la-dottrina-sociale-della-chiesa>

260 *Ibidem*

261 JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (30 December 1987), par.41

262 Lawrence, «The Economics of Laudato Si' – No Surprises Here», *ACBC Media Blog* (blog), 14 September 2015, retrieved November 23, 2020 <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/the-economics-of-laudato-si-no-surprises-here/>, p.23

263 Lawrence, «The Economics of Laudato Si' – No Surprises Here», p.18

Duncan wrote that the Pope strongly supports socially responsible forms of capitalism which enhance social equity and cohesion. His target is the neoliberal versions of economics that have dominated conservative circles²⁶⁴.

Some authors highlighted that the encyclical, by placing the paradigm of social justice at the center of the debate, revived what Alain Supiot called the "Spirit of Philadelphia". The 1944 ILO Declaration of Philadelphia intended to make social justice one of his key points, stating that 'the lasting peace can be established only if it based on social justice' and that 'all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity'²⁶⁵.

However, there has been progressive financialization and privatization of the world which has dismantled this spirit. As said by the Pope, «economic powers continue to justify the current global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain, which fail to take the context into account, let alone the effects on human dignity and the natural environment²⁶⁶». The crisis, which is environmental, social and economic, has deep spiritual and cultural roots, which are connected to the processes of economic individualism, the risk of technocratic dominance, as well as to the bureaucratic involution of the mechanisms of institutional regulation and formalization deriving from a growing weakness of politics at all levels²⁶⁷.

As affirmed by Giraud and Orliange, both the documents have a common universal ambition. The convergence between the 2030 Agenda and the encyclical can keep its promises, provided that the SDGs are interpreted in the light of the

264 Lawrence, «The Economics of Laudato Si' – No Surprises Here», p.8

265 Gael Giraud and Philippe Orliange, «Laudato Si and Sustainable Development Goals: a convergence to be refined», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, June-July 2017, retrieved December 11, 2020, <https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/laudato-si-e-obiettivi-di-sviluppo-sostenibile-una-convergenza-da-affinare/>, p.505

266 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par. 56

267 Giuseppe Notarstefano, *You will inhabit the Earth: commentary on the Encyclical Laudato Si*, (Roma: Fondazione apostolicam actuositatem, 2015), <https://editriceave.it/sites/default/files/estratto/Abiterai%20la%20terra.pdf> p.114

spirit of Philadelphia, where the guiding concept is social justice and not financial mechanisms and capital mobility²⁶⁸.

The Pope does not come with detailed solutions. The encyclical does not advance a blueprint or prescriptions for the governments to implement; it is not the role of an encyclical. The main role of the encyclical is to stimulate dialogue and to guide the decisions of actors that have to implement sustainable development.

Even if *Laudato Si'* develops the Pope's moral critique, is the result of a broad consultation; the Pope found the support of the leading specialists and economists, including Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen²⁶⁹. Pope Francis's conviction of the need to integrate the ethical dimension in the pursuit of economic growth to achieve social justice is shared by many other eminent economists. Robert J Shiller, Kenneth Arrow, Robert Kuttner, Nouriel Roubini, Stephen Mihm, Tomas Sedlacek, Paul Krugman and Robert Skidelsky among many others, call for a renewal of moral perspective in economics²⁷⁰.

2.4. What contribution, theoretical and practical, can provide the encyclical *Laudato Si'* with integral ecology paradigm to the 2030 Agenda?

At the theoretical level, *Laudato Si'* offers principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and directives for actions through a moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that characterize our times. It is a guide meant to inspire, at the individual and collective levels, decisions and actions²⁷¹.

The contributions of the integral ecology paradigm have been:

- through integral ecology, the Pope addressed some issues with a more critical stance and considered some aspects that were excluded from the 2030 Agenda;

268 Giraud and Orliange, «*Laudato Si* and Sustainable Development Goals: a convergence to be refined», p.506

269 Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis», p.65

270 Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis», p.67

271 Interdicasterial working group of the Holy See on integral ecology, *Journing towards care for our common home: five years after Laudato Si*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020), [http://www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/documenti/2020-09-laudatosi5years-cammino-per-la-cura-della-casacomune-/en-VOL-SDS%20ECOLOGIA%20INTEGRALE%20LINGUA%20INGLESE%20\(ottimizzato\).pdf](http://www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/documenti/2020-09-laudatosi5years-cammino-per-la-cura-della-casacomune-/en-VOL-SDS%20ECOLOGIA%20INTEGRALE%20LINGUA%20INGLESE%20(ottimizzato).pdf) p.15-16

- integral ecology paradigm includes the need for a cultural and educational shift, especially directed to the rich;
- integral ecology embraces the Pope's universalistic and progressive paradigm of human rights, which reinforces the emphasis on the common good;
- integral ecology paradigm, although belonging to the Catholic religious sphere, promotes social values to be integrated into the secular vision of the 2030 Agenda.

Concerning the first point, *Laudato Si'* recognizes the root causes that make and keep people poor and are responsible for the misuse of natural resources: an economic development model premised on the fallacy of unlimited economic growth that is overshooting the planet's capacity to sustain life. This position that, differently from the 2030 Agenda, identifies the root causes of social and environmental degradation has been shared by many authors.

Hickel, Kirk, and Brewer have affirmed: «Poverty and ecological crisis do not just exist, they are caused by institutions with specific interests». Unlike the SDGs, the Pope is more critical. According to the authors, «he is unwavering in his condemnation of the key forces at issue». He calls out the transnational corporations that earn by polluting poor countries. He considers the foreign debt system as a tool by which rich countries control poor countries. And he affirms that the financial sector, grown too powerful, has eroded the sovereignty of nation-states and "prevail over the political"²⁷²».

Even Sachs agrees that we have to look for the causes. He affirms that the encyclical attacks the power interests of the economic-financial system that destroy the common good. This vision stands out against that of the 2030 Agenda, which does not at all deal with the reasons for the constant reproduction of poverty and the degradation of the biosphere that made the Sustainable Development Goals necessary. The encyclical, on the other hand, investigates in-depth and criticizes the technocratic paradigm that has been fatal for modernity. The Pope accuses modernity of being too contradictory: on the one hand, science

272 Hickel, Kirk and Brewer, «The Pope v the UN: Who Will Save the World First?»

and technology have brought unheard-of power to man, on the other man has proven himself incapable of using this power in a reasonable way²⁷³. But he says that human freedom is capable of limiting the technique and orienting it towards objectives useful for life. Examples are renewable energy, clean production, social investments, fair trade, modest lifestyle²⁷⁴.

Another aspect that the Pope identifies with harsher tones than the 2030 Agenda as a cause of the ecological crisis is the ecological debt. At this proposal, Hickel, Kirk, and Brewer affirmed: «The SDGs frame the problems of global poverty and inequality as things that just exist, as if they have no cause. Apparently colonialism, slavery, resource theft, debt, structural adjustment and financial crises do not have anything to do with it²⁷⁵». Affluent countries must repay the ecological debt to poor countries by taking the lead in efforts to protect the global environment. International agreements should apportion responsibility for environmental harm among all nations based on historic and current contributions to global environmental degradation²⁷⁶. Again, the Pope searches for the remote causes of the precarious environmental and social situation to which some countries are subject.

About the second point, an added value of the integral ecology paradigm is the inclusion, in addition to the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of the cultural and ethical dimension. Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past, it's also, and above all, a living, dynamic and participatory present reality²⁷⁷. At this proposal, Sachs made some very critical statements and suggested a cultural change: «It is the rich who have to change, not the poor; it is wealth that needs to be alleviated, not poverty»²⁷⁸. He affirmed that while the 2030 Agenda seeks to repair the existing global economic model

273 Sachs, «Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si: examples of post-development?», p.33

274 Sachs, «Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si: examples of post-development?», p.34

275 Hickel, Kirk and Brewer, «The Pope v the UN: Who Will Save the World First?»

276 Gonzalez, «UN Goals Fall Short of Francis' Vision»

277 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, par.143

278 Wolfgang Sachs, «The Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si: Varieties of post-development?», *Third World Quarterly*, 38(12), 2573-2587.
doi:10.1080/01436597.2017.1350822, p.2581

significantly, the encyclical calls for a pushing back of economic hegemony and for more ethical responsibility on all levels. While the 2030 Agenda envisions a green economy with social democratic hues, the encyclical foresees a post-capitalist era, based on a cultural shift toward eco-solidarity²⁷⁹.

The third contribution of the integral ecology paradigm is that it embraces the universal and progressive paradigm of human rights adopted by the Pope. It is progressive because through integral ecology the Pope validates human rights not as human rights implanted in Western institutions, but as human rights embedded in issues of social justice²⁸⁰. Integral ecology joins a notion of human rights that emphasizes context and essential human needs. The global trend of enforcing individual human rights protection involves the pursuit of justice partially out of societal contexts. Francis deviates from this trend (which stresses the importance of human rights and individual accountability), focusing on Christian teaching and social justice and addresses collective problems²⁸¹. In Catholic social doctrine, human rights have their foundation in divine revelation. Man, being in the image of God, possesses the dignity of a person. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and freely himself and entering into communion with other people²⁸². Also, the vision of men united to the social context appears in the Catholic social doctrine. The relationship between God and men is reflected in the social and relational dimensions of human nature. Unless men do not relate to others, they can not develop their potential²⁸³. Among the cardinal principles identified in the Compendium of the Church's social doctrine, there are not the principles of equality and non-discrimination (as it is for the 2030 Agenda), but the principle of the common good, the universal destination of goods, the principle of solidarity. These principles have been brought to the fore by Pope

279 Sachs, «The Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si: Varieties of post-development?» p.2584

280 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.86

281 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.77

282 Pontifical Council for justice and peace, «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church», 29 June 2004, retrieved February 2, 2021

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#Participation%20and%20democracy, par.108

283 Pontifical Council for justice and peace, «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church», par.110

Francis because they have found anchorage in the current social and environmental context. So, we understand the emphasis on the environment, social rights and social justice.

Pope's integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good. The common good is defined by the Pope as the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment. Francis' collective approach, including common arguments regarding the environment, places him as a friendly critic of more individualistic conceptions of human rights²⁸⁴.

Focusing on global environmental issues, Francis reinforces the Catholic emphasis on the common good in the human rights discourse rather than introducing a new category.

Integral ecology shifts the perspective from particular to universal human rights. According to Mark Shea, «the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development; but it has to do also with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups»²⁸⁵. Francis's notion of the common good and human rights indicate that both individual and collective rights are components of the common good, hence concern for the individual benefit cannot be separated from consideration of the common good²⁸⁶.

Finally, the fourth contribution concerns the social values promoted by the integral ecology paradigm. Christiel, Gunton and Hejenowicz see Catholic social teaching and the integral ecology paradigm as contributions to a framework of social values for a sustainability transition. A richer and stronger framework of social values is required to help overcome the collective actions problems of unsustainable development. The core of sustainable development is to promote a set of 'societal values' that will protect and enhance individual and societal prosperity when applied to decision-making arenas and reflected in everyday

284 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.86

285 Mark Shea, «Laudato Si on the Common Good», *Patheos* (blog), 24 June 2015, retrieved February 1, 2021, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/markshea/2015/06/laudato-si-on-the-common-good.html>

286 Troy, «The Papal human rights Discourse: the difference Pope Francis makes», p.88

behaviors. The need is for a common ethical framework for cooperation for sustainability to be attuned to local differences and capable of translation, as a mutually recognizable shared set of values, into many cultural traditions and contexts. It seems essential to build up shared values that offer a sense of 'grand narrative' connecting personal concerns to wider communities of interest and common cause and supporting an ethic of cooperation and care for the future²⁸⁷.

Laudato Si', for the Catholic Church, is a remarkably wide-ranging and ambitious text, which can be seen as an integration of Catholic social teaching with secular understandings of sustainability and environmental crisis. These affinities indicate the potential for a translation of Catholic social teaching concepts into secular frameworks of ethics and governance for sustainability²⁸⁸. It is necessary to harness our most powerful ethical traditions and related social values for generating changes in norms and practices. There is a need for representation and acknowledgment of religious values and frameworks in this context. Catholic social teachings and integral ecology can be seen to underpin or at least to be compatible with secular approaches to ethical reasoning and action for sustainability²⁸⁹.

Major religions are important actors for actions of sustainability. There are social values that unite religions, such as respect for the natural environment, altruism and a sense of community, consideration of all living beings, morality. Certainly, the impact of Laudato Si' in Catholic countries has been very strong. The challenge is how to extend its message to non-Catholic countries as well. Although pertaining to the Catholic religion, its message has sparked many debates among the various religious leaders. In August 2015, Muslims from all over the world gave life to an "Islamic Declaration on Climate Change"; in October 2015 some relevant figures of Judaism released a "Rabbinical Letter"

287 Christie, Gunton and Hejnowicz, «Sustainability and the common good: Catholic Social Teaching and the Integral Ecology as contributions to a framework of social values for sustainability transitions», pp.5-6

288 Christie, Gunton and Hejnowicz, «Sustainability and the common good: Catholic Social Teaching and the Integral Ecology as contributions to a framework of social values for sustainability transitions», p.7

289 Christie, Gunton and Hejnowicz, «Sustainability and the common good: Catholic Social Teaching and the Integral Ecology as contributions to a framework of social values for sustainability transitions», p.9

calling for action on climate change; the “Buddhist Declaration on climate change to world leaders” was issued on 29 October 2015; the “Hindu Declaration on Climate Change” was released on 23 November 2015. These statements demonstrate that religion can speak to global issues and concerns that affect believers and non-believers²⁹⁰.

Providing better tools for understanding reality is not the main objective of the encyclical, which has a practical intention. With its publication, Pope Francis aimed above all to help change reality. The concrete contribution that the encyclical *Laudato Si'* can offer is educational, pastoral and cultural, rather than technical and scientific. Giving substance to the new integral ecology paradigm proposed by *Laudato Si'* means having a far-sighted vision, which must materialize in the places and spaces in which education and culture are cultivated and transmitted, awareness is created, political, scientific and economic responsibility is formed to proceed towards responsible actions²⁹¹.

This appeal was accepted and in these five years, there have been countless occasions, initiatives, processes in which we have been able to see the *Laudato Si'* and its spirit at work. It happened on many levels, from the most local to the most global, within the ecclesial sphere as well as in dialogue with other religions and components of society. *Laudato Si'* influenced the international political debate, starting with the 2015 Paris Climate Conference; it has stimulated the birth of ecclesial initiatives for environmental protection at the regional or national level, or the creation of places and initiatives to experience integral ecology²⁹². In 2018 the founder of Slow Food Carlo Petrini and the bishop of Rieti Domenico Pompili

290 Matthew Livingstone, «Religions and commitment to climate between the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical and the Paris Conference», *Laciviltàcattolica*, Quaderno 3973, Volume 1, 9 January 2016, retrieved December 30, 2020, <https://www.laciviltacattolica.it/articolo/religioni-e-impegno-per-il-clima-tra-lenciclica-laudato-si-e-la-conferenza-di-parigi/>, pp.30-44

291 Michela Nicolais, «Integral ecology. Holy See: we need a new ecological citizenship», Sir-Agenzia d'informazione, 18 June 2020, retrieved December 15, 2020, <https://www.agensir.it/chiesa/2020/06/18/ecologia-integrale-santa-sede-serve-una-nuova-cittadinanza-ecologica/>

292 Giacomo Costa and Paolo Foglizzo, «Five years with *Laudato Si'*», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, May 2020, retrieved December 13, 2020, <http://www.centromissionario.diocesipadova.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Cinque-anni-con-la-Laudato-si%E2%80%99--Aggiornamenti-sociali.pdf>, pp.360-361

launched an initiative: the constitution of the Laudato Si' international communities in the form of free and spontaneous association of citizens, without limitations or restrictions of belief, political orientation, nationality, social background. The aim of each community is autonomously disseminating education on the issues of integral ecology, social justice and solidarity through events, conferences, workshops, courses, publications, exchanges and initiatives in the area²⁹³.

In 2020, FOCSIV (Federation of Christian Organizations International Voluntary Service) announced the publication of the "Guide for integral ecology". The Guide collects twenty concrete cases of economic and social environmental care activities, which various Italian Dioceses have supported in recent years, inspired by the integral ecology paradigm of Laudato Si'²⁹⁴. The new guide – the second and renewed edition of the one published in 2017, collects existing good practices. Each reality can plan its commitment: dioceses, religious institutes, associations, movements, groups, families. The Guide indicates practices for an integral ecology that can help make Europe more sustainable for all in the framework of the 2030 Agenda²⁹⁵.

But two events have acquired fundamental importance in 2020:

1. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development announced the establishment, from 24 May 2020 to 24 May 2021, of a special year dedicated to the celebration of the anniversary of Laudato Si'. The anniversary year opened with Laudato Si' Week and continued with a series of joint initiatives that emphasize "ecological conversion in action" (such as the common prayer for the Earth and humanity in all the world the 24 of May 2020, Laudato Si' Webinars the 29 May and the 18 June 2020,

293 «Laudato Si, a network of communities around the world to spread the ecological message of Pope Francis», *Slowfood*, 16 March 2020, retrieved December 15, 2020, <https://www.slowfood.it/comunicati-stampa/laudato-si-una-rete-di-comunita-in-tutto-il-mondo-per-diffondere-il-messaggio-ecologista-di-papa-francesco/>

294 «The guide for integral ecology 2020», *Focsiv*, 23 September 2020, retrieved December 15, 2020, <https://www.focsiv.it/pubblicazioni/la-guida-per-lecologia-integrale-2020/>

295 «New edition for the "Guide of communities and parishes for integral ecology», *Comunità Laudato Si*, 25 September 2020, retrieved December 15, 2020, <https://comunitalaudatosi.org/nuova-edizione-per-la-guida-per-comunita-e-parrocchie-sullecologia-integrale/>

the publication of “Interdicasterial Text with the Operational Guidelines for Laudato Si’ in June 2020, the meeting “The economy of Francis” in November 2020; some events are planned for 2021, such as the World Economic Forum-Third Vatican Round Table from 26 to 29 January 2020 and different concluding celebrations of the Special Anniversary Year)²⁹⁶.

2. “The economy of Francis”, held from 19 to 21 November, was an important online meeting that brought together over 2,000 young economists, entrepreneurs and changemakers from 120 countries around the world, to respond to the appeal with which Pope Francis wished to bring together «those who today is forming and starting to study and practice a different economy, one that makes life and doesn't kill, includes and does not excludes, humanizes and does not dehumanize, takes care of the creation and does not rob to make a “pact” to change the current economy and give a soul to the economy of tomorrow». A final declaration emerged from the work and commitment of these economists, which articulates in twelve points the requests to institutions, businesses and the powerful of the Earth to rethink an economic model that is inclusive, respectful of nature, attentive to the dignity of work, capable of offering equal opportunities to women and being at the service of men²⁹⁷. These points are relevant in light of the criticisms to the 2030 Agenda discussed earlier because they call the economic actors, especially at the international level, to direct their actions towards a different route. Some of them were:
 - the great world powers and the great economic-financial institutions slow down their race to let the Earth breathe.
 - A worldwide communion of the most advanced technologies is activated so that sustainable production can be achieved in low-income countries;

296 «Laudato Si: special anniversary year», *Dicastery for promoting integral human development*, 16 May 2020, retrieved December 14, 2020, <http://www.humandevlopment.va/it/news/laudato-si-anno-dell-anniversario-speciale-2020-2021.html>

297 «The economy of Francis: the final statement», *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, 26 November 2020, retrieved December 14, 2020, <https://www.aggiornamentisociali.it/articoli/the-economy-of-francesco-lo-statement-finale/>

energy poverty – a source of economic, social and cultural disparity – is overcome to achieve climate justice.

- Economic ideologies are never again used to offend and discard the poor, the sick, minorities and disadvantaged.
- Tax havens are immediately abolished.
- Create new global financial institutions and reform, in a democratic and inclusive sense, the existing ones (World Bank, International Monetary Fund); sustainable and ethical finance is rewarded and encouraged, and highly speculative and predatory finance is discouraged with special taxation.
- Companies and banks, especially large and globalized ones, introduce an independent ethics committee in their governance with a veto on the environment, justice and impact on the poorest.
- National and international institutions provide prizes to support innovative entrepreneurs in the field of environmental, social, spiritual and managerial sustainability because only by rethinking the management of people with companies, will global sustainability of the economy be possible²⁹⁸.

The members of the event concluded with the awareness that all they ask for is very difficult and perhaps considered utopian by many. But all this, that they already experience in their work and their lifestyles, even if today it seems impossible, thanks to their commitment and insistence, it can become less impossible. Not everyone has welcomed the proposals of the Encyclical. Criticisms raised to the Encyclical are going to be summarized below.

2.4.1. Laudato Si' criticisms.

Like all important texts, the encyclical requires in-depth analysis and raises many questions. La Vergata, at this proposal, affirmed: «The text seems to me to contain

298 «Final statement and common commitment», *The economy of Francesco*, 21 November 2020, retrieved December 14, 2020, <https://francescoeconomy.org/it/final-statement-and-common-commitment/>

many unresolved issues, mainly due to three causes: the attempt to hold together instances that are not easily composable; the universality of the appeal, which not infrequently imposes the price of genericity or ambiguity; the inevitable contradiction of the invitation to a plural dialogue but on the ground of the truth of Christianity». He criticized some aspects of the content. The Pope writes that it is essential to pay special attention to the aboriginal communities with their cultural traditions, which must become the main interlocutors. But the problem of the relativity of cultures, or at least their diversity, cannot be set aside. The globality of the perspective rightly adopted in the Encyclical makes it more urgent. The pressing question is on what ground will the different cultures, whether near or far, dialogue on how to take care of the common home in mutual respect. The question "What to value and oppose to the dominant logic?", despite the ecumenical nature of the invocation, has only one answer, taken for granted: the truth of Christianity, reinterpreted and modernized²⁹⁹.

A further aspect to which La Vergata raises a criticism is the image of nature and man as guardian of the creation proposed in the encyclical. This image does not respond to questions such as how to reconcile the effective recognition of the intrinsic value of all beings with the needs of men or when a public work responds to a social utility and when it is moved by mere utilitarianism of the immediate. For the author, it is absurd to believe and misleading to believe, that there is an ideal condition of nature, which must not be altered, or an original one to which one must return. Nature has never been intact, after the appearance of men. The idea of delivering it unchanged to posterity is empty and unachievable. The conclusion for him is only one: it is a matter of seeing case by case, deciding what to do only after a rigorous examination and an open and transparent discussion between all interested parties³⁰⁰. Francis proposes an answer to the problems of the environment that passes above all through education and is essentially ethical. He

299 Antonello La Vergata, «Considerations on the Encyclical of Pope Francis Laudato Si», *Atti Soc. Nat. Mat. Modena* 148 (2017), retrieved December 9, 2020, <https://iris.unimore.it/retrieve/handle/11380/1154566/183568/Su%20Laudato%20si%27.pdf>, pp.360-361

300 Antonello La Vergata, «Considerations on the Encyclical of Pope Francis Laudato Si», p.362-363

hopes for the formation of an "ecological spirituality" in the conviction that, if we feel intimately united with everything that exists, sobriety and care will spring up spontaneously"³⁰¹.

Another criticism focused on the economic aspect. Piero Roggi (a historian of economic thought), affirmed that the condemnation that the encyclical pronounces against economic science appears too severe and historically unfounded. As said before, the Pope attributes to the technocratic paradigm, inspired by the mere search for profit, the root cause of the environmental imbalance and indicates it as the real enemy to fight.

In support of this statement, the Pope cites the *End of the Modern World*, a volume by Romano Guardini, Father of the Church of the twentieth century, philosopher and university professor. Thus, embracing Guardini's thesis, the encyclical launches a harsh attack on economic science, the bearer of the "deviated paradigm". The economy, therefore, is under accusation: firstly because, it would be responsible for overproduction and pollution, but above all, because as economic science, it would poison thought with the pursuit of profit, contrary to values such as the increase of social utility and well-being. The position defended by Roggi is that is not entirely correct to say that economic science has become the bearer, in the course of its long history, of the only chrematistic paradigm (the pursuit of profit for profit). A Christian- inspired component of economic science has been present since its birth. What lacks above all is historical discernment; he would have preferred a more careful discernment instead of a general accusation.³⁰²

For Roggi, many economists today recognize themselves and many deceased economists would have gladly recognized themselves in the thesis of Pope Francis.

Of course, there is a critical current direct towards the pontifical text at the level of content. Many, especially the more radical sectors of the liberal-capitalist

301 Antonello La Vergata, «Considerations on the Encyclical of Pope Francis Laudato Si», p.367

302 Piero Roggi, «The Encyclical Laudato Si and the unsustainable heaviness of economic science» *Toscanaoggi*, retrieved December 9, 2020 <https://www.toscanaoggi.it/Rubriche/Le-idee/L-enciclica-Laudato-si-e-l-insostenibile-pesantezza-della-Scienza-economica>

model, did not like the Pope's criticism of the exploitation of the environment by an economic model based solely on the law of profit³⁰³.

They believe that the encyclical is a utopia because the market economy and capitalism is still the best way to address the challenges of poverty and economic needs.

Also, some religious organizations affirmed it is a utopia, due to the urgency with which it is proclaimed: the need to act "immediately" is constantly recalled. The document is a profound lack of human and political realism. It is a utopia also for the universality displayed. The Pope affirmed that a strategy of real changes requires a rethinking of the whole process. This means to review all political, economic, financial and technological processes, but also anthropological, educational and philosophical as if the planet and humanity can restart everything³⁰⁴.

The Pope has been subject to very hard critiques. Paul Kelly, the Australian's editor-at large affirmed that «page after page reveals Francis and his advisers as environmental populists and economic ideologues of a quasi-Marxist bent».

He alleged that the Pope is totally opposed to the market mechanism and ignorant about the great uplift in living standards in many countries³⁰⁵. Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute claimed: «Capitalism has spurred the greatest reduction in global poverty in world history: according to the International Labor Organization, the number of people living on \$1,25 a day has risen from 811 million in 1991, to 375 million in 2013. This is just one statistical among the myriad of pro-capitalist pages»³⁰⁶. It would be useful to take into account what Raggi argued, namely that many economists are integrating the Pope's message

303 Massimo Borghesi, «The technocratic model in Laudato Si», Massimo Borghesi (blog), 9 September 2019, retrieved December 10, 2020, <https://www.massimoborghesi.com/il-modello-tecnocratico-in-laudato-si/>

304 Arnaud Sélégnny, «To understand the Synod on the Amazon: analysis of the Enciclical Laudato Si», *FSSPX.News*, 5 November 2019, retrieved November 23, 2020 <https://fsspx.news/it/content/52640>.

305 Duncan «The Economic Credibility of Pope Francis: The Australian Newspaper and Laudato Si'», p.55

306 Andrea Tornielli, «The Acton Institute criticizes the encyclical: Imprudent hypotheses», *LASTAMPA*, 27 June 2015, retrieved November 23, 2020 <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/it/2015/06/27/news/1-acton-institute-critica-l-enciclica-ipotesi-imprudenti-1.35255712>.

into their economic vision. They support the market economy, but at the same time, they appreciate the Pope's message.

Jeffrey Sachs, a longtime advocate for both the market system and the poor, supports the market economy and at the same time supports the idea that the economy needs a moral framework³⁰⁷. Joseph Kaboski, professor of economics at the University of Notre Dame and president of CREDO, an international organization of Catholic economists, stresses that markets are crucial for eliminating poverty. He affirmed that the Pope has a point on a number of fronts. Markets are not perfect and ethics are important. But on the other side, we have never seen an example of any country that has escaped extreme poverty because of foreign aid or NGOs. More people have escaped extreme poverty in the past twenty-five years in part through the growth of China and India than in any period of human history. All miracle countries – “miracle” in the economic sense, such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, Honk Hong, Singapore – they have all grown through a high level of trade and market economies³⁰⁸. Kaboski affirmed that: «As an individual, the Pope probably views redistribution programs as a more effective way of tackling poverty than economic growth, though most mainstream economists would disagree». Kaboski said he views the Pope as neither pro-anti capitalist, but instead a measured critic. The Pope is «catechizing on how our Christian view ought to impact our view of a good economy and society³⁰⁹».

2.4.2. Integrating the integral ecology paradigm: Kate Raworth's socio-economic model and Jeremy Rifkin's paradigm.

Two authors who include many aspects of the integral ecology paradigm in their thinking will now be presented.

307 Greg Rosalsky, «Pontiff-icating on the Free-Market System», *Freakonomics* (blog), 19 December 2013, retrieved November 23, 2020 <https://freakonomics.com/podcast/pontiff-icating-on-the-free-market-system-a-new-freakonomics-radio-podcast/>.

308 *Ibidem*

309 Laura Ieraci, «Catholic Economist: Pope Francis Has “measured” Critique of US Economy», *National Catholic Reporter*, 2 July 2015, retrieved November 23, 2020 <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/catholic-economist-pope-francis-has-measured-critique-us-economy>.

The first socio-economic model '*The Doughnut of Social and Planetary boundaries*' has been elaborated by Kate Raworth. It has gained popularity and acceptance internationally, including the United Nations General Assembly. Kate Raworth, in her book *Doughnut economics: seven ways to think like a 21st century economist*, explains clearly and scientifically the basis for sustainable development, reconciling individual human needs with social and environmental dimensions. This model admits the existence of two borders: an inner boundary concerning the social dimensions and an outer boundary relating to the environmental limits. It is between these two borders that an area extends (which takes the form of a doughnut) in which sustainable development is possible. According to the author, a stable society should ensure the availability of basic resources (food, water, health, care and energy) for all people so that human rights are fully respected. The social dimension forms an internal boundary, below which the conditions for human deprivation develop. Concerning the outer boundary, the use of natural resources by man should not put stress on the natural processes of the Earth, causing, for example, climate change and loss of biodiversity to the point of placing it outside the "stable state". The environmental dimension constitutes an external boundary, beyond which the conditions of environmental degradation are realized. Kate Raworth shows us that, just as there is an external boundary to the use of resources, a sort of "ceiling" beyond which environmental degradation becomes unacceptable and dangerous for all humanity, there is one internal to the withdrawal of resources, a "basic social level", under which human deprivation becomes unacceptable and unsustainable. Thus, between these fundamental social rights and the planetary boundaries, a circular band in the shape of a doughnut is formed which can be defined as safe for the environment and socially right for humanity. A combination of social and planetary boundaries of this kind creates a new perspective of sustainable development³¹⁰. For the 21st century a much greater objective is needed: to respect

310 Azzurra Rinaldi and Irene Salerno, «Development economics course», *Sapienza University of Rome*, 2017-2018, retrieved December 14, 2020
<https://www.coris.uniroma1.it/sites/default/files/economia%20della%20ciambella%20-%20rinaldi%20salerno.pdf>, pp.2-11

the human rights of everyone within the limits of the planet. And this goal is summarized in the image of the doughnut³¹¹.

Kate Raworth discussed her model with more than 2000 young people from all over the world during a Webinar organized for The Economy of Francis³¹². Kate Raworth's model shares many aspects with the Encyclical: she imagines a world in which economic growth is not an end in itself; a world in which a new economy is able to combine the necessity to safeguard at the same planetary and social boundaries.

The second author, Jeremy Rifkin, an economist who teaches at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce in Pennsylvania and President of the Foundation on Economics Trends of Washington discussed his proposal of a new paradigm. It is possible to recognize different aspects that are in line with the encyclical (especially about the responsibility of some actors in promoting change and the role of education). When Rifkin read the encyclical he came to mind his book of 1980, where in the last chapter he wondered what role religions could play in the cultural battle to get out of the economic paradigm based on the exploitation of resources, fossil fuels, excess waste and excess social divide. Rifkin in the last years has outlined the boundaries of a new economic-energy-technological paradigm that could guide the societies of the third millennium towards a new possible future on the planet Earth³¹³.

For Rifkin, the third industrial revolution is characterized by the convergence of the exponential development of ICT technologies, by the use of clean and renewable energies that are combined with new technologies of use and conservation, and by an accessible, horizontal, shared and collaborative distribution of power, made possible both by the development of ICT and by the spread of a new human mentality, which he defines as "biospheric, relational,

311 Azzurra Rinaldi and Irene Salerno, «Development economics course», p.51

312 Valentina Rotondi, «Designing a regenerative and distributive economy», *The economy of Francesco*, retrieved December 14, 2020, <https://francescoeconomy.org/it/designing-a-regenerative-and-distributive-economy-k-raworth/>

313 Sio Online Admin «A new paradigm to overcome the economic crisis of the third millennium and look to the future with optimism and hope», *Sio- Italian Society for orientation*, 30 September 2012, retrieved December 10, 2020, <https://www.sio-online.it/2012/09/30/nuovo-paradigma-per-superare-la-crisi-economica-del-terzo-millennio-e-guardare-con-ottimismo-e-speranza-al-futuro/>

emphatic and collaborative", in harmony with the natural rhythms of the Earth (position in line with that of the Pope)³¹⁴. These are the three possible development factors of a new political-economic-energy paradigm.

Rifkin affirms that a proactive role must be played by political and economic actors able to guide civil society and productive organizations with competence and effectiveness towards a sustainable political-economic-energy paradigm; training and research institutions, which must know how to design innovative social and organizational contexts and train new generations to assume a constructive, proactive and innovative role in future scenarios; civil society as a whole in its organized forms and its individual component.

Also the Pope recognizes a proactive role of these actors: he empowers political and economic actors to become the guides of a process of change; he recognizes the potential role of civil society and local communities, as actors characterized by a strong community sense of responsibility; he dedicates an entire chapter to the role of education because he believes that ecological education can take place in a variety of settings (at school, in the families, in the media).

Regarding education and training systems, Rifkin explicitly talks about how they must first change intervention strategies and drive change. Rifkin writes that the curricula of all American and European schools are old, obsolete and detached from the current world economic crisis and environmental crisis³¹⁵.

Although the encyclical may seem a utopia, many aspects developed under the integral ecology paradigm emerge in important economists. When the Pope comes to speak of a "circular model of production that ensures resources for everyone and for future generations, and which requires maximizing efficiency, reusing and recycling", in part reflect what is already happening, with the decline of old capitalism and the start of what Rifkin calls the Third Industrial Revolution, based precisely on the circular model³¹⁶.

314 Jeremy Rifkin, *The third industrial revolution: how "lateral power" is transforming energy, the economy and the world*, (Milano: Mondadori, 2011), p.14 and p.248

315 Rifkin, *The third industrial revolution: how "lateral power" is transforming energy, the economy and the world*, p.242

316 Alessandro Gilioli, « Jeremy Rifkin: How is sharing Pope Francis», *l'Espresso*, 17 June 2015, retrieved December 10, 2020,

<https://espresso.repubblica.it/plus/articoli/2015/06/17/news/jeremy-rifkin-com-e-sharing-il->

The paradigms that guide the 2030 Agenda have all the potential to be transformative, provided that they take on an ethical dimension. This gives meaning to the educational and training work that is entrusted to schools, universities, the scientific and professional communities to bring out a new vision; this gives sense also to the local experiences in fields such as new environmental awareness, social innovation, creative self-employment.

Allegri and Perulli ask whether the 2030 Agenda could be considered as an announcement of the desired social, economic and environmental paradigm shift.

They affirmed that the elements are all there. However, it would be a revolution from above, while many virtuous experiences consolidated locally, suggest that only experimentation from below can create that "network of new regularities" which is entrusted with the hope of a complete change of paradigm³¹⁷.

This reflection projects us into the next chapter. The debate now opens on the initiatives and the actors activated by the two documents: whether the 2030 Agenda promotes a top-down change or whether it is being implemented locally; if the encyclical *Laudato Si'* is influencing local communities and promoting actions from below.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to discuss the criticisms to the 2030 Agenda paradigms, some targets not very specific and transformative and the lack of a critical perspective about the causes of human deprivation: all obstacle to the complete shift towards sustainability. Elites and powerful groups are reluctant to give up what the Pope calls the dominant techno-economic paradigm.

It has been considered whether the integral ecology paradigm can provide a contribution to address the critical issues discussed and to the SDGs achievement. With the integral ecology paradigm, the Pope criticizes an economic model which only pursues growth and profit. The integral ecology paradigm invites to an economic ecology, where economic growth pursues a social purpose and protects

[papa-francesco-dell-enciclica-laudato-si-1.217474](https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/encyclicals/encyclicals_index.html)

317 Allegri and Perulli, «A network of "new regularities" for sustainable development», p.8

the environment. Social justice is a key driver: only by identifying the causes of human deprivation, it will be possible to make human development flourish and protect human rights. The Pope's invitation to an ecological conversion, although it refers to a dimension mainly cultural, educational and ethical, has started to take shape in some initiatives, such as the Laudato Si' communities or events such as *The economy of Francis*.

Of course, the 2030 Agenda remains the most effective political tool to achieve change. The critical issues of the 2030 Agenda do not deny its overall transformative potential. The religious documents can be allies of the 2030 Agenda. Laudato Si' has shown us that religions have an important voice in the challenge of economic, social and environmental sustainability. The evolution of society has to be along two fundamental and interconnected axes: technical, economic and financial on the one hand, and ethical, social and educational on the other. Both need to be strengthened in equal measure since the weakness of one will adversely affect the other, and society as a whole³¹⁸. The result of this integration will be noticed above all at the local level since it is here that the effects of a wrong development model are most visible. This directs us into the next chapter, where the discussion will focus on the actors involved in the implementation of the documents. It will be considered one further criticism to the SDGs, namely to be distant from the local needs. It will be considered if the encyclical Laudato Si' adopts a bottom-up approach, promoting a change from below and making local communities actors of real change.

318 Interdicasterial working group, *Journing towards care for our common home: five years after Laudato Si*, p.18

Chapter III

Criticisms to the top-down approach in the SDGs drafting and implementation: involving actors from the bottom-up

Introduction

The chapter is going to discuss the SDGs' criticism to be objectives distant from the local needs. This distance is due to their approval at the international level, agreed by the Governments of the Members States, and to their implementation, carried out by national governments, experts and elites.

The need for a bottom-up approach in the SDGs implementation, that involves local governments and communities, has emerged. It will be considered if and to what extent the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'* is promoting bottom-up actions and is mobilizing local communities to take actions on sustainable development. In the attempt to mitigate this SDGs distance, the contribution of the *Laudato Si'* can be relevant.

The encyclical appears in the position to strengthen the bottom-up approach required for SDGs implementation. If the encyclical *Laudato Si'* can mobilize the actors from below, an alliance between the two documents can speed up the achievement of the SDGs. It is necessary to unite communities and local actors, around the common cause of sustainability. It will therefore be verified in which fields *Laudato Si'* can activate concrete actions and initiatives.

3.1. Top-down and bottom-up approaches in the decision-making process on sustainable development: the actors involved.

In the decision-making process on sustainable development issues, two approaches determine how decisions are taken and responsibilities are shared between the different actors.

The bottom-up approach means that local actors participate in decision-making, in the strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local area.

The involvement of local actors includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups and representatives of public and private institutions³¹⁹.

The top-down approach relies on higher authority figures to determine larger goals that will filter down to the tasks of the lower level of government³²⁰. The decisions will usually be made by national governments, while local people who will be affected by the decisions, will have little say in the process and have little influence in the project; but also international NGOs programs may be managed by experts in a top-down way, without considering the particularity of the local contexts.

Achieving sustainable development requires multiple sustainability strategies, which range from the entire system to the local or regional system³²¹. Jason Gallup affirmed that «the top-down approach has the potential to create widespread and immediate change when applied effectively». In this approach, the decision-makers, as legitimate holders of authority and guarantors of the common good, define the objectives and then, they will take their final decision. The risk of this approach is that local communities and civil society are often in a non-participatory position. Citizens become aware of the policies when they have already been formulated³²².

The bottom-up approach promotes dialogue and cooperation between the various political, social and economic forces that make up a community. Individuals can participate in the definition of problems and objectives, in the choice of alternative strategies, and the implementation of decisions, while institutions commit themselves to collaborate and to accept the results deriving from this interactive

319 Yves Boisellier, « Bottom-up Approach», *The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD)-European Commission*, 17 July 2015, retrieved January 30, 2021
https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/content/1-bottom-approach_en.

320 Kate Aby, « Which management style is rights for you: top-down or bottom-up approach», *Smartsheet*, 28 June 2018, retrieved January 30, 2021, <https://www.smartsheet.com/top-down-bottom-up-approach>.

321 John Cairns, «Integrating top-down/bottom-up sustainability strategies: An ethical challenge», *Eco-ethics and sustainability ethics*, February 2003, retrieved January 11, 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26386716_Integrating_top-downbottom-up_sustainability_strategies_An_ethical_challenge , p.44

322 Jason Gallup, «Top-down versus bottom-up: two approaches to sustainability», *UW-Madison Office of Sustainability*, 3 July 2018, retrieved January 11, 2021, <https://sustainability.wisc.edu/top-down-bottom-up-sustainability/>

process. Designing bottom-up participation means creating a network of relationships in which, thanks to a more widespread circulation of information and the creation of a climate of learning, dialogue and cooperation, everyone can share the knowledge available, confront with the interests and perspectives of the other actors in the field, until a joint and shared solution is agreed.

The bottom-up approach has different objectives: to involve the local community, which entails organizing the circulation of information, facilitating access to training, whilst at the same time ensuring transparent decision-making procedures; to draw out ideas and generate initiatives, which calls for a degree of open-mindedness; to build consensus, because where participatory decision-making works effectively, it can ensure broad and fair representation of all interest groups; to delegate decision-making powers, from other levels of governance to the local level³²³.

Empowering local citizens and community organizations in decision-making processes provides a possibility for individuals and groups to transform their choices into desired actions and outcomes. The creation of the conditions for effective participation often is expensive and time-consuming, due to community size and stakeholder heterogeneity. But the engagement of these actors in decision-making processes provides a higher chance for the projects' sustainability, thanks to the development of the community sense of ownership³²⁴. Local development of course requires an enabling national environment favorable to the successful implementation and to the long-term sustainability of local projects (for example, provide financial and human capital resources for local development; technical support provided by external agencies, coupled with local technical capabilities; a supporting national legal mandate)³²⁵.

The bottom-up approach is being consolidated more and more³²⁶.

323 European LEADER association for rural development, «The bottom-up approach», https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/leaderii_teaching-kit_booklet-chap4.pdf

324 FAO- Natural Resources Management and Environmental Department, «Asistencia a los países Andinos en la reducción de riesgos y desastres en el sector agropecuario», retrieved February 7, 2021, <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/55804/en>, p.4

325 FAO- Natural Resources Management and Environmental Department, «Asistencia a los países Andinos en la reducción de riesgos y desastres en el sector agropecuario», p.5

326 «Agenda 21 processes», *HIA 21*, retrieved January 14, 2021, http://www.hia21.eu/old/decisori/Appendici/Appendice_1.pdf, pp.6-7

An example of the consolidation of the bottom-up approach is ELARD, the European LEADER Association for rural development. It is an international non-profit association set up to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to maintain their population through sustainable local development. ELARD brings together Local Actions Groups committed to involving all stakeholders in rural development at the local level. Created in 1999, now it joins together almost 3000 Local Action Groups from 26 countries, including countries that are not members of the European Union but have adopted and are implementing leader methodology. Since its creation, the partner LAGs have implemented more than 500,000 projects, while ELARD encourages networking among its European associates. ELARD on one side, promotes bottom-up local development strategies and initiatives, on the other side, it gives voice to rural communities at European and international institutions³²⁷.

Even if it is not yet a day-to-day reality, efforts are being made to put local communities at the heart of the sustainable development process. Going from global to local or regional directly follows René Dubos' famous injunction 'think globally, act locally'³²⁸.

Marsha Wallace, a co-founder of Dining for women, believes that «change meets at the top-down and bottom-up». A single approach is not enough to achieve a change. Permanent change comes when the governance at the top encounters the advocacy and grassroots efforts at the bottom. Wallace affirmed that «top-down change comes from a state, national or global level. Governments, that with their ability to write and enforce laws, impose punishment and offer benefits for socially acceptable behavior, are major drivers to promote change. The bottom-up approach, promoted by private citizens, social entrepreneurs, traditional businesses, can enable and empower people to press for change themselves. These two approaches are both necessary. Together they create a positive feedback loop that can lead to effective results³²⁹».

327 «European Leader Association for Rural Development», *Elard*, retrieved 19 February 2021, <http://elard.eu/>.

328 John Cairns, «Integrating top-down/bottom-up sustainability strategies: An ethical challenge», p.48

329 Marsha Wallace, «Change Meets at the Top down and Bottom up», *Dining for Women* (blog),

These two approaches are important because the SDGs' implementation requires the empowerment of actors at all levels. Governments implement the SDGs in their national policies, plans and strategies. However, the integration of the SDGs within sub-national level planning requires an understanding of local needs. Local policies and programs often are unable to identify the real needs of the population. Local governments should involve communities and individuals: their participation in the decision-making process is essential for the achievement of the SDGs within local contexts.

The starting point of the discussion is the critiques raised to the SDGs to be distant from local needs.

The reference SDG for this chapter is SDG 17 "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development". Target 17.16 refers to the necessity of multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize and share knowledge, especially in developing countries and target 17.17 promotes public, public-private and civil society partnerships³³⁰.

3.2. Criticisms to the top-down SDGs drafting and implementation.

The SDGs are often distant from the real needs of local contexts. This is due, on the one hand, to their international approval, being the result of an agreement and a mediation between the governments of the Members States of the United Nations. On the other hand, the SDGs' distance is also aggravated during their implementation. The SDGs implementation often takes place according to a top-down approach: national governments, NGOs experts, and technicians take the lead in their implementation. The exclusion of local actors and local communities in the SDGs implementation and decision-making processes makes this distance from local needs even wider. Local actors are best placed to know the specificities of the context in which they live. Implementing the SDGs through a bottom-up approach, although desirable, presents obstacles. But an effort is needed to place

retrieved January 24, 2021, <https://diningforwomen.org/change-meets-at-the-top-down-andbottom-up/>

330 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015)

these actors at the center of strategies and initiatives. The actors who have suffered most in the past and still suffer the exclusion from the decision-making process on sustainable development, need to have an active role in the choices that govern them. In doing so, the harmony between the top-down and the bottom-up approaches will be restored: local actors will define their priorities, placed at the center of decision-making processes; global and national actors will finally pursue actions aligned with local needs.

The first reason for SDGs distance comes from the fact that they are the outcome of a global decision. Different interests have been negotiated and mediated between the Governments of the Member States.

The 2030 Agenda is very ambitious and aspirational, but it carries the weight of a global approval at the highest level, and it requires regular follow-up and reporting by all countries. A criticism of the SDGs is that they are top-down and bureaucratic, ignoring local context: one size does not fit all when it comes to achieving sustainable development. The goal must be to strike a balance between respecting local context and working at the international level³³¹.

Arthur Dahl, President of the International environmental forum, affirmed that «the United Nations may seem far from our local actions in our communities [...]. For most of us, looking at an agenda of ambitious goals adopted by heads of State at the United Nations is like looking at a night sky, far from the realities of daily life³³²». He continued, «the United Nations process is essentially top-down, building a global consensus among governments, which is very important, but not sufficient». The SDGs need to be owned by individuals, communities and civil society, starting a bottom-up process and translating them into local realities. The priority must be to implement the SDGs at multiple levels, from the global to the local, and even for each one of us³³³.

The SDGs' distance from local needs is also the result of a top-down SDGs

331 «Are the Sustainable Development goals the best approach to sustainability?», *Future Learn*, retrieved January 14, 2021, <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/achieving-sustainable-development/0/steps/35496>

332 Arthur Lyon Dahl, «Looking at the Sustainable Development Goals from the bottom-up», *International Environmental Forum*, 6 October 2020, retrieved January 11, 2021, <https://iefworld.org/ddahl16j>

333 *Ibidem*

implementation, led by national governments and NGOs experts. An implementation that excludes local actors and communities aggravates the SDGs' distance from the real local needs.

Jessika Koski, a climate policy associate at the Stockholm Environment Institute's US Center affirmed that «while the 17 SDGs are global in scope, policy development and implementation occur especially at the national, regional and local levels. Policy-makers must translate the global SDGs targets into local policy options that reflect real-world conditions. However, often this translation is top-down; experts and elites dominate the policy process». This, she affirmed, «produces ineffective policies that conflict with local priorities and disregard specific development contexts³³⁴».

Masooma Rahmaty and Jimena Leiva Roesch, members of the International Peace Institute, are aware that the space given to civil society is still marginal. They affirmed that «up to now, engagement with civil society and the private sector on the part of the governments remains ad-hoc in most cases and it is often disorganized because only a few civil society organizations are included in the process. Community leaders and small, local civil society organizations also need to become partners in these efforts³³⁵».

They believe that local communities possess the solutions to their own challenges, and they can build upon existing initiatives on the ground that are working. External actors can contribute to sustainable development, giving support to national governments and local communities to sustain collaborative efforts and to be more responsive to the reality on the ground over the long-term³³⁶.

334 Jessika Koski, «From top-down to bottom-up: three steps to improving public participation in the 2030 Agenda», *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, 11 July 2019, retrieved January 12, 2021, <https://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/guest-articles/from-top-down-to-bottom-up-three-steps-to-improving-public-participation-in-the-2030-agenda/#:~:text=While%20the%2017%20SustainableDevelopment,national%2C%20regional%20and%20local%20levels.&text=Often%20this%20translation%20is%20top,elites%20dominate%20the%20policy%20process>.

335 Masooma Rahmaty and Jimena Leiva Roesch, «How innovative approaches can accelerate localization of the 2030 Agenda», *IPI Global Observatory*, 7 February 2020, retrieved January 17, 2021, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/02/how-innovative-approaches-can-accelerate-localization-2030-agenda/>

336 *Ibidem*

An example may be useful to better understand this SDGs top-down implementation, which generates a distance from local needs.

Nicole Aaron discussed, through an Indian case study, the inadequacy of a top-down approach adopted by an NGO to achieve sustainable change. India has looked towards the SDGs as a solution to help Hindu Dalit women like devadasis out of poverty. A focus group discussion between a devadasi woman and an NGO staff member showed that while devadasis women have particular ideas about development, many of the aspirations of development organizations are not working in their context. The woman interviewed, being old, did not have the energy to do manual labor, so she needed work to do at home and proposed an increase of the devadasi pension, however, the NGO member offered her a buffalo³³⁷. Despite having previously explained that raise a buffalo was not economically viable in her village, due to the lack of agricultural work and lack of water, the NGO staff continued to offer her a buffalo. Even if women might prefer more lobbying for a pension increase, they will take any kind of support that the NGO is offering them. Through such approaches, the realities of the everyday lives of devadasis women remain unchanged, in conditions of poverty. These top-down approaches to development rarely consult local beneficiaries and, for devadasis women, are unsuccessful in helping women out of poverty³³⁸.

The need to strengthen the bottom-up approach is now an urgency for SDGs implementation.

The commitment of world leaders to the 2030 Agenda was confirmed during the SDGs Summit held in September 2019, during which they pledged to encourage action at the local level and to support and to make autonomous cities, authorities and local communities that play a critical role in this area. UNRIC (the United Nations Regional Information Center) recognized that one of the main causes of the delay in the SDGs implementation is the fact that policies and programs are

337 Nicole Aaron, «Top-down, bottom-up: success and failures of development in New Zealand and India», In J. Stansfield & A. FranklandHutchinson (Eds.). *Sustainably Yours: Community Development and a Sustainably Just Future — ACDA and IACD Conference Proceedings*. (pp. 18-28). Auckland, New Zealand: Unitec Institute of Technology., 2017. Retrieved February 7, 2021 www.unitec.ac.nz/epress/, p.21

338 Nicole Aaron, «Top-down, bottom-up: success and failures of development in New Zealand and India», p.22

unable to identify and address the real needs of the population. If the efforts employed to achieve the objectives are not based on these needs, the outcome will be negative. Those who have in the past been denied the benefits of development remain marginalized, powerless and excluded. Ensuring active participation does not only mean consulting individuals and communities but placing them at the center of decision-making processes that affect their own development. Priorities must be established by those who benefit most from development: this means that communities have to set programs and development processes. Only ten years remain to reach the SDGs, so the efforts must be focused on the real needs of the populations and communities³³⁹.

Different authors are aware that all the actors need to make efforts to remove the obstacles to SDGs implementation from below. They identify the obstacles and the actions to be taken to overcome them.

Arthur Dahl affirmed «the necessity to look at the SDGs from the bottom-up. Governments will need to launch a process to decide on their goals and targets at the national level, as their share of the global responsibility to reach the goals; but cities and local governments can adopt their own SDGs inspired by the global ones³⁴⁰». Many of the challenges of sustainability require different responses depending on local circumstances, institutional frameworks and cultures.

Public participation gives the possibility of inclusion of those who are most affected by policy outcomes. In this way, policymakers prioritize more effectively and identify unintended consequences. Public participation can not only be promised. It must be planned and executed. Some actions can overcome the obstacles to bottom-up participation³⁴¹. First of all, actively identify and engage marginalized communities. Without explicit attempts to include them, those with privileges are most apt to participate and gain greater influence, aggravating existing inequalities. Secondly, take active steps to support meaningful

339 UNRIC, «UN experts: it is time to encourage the participation of people in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals», retrieved January 12, 2021, <https://unric.org/it/espertionu-e-tempo-di-incoraggiare-la-partecipazione-delle-persone-nellattuazione-degli-obiettivi-di-sviluppo-sostenibile>

340 Arthur Lyon Dahl, «Looking at the Sustainable Development Goals from the bottom-up»

341 *Ibidem*

participation, because development is often expert-driven. It is necessary to invest so sure that communities have the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute in a meaningful way; indigenous and local knowledge has to be welcomed, but also truly valued by policymakers. Finally, transparency is an essential requirement. Policymakers offer the public the chance to provide input, raising the public's expectation that they will have influence. Policymakers have to communicate early and unambiguously about the processes in which the public has a say³⁴².

According to Arun Maria, the main obstacle to SDGs implementation is the centralization of development programs.

He affirmed that «all stakeholders recognize the need for effective partnerships for the SDGs. However, disagreement among stakeholders, as well as among diverse experts with divergent perspectives who must come together to address complex issues, obstacle progress. Governments construct centralized, top-down programs. And international NGOs programs are managed centrally to achieve scale and to improve efficiency by deploying best practices³⁴³». Many different capabilities that must be brought together to address challenges do not collaborate with each other easily on the ground when all of them, whether in government, an international NGO, are "reporting up" at their centers³⁴⁴.

The lack of sustainability literacy is one of the main obstacles to the bottom-up approach in the SDGs implementation.

In the field of sustainable development, affirmed John Cairns, «at the bottom-up level, there are a lot of areas where adequate numbers of competent professionals are available. However, there are numerous areas where the idea of sustainability is not even being discussed in the most general way. So, there is a major educational problem at the bottom-up level³⁴⁵». Cairns stated: «a major problem in increasing literacy at the bottom-up level concerns trying to increase all citizens'

342 *Ibidem*

343 Arun Maria, «A bottom-up approach to achieving the UN SDGs», *Mint* (newspaper), 8 January 2018, retrieved January 17, 2021, <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/sNcjMNeI2AAJDmrBy3wIwK/A-bottomup-approach-to-achieving-UN-SDGs.html>

344 *Ibidem*

345 John Cairns, «Integrating top-down/bottom-up sustainability strategies: An ethical challenge», p.49

literacy in the requirements for sustainable use of the planet and deciding what organizations should be responsible for quality control, planning, financing, and the like. There is also the crucial question of how to transfer increased sustainability literacy from areas where the literacy is high to areas where it is low or non-existent. This problem will almost certainly be exacerbated by cultural, religious and language difficulties³⁴⁶». Following Kung's thought that ethics helps to reduce these problems, because it may furnish a common ground in which diversity can be appreciated and not be a reason for separation, Cairns argued: «if humans are going to have a global economy, a global technology then there must also be global ethics to which all nations and peoples of the most varied backgrounds and beliefs can commit themselves³⁴⁷». The debate on sustainability issues would be more successful if participants explicitly clarify their ethical values that, with scientific evidence, support the positions they are taking³⁴⁸.

While many authors are critical in the possibility of reducing the SDGs' distance from the local contexts, others believe that the SDGs have reduced the distance between the United Nations and local actors, both in the SDGs drafting and in the implementation.

First of all, regarding the criticism that they are the result of an agreement at the highest level, we can not ignore that the SDGs were born from long and intense negotiations carried out by different actors. Governments of the Member States have decided, by finding a compromise, what they want to engage in³⁴⁹. However, in addition to the Governments of the member States, a vast range of stakeholders contributed to the drafting of the 2030 Agenda: United Nations agencies, interest groups, national parliaments, civil society, think tanks and research institutes³⁵⁰.

346 *Ibidem*

347 Hans Küng, *A global ethic for global politics and economics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

348 John Cairns, «Integrating top-down/bottom-up sustainability strategies: An ethical challenge», pp.48-49

349 «Agenda 2030 for sustainable development», *Global compact network Italy*, retrieved January 14, 2021, <https://www.globalcompactnetwork.org/it/il-global-compact-ita/sdgs/agenda-2030.html>

350 Directorate-General for the Environment, «Sustainable Development for all: a new Agenda for 2030», 25 September 2015, retrieved January 30, 2021 https://ec.europa.eu/environment/efe/news/sustainable-development-all-new-agenda-2030-2015-09_25_it

Examples were the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which brought together representatives from civil society, the private sector, local and national administrations; the Sustainable Development Solutions Networks, an independent global network of research centers, universities and technical institutions working with various stakeholders; civil society organizations, such as the Beyond 2015 Campaign, which brought together over 1300 organizations from all over the world, or the European network EADI, which brought together over 150 university institutions and think tanks from 28 European countries³⁵¹. There was an important participatory process in drafting the SDGs.

Secondly, although they are often implemented by national governments or experts, the SDGs are scalable: most of them have a global and local level of application and they require a multi-stakeholder action approach, with an active role of governments, local public bodies, companies of various sizes and civil society³⁵². Opposing top-down and bottom-up approaches does not contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. As numerous authors argue, the two approaches must complement each other. John Cairns affirmed that «both strategies are being developed, although the rate of development of the bottom-up varies dramatically from one country to another³⁵³.

In the SDGs implementation, it is necessary to involve communities and individuals, through a bottom-up participatory approach. However, the international and national levels have an important role to play in helping to drive forward local and regional change³⁵⁴.

351 Alberto Mazzali and Marco Lupi, «The post-2015 Development Agenda and the climate change agreement», *CeSPI*, n.107, September 2015, retrieved September 22, 2020, <https://www.cespi.it/it/ricerche/laagenda-di-sviluppo-post-2015-e-laccordo-sui-cambiamenti-climatici-settembre-2015>, pp.9-10

352 Walter Sancassiani and Loris Manicardi, «UN 2030 Agenda: the first experiences of local entities», in *Ecoscienza*, Number 5, 2017, retrieved January 14, 2020, https://www.arpae.it/cms3/documenti/_cerca_doc/ecoscienza/ecoscienza2017_5/servizio_Sviluppo_sostenibile_Ecoscienza2017_05.pdf, p.40

353 Cairns, «Integrating top-down/bottom-up sustainability strategies: An ethical challenge», p.45

354 Róisín Hinds, « From agreement to action: delivering the SDGs», *Save the Children*, 2016, retrieved January 16, 2020, <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/advocacy/from-agreement-to-action.pdf>, p.2

Bringing the SDGs closer to local needs is a challenge for the Governments of each country.

Vandemoortele believes that despite their complexity is making it difficult for stakeholders at the country level to take them up, it does not mean that the SDGs have no worth. Among the several steps that must be taken, the most important one for every country is to select from the global agenda those aspects that are essential to the local context and adapt them: «Some see this as equivalent to cherry-picking and watering-down, but the danger will only occur if it is done in a non-participatory process³⁵⁵». It cannot be conducted solely by governments. Each government sets its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but has to take into account national circumstances. It must involve the social partners, civil society, academics, community representatives and citizens' assemblies³⁵⁶.

Then, the second challenge to reduce the distance is for communities and for individuals.

Dahl identified 107 targets that could be implemented directly at the community level: «these targets are a kind of checklist for local planning. They are too many to take on all at once, so a community should select some that seem to be high priorities and a good place to start, and then consider others later, after having addressed the priorities. This could be done through partnerships, with different groups of stakeholders or organizations taking on those targets that are of particular interest to them. Through a consultative process, the community could agree on local numerical targets to be achieved by 2030, and construct its own 2030 Agenda. Some of the global indicators could be adapted to measure progress at the local level, or other more appropriate indicators found that can be measured with local resources»³⁵⁷. Dahl affirmed that it is also possible to consider Sustainable Development Goals for individuals. The 2030 Agenda calls for changes in our own aspirations and lifestyles. He listed under each of the 17

355 Jan Vandemoortele, «SDGs: the tyranny of an acronym?», *Impakter*, 13 September 2016, retrieved January 12, 2021, <https://impakter.com/sdgs-tyranny-acronym/>

356 *Ibidem*

357 Arthur Lyon Dahl, «Looking at the Sustainable Development Goals from the bottom-up»

SDGs, some of the things each of us can do to concretize the transition to sustainability. Community and individuals targets contribute to positive direction by showing that constructive efforts can make a visible difference at the local level³⁵⁸.

It will be considered if the involvement of local governments and communities is taking place with the SDGs localization strategy, but above all if and to what extent the encyclical of Pope Francis supports and mobilizes the actors from below.

3.2.1. Bringing SDGs closer to local communities: localizing the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda states that governments and public institutions should work closely on the implementation with regional and local authorities, subregional and international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others³⁵⁹. The need for integrated, inclusive, and coherent approaches – that enhance horizontal coordination between sectors, and vertical integration between levels of government – pursues one of the underlying principles of "leaving no one behind". The reality of SDGs achievement will be based on the actual inclusion, contributions, and collaboration of all partners and levels of government. Daniell and Key affirmed that «the concept of multi-level governance refers to systems of governance where there is a dispersion of authority upwards, downwards and sideways between levels of government – local, regional, national and supra-national – as well across spheres and sectors, including states, markets and civil society³⁶⁰».

According to Pytrik Oosterhof, «the success of multi-level governance and coherent SDGs implementation can be fostered, for instance, by effectively integrating the SDGs into the mandates of institutions and promoting cross-sector

358 *Ibidem*

359 UNITED NATIONS General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1, (25 September 2015), par.45

360 Katherine Danielle and Adrian Kay, «Multi-level governance: an introduction», in *Multi-level governance: conceptual challenges and case studies from Australia* (pp.3-32), November 2017, retrieved February 10, 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321276463_Multi-level_Governance_An_Introduction, p.4

collaboration at all levels». Increasing the role of local and regional governments, communities and local stakeholders is essential for accelerating progress on the SDGs³⁶¹.

Some initiatives that are being implemented can answer the criticism that the local actors have a marginal role in the implementation of the SDGs. The strategy of SDGs localization harmonizes the SDGs with the real needs of local and regional contexts, giving to local actors an active role in the decision-making process.

SDGs localization has been described as the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national, and subnational sustainable development goals³⁶². It includes, in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the process of considering sub-national contexts, from the setting of goals and targets to determining the means of implementation and using indicators that measure and monitor progress³⁶³.

The concept of localization finds its origin in the '90s. In 1992, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the UN adopted Local Agenda 21, a voluntary process that aimed to create local policies and programs to achieve sustainable development. The process required local governments to consult with local communities, minority groups and industrial organizations to develop local environmental plans, policies, and programs. This consultation process was developed to enhance awareness-raising as well as the formation of partnerships. Localization was also promoted with the MDGs. Introduced into the MDGs implementation period, the concept was highlighted as a core necessity during the midterm evaluation in 2008, which indicated that the achievement of the MDGs required ownership, local accountability, and the

361 Pytrik Dieuwke Oosterhof, «Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals to Accelerate Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», *Asian Development Bank*, Issue 33, December 2018, retrieved January 16, 2021, <https://www.adb.org/publications/sdgs.-implementation-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>, pp. 3-4

362 UN Development Group, «Localizing the Post-2015 Agenda: Dialogues on Implementation», New York, 2014, p. 6

363 Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level», Barcelona, 15 July 2016, retrieved January 15, 2021, https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/roadmap_for_localizing_the_sdgs_0.pdf, p.6

efforts of local institutions³⁶⁴. Having learned from these previous experiences, it is commonly agreed that SDGs achievement strongly depends on local contributions and on the capacities of local and regional governments. Oosterhof affirmed that «local and regional governments are often in a strong position to identify and respond to the gaps and needs of successful SDGs implementation [...]. They are close to citizens, therefore, they play an important role in understanding citizens' needs, identifying gaps and vulnerable groups, and facilitating awareness around the SDGs. Furthermore, local and regional governments can play a key role in data collection and monitoring related to the Agenda³⁶⁵». The 2030 Agenda, directly and indirectly, refers to subnational efforts and local and regional governments. To gain a better understanding of what localization would entail, the so-called "global conversation", initiated by the UN Development Group, included a "global consultation on localizing the SDGs"³⁶⁶. Building on the consultation outcome, a partnership between UNDP, UN-Habitat and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments developed a methodology that supported the SDGs localizing approach at the global, national and local levels. Among other tools, a *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs* was created to guide stakeholders in the process of SDGs localization³⁶⁷.

The roadmap identifies the actions to be taken to implement localization and provides examples of the strategy's success. Four actions have been identified to support local and regional actors to implement and monitor the SDGs.

1) *Awareness-raising*: local actors can raise awareness about the SDGs and their importance to local communities. Awareness-raising activities aim to increase the engagement of citizens and local communities, to promote their sense of ownership and their participation in the achievement of the SDGs at the local level. Public awareness-raising campaigns should promote the message that the

364 United Nations, «High level event on the Millennium Development Goals. Committing to action: achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Background note by the Secretary-General», (25 September 2008)

365 Pytrik Dieuwke Oosterhof, «Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals to Accelerate Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», p. 4

366 UN Development Group, *The global conversation begins: emerging views for a new development Agenda* (New York: UNDP, 2013)

367 Pytrik Dieuwke Oosterhof, «Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals to Accelerate Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development», p. 4

SDGs are relevant to ordinary people and local communities all over the world. Local and regional governments may be poorly informed of their role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda or fear that they are small, lack the necessary competence or human, financial and technical capacity to have an active role in the achievement of the SDGs. Through the nomination of champion local and regional leaders who are actively involved in the achievement of the SDGs, powerful awareness-raising and mobilization for local and regional government associations will be possible. These champions should communicate the SDGs and the importance of localizing them³⁶⁸.

2) *Advocacy*: national governments all over the world are launching SDGs-based national development strategies or aligning their existing plans with the proposed goals of the 2030 Agenda. But national associations of local and regional governments have an important role in facilitating the participation of local and regional governments in the development of these strategies, to reflect and respond to local circumstances, needs and priorities. Subnational governments should resist top-down approaches that reduce their role in implementing priorities decided unilaterally by their central governments. They should seek to ensure that the process is bottom-up and that local needs, priorities, and expectations frame national strategies. They can call for reforms and create enabling environments in which to ensure effective local and regional development³⁶⁹.

3) *Local implementation of SDGs*: the implementation should both respond to local and regional needs and priorities, be coherent with, and complement, national strategies. Each level of government should have the capacity to set its own priorities in line with its legal areas of responsibility and pursue them through local and regional plans and sectoral policies. Local and regional governments must ensure that their priorities within the framework of the SDGs are relevant and locally-owned, and include the interests of different levels of

368 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», p.14

369 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», p.17-18

government and local stakeholders³⁷⁰.

Róisín Hinds stated that the process of implementation requires some initial prioritization of targets. According to her, «to ensure effective and inclusive implementation, short-term prioritization must support medium-long term development plans, geared towards the implementation of the entire agenda. If there is any prioritization, it should be viewed as a short-term strategy – an opportunity for governments to take stock and consider how their development plans can integrate the SDGs – but always be geared towards the holistic implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the medium to long term³⁷¹».

SDGs implementation strategies can be defined by adopting ad-hoc SDGs plans or by aligning current local and regional development plans with the goals, targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda. Local and regional plans should provide a comprehensive vision of the territory and define strategies based on a multi-dimensional approach to inclusive, sustainable development. The implementation should promote the full involvement and participation of local stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, community-based organizations, research organizations, academia and individual citizens)³⁷².

4) *Monitoring*: the SDGs will be monitored and assessed through a system of 231 unique indicators. Many of these indicators can be localized by gathering data at the territorial level. The majority of countries' monitoring systems are administered by a national statistical office or national planning service. In other countries, the systems are the competence of an intersectoral commission or a council made up of representatives of different ministries. In either case, local and regional governments should seek to take part in the national follow-up and review of the SDGs implementation.

The definition of local or regional SDGs plans, or plans aligned with the SDGs, should include a set of indicators linked to those of the 2030 Agenda and adapted to each territory's needs and context. Local and regional governments define these

370 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», p.25

371 Róisín Hinds, « From agreement to action: delivering the SDGs», p.10

372 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», pp.28-32

indicators according to their data collection capacities, including their human resources and technological facilities. Similarly, countries with special circumstances such as fragile, conflict-affected, landlocked, or less developed countries or small island might need to include additional indicators to better reflect and monitor their specific circumstances and needs³⁷³.

Concrete examples for each of these areas are presented in the *Roadmap for localizing the SDGs*, proving that the strategy of localization is leading to positive results.

Concerning awareness-raising, in the Netherlands, the Global Goals Municipal Campaign was launched. Approximately, half of the municipalities participate in the campaign; they communicate and raise awareness about the SDGs, facilitate the participation of local stakeholders, examine their own policies to align them with the SDGs and exchange practices with other municipalities within and outside the Netherlands. The international cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International) drawn up a 'Menu of Inspiration', which provided ideas to municipalities on the actions they can take for each of the SDGs³⁷⁴.

Regarding local actors advocacy, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) urged the Spanish government to create a "multilevel coordination committee" at the national level, that recognizes the 2030 Agenda as part of national policy to ensure its effective implementation. The FEMP's strategy is to raise awareness, make commitments and build alliances around the localization of the SDGs³⁷⁵.

A virtuous example of local implementation of SDGs comes from the Provincial Government of Azuay in Ecuador, which defends the principle of the active participation of society, communities and local stakeholders in the process of definition of its plans and actions. In its Territory Vision 2019, Azuay government

373 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», pp.37-39

374 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», p.11

375 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», p.21

envisaged putting into practice its Participatory Planning System while implementing the SDGs in its territory. It has used a People's Provincial Parliament and the Cantonal and Community Assemblies to bring together a wide range of sectors for coherent institutional planning³⁷⁶.

A good example of monitoring activity comes from Colombia. One of the key initiatives implemented in 2015 was the establishment, of the High-level Interinstitutional Commission for the Preparation and Effective Implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This was a multi-sectorial political platform that included all relevant National Ministries (mainly lead by the Department of Statistics, DANE, and the Department of Planning, DNP) and the Office of the President; local and regional governments; and civil society organizations, academia and private sector³⁷⁷. DNP created two tools to assist the local authorities in the monitoring and evaluation process. The first was the Information System for Assessing Performance, to monitor the coverage and fulfillment of the Territorial Development Plans at the product level, and Terridata, a data visualization tool that established standardized and comparable indicators measuring the results in terms of well-being development at the territorial level (murder rates, education levels, economic income, etc)³⁷⁸. Following the establishment of the SDGs Commission, a working group set up by DANE conducted an initial diagnosis of the availability of information required to measure progress in SDGs implementation. It was found that SEN, the National Statistical System, had access to information for 54% of the global SDGs indicators; for 30% of the information it needed improvement, and for the remaining 16%, no data were available. The existence of these statistics stimulated an improvement. The adoption of the National Statistics Plan for 2017-2022 was a very important step in meeting these challenges, as it provided Colombia, for the first time, with a roadmap that defined the supply and demands

376 Global taskforce of local and regional governments, UNDP, UN-Habitat, «Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: implementation and monitoring at subnational level», p.27

377 Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, «Localising the 2030 Agenda in Colombia», no.25, December 2018, retrieved January 16, 2021,

<https://www.local2030.org/library/594/Localising-the-2030-Agenda-in-Colombia.pdf> , pp.2-3

378 Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, «Localising the 2030 Agenda in Colombia», p.4

the country has and needs to have in terms of statistical information³⁷⁹.

Examples of progress in the implementation of the SDGs from the bottom-up provide room for optimism. In light of this awareness, under the banner of SDG 17 *Partnerships for the Goals*, the UN Local 2030 initiative aimed to bring together multiple sectors of society to catalyze action at the local level³⁸⁰. Local 2030 is a network and platform that supports the on-the-ground delivery of the SDGs, with a focus on leaving no one behind. Current Local 2030 partners include the United Nations system, local governments, national governments, financing institutions, businesses, private sector, foundations, academia and civil society to collaboratively develop and implement solutions, share best practices, monitor that advance the SDGs at the local level³⁸¹.

As we have discussed, positive examples are taking place, however, during the 2019 SDGs Summit, Secretary-General António Guterres affirmed, about the achievement of the SDGs, that «we are far from where we need to be. We are off track». António Guterres, through his appeal, recalled that only ten years remain to get on track so that the 2030 Agenda enshrines an alliance between governments and people.

He issued a global call, driven by three essential areas. First, he called for global action, because it is the time for bold leadership, both individual and collective, focused on solutions that will make the greatest impact across the entire Agenda. Second, he remembered the need for local action, to step up domestic responses to make a difference where it matters in people's lives. Third, he called for people action: civil society, grassroots organizations, media, private sectors, unions, academia and others have to mobilize partnerships like never before³⁸².

379 Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, «Localising the 2030 Agenda in Colombia», p.6

380 Enayat A. Moallemi, Shirin Malekpour, Michalis Hadjikakou et al., «Local Agenda 2030 for sustainable development», *The Lancet Planetary Health* 3(6):e240-e241, June 2019, retrieved January 17, 2021 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333901550_Local_Agenda_2030_for_sustainable_development, p.1

381 «Are you looking for tools and solutions to achieve the SDGs at the local level?», Local 2030: localizing the SDGs, retrieved January 17, 2021, <https://www.local2030.org/about-us.php>

382 United Nations Secretary-General, «Remarks to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development», 24 September 2019, retrieved January 17, 2021, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2019-09-24/remarks-high-level-political-sustainable-development-forum>

In light of the urgency with which António Guterres affirmed his global call, the chapter reaches its last step: identify the contribution that the encyclical *Laudato Si'* can make in activating change from below, providing a further stimulus for local action and people action.

3.3. The encyclical *Laudato Si'* looks from the bottom-up: references to the theology of the people and community development.

In this paragraph, the analysis focuses on the Pope's bottom-up approach in discussing current issues and in identifying the local actors who can activate a process of change from below.

Stefano Zamagni, professor of political economy, affirmed that «while other Popes favored the top-down approach, namely, from the first principles of Catholic theology they derived a whole series of consequences of a practical nature, Pope Francis moves in reverse. He starts from the observation of what happens in the world and from there, in the light of Christian principles, he tries to give not only a reading but above all the lines of actions. If we look at the documents written by the Pope and his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, we see that in the last part there is always a chapter that has as title "Lines of action for..."»³⁸³. In *Laudato Si'*'s lines of actions, he refers to the international community, but most of all, to regional and local actors.

Compared to his predecessor, Zamagni stated: «while the philosophical approach of Benedict XVI was what could be defined top-down, that is, it starts from the principles to descend to reality, the approach of Pope Francis, is rather bottom-up. Pope Francis is facing the combined effects of globalization and financialization, which mainly affect local populations. He dedicated an entire encyclical to the environmental theme because this has become one of the main issues that plague humanity. The social doctrine of the Church always remains the same, but over

383 Antonella Ferrucci, «Zamagni next President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Science», *Vita*, 24 March 2019, retrieved January 18, 2021, <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2019/03/24/zamagni-prossimo-presidente-della-pontificia--delle-scienze-s/151034/>

time it receives different emphases and focuses according to the problems that historical events require»³⁸⁴. Pope Francis' philosophical approach determines his attention to specific actors and social groups.

Pope Francis has based the priorities of his papacy around the main tenets of the "Argentine theology of the people", which explains the Pope's call of actors from below³⁸⁵. The basic idea of the theology of the people is bottom-up: the honest and sincere love of God practiced by people at the local level, is a spiritual and practical response to the ongoing challenges of spiritual despondency, economic oppression, social marginalization, and dialogue with other faith traditions. As Paul Christopher Manuel remembered «the basic principles of the theology of the people, include the appreciation of diverse cultural realities, the obligation to promote the well-being of the poorest in any given society, and the development of practical solutions to varied economic, social, and spiritual problems [...]. This approach calls for the development of a poor church for the poor, it emphasized the need to place Christ, who lived among the socially marginalized, at the center of all activities»³⁸⁶.

These principles that guide the theology of the people must be considered when we analyze the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and the actors identified by the document, who can activate processes of change from the bottom-up. The Pope promotes an open and bottom-up approach, that supports dialogue with all people of goodwill, to identify solutions to the current ecological crisis and social inequalities.

Pope Francis gave special attention to small communities, encouraging them to contribute to locally instigated activities for change. Several paragraphs of the encyclical address the role of the local communities.

Francis devoted an entire paragraph to indigenous communities. He asks to show

384 Giovanni Luchetti, «Pope Bergoglio, an inspired realist who rethinks the economy», *Economymagazine*, 20 August 2019, retrieved January 18, 2021, <https://www.economymagazine.it/economy/2019/08/20/news/papa-bergoglio-un-realista-ispirato-che-ripensa-leconomia-5883/>

385 Paul Christopher Manuel, «How the theological priorities of Pope Francis inform his policy goals», *Pope Francis as a global actor* (pp.23-40), February 2018, retrieved January 27, 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323009174_How_the_Theological_Priorities_of_Pope_Francis_Inform_His_Policy_Goals, p.24

386 Paul Christopher Manuel, «How the theological priorities of Pope Francis inform his policy goals», p.25

special care for them and their cultural traditions. Even if they are often considered as merely one minority among others, they should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For the indigenous communities, the land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred place with which they need to interact if they want to maintain their identity and values³⁸⁷. Other paragraphs consider that attempts to resolve all problems through uniform regulations or technical interventions risk overlooking the complexities of local problems and the priorities of local communities. New processes taking shape cannot always fit into frameworks imported from outside; they have to be based on the local culture itself. Respecting the rights of peoples and cultures and appreciating the development of a social group presupposes a historical process that takes place within a cultural context and requires the constant and active involvement of local people within their proper culture and communities³⁸⁸».

Anne Jennings affirmed that «Pope Francis understands and supports community development». When referring to the 2030 Agenda, a recurring question was "where does community fit?". For Jennings, «some answers pointed to top-down corporate approaches to change, often totally disassociated from local communities³⁸⁹». This has resulted in many top-down approaches to policy, planning and proposed action for social, economic and environmental change. She affirmed that «from a bottom-up perspective, the international and national approaches to SDGs lead community development practitioners to question if there is a role for them in assisting to fulfill the SDGs³⁹⁰». The Pope looks to the local communities because, for him, communities around the world and their spiritual and cultural traditions must be respected and protected. Some authors have claimed that the role attributed by the Pope to local communities fits

387 FRANCIS, Encyclical letter *Laudato Si: On care for our common home* (24 May 2015), par.146

388 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si: On care for our common home*, par.144

389 Anne Jennings, «Laudato Si – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion», *Whanake: The Pacific Journal of Community Development*, 4(2), 31-46, 2018, retrieved January 19, 2021, <https://www.unitec.ac.nz/whanake/index.php/home>, p.42

390 Anne Jennings, «Laudato Si – establishing local approaches for global ecological conversion», pp.34-35

perfectly into community development.

Community development (which includes communities of intent and-or geographical communities) is the process whereby people organize to inform, skill and empower each other to take collective action on jointly identified needs³⁹¹. UNESCO defined community development as «a generic term covering the various processes by which local communities can raise their standards of living. This process may include, separately or together, the organization or establishment of services for social welfare, health protection, education, improvement of agriculture, development of small-scale industries, housing, local government, cooperatives³⁹²».

As Ife explained: «community development represents a vision of how things might be organized differently, so that genuine ecological sustainability and social justice, which seem unachievable at global or national levels, can be realized in the experience of human community³⁹³». Communities have a strong link with the spiritual dimension. For Ife «the spiritual dimension is important to community development. A sense of the sacred, and a respect for spiritual values, is an essential part of re-establishing human community and providing meaning and purpose for people's lives³⁹⁴».

Chile and Simpson noted that «the underpinning philosophy of community development and spirituality is the connection of the individual to the collective, acknowledging that the well-being of the individual influences and is influenced by the well-being of community³⁹⁵». When examining the challenges of achieving sustainability, Ife proposed that the bottom-up approach to the changes required, involves community development processes – which he identified as the

391 Susan Kenny, «Towards unsettling community development», *Community Development Journal*, 46(S1), i7-i19, 2011, retrieved January 19, 2021, doi:10.1093/ cdj/bsq050

392 UNESCO and UNITED NATIONS, «Education for community development: a selected bibliography», (Paris: Workshops of the UNESCO, 2014), retrieved January 26, 2021, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ images/0006/000611/061170eo.pdf>, p.1

393 James William Ife, « Community development in an uncertain world: Vision, analysis and practice», (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.2

394 James William Ife, « Community development in an uncertain world: Vision, analysis and practice», p.255

395 Love M.Chile and Gareth Simpson, «Spirituality and community development: exploring the link between the individual and the collective», *Community development Journal*, 39 (4), 318-331, 2004, retrieved January 27, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsh029> , p.318

"missing ingredient" in striving for sustainability³⁹⁶. Ife recommended community development as «a feasible alternative to the current neoliberal social, economic and environmental policies because at the heart of community development, is the idea of change from below³⁹⁷». Ife highlighted that the purpose of community development is to put the community as the place of significant human experience, and the Pope's position is perfectly aligned with this idea. He however advises against single-purpose projects and programs, as warned also by the Pope, because «one-dimensional community development is likely to be of limited value³⁹⁸».

According to Pope Francis, local individuals and communities can make a real difference. They can promote a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a willingness to protect others, an attitude of creativity and a deep love for the land³⁹⁹.

The Pope is inspired by native communities, affirmed Scaramuzzi, because «the original peoples know the dialogue with the earth, they know how to listen to the earth, see the earth. They have a sensitivity that allows them to live well in harmony with the earth. And this we must learn because we are tempted by a kind of progressive illusion at the expense of the earth⁴⁰⁰». But spirituality does not have only a religious connotation.

Spirituality is a concept that refers to the positive qualities that inspire us to do what is right and good for ourselves and other people. It may involve experiencing those larger forces beyond the individual person, especially the connections we have with other beings and our interrelatedness with them. And those qualities can be applied also in personal, professional and community life. Spiritual assets refer

396 James William Ife, « Community development in an uncertain world: Vision, analysis and practice», pp.20-22

397 James William Ife, « Community development in an uncertain world: Vision, analysis and practice», p.138

398 James William Ife, «Community development in an uncertain world: Vision, analysis and practice», p.212

399 FRANCIS, *Laudato Si: On care for our common home*, par. 179

400 Iacopo Scaramuzzi, «Pope Francis: indigenous people are a cry of hope», *lastampa*, 14 February 2019, retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/it/2019/02/14/news/papa-francesco-le-popolazioni-indigene-sono-un-grido-di-speranza-1.33681105>

to what we say and do – our act of compassion, mercy, justice, and another similar way of being in the world. The Pope recognizes these qualities in all communities, because within them, the single individual relates to the other members. Spiritual qualities can be applied on multiple levels – among individuals and families, small groups and organizations, neighborhoods and villages, and full communities and societies⁴⁰¹.

Lunn argued that local development needs and spirituality are essential for social change because communities emancipate from current conventional development models and commit to development suitable for them. These development alternatives will be locally relevant, community-based and bottom-up, opposed to the dirigiste and top-down development of the past⁴⁰².

Of course, among all communities, religious communities have a strong motivation to pursue sustainable development.

Lunn considered that religion has multiple facets, such as personal beliefs and practices, spirituality and faith, so it varies considerably between continents, countries, regions and communities. This creates the potential for religion to activate development, emancipation and human flourishing⁴⁰³».

Maton asked how it is possible to understand people in an everyday context, the problems of social and community life, and the potential of communities to bring resources to address these problems if we do not consider spirituality and religion as an integral part of the discourse⁴⁰⁴. Indigenous, local knowledge in all areas of development, including spirituality, should be included in the development

401 Bill Berkowitz, «Overview: Some Spiritual Assets for Community Building», *Community Tool Box*, retrieved January 22, 2021 <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/spirituality-and-community-building/overview-some-spiritual-assets/main>.

402 Joanne Lunn, «The role of religion, spirituality, and faith in development: a critical theory approach», p.948

403 Joanne Lunn, «The role of religion, spirituality, and faith in development: a critical theory approach», *Third World Quarterly*, 30 (5), 2009, 937-951, retrieved January 21, 2021 https://econpapers.repec.org/article/tafctwqxx/v_3a30_3ay_3a2009_3ai_3a5_3ap_3a937-951.htm p.948

404 Kenneth Maton, «Spirituality, religion, and community pschicology: historical perspective, positive potential, and challenges», *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29 (5), 605-613, retrieved January 21, 2021 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229469856_Spirituality_religionand_CommunityPsychology_Historical_perspective_positive_potential_and_challenges, p.607

process⁴⁰⁵.

3.3.1. What is the contribution of the Laudato Si' to support the SDGs implementation through actions starting from the bottom-up?

In this paragraph, it will be analyzed the contribution that Laudato Si' has given to the involvement of local actors in actions for sustainable development. An alliance between the Laudato Si' and the 2030 Agenda can speed up the achievement of the SDGs.

The first two contributions concern more the theoretical dimension, namely:

- The spiritual and ethical dimension of the communities, which also characterizes Laudato Si' communities, can unite all communities of the world around the common cause of the care for the Earth.
- Pope Francis refers to the Catholic social doctrine principles of participation and subsidiarity. The right to participate is a request for dignity. The Laudato Si' contribution is the recognition that dignity has a relational dimension: it implies a responsible relationship with creation and men.

The other two contributions relate more to a practical dimension, so they will be presented through studies or local projects.

- The Catholic Church, inspired by the Laudato Si', is contributing to the pursuit of the SDGs, through local actions in the communities.
- The two documents can be allied in the field of education in the local contexts.

Concerning the first point (the spiritual dimension of the communities), Haustein and Tomalin recognized that «the SDGs seek to ensure a more grassroots and locally owned type of development based on the recognition that local people are better placed to both understand and respond to development challenges». Since local people are often made up of communities (of faith, but also united by non-

405 Kurt Alan Ver Beek, «Spirituality: a development taboo», *Development in practice*, 10 (1), 31-43, 1 July 2010, retrieved January 21, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09614520052484>

religious motivations), the engagement and role played by them become relevant in pursuing sustainable development⁴⁰⁶.

In the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the Pope focused his attention on religious communities, but also no-confessional communities. The Pope reminded the participants in the International Conference *Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals: listening to the cry of the earth and of the poor*, that the cardinal principle of all religions is love for our fellow and care for creation. Various religious traditions, including the Catholic one, have embraced the Sustainable Development Goals. The Pope referred to a special group of religious people, the indigenous communities. They take care of nearly 22% of the earth's surface and remind everyone of the sacredness of our land. For these reasons, their voices and concerns should be the focus on the search for new paths for a sustainable future⁴⁰⁷.

Indigenous communities inspire *Laudato Si'* communities that arose and are being born locally to concretize the message of the encyclical. As affirmed by Carlo Petrini «*Laudato Si'* communities are international groups called to save the planet through the change that comes from below. People can change the course of history, with their decisions, their consciences and with their will»⁴⁰⁸. *Laudato Si'* communities maintain a non-confessional character. The cardinal reference of the communities is constituted by the principles expressed in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which outlines a universal and all-encompassing dimension to be inspired by. But it is in acting that the community identifies its *raison d'être*: it is in local action, linked to the specificities of the context in which the community is

406 Jörg Haustein and Emma Tomalin, «Keeping faith in 2030: Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals», *University of Leeds Religions and the Sustainable Development Network*, February 2019, retrieved January 24, 2021, <https://jlfic.com/resources/keeping-faith-in-2030-sustainable-development-goals/>, p.5

407 FRANCIS, *Address of his holiness Pope Francis to participants at the Conference on "Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): listening to the cry of the earth and of the poor"*, 8 March 2019, retrieved January 22, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/march/documents/papa-francesco_20190308_religioni-svilupposostenibile.html

408 «Community *Laudato Si'*: the Amazon and the people who live there are closer than is believed», *Gazzetta d'Alba*, 8 July 2019, retrieved January 24, 2021 <https://www.gazzettadalba.it/2019/07/comunita-laudato-si-lamazzone-e-i-popoli-che-vi-abitano-sono-piu-vicini-di-quanto-si-creda/>

established, which emerge from listening to the territory. These peculiarities dictate and suggest the way to decline the universal principles of the encyclical at the local level, supporting the characteristics of each local reality, according to a logic of versatility. It is a system of continuous references between an immaterial dimension, common and transversal to the entire project, based on the sharing of objectives and guidelines, and a material dimension that is the real one of action, which triggers the mobilization from below and starts the real generative process to implement an authentic change in behavior and lifestyle for those who adhere to it, in a perspective of respect and protection of the common home⁴⁰⁹. Local communities, whether religious or secular, are inspired by common principles and values and therefore an alliance of them around the theme of sustainable development is necessary.

About the second point (the references to the Catholic social doctrine), Pope Francis, in looking at individuals, religious communities, local communities, is in continuity with the Catholic social doctrine. Chapter 4 of the Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church, *"Principles of the Church's social doctrine"*, identifies the principles of subsidiarity and participation between the guiding principles of the social doctrine. It affirmed that subsidiarity is among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine. To promote the dignity of the person a prerequisite is showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities. Based on subsidiarity, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help, such as of support, promotion, development, with respect to lower-order societies. The principle of subsidiarity is also a form of protection from abuses of power by the higher-level authority. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community»⁴¹⁰.

409 Comunità Laudato Si, «A guide to communities Laudato Si», retrieved January 20, 2021, <https://comunitalaudatosi.org/guida-alle-comunita-laudato-si/#:~:text=Libert%C3%A0%20%7C%20La%20Comunit%C3%A0%20Laudato%20si,una%20associazione%20libera%20e%20spontanea.&text=Gratuit%C3%A0%20%7C%20Nessuno%20utilizzi%20la%20propria,intende%20realizzare%20sul%20proprio%20territorio>.

410 Pontifical Council for justice and peace, «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church», 29 June 2004, retrieved January 26, 2021, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#Participation%20and%20democracy, par. 185-

The implication of the principle of subsidiarity is participation, «which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which they belong». Participation is a duty that concerns all people, to be fulfilled with responsibility and with a view to the common good». It is essential to consider the context: «Participation can be achieved in all the different relationships between the citizens and institutions: to this end, particular attention must be given to the historical and social contexts in which such participation can truly be brought about⁴¹¹».

In Catholic social teaching, participation is considered under different aspects. It is a right to take part in labor decisions and to take part in political life. But there are other aspects that Pope Francis prioritizes, which relate to human dignity and the protection of human rights. Human persons are equal and enjoy the same rights⁴¹². Participation is a request of the dignity of each human being, not an optional. Participation is also a cultural product. There are many forms of participation. For example, in the community of friends or the community of faith, participation means creating values and ways of life; in the city place of work, it means participation in the economic and political life.

Roland Minnerath considered that «at the very root there is universal awareness in Christian thought that no human being can be treated as an object to another, that no community may be ruled out of society as a whole». Society has to recognize the right of a person to participate. Two movements create participation: one comes from the principles that are inscribed in the very structure of the human person. The second movement goes bottom-up and is based on the principle of subsidiarity. This means that participation is not negotiable, but the construction in which participation will become effective is a matter of culture, political

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411 Pontifical Council for justice and peace, «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church», par.189-191

412 Roland Minnerath, «The Human Right to Full Participation in Society», *the Pontifical Academy of social science*, retrieved 27 January 2021, <http://www.pass.va/content/scienze-sociali/en/publications/acta/participatory-society/minnerath.html>.

development and economic conditions»⁴¹³.

As said before, the classical Church social doctrine of participation deals with participation at work and in politics. However, recently a new field of research has appeared, concerning marginalized people and migrants. Pope Francis has a preferential option for the poor. He is aware that poor and marginalized people are excluded from the benefits of participation at all levels. Even if nobody can be deprived of dignity, they are excluded from social networks. For the Pope, the priority is the inclusion of the poor (homeless, migrants, indigenous people, refugees) in society⁴¹⁴.

The Caritas document "*Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of Laudato Si'*", recognized that the 2030 Agenda places human rights and the inherent dignity of all people as the foundation of all development. The purpose of the Agenda is that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality. The contribution of *Laudato Si'* is the recognition that dignity has a relational dimension. *Laudato Si'* affirms the dignity of each person as the basis of human rights and links this dignity with responsibility towards the common good, the environment, as well as an expected change in lifestyle. Dignity comes with the responsibility to respect creation; dignity is relational. Since we are people in relationships, human dignity leads to a focus on the integral development of individuals and the pursuit of the common good. There is a responsibility to tackle the worst abuses of human dignity and to have a preferential option for the poor. The poor have to be considered as agents of change: no voice can be left out, especially voices of the local populations most affected by any type of development, who currently do not have the relevance they deserve in the political debate⁴¹⁵.

The third point is about the contribution of the encyclical to the SDGs, in supporting actions in the Catholic communities. At the local level, it has been analyzed how religious communities are not extraneous to the SDGs, but can

413 *Ibidem*

414 *Ibidem*

415 «Engaging in the 2030 Agenda through the lens of *Laudato Si'*», January 2018, retrieved 27 January, 2021, https://cafod.org.uk/content/download/44619/518936/version/3/file/CF-SDGs_Laudato_Si_report_v10.pdf, pp.10-16

promote their implementation. Various religious traditions, including the Catholic one, have embraced the Sustainable Development Goals.

To confirm the Catholic contribution in the implementation of SDGs at the local level, it is useful to mention a study conducted in Catalonia by Aixendri and Albareda-Tiana. The authors' premise is that to move towards sustainability, all society entities need to be involved⁴¹⁶. Concerning religious entities, the representatives of 12 religious communities have been involved as sample object of the study, however, we will focus above all on the Catholic religion. The study was based on the information published in the websites of the religious entities involved and on the semi-structured in-depth interviews addressed to the leaders of each religious community⁴¹⁷. Some interesting results are going to be mentioned.

Josep M. Jubany, the Catholic leader of the Barcelona Pastoral Delegation, stressed the importance of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* for Catholic communities. The document provides an in-depth analysis of sustainable development from a Christian viewpoint, calling it sustainable integral development. The three Christian religions – Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Church – mainly pursue actions related to the socio-cultural dimension of sustainable development. The Catholic Church highlights that the faith without works (of charity, of helping your neighbors, of solidarity) is a dead faith. The study results showed us that the greater contributions to the SDGs were to Goal 4 "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education", Goal 3 "ensure healthy lives", Goal 1 "end poverty in all its forms", and Goal 16 "promote peaceful and inclusive societies". Lluís Serra, leader of Unió de Religiosos in Catalonia, affirmed that the Catholic Church recalls «the relation between religion, society and culture», and gives value to the contribution of religions to the cultural

416 Montserrat Gas Aixendri and Silvia Albareda-Tiana, «The role of religion in global sustainability: a study on Catalonia's contribution to sustainable development goals», *Sustainabilities and the humanities* (pp.1-18), January 2019, retrieved January 22, 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327188144_The_Role_of_Religion_in_Global_Sustainability_A_Study_on_Catalonia's_Contribution_to_Sustainable_Development_Goals, p.2

417 Montserrat Gas Aixendri and Silvia Albareda-Tiana, «The role of religion in global sustainability: a study on Catalonia's contribution to sustainable development goals», pp.4-5

heritage of humanity⁴¹⁸. The promotion of human rights and peace emerges among almost all Christian religions. The quantitative analysis has identified activities from Christian beliefs in the promotion of equality and non-discrimination, especially concerning women in disadvantaged situations. About Goal 3 "ensure healthy lives", most religious entities promote health in different ways. The Catholic Church takes care of the sick and the elderly, provides help to alcoholics or drug addicts because, as remember by Josep M. Jubany, Christian religions have always considered taking care of those who are sick or suffer physical pain as works of mercy. The commitment to reduce poverty (Goal 1) appears in all religious groups, however, in the quantitative research, activities related to this Goal are mainly visible in the Catholic Church, with a total of 332 different activities⁴¹⁹. From this study emerged also the joint work of religions towards the SDGs: in Catalonia, the Protestant and the Catholic Churches performed a specific task together through the actions of Caritas and Iniciatives Solidàries, a protestant NGO.

This study has demonstrated that the Catholic Church pursues actions aligned with the SDGs, and the *Laudato Si'* has given a further stimulus, as Catholic leaders in Catalonia has emphasized. The 12 religions of Aixendri and Albareda-Tiana's study contributes, through their actions, to solving human challenges such as reducing poverty (Goal 1); ending hunger (Goal 2), ensuring healthy lives (Goal 3), ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (Goal 4), achieving gender equality (Goal 5), promoting decent work for all (Goal 8), reducing inequality (Goal 10), promoting peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16), and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Goal 17)⁴²⁰. And given that religious traditions are rooted in the local territories, local actions in line with the SDGs undertaken by religious community members will bring SDGs closer to the people.

418 Montserrat Gas Aixendri and Silvia Albareda-Tiana, «The role of religion in global sustainability: a study on Catalonia's contribution to sustainable development goals», pp.10-11

419 Montserrat Gas Aixendri and Silvia Albareda-Tiana, «The role of religion in global sustainability: a study on Catalonia's contribution to sustainable development goals», pp.12-13

420 Montserrat Gas Aixendri and Silvia Albareda-Tiana, «The role of religion in global sustainability: a study on Catalonia's contribution to sustainable development goals», pp.16-17

Another research project, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) provides useful considerations. The project has involved country conferences and stakeholder workshops, that have brought together representatives from faith-based organizations with other development actors and academics⁴²¹.

From the stakeholder workshops, it emerged that between the participants there was universal agreement that the goals and ethics of the SDGs were easy to adopt by the faith-based organizations and in line with religious values. Even if the SDGs do not use explicitly religious language, this was seen as adequate for a global framework⁴²².

Faith actors did not take issue with the SDGs framework as such, nor the formulation of its goals. They noted, however, that religions added value to the successful implementation of the SDGs. Participants noted the need for greater incorporation of religious values, morals and ethical codes for their successful implementation, but did not expect these to be part of such an international framework⁴²³.

Finally, the last contribution is the alliance between the two documents in the field of education in the local contexts. Pope Francis is aware of the role that education can have for sustainable development at the community level.

Scholas is an organization that aims to ecological education, but also at the pursuit of the SDGs. Born in Argentina more than twenty years ago, dreamed up by the then archbishop Jorge Bergoglio – now Pope Francis – Scholas is constituted as an International Organization of Pontifical Law, with offices in Argentina, Vatican City, Chile, Colombia, Haiti, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Mozambique, Panama, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania and the United States. Scholas is present with more than 400 thousand educational centers and reaching more than one million children and young people around the world⁴²⁴.

421 Jörg Haustein and Emma Tomalin, «Keeping faith in 2030: Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals», p.6

422 Jörg Haustein and Emma Tomalin, «Keeping faith in 2030: Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals», p.20

423 Jörg Haustein and Emma Tomalin, «Keeping faith in 2030: Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals», p.22

424 «About us», *Scholasoccurrentes* (blog), 10 March 2016, retrieved January 22, 2021,

An area of Scholas's action is dedicated to Laudato Si'. The Scholas Laudato area deals with education and ecology, inspired by the concept of the care of the "common home" of the encyclical letter Laudato Si', from which this area takes its name and the principles and values. Scholas Laudato's mission is to promote an inclusive vision of education that incorporates sustainability as a fundamental dimension and promotes citizen participation in the light of environmental ethics. Among its objectives is the promotion of the culture of meeting between students of rural schools and urban schools for dialogue and constant commitment to projects; support and train young people in rural and urban areas to disseminate and promote pedagogical models of ecological awareness in their communities; finally, they aim to involve young people in environmental care work beyond urban environmental models, putting them in contact with productive and creative processes in rural areas⁴²⁵.

Another area related to Scholas Laudato is Scholar Orchards, a program that brings together students from rural and agro-technical schools to work together for the environment. It puts into practice the creation of agroecological gardens that allow young people and their communities to produce their own food and understand first hand the cycles of nature⁴²⁶.

Scholas was born from a Catholic context, however, it does not mean that the SDGs, belonging to the secular dimension, have been excluded from the organization's program. Scholas contributes to achieving the SDGs, with the implementation and development of educational programs, and the establishment of strategic alliances with multiple social actors. It also promotes and supports the proposal of young people who participate in its educational programs and that cover the pressing needs of their communities. Some Goals, such as Goal 4 (an inclusive and quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities) and Goal 17 (strengthen the means for implementation and revitalize the global alliance for sustainable development), are Scholas's goals

<https://www.scholasoccurrentes.org/en/sobre-scholas/>.

425 «Scholas Laudato», *Scholasoccurrentes* (blog), 11 June 2019, retrieved January 22, 2021

<https://www.scholasoccurrentes.org/it/campaigns/scholas-laudato/>

426 «Scholas Orchards», *Scholasoccurrentes* (blog), 11 June 2019, retrieved January 22, 2021

<https://www.scholasoccurrentes.org/en/campaigns/scholas-huertas/>

since its birth. Other Goals, such as Goal 1 (eradicate poverty), 5 (achieve gender equality), 10 (reduce inequalities), 11 (achieve more sustainable cities and communities), 13 (take action to combat climate change) and 16 (promote peaceful societies), emerge in the reports that in each new edition of its Citizenship program, more than a million young people have delivered to government leaders from different regions of the world. Scholas is also a member of Mission 4.7, an initiative born in December 2020 that reunited leaders from government, academia, civil society and business to accelerate the implementation of education for sustainable development throughout the world. Inspired by SDG 4 – to achieve quality education – Mission 4.7 aspires that all students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development through education and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence⁴²⁷.

Mission 4.7, co-founded by Global Schools and the SDG Academy, both flagship programs of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, UNESCO and the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, founded the support of former UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki-moon, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and Pope Francis. They all agreed that to achieve the SDGs, every individual must acquire sustainable development knowledge through education, which is the basis for cultivating the best in ourselves and our communities. The moderator of the event's opening session Jeffrey Sachs quoted the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'*, a powerful call for awareness and leadership in sustainable development, and compatible with the purpose of launching Mission 4.7. In the various interventions at the launch of Mission 4.7, the emphasis was placed on the ability of SDGs and *Laudato Si'* to activate projects in communities and schools around the world. José María del Corral, who is the Global Director of Scholas Occurrentes, spoke about his collaboration with Pope Francis in creating a new kind of school, which pursues a culture of encounter, which now reach more than one million students all over the world; Theresa Yung, Project Lead of the SDGs

427 «Scholas and the SDG», *Scholasoccurrentes* (blog), 30 December 2020, retrieved January 22, 2021, <https://www.scholasoccurrentes.org/en/scholas-y-los-ods/>.

Student Program, believes that the SDGs are something that needs to be enabled as a way of doing. She hopes that the students start creating interesting projects out in the communities⁴²⁸.

To conclude, a recent initiative inspired by the SDGs and *Laudato Si'* is *Laudato Si' Garden – The living Chapel*. This project demonstrates that a collaboration between the various actors is possible. It is an open-air garden chapel, a place from which the mission of distributing plants and seeds begin, destined to associations, schools and parishes. A living Chapel was inaugurated in June 2020 at the botanical garden of the La Sapienza University in Rome. Its realization was promoted by the Dicastery for Integral Human Development Service, the Canadian architect Gillean Denny, a hundred students from Pennsylvania State University, La Sapienza University of Rome, the UN, the World Catholic Movement for the climate⁴²⁹. Another chapel was inaugurated in October 2020 in the park of the delta of river Po, promoted by seven municipalities in the area, by the Veneto Region and the Department for Integral Human Development Service⁴³⁰. This recent initiative demonstrates that achieving the SDGs requires joint work, from the top-down level of the United Nations to the bottom-up levels of students and universities, movements, municipalities and communities.

Certainly, among the allies of the SDGs and their localization strategy, Pope Francis is bringing sustainability and integral ecology closer to the needs of local communities. Local initiatives and *Laudato Si'* communities have taken and are taking shape thanks to his encyclical. In doing so, he has emerged as one of the world's foremost champion of sustainable development. Even if Pope Francis does not use the term sustainable development at every turn, his message unflinchingly

428 Sam Thompson, «Mission 4.7 launches at the 2020 Vatican Youth Symposium», *SDG Academy*, 19 December 2020, retrieved January 22, 2021 <https://sdgacademy.org/mission-4-7-launches-at-the-2020-vatican-youth-symposium/>.

429 Giada Aquilino, «The fruits of *Laudato Si'*: from the Living Chapel, new trees for the world », *Vatican News*, 1 December 2020, retrieved February 9, 2021, <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/chiesa/news/2020-12/laudato-si-storia-living-chapel-roma-orto-botanico.html>

430 Alessandro di Bussolo, «*Laudato si'*: a garden of integral ecology in the heart of Po delta», *Vatican News*, 3 October 2020, retrieved February 9, 2021 <https://www.vaticannews.va/it/vaticano/news/2020-10/giardino-laudato-si-veneto-delta-po-ecologia-biodiversita-creato.html>

incorporates the very essence of sustainable development⁴³¹.

Conclusions

We have discussed SDG's distance from local needs. SDGs are the result of a global approval at the highest level, but different actors and stakeholders have been involved in their definition; SDGs are often implemented through a top-down approach, driven by national governments and experts.

It is necessary a bottom-up approach in SDGs implementation, with the involvement of all the actors. The localization strategy is bringing SDGs closer to local actors, giving an active role to local governments and communities. However, the fact that the bottom-up approach still presents many obstacles has led us to seek a possible contribution of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* in strengthening actions from below.

The encyclical is activating initiatives from below. It appeals to local communities and civil society members, it provides an additional stimulus to the actions of the Catholic Church that implement the SDGs, it supports local educational networks inspired by both the documents. *Laudato Si'* is activating bottom-up actions guided by local actors in many fields, therefore, it can be an allied document of the SDGs localization strategy.

431 «Pope Francis – Nobel Prize for Sustainable Development», retrieved January 24, 2021
<https://np4sd.org/nominees/pope-francis/>

Conclusions

This research intended to investigate the contribution of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* in the effort to implement and achieve the SDGs. Considering the criticisms that have been raised to the SDGs' paradigms, in particular, that of economic growth, and the distance of the SDGs from real local needs, the aim was to demonstrate whether, and to what extent, the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, through the integral ecology paradigm, contributes to the SDGs achievement. An alliance between the two documents has been sought at the theoretical level, but above all at the practical level, since it is where the challenge of sustainability and integral ecology is played. It has been clarified that the *Laudato Si'* is not a political agenda nor an action plan. It has no review mechanisms and no funding mechanisms, as it is for the 2030 Agenda. The encyclical is simply a letter on the attitude of the Catholic Church about pressing ecological and social issues. The aim of the encyclical, to educate in the light of the social doctrine of the Church, could appear as a utopia, away from the concrete action area. The 2030 Agenda is the political instrument that can make sustainability a reality. Until now, a political project, a political movement or a law has not taken shape around the integral ecology paradigm. The encyclical had only a persuasive role in the climate change debate between Governments. However, the research has revealed some contributions, theoretical and practical, that the encyclical is giving to the SDGs achievement, alongside political action.

From the theoretical point of view, the integral ecology paradigm puts in the foreground the relationship of the individual parts to each other and with the whole. The relational dimension, which binds the individual to the community, involves a series of principles, such as the common good, the universal destination of the goods of the earth, social justice, solidarity. These principles, through integral ecology, can guide initiatives on sustainable development, supporting the core principles of the 2030 Agenda, equality and non-discrimination. The result of this integral ecology's analytical power is to produce integration even between the areas on which integral ecology can take place. As the Pope said, integral ecology

must be a different economic paradigm, an educational program, a thought, a lifestyle, a spirituality: all aspects involving areas that flank political action and where practical initiatives are taking place, with different impacts. These aspects, for the Pope, are extremely important. Every action taken by actors in any area of intervention will impact the final achievement of sustainability. Integral ecology may appear a too wide paradigm. Some criticisms argue that the integral ecology effort to keep together instances not easily composable is its limit. However, the fact that the Pope has emerged as an authoritative voice, has united fragmented voices of different fields around the common cause of the care of the earth.

First of all, on the practical level, the integral ecology proposes a different economic paradigm, that the Pope calls economic ecology. Its transformative potential has been well received by the economists most critical about the absence of ethics and limits in the economy. The second chapter discussed Pope Francis' economic ecology, which guided economists and entrepreneurs in *The Economy of Francis* event. Economic ecology, with its ethical dimension, contributes to respond to the criticism of the economic growth paradigm.

The integral ecology is concretizing in educational programs. In the field of education, the alliance between integral ecology and the SDGs is giving considerable results. Scholas organization and Mission 4.7 were discussed in chapter three, which confirmed that integral ecology is an essential part of sustainability training. The two notions are taught together, not separately. Scholas networks extend beyond traditional Catholic countries, a sign that integral ecology can be taught all over the world.

The integral ecology paradigm affects community lifestyle and generates a shared thought. It impacts civil society members and local communities. It influences community lifestyle because, in local contexts, the *Laudato Si'* communities educate to a new lifestyle, applying the principles of solidarity, the common good, care for the goods of the earth. The actions taken by these communities on environmental and social issues are aligned with SDGs' social and environmental priorities. The impact of these communities on SDGs achievement can be the starting point for further research, as it will depend on their expansion beyond

countries with a deeply rooted Catholic tradition. It creates a shared thought: projects such as the *Laudato Si' Garden – The living Chapel* are the fruits of an alliance between universities, the Dicastery for integral human development, the United Nations, the Regions. All are united around a common cause.

Finally, integral ecology strengthens the spirituality that gives sense to community development actions. The spiritual dimension gives meaning to the actions of many social groups (religious groups, native communities). The Pope invites us to look at indigenous communities as actors who implement integral ecology. As discussed in chapter three, Catholic leaders have emphasized the further stimulus given by *Laudato Si'* to sustainable integral development. Christian communities are promoters of socio-cultural interventions for SDGs realization.

These different initiatives are not isolated. They are relaunched through recurring events and through a bottom-up approach, they help to bring SDGs closer to local needs. The encyclical has mobilized numerous actors (economists, members of civil society, educators, individuals) and promoted actions in different areas. The encyclical is an important ally of the political sphere and does not generate an antithesis between a secular document and a religious document.

At the political level, the open challenge is how to make integral ecology a reality also at the regulatory level, in the decision-making processes or in political projects, and not just mentioning it in the political speeches. The Pope, in his lines of approach and action, aims to encourage an honest and open debate at all levels of decision-making and not to replace politics. He asks to bring integral ecology in the dialogue in the international community and in the dialogue for new national and local policies. The Pope asks for enforceable international agreements and global regulatory norms; and at the local level, he invites intermediate groups and citizens to put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Citizens and communities can bring integral ecology into dialogue for sustainable development. But the passage of integral ecology from the sphere of dialogue to the regulatory sphere is a challenge opened for the political level. If this passage should take shape, further research can be developed.

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IMPEGNO DI RISERVATEZZA DA PARTE DEL LAUREANDO

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PRENDE ATTO E ACCETTA

che le informazioni, le conoscenze e i materiali riservati, ossia non pubblicamente accessibili, che gli verranno messi a disposizione dal relatore e/o dal gruppo di ricerca per lo svolgimento del lavoro di tesi/prova finale, possono rientrare nell'ambito di applicazione della normativa sulla proprietà industriale (D.lgs. n.30 del 10 febbraio 2005 e successive modificazioni) o essere oggetto di eventuali registrazioni di tipo brevettuale, o possono rientrare nell'ambito di progetti finanziati da soggetti pubblici o privati che hanno posto a priori particolari vincoli alla divulgazione dei risultati per motivi di segretezza.

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- 1 a mantenere la riservatezza sulle informazioni, conoscenze e materiali di cui sopra, evitando di divulgarli a soggetti diversi da quelli che glieli hanno forniti;
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- 3 a non compiere atti che possano essere di pregiudizio all'utilizzazione economica degli stessi da parte dei legittimi proprietari.

Romano d'Ezzelino, 03/03/2021


(firma)

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