



A. Angelucci, R. Bottoni, G. Camilleri, A. Cupri eds.

Human Rights, Religions and the United Nations Agenda 2030



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Giovanni Camilleri, Alessandro Cupri eds.**

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Antonio Angelucci, Rossella Bottoni, Giovanni Camilleri, Alessandro Cupri,
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INTRODUCTION

Alessandro Ferrari

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represents more than a roadmap of goals. It articulates a vision of deep transformation, calling for a rethinking of economic models, cultural values, ecological responsibilities, and social structures. While often framed in terms of political action and technological innovation, the Agenda's deeper ambitions demand an ethical and spiritual reorientation. In this light, religious traditions are not peripheral to the global sustainability conversation—they are essential interlocutors.

This volume investigates how diverse religious and cultural actors are engaging, interpreting, and even expanding the vision of the 2030 Agenda, offering insights, critiques, and innovations that challenge conventional paradigms of development.

Flavia Cortelezzi opens the volume with a powerful structural critique of how current political and economic systems in Italy and Europe fall short of the transformative vision of the SDGs. Her chapter identifies a series of persistent obstacles—including entrenched inequalities, weak investment in innovation, and fragmented governance—that limit the scope for effective change. Cortelezzi draws attention to the paradox of technological advancement coupled with social exclusion, emphasizing how digital development is often not accompanied by widespread empowerment or inclusivity. She further highlights how current public policies tend to reproduce hierarchical and exclusionary logics rather than enabling regenerative practices. In her view, what is needed is not mere adaptation of existing systems but a cultural and systemic shift toward care-centered, participatory, and circular models of development. Her argument forms the structural and ethical foundation for the reflections that follow.

Several chapters respond to this call for ethical reorientation. Rossella Bottoni explores the Catholic Church's evolving relationship with Indigenous communities, focusing on both theological documents and real-world engagements. Her analysis of Pope Francis's magisterium, including *Querida Amazonia* and *Laudato si'*, highlights a growing awareness within the Church of the value of Indigenous cosmologies. She shows how the Church is learning from Indigenous

worldviews—not only as a gesture of reconciliation, but as a strategic response to the planetary crisis. By placing these insights in dialogue with the SDGs, Bottoni presents the Church as an actor capable of bridging global discourses and local wisdoms.

Alessandro Cupri deepens this engagement with the Catholic magisterium through a focused analysis of *Laudato si'*, understood as a theological and practical manifesto. He highlights how the encyclical calls for “integral ecology,” a vision that links environmental, social, and spiritual crises. Cupri discusses how the encyclical has influenced Catholic institutions to adopt sustainability frameworks and created ecumenical and interfaith momentum around climate justice. His chapter shows that Catholic theology is not merely reflective, but operative—shaping policies, inspiring networks, and catalyzing cultural change. Cupri’s work complements Bottoni’s by emphasizing that ecological conversion involves not only personal attitudes but institutional transformations.

Enrica Martinelli brings a Jewish perspective that bridges textual tradition with contemporary activism. She examines the ethical core of Jewish law concerning land, rest, and redistribution—especially through practices like the Sabbatical year (*shmita*) and Jubilee. Martinelli interprets these traditions as ancient expressions of sustainability, grounded in the principle of balance between use and preservation. Her concept of “dual ecology”—external stewardship and inner ethical discipline—offers a nuanced way of framing the spiritual foundations of environmental responsibility. She also addresses how modern Jewish movements are reclaiming these principles to confront today’s ecological challenges. Her contribution resonates with both Cupri’s integral ecology and Cortelezzi’s critique of dominant economic logics.

Antonio Angelucci expands the scope with a rigorous presentation of Islamic ecological jurisprudence. Drawing from the Qur’an and classical legal traditions, he explores how the principles of *khilāfah* (trusteeship), *mīzān* (balance), and *islāh* (reform) structure a moral vision of sustainability. He further discusses the operational roles of *zakāt* (almsgiving) and *waqf* (charitable endowments) as instruments that foster social equity and resource distribution. Angelucci shows how Islamic ethics integrates spiritual accountability with institutional mechanisms, bridging belief and public responsibility. His work offers an important counterpart to Martinelli’s Jewish legal analysis and aligns with the concerns raised by Cupri and Bottoni regarding the interplay between theology and action.

Cristiana Cianitto focuses on the Church of England, offering a case study in institutional innovation. She presents initiatives like the Church’s “Net Zero by

2030” strategy and the development of the “Eco Church” framework, which evaluates parish sustainability in worship, buildings, land use, and community engagement. Cianitto reflects on how Anglican theology supports this commitment through the doctrine of creation and the concept of prophetic leadership. She also notes the Church’s openness to Indigenous insights and ecological liturgies, suggesting an ongoing reconfiguration of religious authority in ecological terms. Her analysis underscores the practical dimension of faith-based environmentalism, connecting theology to management and governance.

Fedor Arkhipov brings into focus the distinct theological and spiritual perspective of the Orthodox Church, which offers a counterpoint to more pragmatic or technocratic approaches to environmental issues. Rather than proposing policy solutions or structural reforms as primary strategies, the Orthodox Church emphasizes that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a spiritual problem. According to its theological tradition, the degradation of the environment results from a rupture in the relationship between humanity and creation—a rupture rooted in pride, consumption, and loss of reverence for the divine image present in all things. Arkhipov draws on Orthodox liturgy, patristic writings, and the doctrine of theosis (divinization) to articulate a path of ecological renewal that prioritizes humility, asceticism, and contemplative reverence. This vision, deeply embedded in Orthodox theology, presents ecology not as a domain for activism alone, but as a sacramental dimension of human existence. His analysis contributes a profoundly spiritual perspective that complements the more institutional and juridical approaches presented elsewhere in the volume.

Stefano Fanetti and Francesca Ainger conclude the volume by turning to community-based cultural innovation. Through their case study of the ecomuseum, they explore how local identity, memory, and territory can become the foundation for sustainability. The ecomuseum, in their view, is not simply a preservationist project, but a dynamic practice of citizenship and ecological stewardship. They show how cultural heritage can serve as a living resource for environmental education, social inclusion, and democratic participation. Fanetti and Ainger’s model embodies the principles articulated by Cortelezzi, Bottoni, and Angelucci, bringing them to life at the grassroots level through community empowerment and co-responsibility.

Taken together, the chapters in this volume form a coherent and multi-layered narrative that reflects a wide spectrum of religious, cultural, and social responses to the pressing challenges outlined in the 2030 Agenda. Religious traditions, far from retreating in the face of global crises such as ecological collapse, social fragmentation, and structural injustice, are actively reimagining

their roles—not only as moral commentators, but as engaged agents of innovation, solidarity, and transformation. Across different faith systems, we observe a willingness to reinterpret theological foundations, embrace intercultural dialogue, and integrate spiritual wisdom into public discourse and institutional frameworks. From the Catholic Church’s advocacy for Indigenous rights and ecological conversion, to the Islamic and Jewish legal traditions that offer sustainable models of stewardship and redistribution, and the Orthodox Church’s call for inner transformation rooted in liturgical and ascetic practices, a shared ethic of care and responsibility begins to emerge.

Whether through doctrinal reform, institutional restructuring, legal reinterpretation, or participatory cultural projects like the ecomuseum, the contributors demonstrate that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the symbolic, spiritual, and affective dimensions of human experience. In this context, the religious imagination—long regarded as peripheral to political, economic, and scientific debates—asserts itself as a vital force capable of inspiring new narratives, shaping collective identities, and anchoring development in values of justice, humility, reciprocity, and hope.

This renewed protagonism of religious traditions not only enriches the pursuit of sustainable goals but also calls for a broader vision of integral development—one that recognizes the interdependence of material, spiritual, and communal well-being. In doing so, the religious dimension clearly transcends the boundaries imposed by modern secular frameworks, breaking out of the marginal spaces to which it had long been confined. Its revitalized presence in cultural, environmental, and socio-economic debates challenges existing paradigms and points to the urgent need for new political and legal forms capable of recognizing, regulating, and meaningfully integrating this expanded role in the public sphere.

The volume is not merely a collection of individual chapters; it expresses a coherent and shared conviction: that the religious imagination, when engaged with the realities and urgencies of our time, can emerge as a powerful force for ethical transformation and cultural innovation. The Agenda 2030 is thus not only a technopolitical document but a spiritual and cultural horizon. The contributions gathered here invite the reader to reflect, engage, and act at the intersection of faith, innovation, and global responsibility.

CONTRIBUTIONS

EMERGING ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN THE 2030 AGENDA: RETHINKING MODELS OF RESPONSIBLE GROWTH WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE ITALIAN CASE

Flavia Cortelezzi

SUMMARY: 1. The 2030 Agenda and the Economics of Sustainability: An Introduction. – 2 Persistent economic and social inequalities: a structural challenge for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda – 2.1 What growth models to reduce inequality? – 2.2 The Italian case – 2.2.1 Reducing Inequality: A Core Challenge of Our Time – 2.3 A Roadmap: Proposals for Long-Term Sustainability – 3. Redefining Value: Corporate Responsibility in the Era of Regenerative Economics – 3.1 Beyond profit: responsible business models – 3.2 Building a Sustainable Business Economy: Policy Direction. – 4. Environmental crises, climate change, and global inequalities: a systems approach to sustainable development – 4.1 Responsible development models for ecological transition – 4.2 The Italian case: progress and critical issues in climate transition – 4.3 Recommendations for a Coherent and Ambitious Italian Climate Policy – 5. Technological innovation – 5.1 The Italian case – 5.2 Advancing SDG 9: Strategic Economic Policy Directions. – 6. Conclusions.

1. The 2030 Agenda and the Economics of Sustainability: An Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 (UN, 2015), represents an ambitious global framework for action, structured into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The intent of the Agenda is to promote peace, human well-being, economic prosperity and protection of the planet. The Agenda has been met with a favourable response from a wide-ranging international community, with many deeming it an integrated and universal instrument for addressing the global challenges of our era. However, almost a decade after its adoption, significant obstacles remain that undermine its implementation, largely attributable to unsustainable patterns of economic

development, persistence of inequality, weak forms of governance, and slow cultural and institutional change (SACHS J.D.et al., 2023; UN DESA, 2022). In the European context, and particularly in Italy, the implementation of the SDGs is subject to specific particularities that require attention. The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS), established in 2016, plays a pivotal role in promoting the adoption of the 2030 Agenda at the national level and monitoring Italy's progress through annual reports, which highlight strengths and weaknesses in different areas (ASviS, 2023). There are several critical economic issues that hinder the achievement of the SDGs in the European and Italian context. Six priority areas are briefly highlighted below:

- Despite progress in some areas, persistent inequalities in income, access to services, and opportunities remain as a systemic challenge in numerous European economies. In Italy, the Gini index – a measure of inequality in income distribution – remains elevated relative to the European average. Significant disparities in income and wealth between the northern and southern regions of the country continue to impede social cohesion and hinder the efficacy of public policies (ISTAT, 2023). These disparities impede the realisation of Goal 10 (“Reduce inequality”) and jeopardise the sustainability of the economic system as a whole.
- Economic Sustainability and Responsible Business: Italian production is predominantly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), is encountering challenges in fully aligning with international sustainability standards, both in environmental and social terms. Despite the emergence of indications towards a transition towards responsible business models (SDG 8 and SDG 12), the process of transition remains both protracted and uneven (Unioncamere, 2023). This unevenness is particularly evident in the domain of non-financial reporting and sustainable finance. The challenge, therefore, lies in the integration of sustainability into business strategy, moving beyond a logic of mere regulatory compliance.
- Environmental crises and climate change: Southern Europe, and Italy in particular, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change: extreme events, droughts, coastal erosion and biodiversity loss threaten ecosystems and infrastructure. Goal 13 (“Combating Climate Change”) remains among the most critical, requiring structural change in energy patterns, consumption habits, and urban and agricultural policies. Despite the European Union's commitment to the Green Deal, implementation at the national level is proceeding with significant delays, partly due to bureau-

cratic complexity and lack of long-term strategic vision (EEA, 2022).

- Technological innovation and digital divide: Innovation is a crucial lever for sustainable transition (SDG 9), but Europe and Italy face a persistent digital divide that manifests itself both at the infrastructure level and in the digital skills of the population. Inequalities in access to technologies, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, undermine the possibility of inclusive and sustainable growth, penalizing rural and remote areas in particular (OECD, 2023). Investment in smart infrastructure, training and digital inclusion is needed to close this gap.
- Global governance and ineffective coordination: One of the most obvious limitations in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda concerns the absence of effective multilevel governance, capable of coordinating policies between local, national, and European levels, as well as between the public and private sectors. The Agenda calls for an integrated and intersectoral approach, but institutional fragmentations, conflicts of competence and lack of shared evaluation and monitoring tools make action ineffective (Biermann et al., 2017). In Italy, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) has been slow to consolidate as an operational and binding tool.
- Slowness in cultural and political change: Finally, full implementation of the 2030 Agenda is hampered by cultural and political resistance to change, which manifests itself in low sensitivity to sustainability in decision-making processes, reluctance to promote structural reforms, and low civic participation. Achieving the SDGs is not just a technical matter, but requires a profound cultural transformation involving institutions, businesses, schools and citizens. In this sense, Goal 17 - "Partnership for Goals" - takes on strategic value, promoting cross-cutting coalitions for change.

The analysis carried out in this paper focuses on the main critical economic issues hindering the achievement of the SDGs in the European and Italian context.

2. Persistent economic and social inequalities: a structural challenge for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Economic and social inequalities represent one of the most urgent and complex challenges in the implementation path of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, hindering across the board the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Inequalities, both between and within countries, undermine social cohesion, fuel political and economic instability, and hinder truly inclusive growth (UN DESA, 2022; OECD, 2020). The SDGs most directly affected by this issue are SDG 1 (Defeating poverty), SDG 2 (Defeating hunger) and SDG 10 (Reducing inequality).

Although the 2030 Agenda sets ambitious goals in terms of reducing inequality, the current global economic system continues to favor mechanisms of wealth concentration and access to resources. According to Oxfam (2023), the richest 1 percent of the world's population holds more than twice the wealth possessed by the remaining 90 percent. These dynamics are intertwined with the hoarding of natural resources, the weakening of social protection systems, and an often-regressive tax structure, with devastating consequences for the well-being of vulnerable populations (PIKETTY T., 2019).

In the Italian context, the ASviS 2020 Report (ASviS, 2020) highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has had a regressive impact on many of the SDGs, with an increase in territorial, generational and gender inequalities. The health crisis has amplified pre-existing disparities, especially in terms of access to health services, education and employment, particularly penalizing young people, women and remote areas.

2.1. What growth models to reduce inequality?

It is essential to rethink development models as an indispensable step in structurally addressing social, economic and environmental inequalities. The traditional approach, centered on a conception of economic growth unrelated to distributional issues, is proving increasingly inadequate to contemporary challenges. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt new paradigms that integrate economic growth, social justice and environmental sustainability, challenging the notion that the distribution of economic benefits is secondary to the increase in gross domestic product.

From this perspective, the circular economy emerges as one of the most promising models, capable of combining environmental efficiency and social equity. It is based on a more rational and durable management of natural re-

sources, through strategies of waste reduction, reuse, repair and recycling, in contrast to the linear paradigm of production and consumption (GEISSDOERFER M. et al., 2017). In addition to its ecological benefits, the circular economy has important employment spillovers, fostering the emergence of new jobs in the areas of materials recovery, maintenance, and technological innovation. These activities can generate stable and decent jobs, helping to strengthen social cohesion (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019).

Another crucial tool for reducing inequality is redistributive policies, particularly taxation. According to Atkinson (2015), a more progressive tax system that includes innovative forms of taxation-such as those on capital and inheritances- is essential to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources. In addition, a more effective fight against tax evasion appears particularly urgent in contexts such as Italy, where this phenomenon seriously undermines the equity of the welfare system. Alongside tax intervention, public investment in strategic sectors such as education, health, transportation and social services plays a decisive role in promoting intergenerational social mobility and creating the conditions for truly inclusive development (OECD, 2021).

Finally, on the global level, international cooperation is emerging as an indispensable component in combating transnational inequalities. In this scenario, sustainable finance instruments are becoming increasingly relevant. ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investments, if properly regulated by transparency and accountability mechanisms, can direct capital toward activities with high social and environmental impact, contributing to a more equitable redistribution of resources among countries and communities (SACHS J.D., 2015). Integration between local policies and global instruments is therefore crucial for building an equitable, resilient and sustainable development model.

2.2. The Italian case

In Italy, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a critical factor that has slowed, and in some cases even reversed, the progress made toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG 10) on reducing inequality. According to the 2020 ASviS Report, the effects of the health crisis have exacerbated pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities, with particular impact on the southern regions of the country. These areas continue to experience higher levels of relative poverty, lower employment rates and reduced access to essential services compared to northern regions (ISTAT, 2021). At the same time, the labor market has seen the exacerbation of growing job insecurity, with the growing prev-

absence of atypical contracts and the persistence of significant pay disparities between men and women, reflecting an increasingly fragmented and unequal employment system. In response to these critical issues, the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) has put forward a series of strategic recommendations. These include the proposal to introduce a legal minimum wage in order to guarantee a minimum threshold of economic dignity for all workers. Additionally, it calls for a strengthening of the education system and vocational training, which are considered key tools for bridging territorial and generational gaps in terms of opportunities. Finally, the urgency of adopting a national strategy for social inclusion is stressed, with special attention to the most vulnerable groups of the population, such as children, the elderly and migrants.

In conclusion, the reduction of inequality cannot be considered a marginal or sectoral objective, but must be recognized as an indispensable condition for ensuring the overall sustainability of the socio-economic system. Development policies must therefore be designed in an integrated, coherent and multi-sectoral way, based on an approach inspired by human rights and the principle of “leave no one behind,” which is one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

2.2.1. Reducing Inequality: A Core Challenge of Our Time

The tenth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 10) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda aims to “reduce inequality within and among nations”, posing itself as an ambitious and structural goal that implies the adoption of coordinated interventions on multiple levels. This goal requires a comprehensive reformulation of public policies, including income redistribution, equitable access to essential social services, and full political and civic participation of all social groups. In Italy, the ASviS 2020 Report highlighted how the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as an accelerator of pre-existing inequalities, straining the resilience of the national socioeconomic system. In particular, it points out that “the health crisis has led to a sharp worsening of economic and social conditions for the most vulnerable segments of the population, exacerbating already existing inequalities and exposing the fragility of protection systems” (ASviS, 2020, p. 251).

Among the main manifestations of these inequalities are growing economic polarization and income gaps. Low-income households, often employed in sectors with high exposure to the crisis - such as tourism, catering and retail trade - have been among the hardest hit by the containment measures and the

slowdown in economic activity. In this context, the insecurity associated with precarious employment, which had already been increasing in Italy before the pandemic, has emerged strongly (ISTAT, 2019). The ASviS Report notes how “workers with temporary and part-time contracts were among the first to lose their jobs, with significant consequences for household income” (ASviS, 2020, p. 256). In contrast, high-income workers, predominantly employed in digitized sectors, have been able to continue their activities in remote work modes, thus accentuating the digital divide and economic stratification.

Particularly vulnerable were immigrants and ethnic minorities, frequently employed in manual, seasonal or informal jobs characterized by low pay and little protection. The pandemic further exposed these groups to both health risk and exclusion from state-prepared economic support mechanisms. Many foreign workers were unable to access measures such as the Citizenship Income or the emergency bonus due to the absence of stringent bureaucratic requirements, such as continuous residence. This exclusion generated double discrimination, both economic and institutional. In addition, there has been a worsening of the social climate, with episodes of stigmatization related to the perceived spread of contagion: “Many immigrants were subjected to stigmatization, with episodes of discrimination and racism” (ASGI, 2020). Civil society organizations, such as the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI), have denounced the risk of establishing a “second-class citizenship,” in which migrant people are systematically excluded from access to basic rights.

An additional factor of inequality is the persistent territorial gaps between the northern and southern regions of the country. Southern Italy, historically characterized by higher unemployment rates and lower public investment, has been most affected by the economic contraction and the fragility of the local health care system. According to the ASviS Report, “Southern regions have seen all indicators related to employment and access to services worsen, falling behind European convergence targets” (ASviS, 2020, p. 259). Territorial inequalities have also been reflected in access to education, with serious consequences for equal educational opportunities. The lack of adequate digital devices and stable internet connections has hindered participation in distance learning by southern students, exacerbating the risk of early school leaving and fueling already entrenched phenomena of educational poverty (Save the Children, 2020).

Young people and women are also among the groups most affected by the crisis. The youth labor market, already undermined by unstable contractual forms, has been hit hard, with a significant loss of employment among young people employed in service sectors. The youth unemployment rate, which al-

ready exceeded 28 percent in 2019, increased further during and after the first lockdown (ISTAT, 2021). At the same time, women have experienced a double penalty: in addition to suffering larger employment losses, especially in female-dominated sectors such as personal services and education, they have had to shoulder a significant increase in family care responsibilities as a result of school closures and the shortage of childcare services. The ASviS Report points out that “the crisis has widened the gender gap in the labor market, rolling back the progress made in women’s employment and participation in public life” (ASviS, 2020, p. 263).

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic has been not only a health crisis, but also a powerful amplifier of existing inequalities. The response to this crisis cannot be limited to emergency measures, but must result in a structural rethinking of economic, social and institutional policies in line with the principles of Agenda 2030.

2.3. A Roadmap: Proposals for Long-Term Sustainability

The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) proposes a coherent and structured set of interventions aimed at tackling inequality in a systemic way, going beyond the emergency responses that have often characterized public policies in times of crisis. One of the priorities is to strengthen the social protection system, which must be made more inclusive and resilient, capable of responding to new forms of work and ongoing social transformations. As also stressed by the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2020), contemporary welfare must extend to atypical, self-employed and migrant workers, ensuring equitable access and effective tools for protection in times of instability.

Economic growth must be geared toward inclusiveness and sustainability, promoting decent employment in key sectors of the ecological and digital transition (OECD, 2020). Targeted investments in infrastructure and services in the South are essential to reduce territorial gaps and promote lasting cohesion, according to the principle of “leaving no one behind” enshrined in the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015).

Digitization represents another key axis. Overcoming the digital divide must be addressed as a social justice issue: the European Commission (2022) explicitly recognized connectivity as a social right in the “Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles.” This implies investment in digital infrastructure even in inland and marginalized areas, as well as digital literacy programs for the most vulnerable groups (UNESCO, 2021).

Health and education, understood as essential public goods, require an equity-based strengthening strategy. In line with the principles of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2010), the health system must ensure universal access, proximity and quality of care, reducing inequalities in access to services. Similarly, education should become more inclusive by supporting disadvantaged students, expanding educational access in remote areas, and reducing economic barriers to tertiary education are crucial interventions for social and intergenerational equity (UNESCO, 2020; ASviS, 2023).

In the labor market, structural reform that reduces precarity and promotes gender equality is essential. According to the World Economic Forum (2023), active policies for women's employment, incentives for work flexibility and investment in public care services are essential conditions for closing the gender gap and ensuring women's full and equal participation in economic life.

Finally, social inclusion must be a cross-cutting principle of public action. Anti-discrimination policies must be strengthened not only at the regulatory level, but also through cultural, educational and intercultural mediation initiatives. Promoting diversity and combating all forms of exclusion are central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to social justice, peace and equality (SDG 10 and SDG 16; United Nations, 2015).

SDG 10 represents a litmus test of Italy's ability to become a more just, equitable, and resilient society. The pandemic has shown that inequality is not just an ethical issue, but a systemic risk to social cohesion and economic stability. As ASviS points out, "A sustainable future is only possible if inequalities are reduced and the potential of every individual is enhanced" (ASviS, 2020, p. 270). The opportunity offered by the post-pandemic recovery cannot be wasted. It is time to build a new model of development, focused on social justice, territorial equity and the inclusion of differences.

3. Redefining Value: Corporate Responsibility in the Era of Regenerative Economics

The role of business in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda is now unanimously recognized as central, not only because of the impact the private sector has on the global economy, but also because of its interconnections with the environment, society and governance. However, the transition to a fully sustainable business paradigm still appears partial and uneven. Indeed, many companies continue to operate according to a logic of short-term profit maximization, often neglecting the systemic conse-

quences of their activities on the environment and communities (PORTER M.E. & KRAMER M.R., 2011).

This approach contributes to the worsening of structural problems such as climate change, natural resource depletion, and socio-economic inequalities, making a critical review of traditional business models urgent. Businesses, far from being mere economic agents, must be rethought as transformative actors, capable of actively contributing to the construction of a “regenerative economy” (RAWORTH K., 2017) that operates within planetary and social boundaries.

3.1. Beyond profit: responsible business models

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) concept, proposed by Elkington (1997), represents one of the earliest and most influential attempts to redefine corporate performance by including the social (“people”) and environmental (“planet”) dimensions alongside economic profit. According to this approach, a company’s success cannot be measured solely in financial terms, but must also take into account its ability to generate shared value (shared value) for all stakeholders.

The adoption of the TBL model implies a reformulation of internal decision-making processes, in which ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) metrics and social-environmental impacts assume equal status with economic-financial indicators. In this way, the company becomes an agent of sustainable development and not a mere generator of externalities (UN Global Compact, 2019).

Sustainable finance represents an additional strategic tool for directing economic activity toward long-term goals compatible with sustainability. Through instruments such as green bonds, social impact bonds, ESG funds, and ethical investment platforms, financial resources can be channeled to projects with high environmental and social value (Eurosif, 2021).

The European Commission, with the Taxonomy Regulation (EU 2020/852), introduced a classification of sustainable economic activities in order to avoid greenwashing and encourage capital allocation in line with the SDGs. In addition, the increasing focus on climate and systemic risks in financial portfolios has led many institutional investors to review their strategies, valuing companies with robust ESG profiles (TCFD, 2017).

ESG reporting has become a key tool for measuring and communicating the non-financial performance of companies. It makes it possible to assess aspects such as CO₂ emissions, gender diversity on boards, labor practices, and the quality of corporate governance, fostering greater transparency and accountability to stakeholders (Schoenmaker & Schramade, 2019).

From 2024, European companies will be required to comply with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which will replace the previous Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD), extending ESG reporting requirements to a significantly larger number of companies and introducing common standards for reporting (EFRAG, 2023).

3.2. *Building a Sustainable Business Economy: Policy Direction.*

In light of the transformations accelerated by the pandemic crisis and the ecological and digital transitions, it is increasingly urgent to orient businesses toward systemic sustainability, capable of integrating economic, environmental and social dimensions in a coherent and structural way. In this context, some strategic directions emerge that can guide business action in line with the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

First, the integration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria within corporate strategy is a prerequisite for aligning corporate governance with international sustainability standards. This process must invest not only the definition of strategic objectives and reporting systems, but also managerial incentive mechanisms, so as to strengthen the coherence between corporate mission and impacts generated. As Eccles, Ioannou and Serafeim (2014) point out, the systematic adoption of ESG criteria is not only an emerging regulatory constraint, but also an opportunity to innovate business models and build lasting competitive advantages.

A second priority area concerns boosting investment in green technologies and production processes with low environmental impact. Businesses are called upon to progressively reduce dependence on nonrenewable resources through the use of clean energy, energy efficiency, eco-design and the adoption of circular economy principles. Such strategies, according to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2020), not only contribute to the reduction of the ecological footprint, but also represent levers of resilience and innovation in the long run.

Another strategic priority is social innovation, defined as a company's ability to generate shared value through solutions that meet the needs of communities and improve living and working conditions. Initiatives such as corporate welfare, collaboration with third sector entities and local development programs are increasingly relevant tools for strengthening the social dimension of sustainability. As highlighted by Mulgan (2006), social innovation expands the role of business far beyond profit, reconfiguring it as an active player in promoting collective welfare.

Finally, effectively addressing the most complex global challenges-from climate change to poverty, from equity in access to resources to the protection of the commons-requires a collaborative approach based on multi-sectoral partnerships. In line with Goal 17 of Agenda 2030, businesses must intensify their involvement in networks that include governments, universities, civil society organizations and international institutions. Only through a logic of co-responsibility and cooperation will it be possible to achieve an equitable and inclusive sustainable transition (SACHS J.D. et al., 2021).

The shift from a linear, immediate profit-centered economy to an integrated sustainability model requires a profound rethinking of the role of business in contemporary society. Adopting models such as the Triple Bottom Line, sustainable investment, and ESG reporting is not only a response to regulatory and reputational pressure, but represents a strategic choice geared toward the creation of lasting value, resilience, and social legitimacy.

As stated in the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2020), "Businesses that can integrate sustainability into their strategic foundations will be the only ones able to thrive in a world profoundly transformed by environmental and social crises."

4. Environmental crises, climate change, and global inequalities: a systems approach to sustainable development

Global environmental crises-particularly climate change (Goal 13 of Agenda 2030), biodiversity loss (Goal 15) and ecosystem degradation-represent an existential threat that is deeply intertwined with economic and social inequalities. Scientific evidence shows that the most vulnerable groups, especially in low-income countries, are disproportionately exposed to extreme environmental impacts such as droughts, floods and sea-level rise (IPCC, 2021). This imbalance, referred to by some scholars as "climate injustice" (ROBERTS J.T. & PARKS B.C., 2007), reflects the asymmetry between those who contribute most to emissions and those who suffer the consequences.

The current economic paradigm, heavily based on intensive extraction of natural resources and a hyper-productive consumption model, has overstepped several planetary limits, challenging the biosphere's ability to sustain anthropogenic activities (ROCKSTRÖM J. et al., 2009; STEFFEN W. et al., 2015).

In particular, the massive use of fossil fuels and intensive agriculture are among the main factors fueling the accelerating climate crisis and biodiversity loss. These processes are further exacerbated by uncontrolled urbanization, deforestation, and fragmentation of natural habitats.

4.1. Responsible development models for ecological transition

Effectively addressing current environmental challenges requires a profound paradigm shift away from linear, resource-intensive development models and toward sustainable and regenerative approaches. Within this framework, three areas of action appear to be priorities: the transition to renewable energy sources, the promotion of regenerative agriculture, and the consolidation of a green economy aimed at carbon neutrality.

The deployment of renewable energy is one of the most effective tools for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as playing a key role in promoting energy justice. Solar, wind, and geothermal technologies, due to their low environmental impact and decentralization potential, are optimal solutions for ensuring energy access even in the most isolated and vulnerable areas, contributing to energy poverty reduction (SACHS J.D. et al., 2019). In addition, the rapidly decreasing costs associated with these technologies, coupled with their ability to generate employment in so-called green jobs, makes the energy transition not only sustainable, but also cost-effective.

In parallel, the adoption of regenerative agricultural practices is critical to strengthening the resilience of food systems and protecting the health of ecosystems. Regenerative agriculture, according to Gliessman (2015), promotes the restoration of soil fertility, increased biodiversity and more efficient management of natural resources, while reducing dependence on chemical inputs and erosion processes. Particularly in the most fragile rural contexts, this perspective is of strategic importance, as it reconciles productivity, food security and environmental sustainability.

Finally, building a carbon-neutrality-oriented green economy emerges as a prerequisite for meeting the goal of containing global temperature rise to within 1.5°C of pre-industrial levels, as stipulated in the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015). Achieving carbon neutrality involves balancing emissions generated and emissions absorbed through integrated strategies that include investment in clean technologies, diffusion of the circular economy, and policies to de-emphasize fossil fuels. According to the OECD (2020), this transition is not only necessary for climate stability, but also represents an opportunity to stimulate innovation and create new markets and jobs in the areas of energy efficiency, sustainable mobility and renewable energy.

4.2. The Italian case: progress and critical issues in climate transition

Italy has adopted several strategies for climate mitigation in line with European Union and Paris Agreement commitments, with increasing integration of renewable sources into the national energy mix. In particular, the country has experienced significant expansion in the use of solar and wind energy, especially in southern regions and coastal areas, thanks to favorable geographic location and public incentives. In 2020, renewable sources contributed significantly to national energy production (GSE, 2021), and there was an increase in self-generation due to the adoption of decentralized systems, such as home solar panels.

Despite such progress, Italy continues to show significant dependence on natural gas, which accounts for a large share of energy needs, particularly in the transport, industrial and domestic heating sectors (ISPRA, 2023). In addition, the pace of implementation of energy efficiency and decarbonization technologies is still insufficient to ensure the achievement of the 2050 climate goals.

4.3. Recommendations for a Coherent and Ambitious Italian Climate Policy

In the context of the climate emergency and in light of Italy's international commitments, the ASviS 2020 Report highlights some strategic directions for strengthening the effectiveness of the national response. A first priority area concerns the acceleration of investment in renewable energy, particularly through support for photovoltaic, wind and geothermal plants. In parallel, the urgency of phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies is emphasized, in line with OECD (2020) recommendations that highlight how such incentives distort the energy market and slow decarbonization.

A second axis of intervention is the strengthening of climate resilience, with investments in adaptive infrastructure and the protection of territories subject to extreme events, such as storm surges, fires, and droughts. These measures are key to preventing the economic and social damage associated with the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, as also highlighted by the IPCC (2021).

Promoting technological innovation is another key element of the strategy, through support for the development and deployment of advanced technologies such as smart grids, energy storage systems, electric mobility and digital solutions for efficient energy management. These tools, according to the IEA (2020), are essential to ensure an effective and sustainable energy transition.

Aligning Italian policies with the European Green Deal is also crucial, with

the goal of transforming the national economic model in a circular and low-carbon direction, encouraging the development of sustainable transport and low-emission industrial processes, in line with the European strategy for climate neutrality to 2050 (European Commission, 2019).

Finally, combating soil degradation is a cross-cutting priority, to be pursued through the adoption of agroecological practices, reforestation programs, and land-use planning attentive to the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity. According to FAO (2021), such interventions are essential to maintain the ecological functionality of soils, ensure food security, and reduce the climate vulnerability of rural communities.

The environmental and climate crisis is both a global challenge and an opportunity to sustainably rethink economic, productive, and social models. Mitigation and adaptation strategies, if oriented to climate justice principles, can help reduce inequalities and promote a resilient, inclusive and regenerative economy. The Italian case shows that the transition is possible, but needs greater ambition, institutional coordination, and collective participation.

5. Technological innovation

Technological innovation is recognized by leading international institutions as one of the key drivers for promoting sustainable, equitable and competitive development. In particular, the ninth Goal of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (SDG 9) emphasizes the importance of “building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and supporting innovation” (United Nations, 2015). However, the potential for innovation remains partly untapped due to systemic inequalities in access to digital technologies, a phenomenon known as the digital divide, which undermines the possibility of ensuring inclusive growth. The European Commission (2022) has highlighted how this divide is not limited to the mere availability of infrastructure, but also extends significantly to digital skills, quality of access, and people’s effective ability to participate in the digitized society and economy. According to the OECD Digital Economy Outlook 2023, Italy has lower levels than the European average in terms of the diffusion of high-speed connectivity, the use of the Internet for advanced purposes and the general level of digital literacy, especially among older people, those with low schooling or residing in rural areas. ISTAT (2023) confirmed that 26 percent of households in the South do not have a fixed Internet connection, compared to 13 percent in Northern Italy. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these disparities, revealing how in-

adequate infrastructure and lack of digital skills have prevented many families and students from accessing distance education or continuing work remotely (ISTAT, 2021; Save the Children, 2020). In response to this situation, the European Commission, through the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade (European Commission, 2022), formally recognized connectivity and digital skills as fundamental social rights. In line with these orientations, Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) devotes an entire component to the country's digitization, with investments of about 40 billion euros, earmarked for strengthening digital infrastructure, training human capital and the inclusion of the most vulnerable. In particular, the PNRR aims to ensure coverage with ultra-wideband networks throughout the country by 2026, as well as to promote digital training programs for the citizenry and small and medium-sized enterprises (PCM, 2021). These strategies are also reflected in the recommendations of UNESCO (2021), according to which digital inclusion is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of fundamental rights in the contemporary era. The organization stresses that digital literacy, if properly integrated into educational pathways and local development programs, can contribute significantly to reducing intersectional inequalities by bridging gaps related to gender, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic status. In conclusion, overcoming the digital divide in Italy and Europe cannot be considered a technical goal, but must be taken as a political and social priority. This implies a paradigm shift, in which technological innovation is driven not only by economic efficiency goals, but also by criteria of social justice and inclusion, consistent with the principles of equitable and sustainable digital transformation promoted by the 2030 Agenda and major international institutions.

5.1. The Italian case

In the Italian context, the digital divide represents one of the main structural criticalities hindering the full development of an inclusive, resilient and sustainable economic and social model. This phenomenon, which manifests itself both in terms of infrastructure and digital skills, is particularly relevant for its impact on territorial, socioeconomic and generational inequalities. According to ISTAT (2023), in 2022 more than 20 percent of Italian households did not have Internet access from home, with peaks of more than 30 percent in the South. Southern regions, such as Calabria, Sicily, and Campania, show a significant lag in broadband coverage and ultra-fast network deployment, accentuating disparities compared to regions in the Center-North. This infrastructural

lag is accompanied by a low level of digital skills: the European Commission's DESI Index (Digital Economy and Society Index) places Italy among the least advanced countries in the European Union for basic digital skills, with only 46 percent of the population possessing such skills, compared to an EU average of 54 percent (European Commission, 2022).

The pandemic crisis has amplified these inequalities. During lockdowns, millions of students and workers experienced difficulties in accessing distance learning and smart working, not only due to the lack of appropriate devices, but also due to the low digital literacy of part of the population. As highlighted by Save the Children (2020), about 12 percent of Italian students were unable to continuously attend online classes due to technical or environmental limitations, with particularly severe impacts in low-income families and in inland and mountainous areas.

In response to these critical issues, the Italian government has integrated a strategy aimed at digitizing the country into the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). Mission 1 of the PNRR allocates more than 40 billion euros to investments in connectivity, digitization of public administration, digital skills training and promotion of technological innovation (PCM, 2021). Key interventions include the "1 Giga Italy" Plan, aimed at ensuring ultra-wideband coverage throughout the country by 2026, and the "Connected School" Plan, designed to improve connectivity and digital literacy in educational institutions, especially in disadvantaged areas.

However, as stressed by ASviS (2023), the success of these policies will depend on the ability to address in an integrated way the root causes of the digital divide, which do not end at lack of infrastructure, but include cultural, economic, and social factors. Digital transformation must be accompanied by a robust investment in human capital, inclusive lifelong learning programs, and strengthening the role of local communities in designing digital solutions.

Ultimately, the Italian case shows how the issue of the digital divide is not just an obstacle to technological development, but a real democratic challenge that questions the ability of institutions to guarantee equal access to innovation, protecting the right to digital citizenship and promoting social cohesion throughout the country.

5.2 Advancing SDG 9: Strategic Economic Policy Directions.

In light of the analysis of the digital divide in Italy, it is possible to outline a series of economic policy recommendations geared toward reducing inequality and strengthening social cohesion, within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 10 (reducing inequality).

First, it is necessary to strengthen public investment structurally in digital infrastructure, with a focus on inland, rural and southern areas. Although the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP) has earmarked substantial funds for overcoming the digital divide, their effectiveness depends on the implementation capacity and consistency of policies at the territorial level (Prime Minister's Office, 2021). The completion of the "Italy to 1 Giga" plan must be considered a strategic priority, as it is a prerequisite for equitable participation in the digitization process.

Second, a strengthening of policies for lifelong digital skills development is recommended. The European Commission (2022) has stressed that digital human capital is an indispensable element for the competitiveness and resilience of economic systems. In Italy, digital inclusion requires targeted interventions for the most vulnerable social groups (the elderly, unemployed, migrants, students in disadvantaged conditions), through digital literacy programs, vocational training and facilitated access to devices. In this regard, strengthening the National Digital School Plan (MIUR, 2022) and supporting civil society initiatives are crucial.

Third, an integrated approach to innovation policies is suggested, promoting synergies between technological development and social inclusion. Investment in research, artificial intelligence, green economy and digitization should be accompanied by accountability and social impact assessment mechanisms to avoid widening inequalities and foster a sustainable and inclusive economy (OECD, 2023; ASviS, 2023). Within this framework, public finance should move toward responsible investment instruments, including ESG funds and social impact bonds, which can mobilize resources toward projects with high territorial and social impact (SACHS J.D. et al., 2019).

Finally, it is crucial to strengthen multilevel coordination between central government, local authorities and third sector actors, in a logic of participatory and territorial governance. As highlighted by the OECD (2020), inclusive digitization cannot be imposed in a top-down manner, but needs the active involvement of local communities, businesses, and educational institutions.

In particular, municipalities should be supported in digital planning and management of public services in digital format, through dedicated funds and technical-administrative support.

In summary, reducing the digital divide in Italy requires a coordinated set of public policies that integrate infrastructure, education, inclusion and governance. Only in this way will it be possible to transform technological innovation into an engine of sustainable development and social justice.

6. Conclusions

The 2030 Agenda represents an ambitious and integrated framework to guide the transition to a sustainable, equitable and resilient future. However, the current trajectory of development patterns shows clear inconsistencies with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Persistent inequality, climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation signal an economic system that has exceeded the planet's biophysical limits and continues to produce structural injustices, both locally and globally.

As revealed in a growing body of scientific literature (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015; IPCC, 2021), addressing these challenges requires deep systemic transformation. A holistic approach is needed that recognizes the interconnectedness of the environment, economy, and society, promoting alternative models based on environmental justice, intergenerational equity, and social inclusion.

This transition implies that we must gradually abandon in favor of a regenerative economy based on renewable energy sources, sustainable agricultural practices, green technological innovation, and the enhancement of natural and human capital. Effective solutions cannot go without strengthening multilevel governance, active community involvement, and greater coherence between public policies and long-term goals.

Ultimately, achieving the SDGs by 2030 is not guaranteed, but it remains possible if we resolutely embark on an alternative course: a transformation that is ecological, cultural, economic, and institutional. It is only through a renewed covenant between human beings and nature, based on collective responsibility and global solidarity, that we can address the converging crises of our time and build more just, resilient and sustainable societies.

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ECOMUSEUMS: PROJECTS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED AND SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT*

Stefano Fanetti, Francesca Ainger**

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. The Ecomuseum: Origins and Evolution of an Idea. – 2. The Protection of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National and International Level. – 3. The Management and Finance of the Ecomuseum Project. – 4. In the Heart of the Como Area: The Ecomuseum of Val Sanagra. – 5. Conclusions.

1. Introduction. The Ecomuseum: Origins and Evolution of an Idea

Paris, 1971. The French museologists Hugues de Varine, then director of ICOM (*International Council of Museums*), and Georges-Henri Rivière, his predecessor and permanent advisor to ICOM, met for a business lunch with Serge Antoine, then advisor to the French Minister of the Environment. The purpose of the meeting was to plan the 9th General Conference of ICOM, that took place in France a few months afterwards. On that occasion, de Varine expressed his desire to overcome the conventional image of the museum as an institution and coined the term “ecomuseum”, by combining the words “museum” and “ecology”¹.

The term ecology should not be interpreted as a concept strictly related to the environment, but rather as “human ecology”, namely the study of the dynamic relationships among human beings, society, traditions, and the surrounding environment². The prefix “eco” was therefore not intended to mean

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1 DE VARINE, H. (2005), *Le radici del futuro: il patrimonio culturale al servizio dello sviluppo locale*, CLUEB, Bologna, pp. 243-244.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

a natural history museum with a merely descriptive purpose³, but to evoke what the ancient Greeks expressed with the word *oikos*: the complexity of relationships within the living environment of a community, the various interconnections, and the very interactions between humans and their environment⁴. Through this vision, de Varine sought to respond to the crisis facing traditional museology by proposing a new form of heritage enhancement – both tangible and intangible – based on active citizen participation.

In 1971, de Varine began to experiment with the newly coined term in the urban context of Le Creusot, a town located to the north of Lyon, historically rooted in coal mining and steel production and in the midst of a severe industrial crisis⁵. In Le Creusot, he established an open and decentralized museum, which was officially recognized by ICOM as an ecomuseum the following year. The project sought to enhance the collective and community heritage of local residents through a participatory process, coordinated by a council of associations that brought together representatives of the urban fabric⁶. Starting from its inception, the ecomuseum embodied a community-driven model with the explicit aim of fostering local development by gathering oral narratives and community knowledge and by promoting research on the living conditions of the population concerned, with the ultimate goal of understanding and communicating its identity.

Since its development in the seventies, the ecomuseum phenomenon has spread globally embracing diverse forms depending on the local context. The label “ecomuseum” is now applied to a wide range of initiatives that may differ significantly from one another⁷. Hence, there is no single model of ecomuseum and its structure is rooted upon the relationship between the territory and the community that inhabits it or has historically inhabited it. Accordingly, the ecomuseum is grounded in the triplet community–heritage–territory, meaning that it develops as a participatory project, through which the community actively engages in the enhancement of local culture, and it conveys the interactions of

3 ANGELINI, A. (2014), *Per un uso sostenibile e duraturo del territorio*, in REINA, G., ed., *Gli ecomusei. Una risorsa per il futuro*, Marsilio, Venezia, p. 131.

4 DE BIAGGI, E., TESTA, I. (2010), *Gli Ecomusei della Regione Piemonte: persone, patrimoni, luoghi*, in GRASSEN, C., ed., *Ecomuseologie. Pratiche e interpretazioni del patrimonio locale*, Guaraldi, Rimini, p. 58.

5 BRAVO, G.L., TUCCI, R. (2006), *I beni culturali demoetnoantropologici*, Carocci Editore, Roma, p. 64.

6 DE VARINE, H., *op. cit.*, pp. 244-246.

7 JALLA, D. (2011), *Oltre l'ecomuseo?*, in VESCO S., ed., *Gli ecomusei. La cultura locale come strumento di sviluppo*, Felici Editore, Ghezzano, pp. 23-47.

the people with their territory in a sustainable development perspective⁸.

This innovative approach marks a clear departure from the traditional museum model, since it is different both in its principles and in its practices. Unlike the “classical” museum, where cultural heritage is passively displayed and appreciated by visitors of a static, mono-disciplinary institution, in an ecomuseum the cultural heritage emerges from the traditions, knowledge, craftsmanship, and ancient customs of the local community, contemplated in their historical evolution and in their connection with the surrounding natural and social environment. According to de Varine, the ecomuseum is not a place to be visited, but a place to be lived, since nature and culture are alive when they belong to a population and represent its heritage⁹. From this perspective, the ecomuseum counterposes the traditional museum, which exhibits a collection rather than a heritage, is confined to a single building, has no meaningful connection to the surrounding territory, and addresses the general public rather than the local population¹⁰. Quite the opposite, the ecomuseum project aims to express and appreciate the knowledge of a local community as cultural and environmental assets – even intangible ones – and to promote territorial development, taking into account the area’s specific social and environmental features. The ecomuseum serves as a tool for understanding and articulating the relationship between the community and its territory. It is not merely a vehicle for promoting local cultural heritage; rather, it is directed toward the community itself, so that it may act as a social engine for sustainable and community-based development. In this way, the project evolves into a space where the interactions between the community and its natural or urban environment may be explored, and where knowledge can be safeguarded and imparted through generations¹¹.

On the basis of its strong connection with the population – urban or rural – the project arises and evolves on the initiative of the very individuals who are part of it and their inclusion in both the planning and decision-making processes is vital to its functioning¹². Moreover, the participation in the management of cultural heritage contributes to awareness-raising among citizens and

8 RATTO TRABUCCO, F. (2020), “L’ecomuseo nel quadro della protezione ambientale”, *Economia e ambiente*, 39, 2, p. 44.

9 DE VARINE, H., *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

10 REINA, G. (2014), *L’ecomuseo fra territorio e comunità*, in REINA, G., ed., *Gli ecomusei*, cit., p. 29.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

their empowerment as custodians and managers of their own heritage¹³. In this light, the ecomuseum has been conceived as a dynamic structure free of predetermined models of governance and organization, precisely to allow each community to enrich the potential of its own cultural and environmental heritage through a truly participatory process.

2. The Protection of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National and International Level

A concise yet effective synthesis of the features outlined above can be found in the Catania Charter (*Carta di Catania*) of 2007¹⁴, which defines the ecomuseum as «a participatory practice for the enhancement of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, created and developed by an organized actor that is the expression of a local community and in the perspective of sustainable development»¹⁵. One of the most meaningful elements of this definition lies in its emphasis on the joint valorisation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage goods, whose distinction may serve from an analytical or academic point of view, though in practice they cannot be considered distinctly separated.

In this regard, material heritage includes items such as farming or herding tools and objects of daily and ceremonial use employed by the local population¹⁶, that typically amount to static representations of the past. Conversely, intangible assets are more difficultly displayed or documented, due to the fact that they are configured as performative acts such as traditions, dialects, rituals, knowledge, techniques, and ceremonies¹⁷. Albeit appreciating and acknowledging their differences, a clear-cut separation between tangible and intangible heritage cannot be drawn, as the two are inextricably linked. Every heritage asset requires its own channel of communication and expression.

13 ANGELINI, A., *op. cit.*, p. 134.

14 The Charter was drafted at the National Meeting *Verso un Coordinamento Nazionale degli Ecomusei: un processo da condividere*, during the conference *Giornate dell'Ecomuseo – Verso una nuova offerta culturale per lo sviluppo sostenibile del territorio*, University of Catania, 12-13 October 2007. The document is available at the following link: <http://www.bda.unict.it/Public/Uploads/article/Carta%20di%20Catania.pdf>.

15 The original text in Italian reads: «una pratica partecipata di valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale materiale e immateriale, elaborata e sviluppata da un soggetto organizzato, espressione di una comunità locale, nella prospettiva dello sviluppo sostenibile».

16 BRAVO, G. L., TUCCI, R., *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Intangible assets still need a material sphere to convey emotions and experiences through physical supports¹⁸.

Overcoming the distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritage has also been enshrined at the international level. In 2003, UNESCO adopted the “Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”¹⁹, which acknowledged the risk of deterioration and disappearance of intangible cultural assets, that manifest themselves through, among other things, oral expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and traditional craftsmanship²⁰. The Convention marked a turning point by exceeding a narrow and highbrow perception of culture and by expanding its scope through an anthropological perspective that includes all aspects of a community life²¹. The UNESCO Convention also values the importance of active citizen participation by claiming that States must «ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management»²².

The Italian legislator has also transposed this approach: Article 7-bis of the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape²³ explicitly recalls the UNESCO Con-

18 TAMMA, M. (2010), “Prodotti culturali e territori: l’immateriale che vive nella materialità”, *Sinergie*, 82, p. 31.

19 The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference on 17 October 2003 and entered into force in 2006. The Convention aims to safeguard intangible cultural heritage by raising awareness among communities about its importance. Article 2(1) defines intangible cultural heritage as: «the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage».

20 Art. 2(2) of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

21 CERQUETTI, M. (2015), “Dal materiale all’immateriale. Verso un approccio sostenibile alla gestione nel contesto locale”, *Il capitale culturale*, Supplementi 02, p. 250.

22 Art. 15 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

23 Legislative Decree No. 42 of 22 January 2004, *Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape, pursuant to Article 10 of Law No. 137 of 6 July 2002* (Decreto Legislativo 22 gennaio 2004, n. 42 *Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio, ai sensi dell’articolo 10 della legge 6 luglio 2002, n. 137*).

Article 7-bis was introduced in 2008 by Legislative Decree No. 62 of 26 March 2008 *Additional Integrative and Corrective Provisions to Legislative Decree No. 42 of 22 January 2004, concerning cultural heritage* (Decreto Legislativo 26 marzo 2008, n. 62 *Ulteriori disposizioni integrative e correttive del decreto legislativo 22 gennaio*

vention, recognising the existence of collective cultural expressions (including intangible ones) of significant value. However, the same provision makes the protection of such expressions contingent upon specific conditions, specifying that they fall within the scope of the Code only when they are embodied in material evidence and when they meet the requirements and conditions set out in Article 10. This provision identifies as cultural heritage those movable and immovable assets of artistic, historical, archaeological, or ethno-anthropological interest, thus it highlights materiality as the necessary precondition for legal protection. As a result, intangible assets, as such, are not directly protected under the 2004 Code. Some commentators have argued that intangible assets cannot be preserved by law through prohibitions, obligations, authorizations, or precautionary and preventive measures, as is the case with tangible cultural assets²⁴. The protection of intangible heritage should instead be achieved through its exploitation, in particular through promotion and communication activities, such as those carried out in the context of ecomuseums²⁵.

This point of view is complemented – and partly overlapped – by an even broader sense of cultural heritage outlined in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, better known as the Faro Convention²⁶. The Faro Convention defines cultural heritage as «a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time»²⁷. This definition encompasses all forms of cultural expression, even if not tied to ownership rights and identified from a subjective perspective, according to what individuals consider as expressions of their own culture.

2004, n. 42, in relazione ai beni culturali).

24 GARLANDINI, A. (2014), *Musei ed ecomusei di fronte alla globalizzazione e alla crisi. Nuovi istituti per nuove sfide*, in REINA, G., ed., *Gli ecomusei*, cit., p. 94.

25 *Ibidem*.

26 Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, adopted in Faro on 27 October 2005 and ratified in Italy by Law No. 133 of 1 October 2020 *Ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, signed in Faro on 27 October 2005* (Legge 1 ottobre 2020, n. 133 *Ratifica ed esecuzione della Convenzione quadro del Consiglio d'Europa sul valore del patrimonio culturale per la società, fatta a Faro il 27 ottobre 2005*).

27 Art. 2(a) of Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

Thereby, the ratification of the Faro Convention in the Italian legal system in 2020 lead to the introduction of a new and much broader notion of cultural heritage, oriented towards different goals as compared to those pursued by the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape. On the one hand, the Convention's extended definition of cultural heritage encloses a comprehensive understanding of culture as a whole and aims to guide State parties' policies towards wider purposes, namely human rights compliance, a peaceful and democratic society, and the promotion of sustainable development processes²⁸. On the other hand, the Code rigorously and restrictively identifies cultural heritage assets in order to define the scope of application of the legal institutes established to protect and promote merely those assets that express cultural value²⁹.

The Faro Convention establishes the human right to participate in cultural life and recognizes both individual and collective responsibility to contribute to its preservation³⁰. The perception of culture, in a collective and social dimension, as outlined in the Convention, aligns with the ecomuseum project, that favors a participatory structure and sustainable development, therefore represents a concrete implementation of the principles set forth in the Convention³¹. Indeed, the ecomuseum serves as a tool for imparting the "cultural heritage" as recognized and valued by the community and for encouraging an active role upon citizens in the protection, conservation, and valorisation of their heritage³². Even though the Convention is not legally binding, it can nevertheless provide a valuable framework to strengthen and legitimize existing practices at local and regional level, such as those carried out in ecomuseum initiatives³³.

28 Art. 1(d) of Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

29 GUALDANI, A. (2020), "L'Italia ratifica la convenzione di Faro: quale incidenza nel diritto del patrimonio culturale italiano?", *Aedon*, 3, p. 274.

30 Art. 1(a)-(b) of Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

31 MUSSATTI, A. (2022), "La Convenzione di Faro e le espressioni di cultura immateriale in Italia: il caso dell'ecomuseo", *Nuove Autonomie*, 3, p. 1038.

32 RIGOBELLO, G. (2024), "Gli ecomusei, strumenti di un nuovo approccio per il patrimonio culturale. Le esperienze di Italia e Spagna", *federalismi.it*, 10, pp. 178-179.

33 SIMONATI, A. (2021), "Il ruolo della cittadinanza nella valorizzazione dei beni culturali alla luce della Convenzione di Faro: niente di nuovo sotto il sole?", *Rivista giuridica di urbanistica*, 2, p. 272.

3. The Management and Finance of the Ecomuseum Project

The first country to recognize legal status to the ecomuseum as an institute was Italy in 1995, when the Piedmont Region passed a law establishing its structure and aims³⁴. The goals pursued by ecomuseums were the preservation of tangible cultural heritage, the faithful reconstruction of traditional living and working environments, the arrangement of routes through the landscape and natural surroundings, the active involvement of local communities, and the promotion of research and educational activities³⁵. Thereafter, many other Italian regions have followed suit by adopting comparable regulation³⁶ and to date there are more than 250 ecomuseums across the country³⁷. Even if many emerged in rural areas, ecomuseums have also developed in urban settings – as is the case of Turin, where an urban ecomuseum was founded to illustrate the history of the city's neighbourhoods and to express the community's collective memory³⁸.

De Varine foresaw that the most suitable legal model for an ecomuseum was the non-profit organization, with a statute drafted according to the specific needs of the community. In his view, community representatives should always have the final say during the decision-making processes³⁹. He also believed that the community should play a leading role in financing cultural activities, while State and regional contributions should be limited, on a subsidiary basis, to the minimum necessary to support regional and tourism development⁴⁰. This approach seems to be driven by De Varine's legitimate attempt to preserve the local population's decision-making autonomy. However, communities are not always able to provide the resources needed, nor should they be burdened to preserve a heritage that belongs to all and should be protected in the interest

34 Regional Law (Piedmont) No. 31 of 14 March 1995 *Establishment of Ecomuseums in Piedmont* (Legge regionale (Piemonte) 14 marzo 1995, n. 31 *Istituzione di Ecomusei del Piemonte*). See: Reina, G., *L'ecomuseo*, cit., p. 11.

35 Art. 1 of Regional Law (Piedmont) No. 31 of 1995.

36 For an overview of regional legislation on the subject, reference can be made to the atlas compiled by the Italian Ecomuseum Network (<https://sites.google.com/view/ecomuseiitaliani/home>).

37 The atlas of the Italian Ecomuseum Network (see footnote No. 36 of this chapter) provides a visual overview of where ecomuseums are located. This mapping reveals a higher concentration in Northern Italy.

38 JALLA, D. (2014), *Ecomusei urbani*, in REINA, G., ed., *Gli ecomusei*, cit., p. 116.

39 DE VARINE, H., *op. cit.*, pp. 257-258.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

of future generations as well. For this reason, it would be more appropriate to advance a model of shared responsibility between the community, that benefits from the establishment of the ecomuseum, and the public institutions, appointed to safeguard cultural heritage and to promote social and environmental sustainable development.

So far, three main types of funding systems have been adopted: full public subsidies, partial public co-financing, and contributions from the ecomuseum's operators, with possible additional public or private donations⁴¹. Lombardy, Veneto, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia have, to some extent, embraced the principles advocated by De Varine through a system of subsidiary public support. The co-financing system encourages ecomuseum managers to fund their projects and rely on public funding merely as a support rather than as the primary source of funding⁴².

Some scholars have raised concerns about the potential misuse in the creation of an ecomuseum for the only purpose of receiving public funding to finance pre-existing activities⁴³. Others, instead, advocate for the need to assess the ecomuseum's potentially negative impacts on the community and emphasise the importance of involving local institutions and setting up networks of ecomuseums, through which operators can share best practices and information⁴⁴.

To this end, bills on ecomuseums have been presented in the Italian Parliament in 2009 and 2014⁴⁵. The 2009 proposal for a framework law on ecomuseums⁴⁶ defined the ecomuseum as a cultural institution «in a given territory and through the involvement of the local population, that provides for research,

41 CREACO, S. (2014), *Note sull'economia e la finanza degli ecomusei*, in REINA, G., ed., *Gli ecomusei*, cit., p. 110.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

43 CERQUETTI, M., *op. cit.*, p. 262.

44 REINA, G., *L'ecomuseo*, cit., p. 15.

45 Specifically, at the national level, the following legislative proposals are worth noting: Senate Bill No. 902 *Provisions concerning the establishment of ecomuseums aimed at enhancing local culture and traditions* (Disegno di Legge n. 902 *Disposizione in materia di istituzione degli ecomusei per la valorizzazione della cultura e tradizione locali*), presented in the Senate in 2008; and two bills presented in the Chamber of Deputies: Bill No. 2804 *Framework Law on Ecomuseums* (Proposta di legge n. 2804 *Legge quadro sugli ecomusei*), introduced in 2009, and Bill No. 2646 *Provisions concerning the establishment of ecomuseums aimed at enhancing local culture and traditions* (Proposta di legge n. 2646 *Disposizioni in materia di istituzione degli ecomusei per la valorizzazione della cultura e delle tradizioni locali*), introduced in 2014. See: MUSSATTI, A., *op. cit.*, p. 1045 (footnote No. 55).

46 See: footnote No. 45 of this chapter.

preservation, and enhancement functions on the tangible and intangible cultural assets of the area, typical of its environment and the lifestyles that have developed over time»⁴⁷. Article 3 recognized the role of the Regions in implementing the law, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, and relied on the regional legislator to regulate the recognition system, the coordination council, funding mechanisms, and the operational procedures. Additionally, Articles 4 and 5 of the proposal provided for the creation of a national coordinating committee and a national observatory for evaluating the regional councils' activities and for handling the national registry of ecomuseums. The later proposal of 2014⁴⁸ largely referred to the content of the framework law, yet it introduced the creation of a national label for ecomuseums released by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism⁴⁹. Despite these proposals, the political will seems to favor the regulation of ecomuseums exclusively at the regional level.

Among the regions that have developed specific legislation on the matter, Lombardy stands out for its comprehensive and updated legal framework. The Lombardy Region promotes the creation, recognition, and monitoring of ecomuseums pursuant to Regional Law No. 25 of 2016⁵⁰. The law reorganized the regional framework on cultural policy, repealing Regional Law No. 13 of 2007⁵¹ previously dedicated specifically to ecomuseums. Article 19(2) of Regional Law of 2016 defines ecomuseums as: «Cultural institutions, established by local authorities (either individually or jointly), associations, foundations, or other private non-profit entities, which – within a defined territorial area and with the active participation of the local population, communities, cultural, scientific and educational institutions, local entities and associations – carry out functions of care, management, enhancement, and protection of local cultural and landscape heritage, representative of an environment, the ways of life, and

47 Art. 1(3) of Bill No. 2804 (2009) *Framework Law on Ecomuseums*.

48 See: footnote No. 45 of this chapter.

49 Art. 5 of Bill No. 2646 (2014) *Provisions concerning the establishment of ecomuseums aimed at enhancing local culture and traditions*.

50 Regional Law (Lombardy) No. 25 of 7 October 2016 *Regional Policies on Culture – Regulatory Framework Reform* (Legge Regionale (Lombardia) 7 ottobre 2016, n. 25 *Politiche regionali in materia culturale – Riordino normativo*).

51 Regional Law (Lombardy) No. 13 of 12 July 2007 *Recognition of ecomuseums aimed at enhancing local culture and traditions for environmental, landscape, cultural, tourism, and economic development* (Legge Regionale (Lombardia) 12 luglio 2007, n. 13 *Riconoscimento degli ecomusei per la valorizzazione della cultura e delle tradizioni locali ai fini ambientali, paesaggistici, culturali, turistici ed economici*).

their transformations». The Region promotes the establishment of ecomuseums and supports their activities, recognizing their role in preserving living cultural heritage, protecting landscapes, and fostering sustainable development processes rooted in local heritage. It also encourages networking and access to European, national, and private funding sources⁵².

Regional recognition – which grants the right to use the official Lombardy Region ecomuseum label and access to calls for proposals and funding opportunities⁵³ – is subject to compliance with minimum requirements and quality standards as defined by the Regional Government Resolution No. XI/1959 of 2019⁵⁴. The required criteria are: the provision of a formal statute certifying the permanent and non-profit nature of the organization; the establishment of operational headquarters; the identification of a specific territorial area; a clear description of the heritage to be preserved; an information/documentation center; active community involvement; and the definition of management, funding, and sustainability procedures. Additional key elements include a professional staff, autonomous capacity for project development, strategic planning, and interactions with local authorities, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders in the area, including tourism operators.

To date, the Lombardy Region has officially recognized 36 active ecomuseums, which reflect the cultural richness and diversity of the Lombard territory, making a significant contribution to its shared narrative and sustainable enhancement⁵⁵.

52 Article 19(1) of Regional Law No. 25 of 2016.

53 Moreover, recognized ecomuseums take part in a Coordination Table, as established by Regional Government Resolution (Lombardy) No. XII/558 of 3 July 2023 *Establishment of the Coordination Table of Ecomuseums – XII Legislature, pursuant to Article 11 of Regional Law No. 25 of 7 October 2016, Regional Cultural Policies – Regulatory Reorganization – Composition and Identification of Operational Procedures* (Deliberazione della Giunta Regionale (Lombardia) n. XII/558 del 3 luglio 2023 *Istituzione del Tavolo di coordinamento degli ecomusei – XII Legislatura, ai sensi dell'art. 11 della legge regionale n. 25 del 7 ottobre 2016, Politiche regionali in materia culturale – Riordino normativo, – Composizione e individuazione delle modalità operative*). This body serves as the institutional tool for in-depth discussion and dialogue between ecomuseums and the Lombardy Region.

54 Regional Government Resolution (Lombardy) No. XI/1959 of 22 July 2019 *Update of the Minimum Requirements for the Regional Recognition of Ecomuseums in Lombardy* (Deliberazione della Giunta Regionale (Lombardia) n. XI/1959 del 22 luglio 2019 *Aggiornamento dei requisiti minimi per il riconoscimento regionale degli ecomusei in Lombardia*).

55 The list of ecomuseums officially recognized in Lombardy is available at the following link:

4. In the Heart of the Como Area: The Ecomuseum of Val Sanagra

Turning from theory to practice, the Como area offers a concrete example of an ecomuseum. In fact, it is *the* example for that territory, since the Ecomuseum of the *Val Sanagra* is the only one officially recognized in the entire province.

Located in Grandola ed Uniti, in a territory straddling Menaggio and Porlezza, this ecomuseum is situated in a strategic position. Grandola ed Uniti may not be widely known, yet this municipal territory includes the renowned Menaggio & Cadenabbia Golf Club, the second golf club established in Italy and named after two famous towns overlooking Lake Como. The area is also known in Italian history for the former *Hotel Miravalle*, which hosted Mussolini during his attempted escape to Switzerland.

We decided to gather information directly at the source, in order to gain a clearer picture of the Ecomuseum's history, strengths, and challenges. This was made possible thanks to the generous cooperation of Attilio Selva, curator of the Ethnographic and Natural History Museum of the *Val Sanagra*, and Rodolfo Spada, coordinator of the Ecomuseum.

The Ecomuseum was established as the final step of a longer process of territorial development: the Ethnographic and Natural History Museum of the *Val Sanagra* was founded in 2001, and, in 2005, the Local Park of Supra-Municipal Interest (*PLIS*) of the *Val Sanagra* was set up on the initiative of the municipalities of Grandola ed Uniti and Menaggio. The Ecomuseum of *Val Sanagra*, that concerns the municipality of Grandola ed Uniti, was officially created in 2011 and received formal recognition from the Lombardy Region in 2014. Since then, it has developed in full synergy with both the *PLIS* and the Museum, which represents an integral part of the Ecomuseum's heritage⁵⁶.

It should be underlined that the territorial context of the *Val Sanagra* is extraordinarily rich from an archaeological-industrial, cultural, and environmental standpoint. The largely wild natural landscape, with woods and meadows are flanked by ancient rural settlements (*Monti di Madri*) and many examples

<https://www.regione.lombardia.it/wps/portal/istituzionale/HP/DettaglioRedazionale/scopri-la-lombardia/cultura-e-tradizione/musei-ed-ecomusei/ecomusei-scopri/ecomusei-scopri>.

56 See: Resolution No. 7 of 29 July 2011 of the Municipal Council of the Municipality of Grandola ed Uniti, *Approval of the Founding Act of the Ecomuseum of the Val Sanagra* (Deliberazione del Consiglio Comunale del Comune di Grandola ed Uniti n. 7 del 29 luglio 2011 *Approvazione atto costitutivo Ecomuseo della Val Sanagra*).

of traditional local activities, such as the *Fornace Galli* (brick kiln), the alpine pastures of *Erba*, *Leveja*, and *Logone*, the *calchere* (historic lime kilns), a forge and a furnace used for ironworking, and a spinning mill. The area offers meaningful historical and artistic heritage, including towers, palaces, religious buildings, and historic villages, along with notable geological sites such as the coal deposit in the *Val Gariasca* – a lateral valley of the *Val Sanagra* – and clay deposits located along the banks of the *Sanagra* stream.

Some of these sites have been restored and incorporated into hiking and cycling routes that allow visitors to appreciate the many facets of the territory. These aspects are also presented on the Ecomuseum's website⁵⁷, which includes sections dedicated to local myths, legends, traditional recipes, and artisanal and productive activities. A new version of the website is currently under development: it will bring together the existing platforms of the Ecomuseum, the Ethnographic and Naturalistic Museum⁵⁸, and the Park⁵⁹ into a single, unified portal, reflecting the deep and ongoing integration among the three institutions.

The Ecomuseum organizes a wide range of initiatives, from guided tours to excursions, from exhibitions to literary events or exhibitions of artworks by local and non-local artists, as well as environmental education activities in collaboration with local stakeholders and conferences or workshops for children. All these activities are aimed at raising awareness and promoting the local area, encouraging responsible behaviour and sustainable local tourism. The Ecomuseum promotes these initiatives, not only on its website, but also on social media, though there is room for improvement. The Facebook page⁶⁰ is active and regularly updated, but the Twitter (now X)⁶¹ account is inactive, and the Instagram profile⁶² – launched in 2020 – is used only occasionally.

While digital communication could be further developed, the Ecomuseum has a generally positive impact on local tourism, drawing around 2,000 visitors each year, a number that demonstrates its appeal and the beneficial role it plays in promoting natural and cultural heritage. Through hiking trails, cycling routes, and guided tours, the Ecomuseum attracts visitors interested in green

57 The Ecomuseum is online at the following address: <https://ecomuseo.valsanagra.it>.

58 The official website of the Ethnographic and Natural History Museum of the *Val Sanagra* can be accessed at the following link: <https://museo.valsanagra.it/>.

59 The official website of the *Val Sanagra PLIS* (Local Park of Supra-Municipal Interest) is available at the following address: <https://parco.valsanagra.it/>.

60 <https://www.facebook.com/ecomuseo.valsanagra>.

61 <https://x.com/ValSanagra>.

62 <https://www.instagram.com/ecomuseovalsanagra/>.

and eco-tourism. Another key strength is its emphasis on local history and the rediscovery of cultural and artisanal traditions, which contributes to capture a growing audience of tourists seeking more authentic and less commercialized destinations.

The *Val Sanagra* already attracts several international visitors, yet its full potential remains largely untapped, especially considering its proximity to Menaggio and other Lake Como towns that draw tourists from all over the world. In this context, it is noteworthy that the Chamber of Commerce of Como-Lecco collaborated with *ENIT*⁶³ offices in the United States for a digital editorial campaign on *AFAR* magazine⁶⁴, which explicitly included the *Val Sanagra* among the promoted destinations⁶⁵. This effort is part of a broader promotional strategy aimed, not only at the Italian public, but also at potential international visitors, through external portals such as *myLakeComo.co*⁶⁶ (available in English) and international ecomuseum networks like the *EcoHeritage Network*⁶⁷.

In line with the spirit of ecomuseums, the project in *Val Sanagra* has gradually developed with the essential support of the local municipality and the volunteer association *Storia, Natura e Vita*⁶⁸, but also through the active involvement of many local partners – such as grocery shops, cafés, *crotti*⁶⁹, hotels, agritour-

63 *ENIT* (now *ENIT S.p.a.*) is the official Italian National Tourist Board. It operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism and is responsible for promoting Italy's image and tourist offerings abroad. *ENIT* supports international marketing and communication strategies, fosters collaboration with regional and local tourism bodies, and helps attract visitors by enhancing Italy's cultural, natural, and economic heritage.

64 *AFAR* is a travel magazine and digital platform founded in 2009 and based in the United States. It specializes in experiential travel, focusing on authentic and mindful journeys that highlight local cultures, art, cuisine, and sustainability. The publication targets an international audience, with a particular emphasis on the North American market. See: <https://www.afar.com/>.

65 For more informations: <https://shorturl.at/HQlaw>.

66 *myLakeComo.co* is a bilingual digital platform (Italian and English) that promotes Lake Como, offering information on events, attractions, itineraries, experiences, and places to visit. See: <https://mylakecomo.co/it/>.

67 *EcoHeritage* is an international network funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, aimed at promoting ecomuseums as participatory tools for the protection of cultural and natural heritage. For more information: <https://ecoheritage.eu/> and <https://network.ecoheritage.eu/>.

68 <https://ecomuseo.valsanagra.it/chi-siamo/associazione-storia-natura-vita/>.

69 *Crotti* are traditional stone cellars or taverns, commonly found in Northern Italy, originally used for storing wine and cured meats. Many have been converted into

ism farms, *pro loco*⁷⁰, sports clubs, and *Alpini*⁷¹, as well as a wide network of supporters, including restaurants and guesthouses, building contractors, hairdressers, car repair garages, and carpenters.

Nonetheless, after the pandemic, financial contributions from local businesses have almost completely ceased. To this day, the Ecomuseum relies primarily on public funding (municipal contributions and regional grants), income from ticket sales at the Museum and the *Fornace Galli*, and minor private donations. The goal is still to rebuild an appropriate level of local support and to tackle one of the most common and pressing issues for ecomuseums: the challenge of securing stable, long-term funding. Because of this, it is essential to diversify income sources through a combination of public funding, private donations, grants, and sponsorships, thus ensuring sufficient resources to support ongoing operations, maintenance, and future development.

In addition, it is important to maintain a strong connection with the local area, not only in terms of funding. Greater involvement of local stakeholders – particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors (hotels, agritourism farms, restaurants, etc.) – could serve as a powerful driving force to increase visitor numbers. This could help the ecomuseum catch the large tourist flows drawn to the nearby lakeside towns along Lake Como, while generating positive returns for local businesses and the wider community. To this end, it is worth noting that some local accommodation providers explicitly mention the Ecomuseum on their websites, demonstrating the potential role the institution can play in attracting tourists and enriching the visitor experience. Moreover, some operators in the sustainable tourism and hospitality sector of the Como area organize excursions along the Ecomuseum's trails, including stops at local restaurants and local businesses.

The collaboration with the community, however, goes beyond economic operators alone. Citizens also participate by providing photos, postcards, legends, and recipes, thereby helping to preserve historical memory and local traditions. In this view, a multimedia room is currently being designed, and it will be dedicated to the community's history over the past two centuries. It will be built through the stories of local residents and descendants of emigrants from

rustic eateries serving local food and wine.

70 *Pro loco* are local volunteer associations dedicated to promoting and organizing cultural, historical, and tourism-related activities in their communities.

71 *Alpini* are members (active or retired) of a historic Italian mountain infantry corps, known for their strong civic engagement and volunteer work in local communities, especially in Northern Italy.

Grandola who settled abroad, particularly in South America.

At the same time, work is underway to create interactive Community Maps distributed across the territory. These are ambitious projects that require specific resources and expertise. For this reason, the Ecomuseum is constantly seeking funding, especially through public calls and grant opportunities.

Collaboration with the local community becomes even more essential considering that the Ecomuseum of *Val Sanagra* is sustained entirely by the work of volunteers of the previously mentioned association *Storia, Natura e Vita*. On the one hand, this aspect may represent a strength, since it reflects the enthusiasm and strong community bonds in the initiative. On the other hand, it reveals a structural weakness shared by many institutions of this kind: the limited availability of human resources and the bureaucratic and financial challenges involved in hiring employees. This situation can generate critical issues, particularly in ensuring continuity of the activities. For instance, both the Ethnographic Museum and the *Fornace Galli* are open to the public only on a limited basis, an aspect that could jeopardize compliance with the minimum requirements set by the Lombardy Region for the official ecomuseum recognition.

The main challenge for the Ecomuseum is its ability to innovate to attract new audiences and boost its overall appeal. Currently, excluding local school groups, most visitors are over the age of 35, while younger generations are largely underrepresented.

The decision to invest in new technologies through the *MuseoInteract – Val-sanagra* project⁷², funded by the regional *InnovaCultura* call, appears particularly effective to respond to the need to engage a wider number of young visitors. The project aims to enhance one of the Ecomuseum's main assets – the Ethnographic and Naturalistic Museum of *Val Sanagra* – by integrating physical and digital experiences. A core feature of the initiative is the implementation of “Autonomous Gamification”, an interactive system offering personalized cultural missions tailored to visitors' individual interests. In addition, the Museum's new website will include features such as virtual room tours that uses 360° video and interactive content, for a cultural offering that is more accessible and engaging.

72 For further details about the project: <https://www.eurca.com/project/finanziato-su-innovacultura-il-progetto-per-la-valorizzazione-del-museo-della-valsanagra/>.

6. Conclusions

It is not always easy to translate into practice what is conceived “from above” by international bodies and leading experts in the field. The creators of the ecomuseum concept intentionally granted a high degree of autonomy upon local communities, precisely to avoid a top-down imposition of how the relationship with the territory and its cultural and environmental heritage should be interpreted and valued. The community-based and local dimension is both the strength and the challenge of these initiatives. While it fosters authenticity and rootedness, the community may lack the knowledge or tools needed to effectively promote local development. The loss of traditional knowledge is a long-standing and complex issue, especially considering the general public’s tendency to favour mass tourism and reach the most popular destinations, which often entails significant environmental impacts for tourist attractions.

Fortunately, there is a growing countertrend of people seeking lesser-known and more local experiences, where they can enjoy nature and engage directly with the historical and artistic heritage of a place. Sustainable tourism is more than a passing trend; it is a necessity for travellers seeking peace and authenticity, and for communities striving to preserve their cultural and environmental heritage without commodifying it, rather safeguarding it for future generations.

The enhancement of ecomuseums must inevitably involve effective communication, so that the existence of these projects can be widely known. In this regard, the promotion initiative of the Ecomuseum of *Val Sanagra* at the international level is a step in the right direction. Another key objective is strengthening these structures, both financially and in terms of management. To this end, it is essential that regional and national institutions protect ecomuseums and ensure coordination among them, fostering collaboration between managers and organizing joint initiatives. As with many other forms of cultural expression, a place that offers beauty and conveys local traditions only needs the right audience to continue transmitting its stories to future generations.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE UN 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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SUMMARY: 1. Religions and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – 2. The focus on indigenous peoples – 3. The Catholic Church and indigenous peoples – 4. Concluding remarks: analogies and differences between the Catholic Church's perspective and the 2030 Agenda

1. Religions and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/70/1 on *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Agenda is «a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity», which identifies «17 Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] and 169 targets» and aims at stimulating «action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet»¹, such as human rights abuses, violent conflict and climate justice². The SDGs, in particular, «reflect an understanding

1 Preamble. Text at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

2 «The concept of Climate Justice frames global climate change as a political and ethical issue and not just a strictly environmental one. It's typically viewed in a global context of spatial and temporal interdependence and recognises that the most vulnerable and poorest in society often have to suffer the greatest impact of the effects of climate change. This despite those very groups being the least responsible for the emissions that have driven the climate crisis. More broadly, in this opinion, Climate Justice recognises the need to consider the fairness of the often disproportionate impact of climate change on citizens and communities in both developing and developed economies». *Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Climate Justice'*, 19 October 2017. On the origins of this expression, see MARY ROBINSON FOUNDATION. CLIMATE JUSTICE (2013), *Climate Justice Baseline*, 12, <https://www.mrfcj.org/media/pdf/ClimateJusticeBaseline.pdf>.

that sustainable development everywhere must integrate economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection»³.

The achievement of this ambitious plan does not commit only States and secular actors. Religious denominations, too, can and do contribute, in particular as regards inclusive and equitable human communities (SDGs nos. 4, 10, 11 and 16), human life, work and technological development (SDGs nos. 3, 8 and 9) and environment, food and nutrition (SDG nos. 2, 12, and 15)⁴. Recurrent themes, among others, which may be found in the discourses of different religious denominations are climate change, loss of biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, the acknowledgment of a common responsibility and the continuous call for the need for an equitable transition⁵, as highlighted inter alia by the

In the rich literature on this topic, suffice it to mention CARDUCCI, M. (2020), "La ricerca dei caratteri differenziali della "giustizia climatica"", *DPCE online*, 2: 1345-1369; CAVALCANTI, M.F. (2023), "Fonti del diritto e cambiamento climatico: il ruolo dei dati tecnico-scientifici nella giustizia climatica in Europa", *DPCE online*, SP-2: 329-343.

- 3 See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda>.
- 4 ANGELUCCI, A. (2024), "Fraternità umana e sviluppo sostenibile nell'orizzonte 2030: Prospettive teologiche vs strategie geopolitiche?", *Diritto & Religioni*, 1: 225-236; ZUANAZZI, I., BATTAGLINI, I., eds. (2021), *Religioni e sviluppo sostenibile*, Accademia University Press, Turin.
- 5 This topic is being deeply investigated by Italian scholars of law and religion. See *inter alia* BALSAMO, F. (2014), "Religioni ed ambiente: il contributo delle confessioni religiose alla costruzione di una 'democrazia ambientale'", *Diritto & Religioni*, 2: 113-151; DE GREGORIO, L. (2019), *Ambiente, Creato, Sviluppo umano integrale: dimensione religiosa collettiva e prospettiva ecologica*, in CONSORTI P., ed., *Costituzione, religione e cambiamenti nel diritto e nella società*, Pisa University Press, Pisa, 293-309; FABBRI, A. (2022), *Il contributo del cattolicesimo e dell'ortodossia al dibattito sulla rilevanza etica del diritto all'ambiente*, in BORDOLI R., ed., *Etica ambientale. Prospettive di ricerca*, Castelvecchi Editore, Rome, 249-265; FRENI, F. (2024), "Stili di alimentazione religiosamente orientati e sostenibilità nell'esperienza giuridica dei territori prospicienti il Mar Mediterraneo", *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale, Rivista telematica* (<https://www.statoechiese.it>), 2: 19-57; GAGLIARDI, C. (2023), *I "giardini" della biodiversità nelle diocesi irlandesi*, <https://www.rivistadirittoereligioni.com/newsirlanda-i-giardini-della-biodiversita-nelle-diocesi-irlandesi/>; MAZZONI, G. (2024), *Ordinamento canonico e pensiero ecologico. La cura della casa comune tra magistero pontificio e sinodalità*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli; SORVILLO, F. (2019), *L'art. 9 della Costituzione e il contributo delle religioni alla protezione ambientale*, in PALUMBO, P., ed., *Libertà religiosa e nuovi equilibri nelle relazioni tra Stato e confessioni religiose*, Editoriale Scientifica, Naples, 211-226; SORVILLO, F. (2014), *Eco-fede. Uomo, natura, culture religiose*, in FUCCILLO, A., ed., *Esercizi di laicità interculturale e pluralismo religioso*,

documents issued in 2015, when the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) took place in Paris. They include the letter of 14 May *The Time to Act is Now. A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change*⁶, Pope Francis's encyclical letter *Laudato si' on care for our common home* of 24 May⁷, the *Lambeth Declaration 2015 on Climate Change* of 17 June⁸, the *Islamic Declaration on Climate Change*

Giappichelli, Turin, 79-118; PETTINATO, C.M. (2022), "Aversio a Deo: l'origine della riflessione ecologica nel magistero papale da Leone XIII a Francesco", *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale, Rivista telematica* (<https://www.statoechiese.it>), 17: 111-137; PETTINATO, C.M. (2014), "Il grido di Abacuc. La questione ecologica alla luce delle istanze del giusnaturalismo cristiano contemporaneo", *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale, Rivista telematica* (<https://www.statoechiese.it>), 31: 1-36; PICCINNI, M.R. (2013), *La tutela dell'ambiente nel diritto delle religioni*, Aracne, Rome; VENTRELLA, C., ATTOLLINO, S. (2020), *Etica delle religioni, diritti dei popoli e dignità sostenibile*, in AA.VV., *L'etica ambientale e lo sviluppo sostenibile nel diritto delle religioni*, Giuffrè, Milan, 173-216; TAVANI, A.P. (2020), *Fattore religioso e ambiente*, Edizioni Dal Sud, Bari.

6 Text at https://fore.yale.edu/files/buddhist_climate_change_statement_5-14-15.pdf.

7 See *inter alia* BOFF, G.L., ZANOTELLI, A., GIRAUD, G., GIACCARDI, C., MAGATTI, M., COSTA, G. (2015), *Curare madre terra. Commenti all'enciclica Laudato si' di papa Francesco*, EMI, Bologna; DE GREGORIO, L. (2016), "Laudato si': per un'ecologia autenticamente cristiana", *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale, Rivista telematica* (<https://www.statoechiese.it>), 41: 1-33; GIRAUD, G., ORLIANGE, P. (2017), *Laudato si' e Obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile: una convergenza da affinare*, in *Aggiornamenti sociali*, 497-507; KUREETHADAM, J.I., ed. (2015), *Cura della casa comune. Introduzione a Laudato si' e sfide e prospettive per la sostenibilità*, LAS, Rome; KUREETHADAM, J.I. (2016), *I dieci comandamenti verdi della "Laudato si'"*, Elledici, Turin; MALAVASI, P., GIULIODORI, C., ed. (2016), *Ecologia Integrata. Laudato si'. Ricerca, formazione, conversione*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan; MORANDINI, S. (2015), *Laudato si'. Un'enciclica per la terra*, Cittadella, Assisi; NOTARSTEFANO, G., ed. (2015), *Abiterai la Terra. Commento all'enciclica Laudato si' con il testo integrale di papa Francesco*, AVE, Rome; PALLADINO, E., ed. (2017), *Approfondimenti e riflessioni sulla Laudato si'*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome; SARTORIO, U. (2015), *Tutto è connesso. Percorsi di ecologia integrale nella Laudato si'*, EMI, Bologna; TIGANO M. (2020), *The Encyclical Letter "Laudato si'" between sustainable development and integral ecology*, in ZILAHY, G., ed., *Sustainability in Transforming Societies. Proceedings of the 26th Annual Conference of the International Sustainable Development Research Society*, BME GTK, Budapest, 881-886; YÁÑEZ, H. M., ed. (2017), *Laudato si'. Linee di lettura interdisciplinari per la cura della casa comune*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome.

8 Text at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/CCB_Lambeth-declaration-2015-on-climate-change-updated.pdf.

adopted on 18 August at an International Islamic Climate Change Symposium held in Istanbul⁹, the Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis issued by 425 rabbis in the United States of America¹⁰ and the *Hindu Declaration on Climate Change* of 23 November¹¹. Although in different tones, they have highlighted that the environmentally most vulnerable countries are not those that have contributed the most to the problem, and that the transition to a more sustainable lifestyle must be equitable and, therefore, have a minimum impact of the poorest and most marginalized communities on earth¹².

2. The focus on indigenous peoples

The expression ‘indigenous peoples’ is referred to approximately 5,000 groups spread across 90 countries, for a total of 476 million persons¹³. Despite being only 6.2 per cent of the world’s population, they make up about 19 per cent of the humans who live in conditions of extreme poverty. At the same time, they possess a rich and irreplaceable cultural heritage: they speak over 4,000 of the 6,700 languages of the world, many of which risk extinction; they live in territories conserving a high portion of the earth’s biodiversity and «hold vital ancestral knowledge and expertise on how to adapt, mitigate, and reduce climate and disaster risks»¹⁴.

Indigenous peoples are among those that are most exposed and threatened by environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity. Although they cause a minimum environmental impact, they suffer from the most serious consequences of the climate change¹⁵. In fact, their vulnerability is determined by a great number of interrelated social, cultural, economic, political and ideological factors, which go beyond current environmental problems and which have

9 Text at <https://ummah4earth.org/en/story/8808/the-islamic-declaration-on-climate-change>.

10 Text at https://www.arrcc.org.au/jewish_statements.

11 Text at <https://www.hinduamerican.org/hindu-declaration-climate-change-2015>. See also SKARPEID, J. (2021), *Liberation of Mother Earth? A Hindu Declaration on Climate Change*, in HEIMBROCK, H.G., PERSCH, J., eds., *Eco-Theology. Essays in Honor of Sigurd Bergmann*, Brill, Leiden, 150-163.

12 LIVINGSTONE, M. (2016), “Religioni e impegno per il clima tra l’enciclica «Laudato Si’» e la conferenza di Parigi”, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 3973: 30-44.

13 See <https://www.un.org/en/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/indigenous-peoples>.

14 See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/indigenouspeoples>.

15 BAIRD, R. (2008), *The Impact of Climate Change on Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, <https://minorityrights.org/app/uploads/2024/01/download-524-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-minorities-and-indigenous-peoples.pdf>.

justified a history of appropriation of the lands they inhabited since time immemorial, the relocation or confining to reservations, the restrictions in the access to essential services such as medical care, drinking water and transports, the limitations or prohibitions to manifest one's distinct identity and religiosity through beliefs and rites transmitted from generation to generation, to speak one's language and to practice traditional economy.

The vulnerability of indigenous peoples lies in the creation itself of this category. The 'discovery' of new lands was accompanied by that of the peoples who inhabited them and whose submission, enslavement, deportation and extermination – substituted with the passing of time by other forms of discrimination, deemed as more acceptable – have been justified by the construction of a specific identity of the 'other' as primitive, barbarian, savage¹⁶: «law, as a special kind of language – regarded by the West as its most respected and cherished instrument of civilization – was also the most vital and effective instrument of empire during its conquest and colonization of non-European peoples, in this case indigenous peoples»¹⁷. Law allowed the West to impose a vision of the world based on the dichotomies superiority/inferiority and civilized (and civilizing) nations/peoples to civilize. The consequence was the elaboration of two sets of rules: one applicable to European-Christians and the other one to 'backward races'¹⁸.

It is well known that the Catholic Church played a paramount role in those historical events: suffice it to mention the papal bulls issued at the beginning of the era of geographical discoveries and European colonization, and its participation in the debate on the indigenous peoples' nature and their related legal status¹⁹. In the context of the evolution of its teaching, the Catholic Church has

16 This origin of the category 'indigenous peoples' explains why there exists no universally accepted definition. Many of the 'indigenous peoples' refuse such a designation – as well as related expressions, e.g., 'aboriginal', 'native' and the obsolete 'Indian'. Some Canadian groups prefer to call themselves 'First Nations'. See PETERS, M.A., MIKA, C.T. (2017), "Aborigine, Indian, indigenous or first nations?", in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 13: 1229-1234.

17 JOHANSSON DAHRE, U. (2020), *The International Discourse on Indigenous Peoples. A Compilation of Legal and Political Documents. Second revised edition*, Palmkrons, Aarhus, 5.

18 *Ibi*, 16 and 52.

19 For a full treatment of these complex issues, see BOTTONI, R. (2024), *I popoli indigeni nel magistero della Chiesa cattolica: da minoranze vulnerabili a custodi della 'casa comune'*, Ledizioni, Milan.

reserved an increasing attention for them²⁰. The care and concern that today it shows is the product of the development and convergence of two paths of reflection: one on social justice (marked by a specific attentiveness, increased over time, of various aspects of the protection of indigenous peoples, such as the right to decent work²¹), and the other on the ecological issue. These perspectives have merged during Francis's pontificate. A key concept of the encyclical letter *Laudato si'* is the notion of integral ecology, which «consists in a combination of three issues: the ecological crisis, the economic crisis and the situation of indigenous peoples in different parts of the world»²². For this reason, the Catholic Church's consideration for indigenous peoples can provide an interesting perspective on its contribution to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda's SDGs, whose «central, transformative promise» is 'Leave No One Behind'²³.

3. The Catholic Church and indigenous peoples

Francis's numerous references to the need to protect and promote indigenous peoples' rights are well known. Among other statements, no. 146 of the encyclical letter *Laudato si'* is worth quoting: «it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves

20 See STOGRE, M. (1992), *That the World May Believe. The Development of Papal Social Thought on Aboriginal Rights*, Éditions Paulines, Sherbrooke.

21 See BECKETT, P. (2021), *Labour Rights and the Catholic Church. The International Labour Organisation, the Holy See and Catholic Social Teaching*, Routledge, New York; ZARAGORI, A. (2018), *L'Organisation Internationale du Travail et les milieux chrétiens (1919-1969)*, PhD thesis, University Jean Moulin, Lyon, <http://www.theses.fr/2018LYSE3084>.

22 BUJAK, J. (2020), "L'«ecologia integrale» e la cura per le popolazioni indigene alla luce del documento di lavoro *Instrumentum laboris* del Sinodo amazzonico", in *Forum Teologiczne*, 21: 100.

23 See <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>. This approach is set out in the *Shared Framework on Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development*, 2017, https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf.

care for it best. Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture»²⁴.

In a statement to the Third Committee of the 70th Session of the General Assembly, Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, confirmed the Holy See's «commitment towards the integral development of the world's Indigenous Peoples and [...] conviction of their central role in the work of the United Nations». He declared that «[a]s we look forward with great hope to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must not forget that environmental degradation and unsustainable approaches to development that we must counteract are often born from a lack of respect for our neighbor and for our shared responsibility for our common home»²⁵. In order to «to be successful in the Agenda's full implementation», it is not only important «to increase efforts to promote and protect the human rights, identity, culture and tradition of Indigenous Peoples in the Agenda's implementation, but also to take into account the traditional wisdom and experience of the Indigenous Peoples as reference points in identifying approaches to preserve and foster their wellbeing and collective interests».

As stressed by the UN Sustainable Development Group, the 'Leave No One Behind' approach «compels us to focus on discrimination and inequalities (often multiple and intersecting) that undermine the agency of people as holders of rights»²⁶. This view – as noted by Archbishop Auza – is consistent with that of Francis, who «recommended in his Address to the General Assembly on September 25, "To enable these real men and women to escape from extreme poverty, we must allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny," as protagonists in their own development and in the development of others».

24 Text in https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. See also the *Address of the Holy Father during the meeting with the indigenous peoples of Amazonia. Coliseo Regional Madre de Dios (Puerto Maldonado)* of 19 January 2018 and the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* of 12 February 2020.

25 This and the following quotations are from *Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Third Committee of the 70th Session of the General Assembly. Agenda Item 69: Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 19 October 2015, <https://holyseemission.org/contents/statements/statements-56252948cbaf03.45801148.php>.

26 Quoted in <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>.

This means ensuring not only that indigenous peoples must not be left behind, but also that they are provided with the opportunity to take an active role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This, in turn, implies that they must be given the possibility «to teach us how to take care of and love our common home. They are unique in their respect for the environment and for their attention to the needs of their community. Their tradition that spans millennia is characterized by a profound respect for nature as a gift and as a good common to all. For them, it is not simply a matter of moral obligation but common sense to consider future generations when taking from the land or when engaging with national governments for their own development. Rooted in a common history and shared identity, Indigenous Peoples and communities provide an essential counter example to contemporary practices, habits and trends which are often expressions of selfish consumerism and are detrimental to our environment».

Archbishop Auza therefore called on policymakers at the international, national and local levels to respect the indigenous peoples' rights not only to their homelands and natural resources – through just laws that «regulate the relationship between indigenous peoples and extractive industries operating in ancestral lands: lands that, in many cases, are also of great spiritual, cultural and environmental significance» – but also to «have a say in their own development».

A link between the Catholic Church's care for indigenous peoples and the attainment of the 2030 Agenda's SDGs has been recognized within the UN system itself. On 29 March 2019, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) organized a seminar on *Indigenous peoples, custodians of nature: Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato si' and the Sustainable Development Goals*, which was concluded by Mons. Fernando Chica Arellano, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme. He warned that «the extraordinary cultural and spiritual patrimony of many indigenous peoples risks being swept away by a sort of economic and ideological colonization cloaked by prospects of development. The distinct and diverse qualities of multicultural communities are threatened by homogenization and standardization of culture and trade which are the logical consequence of the process of globalization»²⁷.

27 This and the following quotations may be found at <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2019/03/29/190329f.html>.

One instrument to maintain biological diversity in agriculture is the system of intellectual property rights, which may be used to generate revenues, able to sustain those activities that, otherwise, would be abandoned. Reports and studies have since long shown «the dramatic nature of the pursuit of economic interests by some large transnational companies in those areas of the planet where autochthonous communities live». This attitude degrades the environment, compels especially the youngest members of indigenous peoples «to migrate, thus uprooting them from their lands and therefore from their origins». As a consequence, they «often find themselves in situations of poverty and vulnerability, and thus rejected by society, becoming, that is, those people whom we cannot and must not leave behind, if we wanted to reach» the 2030 Agenda's SDGs.

Mons. Chica Arellano also stressed the importance of the guarantees under Art. 32 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the structuration of economic activities involving them²⁸. Last but not least, he called for the need to protect traditional know-how from 'bio-piracy' and to ensure the division of advantages consistently with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and, in particular, Arts. 8(j) (In-situ Conservation), 15 (Access to Genetic Resources) and 16 (Access to and Transfer of Technology)²⁹, as discussed in the World Trade Organization, where «various developing countries have proposed, as part of the Agreement on trade aspects of intellectual property rights [...] the inclusion of a provision to establish the impossibility of guaranteeing the protection of patents incompatible with» Art. 15 CBD, «which requires preventative evaluation for access to resources and a division of profits with the providers of raw materials».

28 «1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources. 2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources. 3. States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact». Text at https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf.

29 Text at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/legal/cbd-en.pdf>.

4. Concluding remarks: analogies and differences between the Catholic Church's perspective and the 2030 Agenda

The Catholic Church does not see indigenous peoples merely as vulnerable subjects who, as such, are almost passive recipients of measures of protection, but it empowers them through the recognition of their active role in the custody of our common home. This perspective is in line with that of Agenda 2030, which – just like the Catholic Church – highlights the inseparability of the care of the persons from that of ecosystems. However, this link acquires a distinctive dimension in the Church's mission: the inculturation of the paths of evangelization, which is specific to the Catholic doctrine and may not find a place in the 2030 Agenda.

On the one hand, inculturation has become a form of care for indigenous peoples. In this perspective, being Catholic no longer requires the relinquishment of one's original culture (which, in any case, is quite different from the unconditional acceptance of whatever manifestation of identity, including those that are incompatible with the Church's faith and life). In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world* of 24 November 2013, Francis stressed that «[w]e cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture. It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ» (no. 118)³⁰. On the other hand, the care for indigenous peoples has become a new form of inculturation of the Gospel, as indicated by the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* of 12 February 2020, which stated that the acceptance of the Gospel does not only transform the evangelized community, but also the Catholic Church enriches herself «with the fruits of what the Spirit has already mysteriously sown in that culture [...], showing her new aspects of revelation and giving her a new face» (no. 68)³¹.

In conclusion, although the Catholic Church pursues the same praiseworthy goals as the 2030 Agenda, one may not neglect the former's distinct features, in particular the idea that the care for indigenous peoples and the listening to

30 Text at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

31 Text at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html.

their ancestral wisdom serve the Church's specific purposes, such as the promotion of its mission of evangelization.

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DIFFERENT SHADES OF GREEN: JEWISH ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Enrica Martinelli

SUMMARY: 1. – The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2. – The contribution of religions to the development of an environmental ethic. The Jewish perspective 3. – The various shades of green in Jewish ecology 4. – The spirituality of Jewish environmentalism 5. – «Justice, justice shall you pursue»: sustainable development and social justice.

1. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

God יהוה settled the Human in the Garden of Eden, to till it and tend it¹.

When the Holy One blessed be He created Adam the first man, He took him and showed him all the trees in the Garden of Eden, and He said to him: “See My creations, how beautiful and exemplary they are. Everything I created, I created for you. Make certain that you do not ruin and destroy My world, as if you destroy it, there will be no one to mend it after you”².

In 2016, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The UN Agenda 2030 is a plan of action, which seeks to strengthen collaboration through a common understanding of what needs to be done. The rapid adoption of this framework is almost certainly due to the almost universal recognition of the need for common views and definitions of sustainability.

1 *Genesis*, 2:15. For the translation of quotations from the Pentateuch (Hebrew: *Tanakh*) and passages from other halachic sources (such as the *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, and post-Talmudic codices), I referred to the website www.sefaria.org. This website takes a systematic approach to provide easy access and uses modern language.

2 *Qohelet Rabbà* 7:13.

By endorsing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, the world community reaffirmed its commitment to sustainable development: 193 member states pledged to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection, fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through a new global partnership. The 2030 Agenda is universal, transformative, and rights based. It is an ambitious plan of action for countries, the UN system, and all other actors; it is the most comprehensive blueprint to date for eliminating extreme poverty, reducing inequality, and protecting the planet. The Agenda goes beyond rhetoric and lays down a concrete call to action for people, planet, and prosperity. It encourages taking bold and transformative steps, which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda are five critical dimensions: people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace, also known as the 5P's. Traditionally viewed through the lens of three core elements – social inclusion, economic growth, and environmental protection – the concept of sustainable development has taken on a richer meaning with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda: genuine sustainability sits at the core of these five dimensions, which are closely and inextricably linked.

This “holistic” interpretation of sustainability, in its various forms, asserts that a development intervention, to be sustainable, must consider the social, economic and environmental consequences it engenders, and result in deliberate choices regarding the trade-offs, synergies and spin-offs it inevitably generates.

The adoption of Agenda 2030 signified the acknowledgement of the unsustainability of the prevailing development model, concomitantly establishing an integrated vision encompassing the multifaceted dimensions of development. The model utilised by ecological economics identifies three core elements, namely natural capital, economic capital and social capital. The environment is assigned the primary role of “container” within which society develops, thereby creating an economic system. The fundamental premise of the ecological model is that economies and societies are dependent parts of the biosphere and the natural capital that nature makes available to humankind.

Consequently, the aspiration to achieve economic growth, poverty eradication, and the implementation of novel production and consumption models can only be realised through socially just and sustainable manner, firstly from an environmental perspective.

In essence, a dual sustainability paradigm must be considered, encompassing both the environmental dimension and the human dimension. It is imperative to underscore the inherent interconnectedness of these two ecologies. In the first case, the appropriate utilisation and equitable distribution of resources is pivotal, as is the mitigation of the environmental impact of human activity in the context of global climate change. In the second case, «si tratta di una ecologia della mente all'interno della rivoluzione antropologica» (AIME O. 2021). However, an erroneous “mental” relationship between humanity and nature irretrievably compromises the possibility of addressing the ecological challenge that now appears to be inescapable.

The climate emergency has been demonstrated to have a significant impact on economic growth, peace and global security. It has been shown to add pressure to the already vulnerable livelihoods of conflict-affected local communities and their natural environment. As climate change becomes more apparent, resulting in elevated exposure to environmental hazards and diminished capacity to respond, it significantly disrupts the stability of institutions, the distribution of resources, and international security.

The planet on which we live has finite resources and limited resilience, *i.e.*, a limited capacity to recover from change. The concept of planetary boundaries (ROCKSTROM, J. *et al.*, 2009; STEFFEN, W. *et al.*, 2015), delineates a set of intrinsic processes that regulate the stability of the globe as a system. Two core boundaries have been identified, of which climate change is one, with the potential to single-handedly drive the Earth's systems into a new state should they be significantly compromised. The 5th Assessment Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2014) asserts the following key messages: «firstly, human influence on the climate system is evident; secondly, the more we disrupt our climate, the more we risk severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts; and thirdly, we have the means to limit climate change and build a more prosperous, sustainable future».

The quality and quantity of potential environmental risks are no longer confined to the domain of emergency situations; rather, they are increasingly assuming a systemic character. In a world where multiple crises of varying nature are intersecting, compounding, and exacerbating each other, the climate crisis, ecosystem degradation, competition for resources, loss of biodiversity, and growing inequalities can be regarded as the numerous expressions of a single, now permanent, state of polycrisis.

New approaches and environmental awareness are needed to effectively address the linkages between climate change and sustainable development goals.

The 2030 Agenda sets out several objectives, the most significant of which is the establishment of a unified course, representing a novel paradigm on a global scale. This course is intended to supersede the inadequately integrated and frequently divisive logic of national policies and strategies in response to global crises.

Although the 2030 Agenda does not explicitly mention religious denominations, faith communities are among the “strong” actors called upon to work constructively alongside political and economic (public and private) actors in realising the increasingly relevant role of religion(s) at the global level on issues of planetary scope, such as those that shape sustainable development.

It is evident that religious values and belief systems are of significant importance in this cultural approach. The complementarity of religious values and practices to scientific and technological approaches in addressing the unprecedented environmental challenges of our time is a key tenet. This assertion is further bolstered by the pervasive nature of religious values, which emphasise harmony with nature as a fundamental tenet. When adopted in earnest, the integration of religious values can effect profound changes in both individual behaviour and institutional policies, thereby facilitating a reduction in our environmental impact and offering a crucial response to the planetary crisis.

2. The contribution of religions to the development of an environmental ethic. The Jewish perspective

The ongoing degradation of ecosystems, the progressive and irreversible loss of biodiversity, and the consequent distress experienced by our planet have incited a comprehensive cultural reflection of both ethical-moral and scientific dimensions. While the discourse extends beyond these two domains to encompass other intersecting realities (social, political, economic, cultural), it is evident that ethics and science are central to the discourse on ecological issues.

Although the relationship between humans and nature, along with its historical repercussions, is not a novel subject, the contemporary ethical debate is relatively recent and aligns with the emergence of ecological disciplines advocating for a more informed and conscientious environmental awareness. In addition to science and politics, religions are also engaged in addressing the ecological challenge in its entirety and severity. By offering life perspectives that can inspire and guide human behaviour, religions play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development and safeguarding the “common home”. In the Western context, faith communities are experiencing a process of post-secular-

ization that emphasizes the autonomy of lifestyles and a trend towards de-institutionalization (BERZANO L. 2017). Nevertheless, they remain among the few entities capable of contributing significantly to an ethical reflection, including environmental considerations, which is essential to ensure alignment between programmatic commitments and the practical realization of goals related to a sustainable future worthy of humanity.

The significance, indeed the indispensability, of religions in shaping effective governance of the so-called global commons is echoed in the admonition found in Pope Francis's Encyclical *Laudato si'*³: environmental protection cannot be guaranteed solely through financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that market mechanisms cannot adequately defend or promote. It is within this context that religions and spirituality can contribute, through a renewed effort of elaboration and interpretation – acknowledging past errors – open to confrontation and dialogue.

The pursuit of a universal environmental ethic, inherently grounded in the appreciation of the human-nature relationship, must necessarily engage with the spiritual and religious dimensions (RENGER, A.B, STORK, J. and ÖHLMANN, P. 2023). All faith communities, while acknowledging the diversity of their respective beliefs, are urged to collaborate towards achieving a global “ecological conversion” and to contribute to the establishment of a genuine and robust environmental consciousness. This consciousness should lead to informed and collective decisions in the context of sustainable development. Such an endeavor is unattainable without considering the holistic nature of humanity, inclusive of the spiritual aspect: «there is only one way to avoid the disaster that threatens to crush humankind. Material goals must be replaced with spiritual goals» (CARMELL, A. 1976).

This assertion, representing a rigorous and authoritative strand of Orthodox Judaism, articulates a principle of environmental ethics applicable to all, irrespective of religious affiliation. Indeed, Jewish thought has actively engaged with the challenges of environmental sustainability, partly in response to critiques – often fervent – from economic, political, and cultural perspectives that have accused Judaism (or certain interpretations thereof) of obstructing the development of a positive and caring relationship with the natural world. It is undeniable that many critics have found it easy to censure the *Torah* and certain literal interpretations⁴ – particularly of the Genesis text⁵ – which, by

3 Cap. 5:190.

4 See, among others, WHITE, L. (1967).

5 1: 27-28

emphasizing human “dominion” over creation, are perceived to have fostered a form of environmental irresponsibility among Jews.

Commencing in the 1990s, a significant environmental movement emerged within the Jewish world. The Israeli environmental sector, which had long been predominantly represented by the *Society for the Protection of Nature*, experienced unprecedented growth. Between 1998 and 2004, the number of environmental organizations within the green coalition *Life and Environment* increased substantially. *Shomrei HaAdamah* (the Preservers of the Earth), a network with spiritual and educational objectives, was established. The U.S.-based *Coalition on Judaism and the Environment* (COEJL) initiated projects that reflected the diverse expressions of Judaism, including *Hazon and Canfei Nesharim*, which are affiliated with Orthodox Judaism. Each faction within the organized Jewish community has identified its own «green rabbi», ranging from Reconstructionist activist Rabbi Fred Dobb to the Rabbinic Dean of the University of Judaism, Brad Artson, and the former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Bakshi Doron (TAL, A. 2009).

This relatively recent yet expanding phenomenon prompts a critical inquiry: what elements of Jewish environmentalism are authentically Jewish? Alternatively, is there a genuine Jewish environmental consciousness? This inquiry is not intended to be provocative; indeed, some authoritative rabbinic literature posits that Judaism is far removed from a true ecological vocation to the extent that the protection of the natural world, the preservation of ecosystem integrity, or the safeguarding of biodiversity are not considered priorities (WHITE, L. 1967; SCHWARTZSCHILD, S. 1984; TELUSHKIN, J. 2000).

Considering these staunchly anti-environmentalist positions, it is pertinent to inquire whether there exists an inherent alienation between Jewish communities and the environment, and whether the aforementioned criticisms are substantiated.

This inquiry holds significant relevance, particularly in the current era, where the urgency of addressing ecological challenges is unequivocally evident. Efforts have been made to address this issue, attempting to justify the reluctance of certain segments of Judaism to advocate for environmental protection; however, no interpretative hypothesis has proven entirely convincing. One theory posits that the historical experiences of persecution and diaspora, during which Jews were prohibited from owning land or establishing stable connections to it, may have left a profound impact on the collective Jewish psyche, hindering their appreciation and stewardship of creation (GERSTENFELD, M. 1999). Alternatively, it has been suggested that the continuous study of the *Torah* may

have engendered a virtual reality so compelling that it supplanted an intrinsic connection between Jews and nature (SCHWARTZSCHILD, S. 1984). Conversely, the challenge of interpreting certain unavoidable and discomforting passages in traditional texts, which appear to diverge from the environmentally conscious orientation of more ecologically sensitive Judaism, is undeniable. For instance, the passage from the *Mishnah* is frequently cited to illustrate the purported anti-ecological stance of Judaism: «if one is studying while walking on the road and interrupts his study and says, “how fine is this tree!” [or] “how fine is this newly ploughed field!” scripture accounts it to him as if he was mortally guilty»⁶. Over the years, numerous sophisticated interpretations have been proposed to mitigate even the most ecologically indifferent sources; nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Hebrew tradition embodies an inherent complexity, characterized by the coexistence of elements that express sensitivity to nature and the environment, alongside others that lend themselves to interpretations yielding decidedly dissonant outcomes.

The essence of the matter lies in the observation that, even within the domain of ethics, Jewish thought does not provide unequivocal answers. A distinctive feature of the Jewish tradition is that, despite its strict monotheism, it embraces an inherently pluralistic approach in all other aspects (WEBBER, J. 1992). Consequently, Judaism has undergone remarkable evolution, invigorated by diverse schools of thought, the occasionally conflicting views of rabbis, sages, and decision-makers (*poskim*), and various interpretative methodologies (MARTINELLI, E. 2023).

3. The different shades of green in Jewish ecology

Within the tradition of Jewish Orthodoxy, the prevailing view is that environmental concerns are situated outside the legal framework of *Halakhah* and thus lack prescriptive value. Although deemed important, environmental protection is categorized under the moral precept of *midat haḥasidut* (extraordinary piety) (YOREV, T. 2021). This perspective posits an environmental ethic grounded in human compassion for the nonhuman world. Historically, this has resulted in the perception of creation protection as a morally commendable but not legally obligatory action, confined to the realm of virtuous rather than obligatory conduct. This has posed a significant challenge to the development of ecological decision-making within the context of *Halakhah*. Indeed, a persistent issue in Jewish legal discourse is the absence of legal authorities addressing what

6 *Mishnah Avot* 3:7

many now regard as the paramount challenge of our time: the environmental crisis and the suffering of our planet (TAYLOR, M. 2019).

While it is not feasible to distill Judaism's perspective on the relationship between humanity and nature solely to the literal interpretation of the divine commandment, «Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth, make it subject to you; have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every animal that moves on the earth»⁷ it is equally indisputable that Jewish tradition does not perceive human beings merely as one among many components of nature. The creature made in the image and likeness of God – *tzelem Elohim* – is, indeed, unique and irreplaceable, and has not been positioned by the Almighty on an equal level with the rest of creation. Rather, it embodies an ethical-moral dimension that is distinct and exclusive. For Jews, particularly those who are observant, *Halakhah* represents «partecipazione umana all'iniziativa Divina» (SOMEKH, A.M. 1998). Consequently, the multitude of decisions made by the rabbis or *poskim*, and subsequently followed by a given community, indeed embody various interpretative readings of a shared halachic core, resulting in a plurality of voices that is characteristic of Judaism.

Regarding environmental sustainability, halakhic reflection has essentially diverged into two perspectives, both inspired by similar objectives, albeit originating from opposing positions. The first is traceable to the tradition of Orthodox Judaism, and the second to the mainstream of Reform Judaism. In the context of Orthodox Judaism, rabbinic literature endeavors to develop traditional thought in a manner that ensures compatibility between environmental concerns and strong ecological ethics with halakhic rules. These interpretations employ a rigorous reading of biblical sources and post-biblical literature to derive principles, whether explicit or implicit, that align with ecological or bio-centric conceptions of the relationship between humanity and nature. This orthodox halakhic stance seeks to demonstrate that the perceived conflict between Judaism and environmentalism – and the accusation of anthropocentrism directed at the former – results from a misunderstanding, arising from a prejudiced interpretation of the sources (TIROSH-SAMUELSON, M. 2003, BERNSTEIN, E. 2005)⁸.

7 *Genesis* 1:28

8 Nevertheless, there are those who persist in defending anthropocentrism as a distinctive and inalienable component of the Jewish worldview. Among the prominent figures espousing this perspective is Aharon Lichtenstein, who asserts that the anthropocentric tenet inherent in Jewish religious thought constitutes an insurmountable impediment to the holistic perspective on creation, a viewpoint

In the context of Reform Judaism, a clear acknowledgment exists regarding the contradiction between Judaism and naturalism, with the tradition's disregard for environmental issues being explicitly criticized. This limitation can only be addressed if the *Halakhah* adopts a reformist and progressive approach, demonstrating greater respect for environmental conservation and protection (COHEN, J. 1990).

As previously noted, deriving a definitive, unified response from the *Torah*, the *Mishnah*, and the intricate rabbinic and Talmudic discourse is challenging, as each passage and quotation can be interpreted either anthropocentrically or biocentrically.

An illustration of this duality in interpretation is found in a passage from Deuteronomy, which is frequently cited in contemporary rabbinic literature on Jewish environmental ethics yet inherently contains ambiguity.

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siegeworks against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been reduced⁹.

The passage evidently lends itself to an environmentalist interpretation: even in an emergency such as war, the directive is to preserve nature, specifically by refraining from cutting down trees. The *Torah* thus underscores the significance of fruit trees for human survival and emphasizes that trees, as innocent entities, should remain uninvolved in human conflicts. Consequently, nature is inherently good and warrants protection. More broadly, the principle derived from this passage posits that the destruction of any part of creation without valid justification is prohibited (HIRSCH, S.R. 1996). However, this interpretation is not without ambiguity, as the prohibition against felling trees is explicitly limited to fruit-bearing trees, which are essential for human survival. In contrast, non-fruit-bearing trees do not receive the same protection and may be cut down for warfare purposes. This latter perspective is anthropocentric, prohibiting actions (such as cutting down fruit trees) that are contrary to

that is rigorously rejected by Judaism as it barrier the potential to devolve into idolatry (LICHTENSTEIN, A. 1971).

9 Deuteronomy 20:19-20

human interests, while permitting the use of non-nourishing trees for military purposes. Conversely, the first interpretation is eco-centric, positing that trees possess intrinsic value and an autonomous existence, independent of human needs. It becomes evident that both perspectives can be discerned in the Deuteronomy passage, and the inherent ambivalence provides a crucial insight into the Jewish approach to environmental ethics. The plurality of interpretive readings is not a contradiction; rather, it reflects the enduring richness of the *Halakhah*, which, while respecting ancient views, embraces modern ones, thereby offering a conscious and fruitful resolution to contemporary issues. The various interpretations of this passage suggest that Jewish environmental ethics is inextricably linked to both anthropocentric and biocentric readings. Upon closer examination, both perspectives can be foundational to the concept of sustainable development: humans may harvest and consume plant fruits, but they also bear the responsibility to preserve trees and care for creation (ISRAEL, G. 2011). Indeed, nature does not exist solely to satisfy human needs; to assert this within Judaism would be to deny the principle of divine creation of nature¹⁰.

In consideration of these factors, both the efforts to interpret halakhic principles in an exclusively environmentalist manner and the attempts to develop a new *Halakhah* aligned with ecological mainstream thought are equally inappropriate¹¹. Instead, it is through an understanding of the complexity inherent in Jewish thought – characterized by articulated and occasionally dissonant positions – that meaningful contributions to contemporary issues of sustainable development can be made. This is because Jewish intellectual tradition employs a dialogical method, and in the absence of a central authoritative body and a singular perspective, it fosters continuous research and inquiry beyond established boundaries and compartmentalizations (LUCREZI, F. 2015).

4. The spirituality of Jewish environmentalism

Keep two truths in your pocket, and draw them out according to the need of the moment

Let one be "For my sake the world was create"

And the other: "I am dust and ashes"¹²

10 «The earth is the LORD's and all it holds, the world and its inhabitants» (*Psalm 24*).

11 «Una simile "rinegoziazione" implica una revisione completa dell'atteggiamento ebraico nei confronti del naturalismo. A nostro avviso, questa "rinegoziazione" è impossibile a meno di non congedare la visione ebraica dell'umano e del divino, con la conseguenza di congedare l'ebraismo stesso». See ISRAEL, G. (2011, 8).

12 Hasidic proverb.

As the *Midrash* suggests, humanity represents the final link in creation, as all animals were created prior; thus, humans must comprehend their role in creation as one of responsibility rather than mere dominion. Since the modern era – beginning with Spinoza¹³ – there has been a reinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures (including allegorical interpretations), which have led to a reconsideration of the traditional anthropocentric view. Humans are now seen not only as rulers of creation but also as its guardians and servants. Historically, Judaism has meticulously attended to the minutiae of daily life, distinguishing between permissible and forbidden, sacred and secular time (such as the *Sabbath* and weekdays), and differentiating the fruit of the tree from that of the earth, as well as leavened from unleavened bread. Even the dietary laws of *kasherut* are perceived as fostering a considerate and responsible attitude towards Creation. Consequently, the Jewish tradition inherently promotes an environmental ethic and fosters ecological awareness, which is instrumental in addressing the moral imperatives – rooted in individual and collective responsibility – posed by the challenges of sustainable development.

The *Torah* is profoundly infused with an environmentalist ethos. This is evident from Noah's imperative to preserve biodiversity during the Flood¹⁴, to the principles of *bal taschit* (do not destroy) and *tzaar ba'alei chayim* (compassion for animals), to the laws of *shmitah*, which in biblical times mandated that any produce growing wild be left for the poor, passing strangers, and the animals of the fields, and to the sabbatical year of the land¹⁵. Additionally, the *Torah* exhibits an almost reverential attitude toward the purifying power of water¹⁶. Furthermore, open spaces, intended to encircle ancient cities as green belts, were imposed as binding zoning obligations¹⁷. A set of rules made regard for the natural world obligatory, such as the prescription to send a mother bird away from her nest before taking eggs or chicks¹⁸.

Thus, the *Torah* instructs that the planet, which hosts us, is not to be exploited but rather treated as a priceless treasure. Most commentators concur that just as the observant Jew petitions the Creator for compassion daily, the approach to the natural world should be inspired by the same empathy and

13 On this point, among many, see CASSUTO MORSELLI, M. (2012, 13 ss).

14 *Genesis* 6:9

15 *Exodus* 23:10-11

16 *Leviticus* 15:1-27

17 *Numbers* 35:2-3

18 «If, along the road, you chance upon a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs and the mother sitting over the fledglings or on the eggs, do not take the mother together with her young». *Deuteronomy* 22:6.

kindness for which one prays. Moreover, Judaism has, since antiquity, been profoundly inspired by the fundamental principle expressed in the *Mishnah* of *tikkun 'olam* (mending the world), which asserts that the world cannot exist without its care. This principle applies from the birth of humanity to every living being, animal or plant. Indeed, the contemporary Jewish environmental perspective originates precisely from the «mending the world» impulse, which feeds into the broader traditional Jewish commitment to social change. Consequently, environmentalism is not merely a narrow, technocratic endeavor to meet emission standards or adopt protective zoning prescriptions; rather, it is a means of redefining social justice (TAL, A. 2009).

Jewish environmental ethics, therefore, is experienced more as sustainability-oriented than conservation-oriented. Within the broad spectrum of green hues of the environmental rainbow, Jewish environmentalism is *hands-on* rather than *hands-off*. Jews are not called upon to adopt a conservative approach to life on the planet but rather to actively intervene and work for good in a continuous collaboration with creation, as evidenced by the numerous prohibitions set forth for the *Shabbath*. Rest is reserved for the *Sabbath*, but on all other days of the week, it is necessary to repair the world to improve it and prepare it for its ultimate state for which it was created.

Abraham, often regarded as an early proponent of global ecological principles, exemplifies the practice of severing ties with his “polluting” – because idolatrous – world of origin and to establish a sustainable system grounded in justice, well-being, and coexistence. The significance of these values is underscored in Abraham’s bold negotiation with the Almighty, driven by justice and mercy, for the benefit of the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah¹⁹. The patriarch, acting on his own initiative, seeks to “repair the world,” rectify harm, and restore justice, as it would be unjust to allow the righteous to perish alongside the ungodly; his intentions are virtuous, prompting God to heed his plea.

5. «Justice, justice shall you pursue»: sustainable development and social justice

The principle of *tikkun 'olam* elucidates the intrinsic connection between Jewish environmental ethics and the imperative for social justice, necessitating particular attention and protection for the one who is weaker, for that which is most vulnerable. The admonition from *Deuteronomy*, «Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that your God יהוה is giving

19 *Genesis* 18:20-33

you»²⁰ serves as a dual call to action, a *mitzvah* for every Jew, irrespective of belief, framing ecosystem degradation as inherently malevolent and, within the context of social sustainability, as a fundamentally inequitable dynamic. The disproportionate environmental risks and adverse effects faced by the weaker and more vulnerable segments of society, compared to those with greater resources, reflect a profound pathology afflicting the planet. The economic conditions linked to a community's environmental health are of considerable importance from the perspectives of social sustainability, human well-being, and the nonhuman world.

Jewish environmentalism encompasses a commitment to advocate for victims, with an increasing awareness and responsibility for the socio-environmental conditions of countries most susceptible to extreme weather events due to their particularly fragile state. The fact that one-fifth of humanity lacks access to clean water and two-fifths still lack basic sanitation has a devastating impact on environmental health and prospects for sustainable development. The burden of pollution on public health, the alarming loss of biodiversity, and ongoing deforestation are directly associated with economic impoverishment and resource depletion (YOREH, T. 2021).

The stewardship of ecosystems is a fundamental tenet within Judaism, a principle that is gaining increasing global recognition.

Each morning, observant Jews recite the *Aleinu* prayer, affirming their duty to praise God; however, mere praise appears insufficient. The prayer further emphasizes the proverbial partnership with the Creator, as it continues: *L'taken Olam B'malchut Shadai* [to mend the world through the Almighty's sovereignty] (TAL, A. 2009).

Engaging in this partnership to heal the world, rectify damage, and pursue justice is central to Jewish ethics. The creation, a testament to God's wondrous work, is experiencing significant distress, with ecosystems facing collapse. Despite the scarcity of legal rulings on environmental matters and the nascent development of a genuinely halakhic "green movement", Jewish ethics nonetheless mandates a transformation in lifestyle and social dynamics to align with a higher purpose (LOEVINGER, N.J. 2000).

The challenge, however, lies in the distinction between ethics and law; moral obligations, unsupported by halachic decisions, may not suffice to address the ecological crisis. Yet, when environmental harm is recognized as a threat to life and survival – both human and planetary – it becomes an impediment

20 Deuteronomy 16:20

to sustainable development in all its forms, thereby implicating the Jewish legal system. *Halakhah*, which upholds the sanctity of life, cannot evade the responsibility of endorsing a self-aware environmental ethic that resonates with contemporary times, thereby facilitating a decision-making process for environmental sustainability with legal authority. Scripture offers numerous naturalistic and ecologically explicit images that can be referenced to establish a balanced and effective ethical relationship between humanity and the natural world. This illustrates the breadth and diversity of Jewish conceptions regarding God's involvement in Creation and the Jewish people's relationship with the Almighty. This ancient wisdom accentuates the fragility and immense beauty of the mosaic of life and imparts lessons on how even the smallest ecological epiphanies reveal fundamental truths in harmony with Jewish tradition.

The Book of Job, for instance, exemplifies the intrinsic connection between justice and the land, suggesting that answers to profound existential questions are to be found in the natural world, such as the song of the stars, the flight of the vulture, or the laughter of the ostrich.

The Jewish people, over three generations, wandered in the Sinai Desert to cleanse themselves of the bondage experienced in Egypt; their survival was contingent upon God and the desert, an inhospitable and extreme environment they were compelled to love despite their lack of understanding (Fenyvesi S. 2000). Similarly, Job discovers solace in embracing his journey through the desert, where his personal path of sustainability leads him to cherish and nurture the barren land.

This ethos of love and care encapsulates the ethical-moral framework of Jewish ecologism. A parallel teaching is found in rabbinic literature from the first century of the Common Era: «Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakai used to say, "If you have a sapling in your hand and they tell you 'The Messiah is coming!' first plant the sapling and then go to greet him" »²¹. Even if the Messiah – the quintessential symbol of Judaism – were to arrive while one is planting a tree, the act of planting must be completed before greeting him.

It is evident that Judaism and environmentalism are, indeed, more closely aligned than commonly perceived.

21 *Avot Rabbi Natan* 31b.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TO SUSTAINABILITY FOR AN (EFFECTIVE) ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

Alessandro Cupri

SUMMARY: 1. Introductory Remarks: Agenda 2030, Sustainability, and the (Possible?) Role of Religions – 2. Sustainability in the Encyclical *Laudato si'* – 3. Pope Francis' Magisterium and Its Convergence with the Global Sustainability Goals – 4. What Restart? In Search of a Global and Responsible Solidarity.

1. Introductory Remarks: Agenda 2030, Sustainability, and the (Possible?) Role of Religions

The discourse on sustainable development has by now become central to all contemporary scientific and cultural debate, including within the legal sphere. Sustainability, in its current understanding, began to take shape towards the end of the 1980s¹. Previously, attention had been focused primarily on environmental issues, particularly the management and exploitation of natural resources. Subsequently, the notion of sustainability was enriched with new

1 On this point, the literature is particularly extensive; among many others, see FERRAJOLI, L. (2022), *Per una Costituzione della terra. L'umanità al bivio*, Milano, p. 20 e ss.; PORENA, D. (2017), *Il principio di sostenibilità. Contributo allo studio di un programma costituzionale di solidarietà intergenerazionale*, Torino, pp. 5 e ss.; LUCHENA, G. (2005), *Ambiente, diritti delle generazioni future ed etica della responsabilità*, in (a cura di) GABRIELE, F., NICO A.M., *La tutela multilivello dell'ambiente*, Bari, pp. 205 e ss.; BUFFONI, L. (2007), "La 'dottrina' dello sviluppo sostenibile e della solidarietà generazionale. Il giusto procedimento di formazione ambientale", in *Federalismi.it*, n. 8, 2007; FRACCHIA, F. (2010), "Sviluppo sostenibile e diritti delle generazioni future", in *RQDA*, n. 0, 2010, pp. 25 ss.; GROPPI, T. (2016), "Sostenibilità e costituzioni: lo Stato costituzionale alla prova del futuro", in *Dir. pubbl. comp. eur.*, n. 1.

dimensions, encompassing economic concerns and the problem of poverty². Put differently, sustainability has come to embody not only environmental but also economic and social dimensions³.

Within this framework, and in full continuity with the ongoing debate and various legislative policy initiatives⁴, the 2030 Agenda – adopted in September 2015 by the governments of the 193 Member States of the United Nations – was introduced⁵. Thus, the commitment to making our planet more livable is renewed considering the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – commonly referred to as the SDGs⁶ – these span various operational levels, commonly referred to as the so-called five Ps: People, Planet, Partnership, Peace, and Prosperity⁷. The attainment of these objectives is promoted through the implementation of responsible, equitable, and sustainable frameworks designed to foster sustained economic growth and to mitigate economic and social inequalities⁸.

Certain facets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are by no means foreign to religious traditions; indeed, numerous confessional systems embed within their normative and practical constructs elements which, albe-

2 GLIATTA, M.A. (2021), “Ambiente e Costituzione: diritti distributivi e riconfigurazione della responsabilità intergenerazionale”, in *Costituzionalismo.it*, n. 3, *inter alia* p. 103.

3 The assertions set forth in the main text derive from the so-called 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference, the proceedings of which culminated in the action programme known as “Agenda 21”, aimed at achieving a high target of sustainable development, encompassing also the economic and social dimensions. The document is accessible at the following web address: https://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/res_agenda21_00.shtml.

4 Refer to the preceding note.

5 For the full text, see <https://unric.org/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/11/Agenda-2030-Onu-italia.pdf>. For an overview of Agenda 2030, see the work of PACILLO, V. (2022), “Obiettivo 4 dell’Agenda 2030 e attività alternative all’insegnamento della religione cattolica: la proposta di accordi di rete sulle tracce del pensiero di Mario Lodi”, in *Il Diritto Ecclesiastico*, n. 133, in particular pp. 541-543 along with the authoritative bibliography cited therein.

6 NORICHITA, K., BIERMANN, F. (2017), *Governing through Goals: Sustainable Development Goals as Governance Innovation*, The MIT press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Reference is made to the contribution of D’ALOIA, A. (2019), “Bioetica ambientale, sostenibilità, teoria intergenerazionale della Costituzione”, in *BioLaw Journal*, n. 2, 645-678.

it formulated independently, exhibit partial convergence – or at least notable analogy – with the objectives delineated by the United Nations⁹. More precisely, as recently emphasized by scholarly doctrine, religious confessions long preceded secular legal systems in placing at the center of their value frameworks – and consequently their legal constructs – issues such as care for the world, the protection of the environment inhabited by the faithful, social justice, and human solidarity¹⁰. It must be emphasized that no religious confession was explicitly considered in the sustainability debate, and even less so were they regarded as potentially ‘useful’ actors in the achievement of the Agenda’s Goals. It is evident that religious traditions were not assigned a technical role within the framework of Agenda 2030; nonetheless, they effectively function as qualified interlocutors in disseminating sustainability-related messages, performing a complementary role, and contributing, through their principles, to guiding the conduct of the faithful. Religious confessions can contribute to fostering an environmental *ethòs*, which helps cultivate a sense of sustainability that can be described as interreligious¹¹.

Within this framework of meaning, and as regards the specific contribution of this section of the present volume, the Catholic Church and its magisterium are situated, having adopted environmental policies and, at times, human rights norms aimed at promoting sustainable development, so as not to neglect the so-called «common home»¹². Building on these premises, the follow-

9 In addition to the normative framework of the Catholic Church, which will be addressed in the present contribution, the following documents issued by other religious confessions may also be recalled: *A Rabbinic Letter on Climate Crisis* (29 ottobre 2015); *Bhumi Devi Ki Jai! A Hindu Declaration on Climate Change* (23 novembre 2015); *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* (18 agosto 2015); *The Time to Act is Now: A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change* (14 maggio 2015).

10 ZUANAZZI, I., BATTAGLINI, L. (2021) (a cura di), *Religioni e sviluppo sostenibile*, Accademia University Press, Torino, pp. VII-VIII; BALSAMO, F. (2014), “Religioni ed ambiente: il contributo delle confessioni religiose alla costruzione di una recente ‘democrazia ambientale’”, in *Diritto e Religioni*, n. 2, p. 117. The Autour states that «le confessioni religiose, impegnate attivamente al risanamento del debito ecologico, hanno concretato la portata generale dei precetti confessionali a fondamento di quegli stessi principi, elaborando e proponendo un sistema capillare di regole specifiche con cui indirizzare i fedeli verso comportamenti e stili di vita ritenuti rispettosi del creato».

11 On this point TATAY, J. (2019), “Creer en la sostenibilidad. Las religiones antes el reto ambiental”, in *Cristianisme i Justícia*, n. 212, pp. 3-25.

12 The concept of a common home is systematically introduced and developed by

ing paragraph will address the environmental policy of the Church during the Pontificate of Pope Francis.

2. Sustainability in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*

The Catholic Church, alongside other Abrahamic religions¹³, has repeatedly emphasized, from various perspectives, the very concept of injustice in relation to the environment and the Earth, understood as a space granted by the Divine for the use – rather than the waste – of humankind¹⁴. More clearly, injustice is to be understood – and is thus embodied – in the phenomenon of the degradation of nature associated with environmental deterioration, which in turn impacts the human condition. Indeed, never more so than in recent years, within the so-called Anthropocene era, have religious traditions emphasized ecological and environmental challenges from a perspective that ranges from the local to the global dimension¹⁵. The perspective of the Catholic Church is to offer a reflection on so-called integrated policies, without, however, separating the climate crisis from the social one. This is because the degradation of the Earth cannot be understood other than in conjunction with the deterioration of the human condition. More clearly, these two elements represent two sides of the same coin¹⁶.

Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015), where the Earth is presented as «a sister with whom we share our existence, and as a beautiful mother who welcomes us into her arms», highlighting the need for shared responsibility in its custody. The expression appears from §1 of the Encyclical and becomes key in proposing an integral ecology. Although similar elements are found in previous pontificates – especially in John Paul II (*Centesimus annus*, 1991) and Benedict XVI (*Caritas in veritate*, 2009) – it is with Francis that the formula common house assumes a conceptual and pastoral centrality in the contemporary Catholic magisterium.

On this point, the words of MAZZONI, G. (2020), “L’Ecologia e sostenibilità tra magistero e sinodalità: sviluppi economici e giuridici nel pensiero di Francesco”, in *Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica*, n. 2, p. 325.

- 13 On this point, the chapters of this volume of ENRICA MARTINELLI, ANTONIO ANGELUCCI, ROSSELLA BOTTONI.
- 14 On the point, always current the careful examination of K. Golser, *Religioni ed ecologia. La responsabilità verso il creato nelle grandi religioni*, Bologna, 1995.
- 15 For details on this issue, see OLIOSI, F. (2022), “Globalizzazione e periferie nel magistero di papa Francesco: verso un diritto canonico glocal?”, in *Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica*, n. 1, pp. 87-112.
- 16 What is stated in the body of text appears to be of primary importance in the analysis that we are trying to conduct. Because collective welfare prevails over the interests of a few. And environmental decay reflects a way of acting in the world

A closer examination of the Catholic Church's contribution to eco-sustainability – and thus its environmental policy – reveals a progressively intensifying trajectory, which, from a legal standpoint, reached its apex with the encyclical *Laudato si'*¹⁷, issued during the Pontificate of Pope Francis.

Pope Francis' magisterium on environmental issues is characterized by an approach that goes beyond purely technical and scientific considerations, enriching and integrating them with a moral vision¹⁸.

Indeed, on multiple occasions and from various perspectives, the Pontiff repeatedly invokes the concept of «integral ecology», which serves as a guiding compass – almost a sort of common denominator – for the ecclesial policy of Francis' pontificate¹⁹. The environment and society should not be understood as two separate entities; on the contrary, they are interconnected and, above all, deeply embedded within a broader global (eco)system²⁰.

connected to individualism without thinking about the reflections, sometimes more or less harmful, that fall on the collectivity. From this precise guideline that Francis starts a reflection first and then a real magisterium in relation to the model of sustainability of the contemporary Church. In this light, among many others, it refers to the examination of SALVINI, G. (2018), «Giustizia nell'economia globale. Costruire società sostenibili e inclusive», in *La Civiltà cattolica*, Vol. IV, pp. 45-54.

17 In fact, the very first steps of the environmental policy of Francis can be seen from the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, from here the same Pontiff looks to a new direct pastoral reflection, as it was then years later, Towards a new economic model for creative sustainability. Part of the doctrine, this thought is acceptable, he recently considered that the Apostolic Exhortation cited has laid the foundations for «an ethical reinterpretation of the current economic system». From MAZZONI, G., *L'Ecologia e sostenibilità tra magistero e sinodalità: sviluppi economici e giuridici nel pensiero di Francesco*, cit., p. 526.

18 On this point, we would like to refer to the reflection contained in MATTEI, U. (2020) (a cura di), *La dittatura dell'economia*, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, Torino, pp. 111-114.

19 What is stated in the body of text is taken from *Laudato si'*, par. 137 in which Francis affirms that «Since everything is intimately related and that the current problems require a look that considers all aspects of the world crisis, I now propose to reflect on the various elements of an *integral ecology* that clearly understands the human and social dimensions». (The italics are added by the Author).

20 *Ivi*, par. 139 e par. 16 in which it is stated respectively that «The ecological crisis is also a social crisis, because the two are deeply linked. Environmental challenges are not only about nature, but also about society and its structure and development. The environmental and social issues cannot be separated. Pollution and climate change are problems that mainly affect the poorest». On the same horizon of meaning the Pontiff affirms that «Everything is connected. And nature is a language that allows us to enter relationship with the world and with each other, through an integral

Within this interpretative framework lies the encyclical *Laudato si'*, in which Pope Francis clarifies and deepens the concept of integral ecology in the direction of care for and safeguarding of our common home. This perspective does not simply equate to the protection of nature, but rather encompasses the preservation of the broader habitat – *lato sensu* – in which humanity is embedded. It evokes foundational pillars rooted in the Church's tradition, such as social justice, human dignity, and a sense of responsibility toward future generations²¹. On the contrary, what has just been stated implies that these critical issues – both individually and collectively – cannot be addressed without considering the underlying social, economic, and political dimensions. In other words, the environmental crisis, in its various facets, is not an isolated or self-contained phenomenon; rather, in Pope Francis' magisterial perspective, it represents the outcome of systemic inequalities and persistent forms of exploitation that characterize postmodern society.

In the Encyclical, the Pope first invites the entire People of God, and then all people, to reflect deeply on the relationship between humanity and creation—more specifically, on how human actions affect the natural world. Within this framework, the Church's focus on sustainability highlights the need to consider the impact of individual actions on the entire ecosystem²². This perspective sees the individual as an integral part of a collective system, within a relational framework that can, to some extent, counter environmental degradation. For Francis, this is both a technical and moral dilemma, grounded in trust in the ethical potential of human actions as a shift in mindset toward ecological conversion²³.

vision of reality».

- 21 Cf. PETTINATO, C.M. (2022), *Aversio a Deo: l'origine della riflessione ecologica nel magistero papale da Leone XII a Francesco*, in *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale*, n. 17, *inter alia* pp. 127-134 and the bibliography cited therein.
- 22 Cf. *Laudato si'*, par. 119 «Each of us is called upon to reflect on our actions and consider how they may affect the environment and others. In fact, an ecological awareness is not only a matter of protecting creation, but also implies a conversion of the heart that touches the person himself».
- 23 In the perspective of Francis, the so-called change of mental paradigm progressively allows the reduction, more than the solution *tout court*, not only of the ecological crisis, but of the social injustices that accompany this crisis. Cf., on the point, par. 53 «A change of mentality that starts with the individual and becomes a real cultural revolution capable of generating policies and concrete actions at local and global level».

What has just been described invokes two foundational concepts of canon law: justice and solidarity²⁴. The environment becomes a legal good owned by all humanity, who are called to manage and preserve it through responsible frameworks. Only in this way can impacts on the most vulnerable populations be avoided. This is a crucial point: environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poorest segments of the global population, who have no means to combat it. Thus, an environmental crisis becomes a crisis of justice. The poor, as also highlighted by the Pontiff during the Amazon Synod²⁵, bear the highest burden of the current environmental degradation.

The appeal to integral ecology is justified by the need to overcome a fragmented view of contemporary crises. It provides a theoretical framework in which social justice and environmental justice are not treated separately but are recognized as interconnected and mutually influential. In this sense, integral ecology allows for an understanding of how social inequalities and environmental degradation share common roots and require integrated responses.

The Encyclical that we are examining recalls a further concept, connected and at the same time clarifying what has been analyzed so far: criticism of individualism. Modern economic policies have led to a culture of consumerism and waste, involving the exploitation of natural and human resources²⁶. This led Francis to affirm the primary need for new models of development based on the search for balance and cooperation between human actors guided by social justice²⁷. The Pontiff's admonition does not aim to stop development, but rather to create a common policy towards sustainable and integrated pro-

24 Literature on the subject is particularly extensive, ex. SCIACCA, G. (2022), *Nodi di una giustizia. Problemi aperti del diritto canonico*, Il Mulino, Bologna; ERRÁZURIZ MACKENNA, C.J. (2020), *Il diritto e la giustizia nella Chiesa: per una teoria fondamentale del diritto canonico*, Giuffrè Francis Lefebvre, Milano.

25 For the results of the Amazon synod see Sinodo dei Vescovi. *Amazonia: nuovi cammini per la Chiesa e per una ecologia integrale*. Documentum Finalis. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019.

26 Cf. *Laudato si'*, par. 190 «We need models of development that are not based solely on self-interest and the accumulation of wealth, but that aim at creating a more just society in which fundamental human rights are respected, those of the most vulnerable».

27 *Ivi*, par. 106 «The modern economy tends to reduce everything to a commodity, a figure, a good to buy and sell. A culture of consumerism and waste has been established which reduces the human being to a mere consumer. This system has created a devastating waste culture that leads to the rejection of millions and the deterioration of our common home».

gress, in the sense described above. It is a real complaint against the «culture of waste», which not only produces physical waste, but also marginalized and invisible people, who pay the highest price for environmental degradation²⁸. The Pope criticizes an approach that sees human beings and nature as objects to be used and discarded and calls for a renewed intergenerational solidarity. In a world that produces material waste, the culture of waste also leads to the marginalization of millions of people, who become invisible and deprived of rights. In this context, the Pope calls for a «human ecology», in which the dignity of every person is respected and valued²⁹. This implies a shift in mentality that goes beyond consumerism and individualism to promote a new vision of human well-being, centered on solidarity, justice, and care for our common home³⁰. This new model entails a reorganization of production and consumption that considers the finite nature of natural resources and the right of all people to access the means necessary for a dignified life. *Laudato si'* calls for a transformation of political and economic structures, which often perpetuate exclusion and oppression of the vulnerable, to promote policies of inclusion, equity, and sustainability.

Climate change is one of the most significant manifestations of the global ecological crisis an issue Pope Francis recognizes as highly serious and of international importance. In this context, the Pontiff not only highlights the evident damage caused by global warming but also condemns the historical responsibility of so-called industrialized countries, whose substantial greenhouse gas emissions have played a decisive role in planetary warming. Francis calls for urgent collective international action, advocating for an approach that engages all States in combating the climate crisis through cooperative solidarity. In this regard, adopting concrete and ambitious public policies is essential, particularly those aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting biodiversity, and developing environmentally sustainable technologies. Moreover, the Pontiff stresses that an effective response to the ecological crisis cannot be limited to isolated national efforts but must be pursued multilaterally, ensuring genuine cooperation among countries based on the principles of international

28 *Ivi*, par. 22 in which «These problems are intimately linked to the culture of waste, which affects both excluded human beings and things that quickly turn into rubbish»

29 *Ivi*, par. 155 in which it is stated that «Human ecology implies something very profound: the necessary relationship of the life of the human being with the moral law inscribed in his own nature».

30 *Ibid.*

solidarity and common but differentiated responsibility, as enshrined in international law and global environmental agreements³¹.

Pope Francis' magisterium builds on a long tradition of Christian social thought, which sees protecting creation as an essential and non-negotiable duty based on the Church's moral and social teachings. *Laudato si'* particularly develops the concept of the common good, extending it to the environmental realm. Care for creation is not merely an ethical option for Christians but a universal moral obligation involving both individuals and communities. The Pope calls for a radical ecological conversion a deep shift in daily life, consumption, and relationships with the environment and humanity. This conversion goes beyond individual actions, requiring structural change in economic, political, and social systems. Addressing the ecological crisis demands comprehensive institutional reform to promote a society that upholds the common good through social justice, intergenerational equity, and environmental sustainability. Thus, caring for the environment is a profound commitment that challenges global socioeconomic structures and proposes a development model integrating human rights with creation's protection³².

There is a clear similarity, especially when sustainability is seen as a responsible choice toward the common good or, using a term familiar to canonists, as a choice aimed at protecting the «common home».

Under Pope Francis, the Church of the third millennium promotes a cultural transformation that involves the economy, politics, and civil society, based on ecological conversion and sustainability. His pontificate is marked by a strong commitment to overcoming mediocrity, shown by the creation of the global network 'The Economy of Francesco'³³ and support for environmental movements and initiatives like 'Zero Hunger'³⁴. The Pope stresses that the serious degradation of ecosystems and environmental imbalances require shared responsibility and concrete actions to repair and prevent further harm. The principle of intergenerational justice, which underlies sustainable development, reflects a 'culture of care' that Francis sees as a path to peace. Science and faith come together to guide the way toward a shared future, involving all social and spiritual areas, so that ecological conversion is not just material but also a true commitment to social and spiritual renewal.

31 *Ivi*, par. 26.

32 *Ivi*, par. 217.

33 Cf. <https://francescoeconomy.org/it/>.

34 Cf. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2023/documents/20230701-messaggio-fao.html>.

3. Pope Francis' Magisterium and Its Convergence with the Global Sustainability Goals

Viewed from this perspective, a clear similarity emerges between the Church's environmental policy and the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda, particularly when sustainability is understood as a responsible commitment to the common good of all humanity³⁵. The interconnection between the environmental policies promoted by the Church and the Goals outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda represents an area warranting thorough analysis. Pope Francis' *Laudato si'* unequivocally addresses the global ecological crisis, closely linking environmental protection to social and economic dimensions. This approach shows significant similarities with the 2030 Agenda Goals, which promote sustainability through a holistic and integrated paradigm aimed at reducing inequalities and tackling environmental challenges in an equitable and inclusive manner.

The first similarity concerns the integrated nature of the ecological crisis. The concept of integral ecology, introduced by Pope Francis in the *Laudato si'* encyclical, aims to overcome a reductive view of the environment that separates it from social, economic, and political dimensions. According to the Pontifical teaching, ecology cannot be limited to mere protection of landscapes or natural resources; rather, it entails a radical transformation of the relationship between humanity and the environment, where respect for creation is coupled with a rethinking of economic and social structures. Indeed, *Laudato si'* condemns the irresponsible and predatory use of natural resources by industrialized countries, calling for systemic reform to ensure sustainable and equitable management of the environmental heritage. This approach aligns with the normative framework outlined by the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, which, through the paradigm of integrated sustainability, promotes natural resource governance grounded in intergenerational equity and distributive justice. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere), 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries), 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), and 15 (protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems) constitute the pillars of a systemic approach that recognizes the structural interconnection between ecological emergencies and socioeconomic inequalities. Similarly, Pope Francis emphasizes that the most vulnerable groups, especially the poor, are the primary victims of the devastating effects of climate change, as well as the imbalances caused

³⁵ See *infra*.

by an ecologically unsustainable and socially unjust development model.

A key issue in comparing Pope Francis' magisterium with the 2030 Agenda goals is the principle of intergenerational justice. In *Laudato si'*, the Pope urges humanity to see environmental impact not just as a legacy for future generations, but as a moral responsibility toward vulnerable populations already affected by environmental degradation, especially in developing countries. This principle requires each generation to protect the environment for those that follow. This idea is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 13 of the 2030 Agenda, which calls for urgent action against climate change. The 2030 Agenda serves as a soft law framework, guiding public policies through clear goals and practical actions. Its approach to sustainability is technical and functional, focusing on efficiency and multilevel governance. In contrast, Pope Francis' teaching, particularly in *Laudato si'*, pairs environmental action with an ethical and spiritual imperative. His concept of 'ecological conversion' calls for a deep change in individual and collective behavior based on moral responsibility to creation, going beyond legal or technical measures. The difference between these approaches lies not just in form but in the foundation of action: one is a legal-institutional, technical rationality; the other an ethical-relational view that frames environmental care as integral and intergenerational justice.

Despite clear similarities between the two approaches, a fundamental difference remains in their understanding of the ecological crisis. On one hand, the 2030 Agenda adopts a pragmatic and measurable framework focused on concrete, verifiable goals that emphasize the urgency of timely regulatory interventions and environmental policies. Its nature is inherently technical, aimed at optimizing the management of natural resources through global governance tools, reflected in specific measures and indicators. On the other hand, Pope Francis' vision, while acknowledging the need for concrete actions, highlights the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the environmental issue – dimensions that are difficult to translate into immediately applicable or quantifiable policies. In particular, the call for an 'ecological conversion' requires a shift in moral values and priorities, pushing not only for the reformulation of public policies but also for a transformation of individual and collective beliefs about environmental responsibility. This approach raises questions about the compatibility between the universal responsibility ethics promoted by the magisterium and the purely managerial and technical nature of the environmental policies adopted by the 2030 Agenda. The latter tends to treat the ecological crisis primarily as a matter of resource optimization and damage prevention, often overlooking the moral dimension that makes it a global challenge of justice and

equity. In this respect, the 2030 Agenda focuses on sustainability as a development goal, whereas Pope Francis' vision intertwines it with intergenerational justice and social equity, proposing a change that concerns not only ecological management but also the ethical regeneration of society.

Another key point of convergence between *Laudato si'* and the 2030 Agenda is their critique of the dominant economic development model, which has led to unsustainable resource consumption and exacerbated social and economic inequalities. Pope Francis strongly condemns the "culture of waste," evident not only in consumption patterns but also in policies that marginalize entire sectors of the global population, depriving them of access to essential resources for a dignified life. This critique aligns closely with Goal 12 of the 2030 Agenda, which calls for responsible production and consumption by promoting a circular economy and waste reduction. The adoption of sustainable economic models that prioritize quality of life over mere increases in production and consumption is a fundamental pillar of the Agenda and finds a significant theoretical counterpart in Pope Francis's thought. Both approaches emphasize the need for an economic paradigm that moves beyond profit-driven logic to center collective well-being and long-term sustainability.

From the comparison between *Laudato si'* and the 2030 Agenda, the central role of states and international institutions in managing the ecological crisis clearly emerges. Pope Francis firmly calls on the international community to respond urgently and cooperatively to the growing threat of climate change, urging governments to adopt policies oriented towards social justice. In particular, he highlights how the poorest and most vulnerable countries, despite being the least responsible for global warming, suffer the most severe consequences of environmental disasters. Therefore, adaptation and mitigation policies must be accompanied by a concrete commitment to reduce global inequalities and ensure that the most fragile are not further penalized by the current development model. The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sets concrete and measurable objectives, emphasizing the importance of a multilateral approach to collectively address global challenges. Specifically, Goal 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change, requires unprecedented international cooperation to ensure effectiveness on a global scale. However, the achievement of these goals largely depends on the political will of member states, who sometimes hesitate to sacrifice short-term economic or political interests in favor of a long-term commitment to sustainability³⁶. In

36 Cf. REGINI, M. (2000), *Modelli di capitalismo. Le risposte europee alla sfida della*

this context, Pope Francis's approach can be understood as a moral appeal that transcends political negotiations, calling upon the international community to engage in shared commitment and global cooperation driven not by immediate profit motives, but by a collective ethical responsibility for the safeguarding of the planet and human dignity.

Ultimately, the papal vision highlights the importance of global governance that extends beyond the mere technical and quantitative dimensions of environmental policies, embracing a perspective grounded in ethical responsibility, solidarity, and intergenerational justice. This vision thus demonstrates a strong alignment with the ideals promoted by the 2030 Agenda. While the Agenda provides concrete and measurable tools to address the ecological crisis, Pope Francis's magisterium emphasizes the necessity of a cultural transformation involving not only states but also civil society and individuals alike, urging all to undertake an "ecological conversion" that transcends technical solutions and responds to the imperatives of social justice and the preservation of creation.

4. What Restart? In Search of a Global and Responsible Solidarity

The relationship between Pope Francis's environmental policy and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda highlights a profound connection between the legal, ethical, and moral dimensions of secular law and the Church's magisterium. Although originating from distinct spheres – the Catholic Church on one side and the United Nations on the other – both share a common starting point: the ecological crisis is a global challenge that demands a collective, fair, and just response, capable of addressing social and environmental inequalities in an integrated manner³⁷. The conclusions are also similar: safeguarding the environment and improving living conditions for people, especially vulnerable groups, cannot be separated³⁸.

The 2030 Agenda, as an instrument of international law and policy, not only establishes an operational framework for monitoring progress toward sustainability but also represents a binding commitment for States, which are called upon to adopt policies addressing the needs of sustainable development by promoting social, economic, and environmental justice. However, Pope Francis's teaching transcends the technical and operational dimension, offering an ethical and spiritual reflection that calls for a renewed awareness of our

globalizzazione, Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari.

37 On this point, see parr. 2 and 3 of this contribution.

38 *Ibid.*

collective and intergenerational responsibility, fully aligned with the Church's mission of human salvation³⁹. From a legal perspective, the Church maintains that environmental protection should be recognized as a fundamental right, integral to human rights, whose respect is intimately linked to social justice and intergenerational solidarity⁴⁰.

A central concept in this debate is the care for creation, which is fully encompassed within the ordinary pontifical magisterium⁴¹. According to the Church, the care for creation represents a universal order established by God's will, imposing moral and ethical obligations on all people, regardless of their affiliation (or lack thereof) with the People of God, towards the environment and creation. The conception of canon law suggests that man is not the absolute master of nature, but a responsible steward, with the duty to preserve its integrity for future generations⁴². This principle translates into a universal legal obligation of environmental protection, reflecting a broader ecological justice to be implemented through coherent public policies and international regulations. In Pope Francis's vision, nature is not a resource to be exploited but a gift from God that must be respected and safeguarded, in harmony with social justice and the common good⁴³.

Further considerations can be drawn. The issue of sustainability addressed pertains to the social difficulty, even before the legal and political ones, of a radical shift in collective ecological mindset. The reason for this lack can be traced to certain effects of globalization, which, while having yielded positive outcomes such as global economic integration, has also led to structural global inequalities, with negative impacts on social and environmental structures⁴⁴. In this regard, from the perspective of the author, the theory is compelling that globalization has accentuated the "liquidity" of social bonds, eroded (ten-

39 Cf. FERRARI, S. (2002), *Lo spirito dei diritti religiosi*, Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 94 ff.

40 See above.

41 This is not the place for an in-depth analysis on the power of magisterium within the canonical system. On the point, see the careful examination of DALLA TORRE, G. (2018), *Lezioni di diritto canonico*, V ed., Giappichelli Editore, Torino, pp. 116-119.

42 From a comparative perspective, one can here refer to the Islamic legal system, which holds that the believer is a vicegerent (*khalifah*) of *Allah* on Earth and, as such, has the duty to preserve and manage natural resources responsibly. In this regard, see among others, IQBAL, M. (ed.) (2005), *Islamic Perspectives on Sustainable Development*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 17.

43 Cf. par. 2.

44 The concept of liquidity was borrowed from BAUMAN, Z. (2006), *Dentro la globalizzazione. Le conseguenze sulle persone*, Laterza, Roma-Bari.

dentially) the structures of collective solidarity and separating individual consumption from the inevitable yet ignored global consequences⁴⁵. It is in this no man's land that the ecological crisis asserts itself and grows ever more in the shadow of decision-makers. More clearly, this new globalized era lacks a definable global solidarity. This point aligns with Pope Francis's teaching concerning the profile, already evident, of global consumerism and the prominent role it occupies in contemporary societies⁴⁶.

From the specific perspective of the scholar of law and religion, Pope Francis's teaching offers a compelling alternative: an integral ecology that encompasses not only the environmental dimension but also social and economic justice. The Church's approach stands in opposition to global individualism and consumerism, advocating for the construction of global solidarity centered on collective well-being and respect for the environment. In this regard, the papal vision aligns with the 2030 Agenda in emphasizing that sustainability is not merely an ecological imperative but a matter of global justice. From a legal standpoint, the 2030 Agenda serves as a normative response to the global ecological crisis; however, its realization hinges on the capacity of states to adopt domestic legislation consistent with the principles of sustainability and social justice. Nevertheless, globalization – particularly in its fluid and hyper-connected dimension – has complicated international cooperation. Decision-making processes have fragmented due to increasing economic, cultural, and technological interdependence, making the harmonization of regulations and the definition of common actions challenging. Moreover, the still-dominant state sovereignty and the emergence of non-state actors (multinational corporations, transnational organizations) further complicate the possibility of collective and coordinated legal action, slowing the implementation of shared environmental policies. In this context, international law is called upon to ensure that states fulfill their duties of global solidarity by adopting urgent ecological policies and promoting environmental human rights as fundamental rights. Ultimately, the connection between the Church's doctrine and the Sustainable Development Goals, along with reflections on globalization, invites a critical examination of the current development model, highlighting the need to overcome disconnection and individualistic consumption patterns. Ecological and social justice can only be achieved through renewed global solidarity that acknowledges our interdependence and responsibility toward the environment and future gen-

45 *Ivi*, pp. 112-140.

46 BAUMAN, Z. (2012), *Consumo, dunque sono*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, pp. 103-145.

erations. In this scenario, intergenerational justice, through the instrument of law, becomes the foundation for constructing a new global legal and moral order capable of addressing ecological challenges with a collective and legally binding vision directed toward global and responsible solidarity.

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THE ROLE OF ISLAM AND ITS ORGANIZATIONS IN COOPERATING ON THE GOALS OF THE 2030 AGENDA

Antonio Angelucci

SUMMARY: 1. Foreword - 2. Islam and environmental sustainability - 3. Muslim communities' contribution to achieving the SDGs between challenges and opportunities - 4. Conclusion.

1. Foreword

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 through Resolution A/RES/70/1, provides a global legal and policy framework for promoting equitable, inclusive, and environmentally sound development¹. The program is divided into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ranging from eradicating poverty and hunger to protecting the environment, from promoting social justice to building effective and accountable institutions². The achievement of these goals requires synergistic efforts among state actors, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, and religious communities, which play a crucial role both in the development of ethical and legal principles in support of sustainability and in the concrete implementation of initiatives in line with the 2030 Agenda³.

In this perspective, Muslim communities constitute a key interlocutor in the implementation of the Agenda, both because of their demographic significance – with a population of about 1.9 billion people spread across more than fifty UN member states⁴ – and because of the importance Islamic doctrine places on responsible resource management and social justice⁵.

1 Cf. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>.

2 Cf. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

3 Cf. DELLE CAVE, G. (2021), "European development goals: sustainable cities and public regeneration perspectives", *DPCE Online*, n. 1, 161 ss.

4 On this point, see https://www.ismu.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/30-Rapporto-ISMU-ETS_2024.pdf.

5 Cf. ABIAD, N. (2007), *Justice in the Qur'an and in the Islamic tradition*, Routledge.

Islam, in fact, does not merely regard sustainability as a contingent necessity, but incorporates it within an established normative and value framework, which finds expression in the primary legal sources – the *Qur'an* and the *Sun-nah* – as well as in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which over the centuries has elaborated principles and norms applicable to environmental protection and socio-economic equity⁶.

The pivotal concepts of Islamic law regarding sustainability include the principle of *khilāfah* (custody of the Earth)⁷, which places a fiduciary responsibility on humans to manage natural resources; the principle of *mīzān* (balance and harmony)⁸, which requires the preservation of the natural order and the restriction of over-exploitation; the prohibition of *isrāf* (waste)⁹, which encourages moderation and responsible consumption; and the principle of *ʿadl* (justice), which mandates the equitable redistribution of wealth through legal institutions such as *zakāt* (compulsory almsgiving)¹⁰ and the *waqf* (charitable foundations)¹¹. These precepts, in addition to constituting an ethical benchmark for the faithful, find practical application in the development policies adopted by several Muslim-majority states, as well as in the activities of numerous Islamic organizations committed to promoting environmental and social justice.

In this context, the potential contribution of Muslim communities to the achievement of the SDGs will be analyzed through two complementary lenses: firstly, a reflection on the compatibility between contemporary Islamic legal thought and the principles of the 2030 Agenda; and secondly, an examination

6 *Ex multis* GAFOURI, A.H. (2000), *Islam et économie. Réflexion sur les principes fondamentaux de l'économie islamique*, Beirut, Edition al Bouraq, 158-159.

7 *Il Corano*, 2: 30. The Quran was consulted in the version by ZILIO-GRANDI, I. (trans.) (2010) *Il Corano*. A. Ventura (ed.), Milan, Mondadori. Translation from italian into english by us.

8 *Il Corano*, 55: 7-9.

9 The concept of *isrāf*, meaning “waste” or “excess,” is forbidden in the *Qurʾān*. Human beings are urged not to waste resources, whether material, financial or food, but to use what they have with moderation and gratitude. This principle relates to the concept of responsibility in dealing with the resources that *Allah* has made available to human beings. A very significant verse mentioning the prohibition of *isrāf* is found in *sura Al-Aʿraf* 7:31.

10 *Il Corano*, 2: 43 «Perform the prayer, pay the tithe, and prostrate yourselves like others in prayer». Cf. VERCELLIN, G. (1996), *Istituzioni del mondo musulmano*, Einaudi, Torino, 220 s.; PRANAM, D. (2013), *Zakat as a Measure of Social Justice in Islamic Finance: An Accountant's Overview*, West Bengal.

11 Cf. SADEQ, A.M. (2002), “Waqf, perpetual charity and poverty alleviation”, in *International Journal of Social Economics*, n. 1/2, 135-151.

of concrete initiatives implemented by Islamic-based governmental and non-governmental organizations. The objective is to demonstrate that Islamic law, far from being a static and archaic normative system, constitutes a dynamic and evolving legal framework capable of providing effective tools to address global sustainability challenges. It is evident that Islam functions as a strategically in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, it offers a legal and moral paradigm that, when effectively utilized, has the potential to expedite progress towards a more equitable and sustainable model of global development¹². The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, is a global action plan to address the most pressing challenges of our time¹³. With its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Agenda aims to eliminate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. However, achieving these ambitious goals requires the participation and commitment of all sectors of society, including religious communities¹⁴.

To this regard, Muslim organizations are playing an important role. Islam, with its ethical and moral principles, provides a unique perspective on sustainability and responsible resource management. It is therefore the intention of this study to explore the way these communities are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. This exploration will be undertaken without any presumption of exhaustiveness. The study will commence with an analysis of the concept of sustainability in contemporary Islamic thought. This will be followed by an assessment of the initiatives undertaken in this respect.

The present attempt will thus be made to demonstrate not only that contemporary Islamic thought is compatible with the goals of the 2030 Agenda, but also that it can potentially accelerate progress towards global sustainability by becoming a strategically involved.

2. Islam and environmental sustainability

Islam is characterized by a robust theological and legal foundation that underpin environmental sustainability and the conscientious stewardship of natural resources. These principles are embedded within the tenets of Islamic law, as articulated in its primary sources. In Islamic thought, the concept of *khalīfah*, or the vicariousness of human beings over the earth, is central to understanding man's role with respect to the environment. In accordance with the teach-

12 See *infra*.

13 Cf. <https://unric.org/it/agenda-2030/>.

14 Cf. note 2.

ings of the Qur'an, humanity has been entrusted with the role of vicar on Earth by God, thereby assuming the mandate of ethical and legal responsibility for the management of resources. The Qur'an unambiguously establishes this role through the explicit verse, «And when your Lord said to the angels, 'Behold, I will place on earth My vicar (*khalīfah*)'»¹⁵. This passage has been interpreted over the centuries as the recognition of a fiduciary role for humans, called upon to exercise responsible and sustainable management of the environment, avoiding all forms of corruption and abuse of natural resources¹⁶. Related to the concept of *khalīfah* is that of *amānah*, translatable as "trust" or "reliance," which emphasizes the sacred and temporary nature of the ownership of natural resources. The *Qur'ān* states, «We had offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains the responsibility of the sacred storehouse (*al-amānah*). They refused to take it and were afraid of it. But man took charge of it»¹⁷. This *āyat* confirms the burden on humanity to manage the environment, imposing a duty of care that excludes all forms of waste, overexploitation, or environmental degradation¹⁸.

Islam also introduces the concept of *mīzān*, or balance, as a guiding principle for ecosystem management. The *Qur'ān* states that God created the world in perfect balance and that mankind is obliged to respect this natural harmony: «He has raised the heavens and erected the scales, so that you do not cheat in the balance: set the weight fairly and do not distort the scales»¹⁹. This precept implies the duty to avoid indiscriminate exploitation of resources, as well as to adopt sustainable economic and social practices²⁰.

The prohibition of *isrāf*, or wastefulness, and the condemnation of *fasād*, understood as corruption and degradation of the earth, represent further fundamental elements of the Islamic vision of sustainability. Islamic law admonishes, «Do not bring corruption to the earth after it was put in order by God»²¹. This passage has been interpreted by Islamic scholars as an explicit

15 *Il Corano*, 2: 30.

16 Cf. DIEN, M.I. (1997), "Islam and the Environment: theory and practice" in *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, n. 18(1), 47-57.

17 *Il Corano*, 33: 72.

18 Cf. KAMALI, M.H. (2012), "Environmental Care in Islam: A Quranic Perspective" in *Islam and Civilizational Renewal*, n. 3(2), 261-283.

19 *Il Corano*, 55:1-9.

20 Cf. OZDEMIR, I. (2003), *Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective*, in FOLTZ R.C., DENNY F.M., BAHARUDDIN A. (eds.), *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, Harvard University Press, 3-37.

21 *Il Corano*, 7:56.

prohibition against environmental degradation, pollution, deforestation, and overconsumption of natural resources²². The principle also extends to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which includes specific rules for the protection of water sources, sustainable management of agricultural land and respect for the rights of future generations.

Islam also recognizes the intrinsic value of natural resources and their role in the well-being not only of humanity but of all creatures. The Prophet Muhammad, in a *hadith* reported by Muslim, stated, «The world is green and beautiful, and God has appointed you as its custodians»²³, thus emphasizing the role of human responsibility in preserving the environment for future generations²⁴. These theological and legal principles form the basis of an Islamic vision of sustainability, which emphasizes the need to maintain ecological balance, avoid waste, and adopt a development model in harmony with divine precepts.

Contemporary Islamic thought has reinterpreted and actualized these principles considering modern environmental challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals. It has been asserted by numerous Muslim scholars that a correlation exists between spirituality and sustainability. The scholars have argued that the environmental crisis is, first and foremost, a moral and spiritual crisis. Seyyed Hossein Nasr has posited that the loss of a sacred view of nature is a primary cause of environmental degradation. He proposes a return to a more holistic conception of the ecosystem as a solution²⁵.

Muhammad Chapra revisited the concept of *khalifah* from an ecological perspective, stating that while God is the ultimate owner of the universe, man is merely a trustee (*amīn*), responsible for the ethical use of natural resources according to the limits established by Revelation²⁶. Similarly, Egyptian theologian Yusuf al-Qaradawi has highlighted the importance of *fiqh al-bi'ah*, or Islamic environmental jurisprudence, which imposes a religious duty on Muslims to protect the environment²⁷.

22 Cf. FOLTZ, R.C. (2000), "Is There an Islamic Environmentalism?" in *Environmental Ethics*, 22(1), 63.

23 Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj. (n.d.). *Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2742*. Available at the following address: <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2742>.

24 *Ibidem*.

25 Cf. NASR, S.H. (1996), *Religion and the Order of Nature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

26 Cf. CHAPRA, M.U. (2008), *The Islamic Vision of Development in the Light of Maqāsid Al-Sharī'ah*, International Institute of Islamic Thought.

27 Cf. AL-QARADAWI, Y. (2001), *Ri'ayat al-Bi'ah fi Shari'at al-Islam [Environmental Protection in Islamic Law]*, Dar Al-Shorouk.

In recent decades, Islamic-inspired environmental movements have also emerged, such as the *Green Deen*²⁸, which promotes an environmentally sustainable lifestyle based on Islamic precepts, and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)²⁹, founded in 1994, which works to raise awareness of environmental issues among Muslim communities.

At the institutional level, there have been significant advancements in the promotion of sustainability in Muslim countries. The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, adopted in 2015 during the International Islamic Symposium on Climate Change in Istanbul, represented a significant moment of commitment from the Islamic world. The Declaration calls on Muslim countries to phase out fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy, emphasizing the ethical and religious responsibility of Muslims in the fight against climate change. Moreover, in 2016, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopted a resolution to incorporate environmental sustainability into the development policies of its member states³⁰.

However, the sustainability debate in contemporary Islam is not without its critical issues. Some scholars argue that the emphasis on life in the afterlife may divert attention from earthly environmental problems, while others debate how to balance economic development and environmental protection, an issue particularly relevant to developing Muslim countries. In any case, Islamic thinking on sustainability continues to evolve, making a significant contribution to the global discourse on sustainable development. New interpretations and emerging movements are strengthening the engagement of Muslim communities in the achievement of the SDGs, demonstrating that Islam, with its rich normative and ethical heritage, can offer valuable tools for addressing the environmental challenges of the 21st century.

3. Muslim communities' contribution to achieving the SDGs between challenges and opportunities

The contribution of Islamic communities and organizations to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is significant, yet this endeavor is not without challenges and obstacles that must be addressed to maximize their impact and involvement in this area. Within the Islamic world, the challenges that emerge are varied and complex. One of the earliest challenges pertains to

28 <https://www.greendeentribe.co.uk/home>.

29 <https://www.ifees.org.uk/>.

30 Cf. https://www.oic-oci.org/page/?p_id=302&p_ref=106&lan=en.

the divergent interpretations of sacred texts in the context of environmental concerns and sustainable development. Indeed, several scholars adopt a literal reading of the texts, an approach that does not always align with the SDGs outlined on a global scale, particularly about natural resource utilization and modern economic dynamics³¹. This kind of interpretation can sometimes lead to counter the need for change in environmental or sustainable development practices, even though these concepts are increasingly necessary to respond to contemporary global challenges.

Furthermore, it is important to note the discrepancy between the rich Islamic ethical tradition, which promotes responsible environmental stewardship, and actual practices in many Muslim countries, where resources are limited, or sustainability policies are insufficiently implemented. Indeed, a considerable number of nations are distinguished by political instability and internal conflicts that impede development and international cooperation, which are imperative components for the execution of the SDGs. It is evident that a few countries are confronted with economic challenges that result in constrained resource allocation for sustainability initiatives. This, in turn, exerts an additional impediment on progress³².

Another significant obstacle is negative stereotypes and prejudices toward Islam, which not only hinder collaboration between Muslim communities and international partners, but also reduce the visibility and recognition of the contributions these communities make to the global cause³³. Despite these difficulties, there are also multiple opportunities that could be taken to strengthen Muslim communities' engagement in sustainable development.

One of these is interreligious dialogue, which can foster cooperation between different religious traditions to address common challenges. A significant example in this context is the *Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence* signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, in 2019, which opened new possibilities for inter-faith collaboration on issues such as sustainability and social justice³⁴.

31 Cf. SCHWENCKE, A.M. (2012), *Globalized Eco-Islam: A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism*, cit., *inter alia*, 18-20.

32 Cf. SANIOTIS, A. (2012), "Muslims and ecology: fostering Islamic environmental ethics", in *Contemporary Islam*, n. 6(2), 156-158.

33 Cf. LYONS, J. (2013), *Islam Through Western Eyes: From the Crusades to the War on Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, 72-74.

34 Cf. PETITO, F., DAOU, F., DRIESSEN, M.D. (2021), *Human Fraternity & Inclusive Citizenship: Interreligious Engagement in the Mediterranean*, Ledizioni

Interreligious is a promising avenue for joining forces in the pursuit of social justice and care for the environment, principles that are common to many religions.

Furthermore, there is great potential to strengthen partnerships between Muslim organizations and international agencies, including the United Nations and the World Bank. These partnerships can help promote more ambitious environmental policies and implement concrete projects that benefit vulnerable communities³⁵. The recent growth of *Green Sukuk*³⁶, Green Islamic bonds, is another example of how Muslim institutions are looking for innovative solutions to finance sustainable projects. These financial instruments, compliant with Islamic finance, offer new possibilities to attract sustainability-oriented investments³⁷.

The integration of education in this direction into the curricula of Islamic schools and universities is becoming increasingly widespread, with the aim of training a new generation of leaders aware of environmental challenges and able to propose appropriate solutions (UNESCO, 2023). Finally, emerging technologies offer further opportunities for the development of innovative solutions for sustainability, in line with the Islamic tradition of scientific research and innovation³⁸.

To further enhance the involvement of Muslim communities in the promotion of the SDGs, some key strategies can be adopted. First, a continuous investment in research and training of Muslim experts in the field of sustainability would increase the capacity of communities to contribute significantly to the achievement of the global goals³⁹. Second, strengthening collaborative networks between Muslim organizations, academic institutions and civil society actors would facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices to address common challenges⁴⁰.

LediPublishing, 15-17.

35 Cf. KARAM, A. (2022), *Religion and the Sustainable Development Goals*, Routledge, Londra, 203-205.

36 <https://www.climatebonds.net/projects/facilitation/green-sukuk>.

37 Cf. MOGHUL, U.F., SAFAR-ALY S.H.K. (2014), "Green Sukuk: The Introduction of Islam's Environmental Ethics to Contemporary Islamic Finance", in *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review*, n. 27(1), 29-31.

38 Cf. AKHTAR, R. (2016), *Climate Change and Human Health Scenario in South and Southeast Asia*, Springer, Berlino, 89-91.

39 Cf. HASSAN, A., HANEEF, M.A. (2018), *Islamic Economics Education in Southeast Asian Universities*, Palgrave Macmillan, Londra, 201-203.

40 Cf. <http://www.arcworld.org/>.

Furthermore, effective communication strategies are essential to counter negative stereotypes and to increase the visibility of concrete actions that Muslim communities undertake in favor of sustainability itself⁴¹. Another important strategy concerns the integration of the SDGs into the national policies of Muslim-majority countries, thus promoting strategic planning that accelerates progress towards the objectives set⁴². Finally, promoting youth leadership in the sustainable field, training them on environmental issues, represents a decisive step to ensure continuous and innovative commitment in this sector⁴³. In this way, the younger generations could play a decisive role in achieving the SDGs, so that they remain a priority also in the future.

In conclusion, although the challenges are numerous, the opportunities for progress are real and Muslim communities have the possibility to become global protagonists in the promotion of sustainable development. Through the adoption of targeted strategies and the further consolidation of their environmental stewardship practices, Muslim communities can effectively address the challenges of our time and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set by Agenda 2030.

4. Conclusion

In this article, the significant role that Muslim communities are playing in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda has been highlighted. Without claiming to cover every aspect, the survey has highlighted how the Islamic principles of *khalifa* (vicariate), *amanah* (reliance) and *mizan* (balance) are the basis of a theological model of sustainability that not only aligns with, but often anticipates the needs of the contemporary world⁴⁴. Religious theories, reinterpreted in a modern context, offer a solid ethical basis for addressing global challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and social inequalities.

The strong connection between the fundamental principles of Islam and the objectives of Agenda 2030 clearly demonstrates that the Muslim faith can and must be considered a fundamental ally in achieving a sustainable future. In particular, the philosophy of “vicariate” suggests a vision of the world in which the

41 Cf. KOEHRSEN, J., HEUSER, A. (2020), *Faith-Based Organizations in Development Discourses and Practice*, Routledge, Londra, 178-180.

42 <https://www.sesric.org/publications-sdgs.php>.

43 <https://climate.arabyouthcenter.org/>.

44 See *supra*.

human being is not a dominator of the earth, but a responsible custodian of its resources. This conception is reflected in numerous examples of practical sustainability promoted by Islamic organizations, such as microfinance programs, which provide access to resources for the most vulnerable populations, and education for sustainability, which aims to train new generations to be aware and responsible.

Furthermore, Muslim institutions and organizations, such as Al-Azhar, which promote sustainability-oriented education⁴⁵, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which promotes international cooperation policies, are having a positive impact in several sectors. Green Islamic finance solutions, such as *sukuk* (Islamic bonds) for ecological and social projects, represent an innovation that can play a key role in financing the transition to more sustainable economies.

Nevertheless, the challenges accompanying this commitment cannot be overlooked. Divergent theological interpretations, political instability in certain regions, and economic difficulties – particularly in developing countries – can hinder progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite these obstacles, a landscape rich in opportunities emerges. Interculturality and interreligious dialogue represent powerful tools capable of fostering more inclusive and resilient international cooperation, while technological innovation, including advancements in Islamic finance, offers new avenues for developing practical solutions to environmental issues.

In this context, cooperation among public and private actors, between governments and non-governmental organizations, and between religious and secular sectors becomes a key element in optimizing the contribution of Muslim communities to the SDGs. Future strategies should focus on strengthening scientific and academic research in this area, to better understand how Islamic values can be integrated into public policy and international sustainable development initiatives. The training of experts in Islamic finance, sustainability, and environmental policy will be essential to build the competencies required for the implementation of concrete and lasting projects. Another crucial aspect for future success is the reinforcement of collaborative networks among diverse Muslim communities on a global scale. The creation of collaborative platforms that connect Muslim stakeholders – ranging from local to global levels – will facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and knowledge.

45 <https://waag-azhar.org/en/25287/>.

The empowerment of youth leadership, which is already emerging as a key driver of change, can play a central role in promoting the active engagement of younger generations in sustainable development policies. Islam, therefore, is not only compatible with the SDGs, but also offers an ethical framework that encourages the adoption of sustainable policies and practices, emphasizing the balance between economic growth, social justice, and environmental stewardship. The challenge for the future lies in translating these principles into concrete action, harnessing the potential that Muslim communities possess on a global scale.

The integration of these dynamics into international policies – supported by inter-community solidarity and the shared willingness to address global challenges – will significantly contribute to the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Thus, cooperation between the Muslim world and other religious groups, in addition to promoting peace and stability, can pave the way for a more equitable and sustainable model of global governance.

In conclusion, the path toward full implementation of the SDGs is not without obstacles, but the Islamic vision of sustainability – rooted in the values of justice, equity, and care for the Earth – provides a solid foundation for building a more inclusive and sustainable future. Muslim communities, with their global reach and deep-rooted traditions, have the potential to become leading agents of positive change, actively contributing to the creation of a more just and balanced world in line with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.

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FOR A *GREEN* CHURCH OF ENGLAND: *CARBON FREE* COURSE

Cristiana Cianitto

Summary: 1. A common goal for all the peoples of the earth. – 2. For a green deal of global Anglicanism. – 3. The Church of England carbon free. – 4. 2030: a step, not the milestone.

1. A common goal for all the people of the earth

Signed on 25 September 2015 by the governments of the 193 member states of the United Nations and endorsed by the UN General Assembly, the 2030 Agenda consists of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framed within a broader action programme of 169 environmental, economic, social and institutional targets to be achieved by 2030. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is thus an action programme for people, planet and prosperity that provides a common basis to build a different world and give everyone the chance to live in a sustainable society. In fact, the goals set have a global validity, they concern and involve all the countries and components of society, from private companies to the public sector, from civil society to information and cultural operators: these include the Churches, as social intermediate bodies through which every person fully realises his or her personality.

Sustainable development¹, defined according to its three dimensions - economic, social and ecological - aims to end poverty, to fight inequality, to tackle climate change, to build peaceful societies that respect human rights.

All the subscribing countries are therefore called upon to commit themselves to defining their own strategy to achieve these goals, communicating their achievements within a process coordinated by the UN.

1 Sustainable development includes 17 goals in which social, economic and climate justice targets are articulated, among which the goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and the goal 10 (reducing inequalities) are the most relevant for religious denominations.

Each country is assessed annually through the work of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), which has the task of evaluating progress, results and challenges for all countries, and by national and international public opinion. In addition, a debate on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda takes place every four years at the UN General Assembly, in the presence of Heads of State and Government: the first review took place in September 2019.

At the European level, the Union is engaged in the definition of the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The way in which the goals are declined at the EU level is intended to be an important guideline for the member states in the final definition of their respective strategy. The driving force behind this adaptation programme is the European Commission; during the opening speech of the plenary session of the European Parliament in July 2019, Ursula von der Leyen presented a rich programme of action, in which the Union's will to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, also in relation to the Paris Agreement on climate change, clearly emerges.

Agenda 2030 rests on the basic assumption that sustainability is not a purely environmental issue, nor a matter for governments alone, since the ecological perspective must be included in a more general approach that places man at the centre in a multidimensionality that considers him as a social and environmental actor, and an economic one. All these perspectives are strongly inter-related, and the great religions agree on this: it is not just today that they are questioning how the overexploitation of ecosystems, of which man as God's creature is guardian and integral part, affects access to dignified living conditions that respect the principle of equality and fair redistribution of wealth. Well known even to everyone are the positions of Pope Francis on the need for an integral perspective that places man at the centre of ecosystems from an active and passive point of view, so that he can usefully act to improve his own existential and spiritual condition without neglecting the responsibilities that bind humanity to the environment it inhabits². Equally fairly well known to the general public are the interventions of the religious authorities of the great reli-

2 Just as an example, think of the great attention that Pope Francis and the Catholic Church in general pay to the issues of ecology in its integral dimension, as functional to the development of the principle of human dignity, as outlined by the Pontiff in his own encyclical *Laudato sii*. See on this topic MAZZONI, G. (2024), *Ordinamento canonico e pensiero ecologico. La cura della casa comune tra magistero pontificio e sinodalità*, Rubettino, Roma; BOTTONI, R. (2024), *I popoli indigeni nel magistero della Chiesa cattolica, da minoranze vulnerabili a custodi della 'casa comune'*, Ledizioni, Milano.

gions on this subject, interventions which reconnect the environmental theme to the fight against inequalities and the protection of the weakest.

2. For a green deal of global Anglicanism

In the groove just outlined, less known to the public is the Anglican Churches' commitment to ecological issues, which starts well before the 2030 Agenda.

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC)³ has welcomed the new global commitment promoted by the UN for sustainable development, translating it into two resolutions addressed to the Anglican Communion for a human growth respectful of creation, of humanity as well as of every other animal and plant creature. The proposed actions are both symbolic, such as the establishment of days of reflection, prayer and fasting dedicated to these issues, and more pragmatic, such as the identification of sustainability plans for places of worship and pastoral action «develop[ing] an action plan and resources for sustainable living at individual, parish, diocesan and provincial level; including policies and procedures to minimise waste, increase use of renewable energies, and incorporate creation care into liturgical practice»⁴, bringing indigenous peoples, as custodians of the common home, back to the centre of the Churches' action⁵.

Also, during the 2016 session of the ACC, the Communion's commitment to climate change issues had emerged strongly, noting the need to work proactively in collaboration with local communities to adopt appropriate measures to contain and mitigate the effects of climate change to protect creation and

3 The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) is one of the four instruments of Communion that ensures collaboration and discussion between the sister Churches for the definition of common action on issues of global interest. It is composed of the Archbishop of Canterbury, clergy and laity, including at least two women and two young people under the age of twenty-eight. It draws up common guidelines for the Churches of the Communion, also stimulating ecumenical dialogue with other Christian Churches. It has no imposing powers on churches, but its deliberations constitute guidelines. For further information see the ACC's communion website <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/>; CIANITTO, C. (2020), *Anglicanesimo, territorialità e diaspora*, in QDPE 1, p. 127-142.

4 ACC, A17:05 (2019) Anglican Communion Environmental Network, in <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-17/resolutions.aspx#a1705>.

5 ACC, A17:06 (2019) Climate resilience: «[...] recognising the important role of Indigenous/First Nation peoples' knowledge in building resilience to climate change in communities», in <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-17/resolutions.aspx#a1705>.

the peoples who inhabit it. As J. Golliher, Director for the Environment and Sustainable Communities, Anglican Communion Office at the UN, emphasised, the Communion must move from simple exhortations to concrete plans that can instil the evangelical precept of the protection of creation and attention to the needy into concrete actions that make the commitment of the Anglican Churches tangible⁶. Hence, a medium- to long-term planned commitment was needed, which resulted in the request for a ten-year plan of positive actions that the Communion set out to implement.⁷

However, the Anglican Churches' commitment to ecological issues did not begin with Agenda 2030. Already in 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the ACC had promoted and strongly supported the creation of the Anglican Alliance⁸, established by the Lambeth Conference⁹, with the aim of promoting and pursuing joint action by the Churches on ecology and social justice issues, promoting the projects of the local Churches as good practices scattered in the different territories of the world from which drawing inspiration and useful tools to develop the Anglican Church's attention towards the last, the weakest, in the concrete implementation of the evangelical message that is proper to it, and of the role of custodians of creation that God assigns to humanity in Genesis¹⁰. From its foundation to the present day, Anglican Alliance represents Anglicanism's choral response to the challenges posed by globalisation and climate change, as well as in all situations of emergency and environmental disaster, certifying a profound sensitivity and commitment. The 2030 Agenda, however, has had the merit of embedding this experience in a global network that gathers States, Churches and civil society around a single common goal.

6 See GOLLIHER, J. (2016), *The Climate Crisis: The Anglican Communion, the United Nations, the World*, in particular see Recommendation 4, at <https://acen.anglicancommunion.org/media/236537/Paper-for-ACC16-Jeff-Golliher.pdf>.

7 ACC, A17:11 (2019) Sustainable Development Goals: «4. requests that the Secretary General report to the Standing Committee, no later than its first meeting in 2020, on a 10-year strategy on Anglican Communion engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals», in <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-17/resolutions.aspx#a1705>.

8 Anglican Alliance, <https://anglicanalliance.org>.

9 The Lambeth Conference, founded in 1863, is the assembly of the bishops of the Anglican Churches. It meets every ten years and operates on established practice. Its decisions are not binding on the churches but they have great power of direction and moral persuasion. For further information <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/lambeth-conference.aspx>.

10 *Luke*, 4:18; *John*, 10:10; *Genesis*, 2:15.

The coordination of the Anglican Alliance and the Anglican Consultative Council contribute to building a network that finds, however, in the action of the individual Churches of the Communion its *raison d'être*. It is not possible to describe in detail the action of each church of the Communion, so we have chosen to analyse the action of the Church of England, also because of the organisational and institutional peculiarities.

3. The Church of England carbon free

In February 2020, the General Synod of the Church of England¹¹, accepting the ACC's call for a more proactive commitment of the Churches against climate change, set the ambitious goal of making all church buildings, be their churches, schools or buildings used for other purposes, carbon-free by 2030¹². On the other hand, the mission of the (Anglican) Church in the world¹³ has among its tasks the protection of creation through the renewal of life on earth in all its forms as part of the Gospel proclamation to which God has destined it.

Within this theological framework moves the Church of England's commitment to a holistic and integral ecological vision that places the human being at the centre in his relationship with nature, as the guardian and, at the same time, responsible user of God-given goods. The Routemap to Net Zero Carbon

11 The General Synod is the general synod of the Church of England that was established in 1969 by the Synodical Government Measure.

12 GS, final motion 2020: «That this Synod, recognising that the global climate emergency is a crisis for God's creation, and a fundamental injustice, and following the call of the Anglican Communion in ACC Resolutions A17.05 and A17.06; (a) call upon all parts of the Church of England, including parishes, BMOs [Bishop Mission Orders], education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals, and the NCIs [National Church Institutions], to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target; (b) request reports on progress from the Environment Working Group and the NCI's every three years beginning in 2022 and; (c) call on each Diocesan Synod, and cathedral Chapter, to address progress towards net zero emissions every three years», in <https://churchofengland.org>.

13 The Anglican Church has five marks for its mission in the world: «To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers; 3. To respond to human need by loving service; 4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth». See <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>.

2030¹⁴, presented in 2022, is the result of study and planning work that started during the Covid-2019 emergency; a series of practical solutions were tested and studied to be suggested to the various levels of local government responsible for the management of church buildings, so as to create guidelines with efficient, economically sustainable solutions that respect the architectural and artistic constraints to which many buildings are subject to. As goals for 2030, the routemap indicates the decarbonisation of buildings directly controlled by the Church - i.e. churches, schools, offices, service buildings, clergy houses, care and recreation centres - with a shift from fossil energy sources to renewable ones. This largely implies the conversion of existing lighting and heating systems with photovoltaic or fully powered by renewable energy sources ones, when possible, or with the lowest possible ecological impact.

A path that appears to be mapped out, but which in its practical implementation comes up against at least two problems due to the nature of the Church of England as an established church. On the one hand, any modification of a church building, even the replacement of the lighting system, implies the activation of the Faculty Jurisdiction; on the other hand, it is necessary to involve all the bodies that contribute to the patrimonial management of the Church buildings and that are not exclusively Church bodies. Prominent among these are the Church Commissioners who have embarked on a real process of patrimonial 'conversion'.

The nature of the Church of England as an established church implies the subjection of any place of worship to the jurisdiction of the Crown. Ecclesiastical bodies that directly manage these places, such as Parochial Church Councils or dioceses, cannot freely determine to conform to the principles of the Routemap sought by the General Synod. Any changes to a church building fall under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, which, because of the establishment, fall under the British courts which are generally presided over by a lay judge. This is the Faculty Jurisdiction¹⁵, where the judge acts as a control body for the structural and architectural conformity of the project involving the building from every point of view, i.e. landscape, architectural, structural and

14 The Church of England (2022), *Routemap to Net Zero Carbon 2030*, The Church House Publishing, London, <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/net-zero-carbon-routemap#na>.

15 See Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018 and Faculty Jurisdiction (Amendment) Rules 2022. For further details and the relevant case law, please refer to the website of the Ecclesiastical Law Society <https://ecclawsoc.org.uk/education/legal/faculty-jurisdiction/>.

the preservation of the building decency understood as *dedicatio ad cultum*. The jurisprudence¹⁶ on this topic shows an increase in requests for authorisations to adapt lighting and heating systems of the buildings. In all the cases, the judge gives due consideration to the need to adapt to the Routemap defined by the Synod, but at the same time there is a necessary evaluation of the technical options available, as well as the economic impact, seeking a solution that is as tailor-made as possible for each building and the community that uses it¹⁷.

A close coordination between the policies undertaken by the General Synod and the courts is therefore necessary, just as the collaboration between the General Synod and the Church Commissioners appears even more necessary.

The Church Commissioners¹⁸ were the result of the merger of two pre-existing bodies: the Governors of the Bounty of Queen Anne for the Augmentation for the Poor Clergy, created in 1703 by the Queen Anne's Bounty Act¹⁹, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, created by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Act of 1836²⁰. In 1947 the Church Commissioners became the owners of all the properties that had previously belonged to the Queen Anne's Bounty and the

16 See on these issues WILLINK, D. (2024), *Re St Mary, Stalbridge [2024] ECC Sal 1 & 2: Salisbury Consistory Court: Willink Dep Ch, 22 February and 8 April 2024*[2024] ECC Wor 3, in *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*, 26(3), p. 349-350. The most recent pronouncements include *Re St. Bartholomew Colne [2025] ECC Bla 1*; *Re Christ Church Wesham [2024] ECC Bla 5*; *Re Holy Cross Newcastle [2024] ECC New 3*. For a comprehensive review of the most recent case law on the subject see Law & Religion UK, <https://lawandreligionuk.com/2021/03/08/an-index-of-lruk-posts-reduction-of-carbon-emissions/#Consistory%20court%20judgments>.

17 This need is well exemplified by the video available on the Church of England website, Practical tips for Churches to reach net zero, <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/net-zero-carbon-church/practical-guide-help-your-church-reach-net-zero-carbon>.

18 Church Commissioners Measure 1947.

19 The task of Queen Anne's Bounty was to manage the collection of tithes that had always been paid to the Church and taken by Henry VIII during the Reformation. Queen Anne (1702 - 1714), a fervent and pious Anglican, returned them to the Church for the support of the poor clergy. The collection of tithes was later abolished in 1926; at the time of the creation of the Church Commissioners the proceeds collected by the Bounty were used to support about 10,000 incumbents. See Archbishops' Commission (1995), *Working as one body, The report of the Archbishops' Commission on the Organisation of the Church of England*, London, p. 81.

20 Cf. DOE, N. (1996), *The legal framework of the Church of England*, Oxford University Press, p. 464; HILL, M. (2007), *Ecclesiastical law*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 38 ff.

Ecclesiastical Commissioners²¹. They own them as trustees for the Church of England's own purposes and are not a body of the General Synod, but a public legal entity of the State that manages Church property as a trust. Audits of their activities are carried out directly by the Home Secretary and Parliament when approving the annual budget. The Synod receives a copy of the Commissioners' budget annually, but has no duty to discuss and approve it, although it does, to ensure coordination between the two bodies. The First Church Estate Commissioner is also an ex officio member of the Synod and of the Archbishops' Council. To guarantee to the Church the necessary resources for its activities, the Church Commissioners²² operate on the financial market²³ like any other asset management agency so that, until a few decades ago, they were not bound by any ethical requirements in their investments' choice. The Commissioners' could opt for the type of investment they considered most appropriate without worrying about its ethical qualification if such considerations might have endangered the profitability. This principle has been affirmed in case law in the past²⁴ with an inversion of priorities: ethical concerns should only be considered when making unethical investments could itself become a financial detriment to the Church; consequently, the Church Commissioners could make unethical investments if they were financially profitable.

With the creation of the Church of England Ethical Investments Advisory

21 In 1976 with the Endowments and Glebe Measure they were also entrusted with the management of the *benefices* still formally held by incumbents. For more on these issues, see CIANITTO, C. (2012), *Le risorse del culto. Finanziamento e sostentamento del clero nelle Chiese anglicane in Gran Bretagna*, Sandrigo, TgBook.

22 DOE, N., *The legal framework*, cit., p. 467; Church Commissioners Measure 1947, s. 10(4)-(6). The Church Commissioners are not the only body that manages and invests capital within the Church. To list only the central bodies of the Church, it is necessary to mention the Central Board of Finance, which is the holder of the financial endowment of the General Synod, and the Church of England Pensions' Board to which all the Diocesan Boards of Finance and all the various trusts held by the Parochial Church Councils.

23 The duty of the Anglican Churches to invest their resources in profitable activities to generate new income to be used not only for the support of the clergy, but also for the purposes of worship and charity activities, is among the corollaries of the principle of Stewardship, as set by the Lambeth Conference. In doing so, however, each church must be sure that the financial transactions undertaken are ethically consistent with the evangelical principles. See Lambeth Conference, 1908, Res. 49 in DOE, N. (1998), *Canon law in the Anglican Communion*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, footnote 149.

24 Harries (Bishop of Oxford) v Church Commissioners [1992] 1 WLR 1241.

Group – which, in collaboration with the Archbishops’ Council²⁵, outlines to the Commissioners’ the guidelines for a correct ethical management of the assets - the observance of ethical principles in the management of assets has become more effective today, regardless of the economic implications.

While the Church of England set out to embrace the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda by adopting its own Routemap for a carbon-free Church by 2030, the Church Commissioners continued their policy of ethical investment by also setting themselves some specific targets. Although formally a state body, during the last decades they have been increasingly in tune with the pastoral policies that the Church of England adopts. In this sense, in their Responsible and Ethical Investment Policy, the Church Commissioners effectively emphasise the goals of the Paris Agreement, as well as the need to pursue them in the light of the five marks of mission that inspire the Anglican Church. For this reason, the Commissioners’ investment portfolio aims to become totally carbon-free by 2050²⁶, thus consistently reflecting the Church’s objectives also through its financial and asset dimensions. Without this necessary coordination, the direction outlined by the Synod would remain partly unfulfilled as it would lead to the paradox of having green buildings for sure but managed by a clergy supported with carbon footprint funds anything but green.

4. 2030: a step, not the milestone

An ambitious goal that of the Church of England, as well as that of the entire Anglican Communion, which passes through a material conversion - of buildings and investments - and a moral one, through educating each community to think about the impact of its habits on the common home, the creation.

For this reason, 2030 is only a stage, not the arrival of a journey that has found new motivations in the 2030 agenda, but which has started from afar and is solidly based on the evangelical principles that animate the mission of

25 For a detailed exposition of ethical investment policies see the latest available Church Commissioners report, *Church Commissioners annual report* (2023), p. 25 in https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/the-church-commissioners-for-england-annual-report-2023_1.pdf; Church Commissioners for England (2024), *Responsible and Ethical Investment Policy*, https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/ccfe-responsible-and-ethical-investment-policy-2024-public-version-23apr2024_0.pdf.

26 See Church Commissioners for England (2023), *Climate Action Plan*, https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/climate_action_report_030723_digital2.pdf.

the Church of Christ, not only the Anglican Church, in the world: responsible custody of creation as a gift of God, attention to humanity for the social and sustainable progress of all the people of the earth.

Therefore, the Church of England's goals do not end with the Routemap but go beyond it. The Church's green turnaround must serve as an example to educate every single gesture of each believer to care for the other, including limiting unnecessary travel and implementing forms of smart working. These are just some of the goals contained in the Routemap that look ahead to the post-2030 period²⁷ and aim to generate a carbon free circle for the whole life of the church that includes from the supply of raw materials to the disposal and recycling of waste, so that the faithful of the future will increasingly pay witness to a Church which cares of all the dimensions of the human existence.

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27 See *Routemap to Net Zero Carbon 2030*, cit., p. 69.

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BEYOND DOMINION: ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ECOTHEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Fedor Arkhipov

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. – 2. Religion and Ecology: The Role of Orthodox Christianity in Environmental Conservation. – 3. The Ecological Agenda of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: A Chronological Overview. – 4. The Evolution of the Ecological Matters of the Russian Orthodox Church. – 5. Comparative Analysis of the Ecological Positions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church in Relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. – 6. Conclusion.

1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents a crucial global initiative aimed at addressing interconnected crises like climate change, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation¹. Through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it seeks to «transform our world» by 2030, focusing on sustainable practices to create a more equitable and resilient society.

A central concept in this discourse is social-ecological transformation; however, many proposed solutions, framed within a «new critical orthodoxy» – a concept proposed by Ulrich Brand – offer only incremental changes rather than a fundamental overhaul of existing systems (BRAND, U. 2016, p. 24).

These solutions, while acknowledging ecological urgency, often fail to address the deep structural drivers of environmental harm, such as economic models that prioritize growth and resource extraction.

1 Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/70/L.1)] 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (accessed 27 January 2025).

In contrast, Orthodox Christianity, despite its perceived conservatism, offers a more radical and holistic vision for ecological transformation, which resonates with the 2030 Agenda. While mainstream approaches emphasize market solutions, namely additional economic regulations, environmental duties and fines, Orthodox Christianity advocates for a spiritual and ethical reorientation of society (THEOKRITOFF, E. 2017, p. 116; SKIRBEKK, V. and others 2020, p. 264). It emphasizes that ecological healing is not just a matter of policy adjustments but requires a profound transformation of humanity's relationship with nature. This vision of stewardship, humility, and moderation challenges consumerist, exploitative mentalities, aligning more closely with the transformational goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Orthodox Christianity's ecological message, articulated particularly by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, calls for a deep moral and spiritual renewal, as expressed in the 2016 Council of Crete (Paragraph 8 of the Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church)². World Orthodoxy argues that the environmental crisis is rooted in spiritual and ethical failings, not just technical or political issues. This makes the Orthodox perspective both contemporary and radical, calling for a change in human hearts and minds, grounded in ancient theological principles, which directly oppose the consumer-driven solutions of green capitalism or market-based approaches.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping ecological attitudes, with various faiths emphasizing humanity's responsibility to care for the Earth (REUTER, T.A. 2015, pp. 1217–1231; DAVIS, G.F. & SAHNI, P. 2018, pp. 253–273; SHERMA R.D. 2021, p. 465). In the case of Orthodox Christianity, this ethical framework encourages sustainability and conservation. However, the role of Orthodox Christianity in the global ecological movement, particularly within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, remains underexplored (CHU, L.T. 2022). For example, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has engaged with ecological issues since the 1990s³, yet there is limited research on how Orthodox Christians, including

2 *Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church: To the Orthodox people and to all people of good will*. Official Documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. Available at: <https://www.holycouncil.org/message> (accessed 27 January 2025).

3 Since the late 1990s, representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church have frequently commented on environmental issues. The peak of the ROC's involvement in the ecological agenda appears to have occurred at the turn of the 2000s and 2010s, when Orthodox clergy began to actively speak about the importance of environmental concerns within church ministry. The official stance was reflected in a number of church documents, and the Church itself took part in interfaith

those within the ROC, perceive contemporary environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and how these views influence their actions (KHRIBAR, S.F. 2009; NEGROV, A. & MALOV, A. 2021, p. 305).

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how Orthodox Christian beliefs, particularly those of the ROC, intersect with global sustainability efforts. It will explore how Orthodox ethical norms influence ecological behavior and participation in environmental initiatives. Additionally, the study will consider how political, social, and cultural factors shape Orthodox Christians' engagement with ecological issues.

This research will demonstrate that Orthodox Christianity, far from being an outdated or conservative force, offers a vital, forward-thinking ecological message that contributes meaningfully to the global sustainability agenda. By focusing on the spiritual and ethical dimensions of environmental transformation, Orthodox Christianity presents a counterpoint to market-based solutions, providing a vision for a more profound and lasting ecological shift.

2. Religion and Ecology: The Role of Orthodox Christianity in Environmental Conservation

Environmental issues have increasingly become central to contemporary discourse, affecting a wide range of fields, from economics and politics to sociology and religion (ZEMO, K.H. & NIGUS, H.Y. 2021; ORELLANO, A. , VALOR, C. & CHUVIECO, E. 2020). Over the past few decades, religious organizations have become more involved in addressing ecological concerns, recognizing the growing global environmental crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources. They offer frameworks that help shape ecological consciousness, reinforce moral obligations toward the environment, and promote a transformation in how humans relate to the natural world—from viewing it as a mere resource for human exploitation to recognizing it as a sacred and valuable part of Divine creation (SACHDEVA, S. 2016, p. 18).

Although the relationship between religion and ecology has often been seen through the lens of «green» faiths like Buddhism and Hinduism, monotheistic religions such as Christianity and Islam have also increasingly engaged with environmental concerns. In Islam, for instance, the concept of stewardship over the Earth has been revitalized, emphasizing humanity's role as caretakers of

dialogue and initiated discussions on ecological issues with the support of the government (KARAKO, P.S., 2010, pp. 70-71).

nature (HANCOCK, R. 2019; KOEHRSEN, J. 2021).

Similarly, in Catholicism, Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* has brought environmental issues to the forefront, advocating for collective efforts to combat climate change and protect the planet⁴. These developments reflect an evolving understanding of the need for ecological responsibility, not only for the survival of the planet but also for spiritual growth.

Despite this growing engagement, Orthodox Christianity has faced significant theological opposition regarding its stance on environmental issues. One of the most influential critiques came from Lynn White, whose article *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* explored the relationship between Christianity and ecological degradation (WHITE, L. JR. 1967). White argued that Christianity's doctrine of human dominion over nature played a central role in shaping humanity's exploitative relationship with the environment. By framing humans as separate from and superior to nature, Christianity, according to White, laid the theological groundwork for the exploitation of the natural world. She suggested that this dualistic view of humanity and nature justified environmental destruction by portraying nature as an object to be used for human benefit, rather than a living, interconnected system.

In response to these critiques, eco-theological movements within Orthodox Christianity have sought to reinterpret the idea of dominion, advocating for a more responsible and respectful approach to nature (WATLING, A. 2008, p. 477). However, some critics argue that the anthropocentric worldview, where humans are seen as rulers of the Earth, remains deeply ingrained in Christian doctrine, hindering a shift toward a more integrated understanding of humanity's place within the natural world (CHERNYAEV, A.V. 2013). This critique aligns with indigenous and animistic belief systems, which view humans as interconnected with nature rather than superior to it. Despite these challenges, Orthodox Christianity offers a rich framework for ecological conservation rooted in spiritual and ethical teachings. Orthodox eco-theology emphasizes that humanity's relationship with nature is not solely a matter of dominion but of stewardship⁵.

4 POPE FRANCIS. 24 May 2015. *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' on Care for Our Common Home* (accessed 3 February 2025), Official Website of the Holy See, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

5 In the context of this article, Orthodox ecotheology is understood as a form of constructive theology that focuses on the relationships between Christianity and nature, particularly in light of ecological issues. I define ecotheology as an approach

According to Orthodox thought, the natural world is a gift from God, created with intrinsic value and sanctity. Orthodox Christians are called to care for this creation with respect and humility, acknowledging their role as caretakers rather than exploiters.

A key aspect of Orthodox eco-theology is the emphasis on asceticism and self-restraint (CHRYSSAVGIS, J. & FOLTZ, B.V. 2013). These values overlap with ecological practices, as they encourage moderation in consumption, a reduction of waste, and a mindful approach to the natural world. By focusing on self-control and spiritual purity, Orthodox Christianity calls its followers to consider the impact of their actions on the environment, fostering a more sustainable and ethical approach to life. This ascetic perspective, which encourages believers to refrain from overconsumption, complements ecological practices such as reducing carbon footprints, conserving resources, and avoiding excess.

The Orthodox Church's engagement with environmental issues has deepened over the past few decades. This shift can be traced back to the 1960s when the World Council of Churches began addressing natural resource use and sustainable development (McFEE, D.E. 2002). This period laid the foundation for a global religious environmental agenda, in which Orthodox leaders have played a key role. The growing interest of Orthodox Christian leaders in environmental concerns has manifested in several ways, including participation in international forums and the publication of key church documents⁶ on environmental issues.

that emphasizes the importance of God's creation as a "household," where the natural world is seen as an interconnected system. This approach emerged in response to the recognition of the ecological crisis threatening the future of humanity, as well as the so-called «ecological complaint» against Christianity, which accuses it of contributing to the exploitation of nature. (BROWN, V. 2025; DEANE-DRUMMOND, C. 2008; CONRADIE, E.M. 2020, pp. 1-13; TOMOIOAGĂ, F. 2020, pp. 74-106; NEGROV, A. & MALOV, A. 2021, p. 305).

- 6 In the Orthodox Church, official documents issued by local churches hold binding authority primarily for their clergy, while laypeople follow these directives voluntarily. Documents addressing socially significant issues tend to be more declarative, reflecting the Church's stance as part of civil society rather than imposing strict obligations. Consequently, any ecclesiastical act has a localized application, functioning within the framework of church (corporate) law rather than canonical law, which pertains to fundamental doctrinal and structural principles. Unlike in the Catholic tradition, Orthodox canon law does not have a clear distinction from ecclesiastical law. As 19th-century Russian canonist Alexey Pavlov noted, Orthodox scholars often use these terms interchangeably (PAVLOV, A.S. 1902, p.8). Later legal documents regulating church life do not hold the same canonical status as the canons established by the first seven Ecumenical Councils. Instead, they constitute

A prominent figure in this movement has been Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who has been an outspoken advocate for environmental action since the 2000s. He emphasizes the importance of preserving nature as part of God's creation and has called on Christians worldwide to recognize their responsibility to protect the environment⁷. Under his leadership, the Orthodox Church has become an active voice in global ecological discourse, participating in summits and international discussions on sustainability and climate change. The Orthodox Church's environmental activities are diverse, spanning both practical initiatives and spiritual education. These efforts aim to raise awareness among the faithful and the broader public about the urgency of environmental issues and the moral imperative to care for creation. One key aspect of this engagement is the Church's collaboration with international environmental organizations, where it actively participates in conferences, forums, and joint initiatives focused on nature conservation and sustainable development. Through these partnerships, the Church contributes to the global environmental movement, lending its moral and ethical perspective to discussions on ecological responsibility (HARMANNIJ, D.J. 2019).

In addition to working with environmental organizations, Orthodox leaders take part in high-level political forums and climate summits, where they emphasize the importance of ethical decision-making in the management of natural resources. By advocating for long-term, sustainable policies that prioritize ecological integrity, social justice, and fairness, the Church seeks to influence global environmental governance and promote policies that reflect a commitment to responsible stewardship (SACHS, J.D. et al., 2022). A foundational element of the Orthodox Church's environmental advocacy is the adoption of official Church documents addressing ecological concerns. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in particular, has issued numerous statements highlighting the sacredness of nature and the responsibility of humans to act as caretakers of God's creation. These documents call on the faithful to integrate eco-friendly practices into their daily lives, recognizing the environment as an essential part of the divine order that must be protected (NANTSOU, T. & ASPROULIS, N. 2021).

ecclesiastical law, which may also incorporate state regulations on church-state relations while remaining rooted in canonical tradition.

7 THE GREEN PATRIARCH: HIS ALL-HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW, *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*, www.goarch.org/society/greening-the-parish/green-patriarch. (accessed 3 February 2025).

Beyond its institutional declarations, the Orthodox Church actively fosters interfaith dialogue on environmental issues, organizing forums and discussions that bring together representatives of different religious traditions. These interfaith initiatives aim to develop common approaches to ecological challenges, encouraging collaboration across religious communities in addressing the global environmental crisis. By uniting religious voices in support of environmental action, the Church contributes to a broader ethical and spiritual response to pressing ecological concerns (PRISHLYAK, N.B. 2016).

Furthermore, the Orthodox Church plays a crucial role in raising awareness of and responding to environmental disasters, including pollution, habitat destruction, and climate-related catastrophes. It mobilizes its resources to educate the public about the consequences of environmental degradation, organizes humanitarian aid efforts, and advocates for sustainable lifestyle changes that reduce environmental harm. Through pastoral guidance and community engagement, the Church seeks to inspire a sense of responsibility and collective action among its followers, reinforcing the idea that caring for the environment is an integral part of the Christian way of life (KULEBYAKIN, E.V. & ZYAMALOVA, N.I. 2012).

By combining spiritual teachings with concrete environmental initiatives, the Orthodox Church integrates ecological awareness into its religious mission, offering a unique and holistic perspective on sustainability. Through these efforts, it seeks to instill a deeper understanding of humanity's interconnectedness with nature and the ethical obligation to protect the planet for future generations.

3. The Ecological Agenda of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: A Chronological Overview

The ecological agenda of the Ecumenical Patriarchate has evolved significantly over the years, driven by the increasing urgency of the environmental crisis. This development is particularly evident in the statements issued by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the deliberations of the Holy and Great Council of 2016. By examining these documents in chronological order, one can trace the deepening theological understanding of the ecological crisis and the Orthodox Church's growing commitment to environmental stewardship.

The documents mentioned have different status, the statements of the Patriarch as a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate are intended to articulate the position of the church he heads on ecology. In turn, the documents

of the 2016 Council were an attempt to revise and adapt the canonical base, common to all local Orthodox churches, to modern realities.

However, the non-recognition of this council by a number of local churches, including the Russian Orthodox Church, again limits the scope of the acts of this Council, making them more of a declaration than a guide to action. From Patriarch Bartholomew's landmark statements in the late 1990s to the more comprehensive framework developed at the Council, these initiatives demonstrate a consistent and profound link between ecology and Christian spirituality (ANDRIANOS, L.A. & TOMREN, T.S. et al., 2021, p. 340).

The journey of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in addressing the environmental crisis began in earnest with the publication of the *Statement on the Environment* on November 8, 1997⁸. In this pioneering document, Patriarch Bartholomew made a direct connection between the environment and Christian spirituality. He argued that the ecological crisis was not merely a scientific or technical issue, but a deeply spiritual and moral one. The Patriarch called for a sacred responsibility to care for God's creation, emphasizing that the destruction of nature is a violation of divine commandments. This was not just a call to action but a moral and theological imperative, as he urged Christians to view the Earth as a gift from God, not a resource to be exploited.

In his statement, Patriarch Bartholomew also linked the Eucharist to environmental care, teaching that the sacrament is a reminder of the divine gift of creation and humanity's duty to preserve it. The idea of asceticism—moderation and self-restraint—emerged as central to the Church's ecological message. The Patriarch argued that voluntary simplicity and moderation in consumption were necessary to align human behavior with the natural world and reduce the environmental footprint of human activity. In the years that followed, Patriarch Bartholomew continued to develop this vision, organizing international conferences, engaging with scientists, and calling attention to the moral dimensions of environmental destruction. He also declared September 1st as the *Day of Prayer for the Protection of Creation* in 1989, an initiative that would become central to the Patriarchate's ecological calendar.

As the global environmental crisis deepened in the 2010s, ecological messages became more urgent. In the 2016 *Encyclical Message*, which was adopt-

8 HIS ALL HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW, *Statement on the Environment: Speeches at the Environmental Symposium*, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, California, 8 November 1997, accessed 4 February 2025, <https://www.acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship/theology-e/orthodox-churches-statement-environment>.

ed at the synod chaired by the Patriarch, there was a more pronounced critique of the global economic system and the pursuit of unlimited growth, which were directly linked to the destruction of natural resources (paragraph 14 of the Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church)⁹. The need for spiritual renewal was emphasized, with a call for humanity to reject consumerism and greed and instead adopt a lifestyle based on moderation and respect for creation. This period saw the development of a more holistic ecological vision, where interreligious dialogue and cooperation with environmental organizations became a key aspect of the Patriarchate's strategy (ANDRIANOS, L.A., 2021, pp. 199-200). Bartholomew's role as an ecumenical leader who could bring together religious leaders, scientists, and policymakers was cemented, positioning him as a pivotal figure in the global environmental movement.

The Holy and Great Council, convened in Crete in 2016, represented a crucial moment in the history of Orthodox environmental thought. The Council's *Message* emphasized that the ecological crisis is not just an environmental or scientific issue, but one with profound spiritual and ethical implications (paragraph 8 of the Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church)¹⁰. The ecological crisis stems from spiritual and moral issues, particularly greed, selfishness, and avarice, leading to the reckless consumption of resources, pollution, and climate change. The Church teaches that humans are stewards, not owners, of creation, and calls for repentance for environmental abuses. The 2016 Council emphasized asceticism as a solution, advocating self-restraint and moderation to combat overconsumption. The Church also stresses the need for a global approach to the crisis, with collective action from governments, organizations, and religious bodies. The Orthodox Church participates actively in international ecological efforts, designating September 1 as a day of prayer for nature's protection.

An important part of the Holy and Great Council's document «The Mission of the Orthodox Church in the Modern World» is Paragraph 10 of the Section titled «The Mission of the Orthodox Church in the Modern World: Witness of Love through Service¹¹.» The Council teaches that the unlimited pursuit of

9 Encyclical of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, Crete 2016, Pentecost 2016, accessed 4 February 2025, <https://www.holycouncil.org/encyclical-holy-council>.

10 Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, *To the Orthodox people and to all people of good will*, accessed 4 February 2025, <https://www.holycouncil.org/message>.

11 The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today's World, *The contribution of the*

wealth and consumerism leads to environmental destruction and the depletion of resources. The overexploitation of the Earth's resources, driven by greed and selfishness, exacerbates ecological harm. The Church emphasizes the responsibility to protect creation, as nature was entrusted to humanity by God (Genesis 2:15). Greed, which satisfies material desires, results in both spiritual impoverishment and environmental devastation. The natural resources of the Earth belong to God, not humanity (*Psalms* 23:1). The Church advocates for frugality, self-restraint, and a responsible relationship with the environment, stressing that both present and future generations have a right to enjoy God's creation. This perspective aligns with the broader teachings in «*The Mission of the Orthodox Church in the Modern World*,» particularly in the section on Peace and Justice. The Church's call for environmental stewardship and justice is not just an ethical imperative but also part of a broader vision for a just and peaceful world, where the well-being of both humanity and creation is safeguarded. Protecting the environment and adopting sustainable practices are essential not only for peace but also for preventing future conflicts, as the fight for dwindling natural resources often leads to geopolitical tensions and war.

A consistent theme in both Patriarch Bartholomew's message and the Council's documents is the connection between the Eucharist and the environment. For the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist is not only a sacrament of communion with God but a reminder of humanity's duty to care for creation (MARSH, L. 2021, pp. 46-69). The Church teaches that creation is a gift from God, and humanity's role is to offer it back to Him with thanksgiving. In the words of the *Encyclical Message* from 2016, "Your own of your own we offer to You in all and for all"—this phrase encapsulates the Orthodox belief that creation is sacred, and humanity's responsibility is to protect and preserve it, not exploit it for selfish gain.

Throughout the 2000s and into the 2010s, the Ecumenical Patriarchate consistently called for interreligious dialogue to address the global ecological crisis (BARTHOLOMEW, JENKINS, FRANCIS, XVI, PAUL II, WELBY, & IERONYMOS II, 2023). The 2016 Holy and Great Council further solidified the Church's commitment to global ecological cooperation, stressing the shared responsibility of all people to protect the Earth. The Church's active participation in international efforts to combat climate change, its support for the Paris Climate Agreement, and its

Orthodox Church in realizing peace, justice, freedom, fraternity and love between peoples, and in the removal of racial and other discriminations, Holy and Great Council, Pentecost 2016, accessed 4 February 2025, <https://www.holycouncil.org/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world>.

emphasis on environmental justice reflect its growing commitment to engaging with the world's religious and political leaders.

In the 2020 *Message for the World Day of Creation*, Patriarch Bartholomew emphasized that the destruction of the environment is not just a political or economic issue but a spiritual crisis¹². He urged interfaith collaboration to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation, acknowledging that the ecological crisis transcends religious boundaries.

In conclusion, the ecological agenda of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, from the early statements and teachings of Patriarch Bartholomew to the comprehensive ecological framework established by the Holy and Great Council in 2016, represents a profound theological response to the environmental crisis. The Church has consistently linked ecological stewardship with Christian spirituality, urging the faithful to adopt a lifestyle of moderation, self-restraint, and respect for creation, and calling for collective global action to preserve the Earth for future generations.

4. The Evolution of the Ecological Matters of the Russian Orthodox Church

The ecological agenda of the Russian Orthodox Church has undergone a significant evolution over the past few decades, as reflected in several key documents. As noted earlier, the legal status of these acts is limited to intra-church application. However, unlike the acts of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, they are a full-fledged part of the church law of the Russian Orthodox Church, since they were adopted by its highest governing bodies (Bishops' Councils or the Holy Synod, acting in between). In particular, the *Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* not only reflects the church's position on key social issues, but is also a guide for clergy in carrying out preaching, and can also be used by church courts and disciplinary commissions of the church as a criterion for assessing the compliance and non-compliance of the actions of clergy with church rules. In the hierarchy of sources of canon law of the Russian Orthodox Church, they occupy approximately the same position as acts of the Bishops' Councils and the Synod, respectively, which is in its canonical significance lower than the canons of the first Seven Ecumenical Councils and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, as well as the modern Charter of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, they are generally binding for the

12 BARTHOLOMEW I, *Message for World Day of Creation - Full text*, September 1, 2020, accessed 4 February 2025, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-09/bartholomew-i-message-for-world-day-of-creation-full-text.html>.

entire church, since they stand in legal force above the decrees and orders of individual bishops.

The sources of church law analyzed in this paragraph articulate the Church's growing engagement with environmental issues, emphasizing the spiritual and theological dimensions of ecology, as well as practical steps for involvement. The Church's engagement with environmental concerns began in earnest with the publication of the *Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* in 2000¹³. This document addresses ecological issues from a theological and anthropological perspective, asserting that the environmental crisis is a consequence of humanity's estrangement from God. According to paragraph XIII.2, this estrangement, caused by original sin, disrupted the harmony between humanity and the natural world, leading to the exploitation of nature and the consumerist attitude that underpins environmental degradation. The Russian Orthodox Church, like the Patriarchate of Constantinople, refers to the same Biblical teachings, emphasizing humanity's role as stewards, not masters, of creation. *Romans* 8:20-22 and *Genesis* 3:18 illustrate how sin has affected both humanity and nature, disrupting their original harmony. The Church cites St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa, who stress that dominion over creation means responsibility, not exploitation, with humanity tasked to "cultivate and keep" the Earth (*Genesis* 2:15). This theological foundation aligns with the call for environmental stewardship.

The *Fundamentals* further critique anthropocentric views that regard nature solely as a resource for human consumption. Paragraphs XIII.3 and XIII.4 specifically call for a reevaluation of humanity's relationship with nature, urging a more balanced, spiritually-oriented approach. Nature, according to the document, should be viewed as a temple—a sacred creation that humanity is tasked with preserving rather than exploiting. This theocentric view encourages a deeper respect for the natural world as part of God's creation, and this perspective would become a cornerstone of the ROC's ecological agenda in subsequent years.

As ecological challenges such as pollution, deforestation, and resource depletion continued to intensify in the following years, the ROC expanded its position with the publication of *The Position of the Russian Orthodox Church on Current Ecological Issues* in 2013¹⁴. This document articulates a comprehensive

13 Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2000. Official website of the Moscow Patriarch. Retrieved 15 January 2025, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/419128.html>.

14 The Position of the Russian Orthodox Church on Current Ecological Issues in 2013,

stance on environmental responsibility, emphasizing that the ecological crises facing the world are rooted in human sin and spiritual decline.

The document begins with a section on *Theological Foundations*, linking the degradation of nature to modern consumerism, where economic gain and the exploitation of resources are prioritized over care for the environment. It stresses that the root causes of ecological problems lie not only in economic and technological spheres but also in the moral and spiritual condition of humanity.

In the section *Theological Reflection on Ecology*, the document underscores that the Orthodox Church rejects both anthropocentric humanism, which treats nature as a mere resource for human use, and pantheism, which elevates nature to the status of deity. Instead, it promotes a theocentric worldview, in which nature is understood as part of God's creation, and humans are called to be responsible stewards. The Church calls for a return to virtues such as humility, temperance, and self-restraint as key to addressing ecological issues in a Christian manner. Spiritual transformation is framed as essential for effective ecological action—without a transformation of the human soul, practical efforts to protect nature will not yield lasting results.

The document also discusses the role of the Church's liturgy in promoting ecological care. In the section *Ecological Themes in Church Liturgy*, it highlights how liturgical practices such as the Divine Eucharist, prayers for good weather, and the blessing of elements like water connect spiritual life with ecological concerns. These practices emphasize the sanctification of both humanity and nature, reflecting the belief that the material world, although fallen, can be redeemed through spiritual engagement. The Church encourages the development of prayers and services that specifically address contemporary environmental challenges.

The 2013 document also emphasizes the importance of ecological education, both for clergy and laity, as discussed in the section *Ecological Education and Christian Ethical Reflection*. The Church advocates for the integration of ecological ethics, based on Christian teachings about creation, into religious and secular educational systems. Monasteries and rural parishes, which often engage in sustainable agricultural practices, are highlighted as models of responsible living and environmental stewardship. This focus on education aims to transform hearts and minds, encouraging the faithful to see environmental

Official website of the Moscow Patriarch, accessed 4 February 2025, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2775125?ysclid=m6qrvk9dog238442726726>.

care as part of their Christian duty. In terms of practical involvement, the document emphasizes the importance of both clergy and laity actively participating in ecological initiatives.

The section *The Church's Participation in Ecological Action* urges the faithful to engage in sustainable practices in agriculture, industry, and urban planning. The Church also expresses its willingness to cooperate with governmental and international institutions, provided that these collaborations are focused on genuine ecological goals and not on political or economic interests. This marks a shift from merely theological reflection to tangible action, recognizing the need for the Church's active involvement in efforts to protect the environment.

The Church's commitment to practical ecological action became even more formalized in 2015 with the publication of the *Methodological Recommendations on the Participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Environmental Protection Activities*¹⁵. As an act of the Synod, in its canonical force it is somewhat inferior to previous documents and can be considered as a subordinate canonical act, which is aimed at implementing the instructions given in the *Fundamentals of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* and *The Position of the Russian Orthodox Church on Current Ecological Issues*, as acts of the Bishops' Councils. These recommendations provided a structured framework for the Church's involvement in environmental initiatives across various levels. It underscores the need for a responsible attitude toward nature, considering it as God's creation, which humanity is called to preserve and cultivate, as indicated in *Genesis 2:15*. The document acknowledges that the industrial era has led to significant environmental damage, such as pollution, deforestation, and improper waste disposal, which have contributed to the global ecological crisis.

The recommendations outline the roles and responsibilities of different Church levels in promoting environmental protection. At the *Church-wide level*, the Department for Church and Society Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate coordinates environmental activities, engages with governmental and public organizations, and participates in environmental forums. At the *diocesan level*, archbishops are responsible for creating and overseeing environmental programs, and they are encouraged to involve youth and volunteers in ecological activities. At the *deanery level*, the local dean or appointed coordinator manages the coordination of environmental efforts across parishes, organizing events

15 Methodological Recommendations on the Participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Environmental Protection Activities, 2015, Official website of the Moscow Patriarch, accessed 4 February 2025, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4158736.html?ysclid=m6qryornow862490995>.

and encouraging participation from local organizations. Finally, at the *parish level*, the Church engages in practical activities such as clean-ups, tree planting, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices.

The 2015 recommendations also emphasize the importance of fostering an ecological culture among believers, highlighting the need for the Church to actively engage in environmental protection at all levels of Church life. The document stresses that the Church must remain cautious when participating in initiatives that may be exploited for political or economic gain. In such cases, the Church reserves the right to abstain from participation and to criticize actions that harm the environment.

The evolution of the ROC's ecological agenda reflects a growing recognition that ecological issues are deeply intertwined with spiritual, moral, and theological concerns. From the early theological reflections on creation in the *Fundamentals of the Social Concept* (2000) to the more comprehensive and action-oriented *Position on Current Ecological Issues* (2013) and the *Methodological Recommendations* (2015), the Russian Orthodox Church has consistently emphasized that ecological care is an essential aspect of Christian stewardship. The Church has gradually shifted from merely reflecting on ecological issues to promoting practical action, integrating ecological education, and calling for the active participation of the faithful at all levels of Church life¹⁶. Through this evolving agenda, the ROC has placed ecological care at the heart of its social and spiritual mission, firmly rooting its approach in Christian values and the teachings of the Gospel.

5. Comparative Analysis of the Ecological Positions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church in Relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This section explores the eco-theology of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and

16 As examples of the Church's activities in the field of ecology, the following can be mentioned: The representative of the Tula Diocese participated in a roundtable on ecological issues // Patriarkhiya.ru [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://eparchia.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3024956.html> [Accessed: 4 February 2025]; The international seminar "Religious communities for justice and peace" took place in Moscow // Patriarkhiya.ru [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/3299501.html> [Accessed: 4 February 2025]; A conference "Christian world and ecological practice of the 21st century" was held in Moscow // Patriarkhiya.ru [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2979565.html> [Accessed: 4 February 2025].

the Russian Orthodox Church within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Both Churches share a theocentric view of environmental stewardship, recognizing Earth as God's creation, with humanity serving as caretakers, not masters. Their theological and ethical foundations align, yet their approaches to ecological issues differ, particularly through the lens of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including climate action, sustainable consumption, and biodiversity protection.

Both Churches stress humanity's duty to act as stewards of nature, a principle expressed in the Russian Orthodox Church's *Fundamentals of the Social Concept* (2000) and the *Message of the Holy and Great Council* (2016). They identify humanity's estrangement from God as the root cause of ecological degradation, fueling a mentality that exploits nature for personal gain. This aligns with SDG 12, which advocates for sustainable consumption and production.

The Russian Orthodox Church's *Position on Ecological Issues* (2013) highlights spiritual decline as the core issue behind environmental harm, echoing the Ecumenical Patriarchate's call for spiritual renewal and a transformation in human attitudes toward nature. Both Churches advocate asceticism and self-restraint as remedies for ecological damage, emphasizing humility, moderation, and the curbing of overconsumption as key virtues for ecological renewal. The *Crete Council* (2016) and the *Fundamentals of the Social Concept* (2000) stress that addressing ecological concerns requires spiritual transformation rather than solely technological or economic solutions, resonating with SDG 13's call for urgent climate action.

Both Churches view the relationship between humans and nature as sacred. The Russian Orthodox Church's *Position on Current Ecological Issues* (2013) likens nature to a temple, emphasizing humanity's role as protector and servant. The Ecumenical Patriarchate similarly stresses that humans are guardians, not owners, of God's creation and must respect its sanctity. Both Churches also highlight the importance of ecological education and practical action, with the ROC recommending ways to integrate ecological teachings at all levels of Church life, while the Ecumenical Patriarchate engages in international environmental forums and observes September 1st as the Day of Prayer for the Environment, aligning with SDG 4's focus on quality education and environmental sustainability.

Despite sharing common theological and ethical foundations, the two Churches differ in their emphasis and approach to ecological issues. The Russian Orthodox Church places considerable weight on the spiritual condition of humanity as the core issue of the ecological crisis.

It advocates for spiritual renewal and transformation of the human soul as the foundational solution to environmental problems. According to its *Fundamentals of the Social Concept* (2000), humanity's estrangement from God has disrupted the harmony between man and nature, emphasizing the need for spiritual awakening. This perspective resonates with SDG 3, which calls for promoting good health and well-being, and SDG 15, which highlights the importance of restoring ecosystems. In contrast, while the Ecumenical Patriarchate also emphasizes spiritual renewal, it places greater emphasis on global responsibility and collective action. It views the ecological crisis as a shared challenge for humanity, advocating for international cooperation and participation in global environmental initiatives, as reflected in the documents of the *Crete Council* (2016). The Ecumenical Patriarchate actively engages in interfaith efforts and international forums, such as the World Council of Churches, promoting the involvement of the global Orthodox community in ecological awareness. This aligns with SDG 17, which promotes partnerships for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing multilateral cooperation.

The Russian Orthodox Church focuses more on local and national initiatives, preferring practical actions at the diocesan and parish levels. It is cautious about international cooperation, especially when ecological initiatives might be politically motivated (CURANOVIĆ, A. 2019, pp. 66-105). The ROC's *Methodological Recommendations* (2015) stress that ecological action should be rooted in Christian moral values, rejecting political or economic motives that could undermine genuine environmental protection. This focus on local action reflects SDG 11, which promotes sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 12, which calls for sustainable consumption and production patterns at the local level. Both Churches are cautious about engaging in ecological initiatives that might be exploited for political or economic purposes. The Russian Orthodox Church is particularly wary of cooperating with secular or governmental organizations when ecological goals may be politicized. It stresses that ecological action must be rooted in Christian moral values and not compromised by political or economic agendas, as highlighted in the *Methodological Recommendations* (2015). On the other hand, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is more open to cooperation with public and international organizations, recognizing the importance of multilateral efforts to address global ecological challenges, while ensuring that such cooperation aligns with Christian values, as discussed in the *Crete Council* (2016). This reflects a broader commitment to SDG 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, as well

as SDG 17, which emphasizes global partnerships. The principle of «common but differentiated responsibilities» (as outlined in SDG 13 and Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration¹⁷) is implicitly supported by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which emphasizes global solidarity in environmental action, while the Russian Orthodox Church stresses the importance of local and personal responsibility, highlighting spiritual accountability as central to addressing the ecological crisis, as noted in its *Position on Ecological Issues* (2013). Though neither Church has a direct focus on sustainable urban development, both advocate for responsible resource use and eco-friendly practices in urban settings. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, in the *Crete Council* (2016), promotes sustainable living in urban environments, while the Russian Orthodox Church encourages guiding urban sustainability efforts with spiritual principles, as outlined in its *Methodological Recommendations* (2015).

6. Conclusion

The growing prominence of environmental issues within global discourse underscores the importance of a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to ecological responsibility. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for urgent action on climate change, sustainable consumption, and biodiversity preservation, reflects a growing recognition of the need for integrated solutions that address both the environmental and ethical dimensions of our global crises. Religious institutions, including the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church, are increasingly seen as key players in this dialogue, offering moral and theological frameworks that complement scientific and political efforts.

The comparative analysis of the ecological positions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the ROC highlights both shared commitments and distinct differences in their approaches to environmental stewardship. Both Churches emphasize a theocentric worldview, where humanity is viewed as stewards rather than masters of creation. This shared foundation reflects a broader theological alignment with the ethical principles of the 2030 Agenda, particularly in areas like sustainable consumption, climate action, and biodiversity conservation. The Churches stress that the ecological crisis is not solely the result of economic and technological failures, but also a consequence of humanity's estrangement from God. Both advocate for a spiritual transformation that seeks to ad-

17 The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

dress the root causes of ecological degradation, focusing on moral renewal, asceticism, self-restraint, and the cultivation of virtues such as humility and moderation.

However, while both Churches share a common theological and ethical foundation, their approaches to ecological engagement differ significantly. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, with its global outlook and ecumenical mission, places strong emphasis on international cooperation, interfaith dialogue, and collective action to tackle ecological crises. Its active participation in global environmental forums and its call for shared responsibility underscore a broader, more inclusive approach to environmental advocacy. In contrast, the Russian Orthodox Church is more focused on local and national initiatives, emphasizing personal responsibility, spiritual renewal, and practical action at the diocesan and parish levels. Its cautious stance on international environmental projects reflects concerns over political or economic motivations that might undermine Christian moral values.

These differing approaches can be understood within the broader theological and ecclesiological contexts of the two Churches. The Ecumenical Patriarchate's role as the spiritual leader of the global Orthodox communion leads it to prioritize global dialogue and cooperative efforts, while the Russian Orthodox Church, with its national identity and historical context, focuses more on local action. Despite these differences, both Churches remain united in their call for a deeper, spiritually grounded relationship with nature, one that recognizes the sanctity of creation and the ethical imperative to protect it for future generations.

Ultimately, the ecological positions of both the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church offer valuable contributions to the global conversation on sustainability. By framing environmental care as a moral and spiritual responsibility, these Churches provide a unique perspective that complements secular and scientific approaches. Their respective emphases on local versus global action, and their varying approaches to cooperation with secular and international institutions, reflect the diversity of thought within Orthodox Christianity on ecological issues. Yet, both Churches agree that ecological responsibility is not only a matter of environmental policy but a profound call to spiritual and moral transformation, underscoring the sacredness of nature and humanity's ethical duty to protect it.

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EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE: THE 2030 AGENDA AMONG RELIGIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Antonio Angelucci

1. The educational urgency of the 2030 Agenda in the academic context

The university of the 21st century is faced with a challenge: to evolve into a “laboratory of the future,” capable of forming knowledgeable and responsible global citizens, yet without losing sight of its historical reality as a place of research and transmission of knowledge. The contributions collected in this miscellany clearly testify how the UN Agenda 2030 does not simply represent an external normative reference but constitutes an educational and cultural paradigm that directly challenges the contemporary university mission. Sustainable Development Goal No. 4, dedicated to quality education, takes on relevance in this context, taking shape as a metagoal that cuts across all the other SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). As is clear from the analysis of teaching in the University of Insubria Studies, presented in the volume, the integration of the 2030 Agenda in educational pathways does not only respond to a need for curricular updating, but also to a deeper need to rethink the relationship between academic knowledge and social transformation. The complexity of the 2030 Agenda, with its 17 goals and 169 targets, reflects the interconnected nature of contemporary challenges, and necessarily requires a systemic and interdisciplinary approach. The contributions by Cortelezzi (pp. 13-34) and Fanetti and Ainger (pp. 35-52), highlight how current economic, environmental, and social emergencies cannot be addressed through fragmented knowledge or isolated disciplines. The university is thus called upon to overcome traditional disciplinary fences to embrace a holistic vision of knowledge, in which scientific, humanistic, and social skills converge toward common goals of sustainability and justice.

This transformation is not without tensions. On the one hand, there remains the need to preserve the methodological rigor and disciplinary specificity that characterize academic excellence; on the other hand, there emerges the ur-

gency of training professionals capable of operating in articulated contexts and dealing with problems that know no disciplinary boundaries. The experience of the course on “Human Rights, Religions and the United Nations Agenda 2030” at the University of Insubria, documented, among other things, in the interviews presented in the volume, shows how it is possible to combine these seemingly opposing needs through an approach that maintains scientific solidity while enriching it with an applicative and transformative perspective.

Moreover, the global dimension of the 2030 Agenda calls for deep reflection on the role of the university in contemporary society. As the testimonies of international experts, from the United Nations to the World Bank, from international cooperation to civil society organizations, point out, the university can no longer conceive of itself as an island separate from the world, but must assume the responsibility of actively contributing to the construction of a sustainable future. This implies a rethinking not only of educational content, but also of teaching methodologies, evaluation criteria and the organizational structures of the university institution itself.

The urgency of this transformation is accentuated by the rapidly changing technological and social environment. The multiple crises that characterize our time – climatic, geopolitical, economic, health – require integrated and timely responses that only agile and innovative educational institutions can provide. The university must therefore rethink itself not only as a repository of established knowledge, but as an incubator of innovative solutions to novel problems, as well as a trainer of adaptive skills for a constantly changing future.

2. Religions and Human Rights: a necessary intertwining

One of the most significant insights emerging from the cross-reading of this miscellany, which becomes a common thread, concerns the fruitful convergence between human rights, the religious dimension, and the goals of Agenda 2030. The contributions by Bottoni (pp. 53-65), Martinelli (pp. 67-82), Cupri (pp. 83-100), Angelucci (pp. 101-114), Cianitto (pp. 115-125) and Arkhipov (pp. 127-149) offer a comprehensive and compelling overview of how the world’s great religious traditions are not only compatible with the principles of sustainable development, but can offer spiritual, ethical, and practical resources that are fundamental to their implementation.

Such convergence is neither obvious nor superficial. For decades, both human rights and sustainable development discourse have developed in predominantly secular circles, often in tension or open opposition with religious institutions.

The contributions collected in this volume demonstrate, however, how this dichotomy is largely overcome in more advanced contemporary thinking. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'*, repeatedly cited in the essays, is probably the most emblematic example of this awareness, but similar sensitivity emerges from analyses devoted to Judaism, Anglicanism, Orthodoxy, and Islam.

The multireligious approach adopted in the miscellany reveals a particularly effective pedagogical strategy for training students capable of operating in multicultural and pluralistic contexts. As Martinelli points out in his contribution on Jewish environmental ethics (pp. 67-82), different religious traditions offer complementary perspectives on the major themes of sustainability: stewardship of creation, intergenerational justice, responsibility toward the most vulnerable, and moderation in consumption. These dimensions do not represent mere "value additions" to an otherwise purely technical discourse but constitute structural elements for an adequate understanding of contemporary challenges.

Also, significant appears to be the contribution on Islam (pp. 101-114), which shows how principles such as *khalifah* (custody of the Earth), *mīzān* (balance) and *ʿadl* (justice) provide an interpretative framework consistent with the SDGs, while maintaining the cultural and spiritual specificity of the Islamic tradition. This perspective overcomes both cultural relativism and abstract universalism, proposing a concrete model of intercultural dialogue based on the recognition of differences and the search for operational convergences. Cupri's contribution (pp. 83-100) on the position of the Catholic Church highlights how the integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis is not limited to the environmental dimension but embraces a systemic vision that links care for creation with social justice, the fight against poverty and the promotion of peace. This holistic perspective is deeply linked to the integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda and provides a solid value basis for innovative and transformative action. Cianitto's analysis (pp. 115-125) on the Church of England shows, then, how the commitment to carbon neutrality represents not only a technical choice but expresses a spiritual and ethical conversion involving the entire church community. The carbon free by 2030 project is a concrete example of how religious motivation can be translated into measurable goals and concrete actions, offering a replicable model for other institutions.

The inclusion of the religious dimension in the discourse on human rights and sustainable development does not only respond to demands for "political correctness" or formal inclusiveness. As the contributions reveal, religious communities represent leading social actors in the promotion of sustainability

at local and global levels. They possess extensive networks of relationships, established organizational structures, economic resources and, most importantly, the ability to motivate and mobilize the faithful toward goals of social transformation.

This practical dimension of the convergence religions-human rights-sustainability offers university students not only learning content but also models of civic and social engagement. Academic education thus acquires a vocational dimension that goes beyond the mere acquisition of professional skills, moving toward building personalities capable of taking responsibility for the global (and “glocal”) common good.

3. Innovative teaching methodologies for transformative learning

Pedagogical innovation is probably the most experimental and promising aspect of the experience documented in this volume. The integration of Agenda 2030 into the university curriculum required (and requires) a radical rethinking of traditional teaching methodologies, directing them toward more interactive, participatory, and impact-oriented approaches. The evidence gathered in interviews with national and international experts (pp. 165-225) offers insight into the potential and critical issues of this methodological transformation.

Learning by doing appears as the central paradigm of the experience described. The approach is not limited to the well-known theory-practice alternation but configures a learning model in which knowledge is built through action and reflection on action. Simulations of international negotiations, SDGs localization projects, and collaborations with grassroots organizations are all examples of how academic rigor and social relevance can be combined. As the evidence of Pesce Monteiro and Vauzelle (pp. 174-177; 182-184) shows, this methodology meets the need to train professionals capable of operating effectively in the international arena and in multilateral organizations.

Particularly innovative appears to be the systematic use of *project-based learning* applied to issues of global relevance. Students are not limited to analyzing sustainability profiles from a purely theoretical perspective, but are asked to develop concrete proposals, confront real constraints, and negotiate solutions with different *stakeholders*. This methodology develops key transversal competencies: systemic analysis skills, aptitude for *problem solving*, communication and interpersonal skills, and intercultural sensitivity.

The interview with Marina Ponti, a representative of *UN SDG's Action Campaign* (pp. 185-189), highlights the importance of adopting methodologies that

emotionally engage students, using creativity and art as tools to communicate complex messages. A method based on direct experience not only promotes more effective learning, but also helps develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for global challenges, going beyond the mere accumulation of theoretical knowledge.

Interviews with communication and media experts, such as the one with Emanuele Giordana (pp. 189-196), highlight a still too often.

Overlooked aspect of university education: the need to prepare students to communicate effectively with diverse audiences, using appropriate languages and appropriate communication strategies.

The interdisciplinary approach translates methodologically into the use of *team teaching* and the design of training modules that cross the boundaries between different disciplines. The example of the module on the 2030 Agenda described in this volume shows how it is possible to integrate legal, economic, sociological, political, and religious perspectives around a common *framework*, maintaining the specificity of each while building a coherent overall vision.

Evidence of the international dimension of the educational experience clearly emerges from the testimonies of Alessandro Casartelli of the World Bank (pp. 196-200) and Giacomo Negrotto of the UNDP (pp. 200-204). These interviews show how the university can serve as a bridge between academic training and international professional practices, preparing students to work in multicultural settings and global organizations. Direct exposure to testimonies from practitioners provides insight into the challenges and opportunities that await them in the world of work.

However, there is no shortage of critical issues. Estimating learning in such complex and multidimensional contexts presents significant methodological challenges. How to measure systemic thinking skills? How to assess the development of intercultural sensitivity? How to test the acquisition of ethical and civic skills? Documented experiences suggest the use of portfolios, self-assessment, *peer* assessment, and project assessment, with the question of standardization and comparability of results remaining open.

Also, not without problems appears to be the issue of organizational sustainability of these innovative approaches. Participatory methodologies require a significantly higher investment of time and resources than traditional face-to-face teaching. Training teachers, designing innovative activities, and managing relationships with external partners entail high organizational costs that do not always find recognition in traditional academic incentive systems.

4. A shared vision for the (near?) future of the university

The cross-reading of the contributions collected in this miscellany clearly delineates a vision of the university as a space of the future, a place where not only theoretical knowledge but also value orientations and transformative planning are elaborated.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals provide a particularly effective framework of meaning for rethinking the organization of university knowledge. As is evident from Cortelezzi's contributions (pp. 13-34) and the testimony of international experts, the 2030 Agenda is not an additional sectoral program, but an integrated framework that allows traditionally separate disciplinary fields to be connected. Fighting poverty (SDG 1) is intertwined with environmental protection (SDGs 13-15), quality education (SDG 4) connects with reducing inequality (SDG 10) and promoting peace (SDG 16) is welded with sustainable economic development (SDG 8).

Such a systemic view responds to the need, increasingly felt in academia, to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge that characterizes today's university. The contributions presented in this volume, from Catholicism to Islam, from Judaism to Anglicanism, from Orthodoxy to ecumenical traditions, show how it is possible to maintain the specificity of different cultural and spiritual traditions while converging toward common goals of justice, sustainability, and peace. This model of "unity in diversity" offers a valuable paradigm for rethinking the organization of university knowledge from an interdisciplinary and intercultural perspective.

The testimonials collected in the interviews highlight the wealth of opportunities open to students trained in an integrated approach. From international organizations to social enterprises, from public institutions to nongovernmental organizations, from social communication to international cooperation, the contemporary labor market increasingly requires professionals capable of operating in multicultural and sustainability-oriented contexts.

The dialogue with students documented in the volume (pp. 172-174) reveals how lucidly the younger generation perceives both the potential and the limitations of Agenda 2030. Their skepticism (however, constructive) toward international institutions is accompanied by a strong motivation toward local engagement and horizontal subsidiarity. This sensitivity suggests the need to balance the global dimension of the SDGs with a strong territorial rootedness, enhancing the "*think globally, act locally*" principle that runs through the entire documented training experience.

The miscellany itself constitutes a concrete example of how it can be articulated an educational proposal capable of combining academic excellence, ethical sensitivity, and social impact. The convergence between different disciplinary perspectives, the integration of theoretical and applied dimensions, the dialogue between different cultural and religious traditions, and the openness to the testimonies of the professional world represent as many elements as possible of an innovative and replicable educational model.

The experience of the University of Insubria shows, then, how it is possible to transform Agenda 2030 from a programmatic document into an effective pedagogical tool, capable of guiding both the content and methodologies of university education. The involvement of various national and international experts over the course of five years testifies to the wealth of networks that can be activated when the university takes a proactive role in dialogue with the outside world.

5. Artificial intelligence and future challenges: toward an augmented and accountable university

Reflection on the future of the university in the era of Agenda 2030 cannot be separated from a specific consideration of the role of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in university education. Although not explicitly explained in the collected contributions, the technological dimension cuts across many of the issues addressed and requires a specific in-depth study to complete the picture of the challenges and opportunities facing the university institution.

The advent of generative artificial intelligence and *machine learning* tools raises fundamental questions about the very nature of the university educational process. If machines can produce texts, analyses, translations and even scientific research with increasing quality, what remains the specific added value of education? The answer to this fundamental question finds important elements of guidance in the pages of this volume.

The emphasis on experiential and transformative learning, documented in the interviews with Marina Ponti (pp. 185-189) and in the innovative methodologies described, suggests that the value of the university does not lie primarily in the transmission of information or the development of easily automated technical skills, but in the formation of critical, ethical and relational skills that remain deeply human. Moral judgment, cross-cultural sensitivity, an aptitude for collaboration, and creativity in *problem solving* represent skills that artificial intelligence can support but not replace.

The integration of the 2030 Agenda into university curricula acquires even greater value in this perspective. The Sustainable Development Goals require, in fact, precisely those “augmentative” skills with respect to AI that characterize human specificity: the ability to understand and manage systemic complexity, to balance diverse and often conflicting interests, to operate in contexts of uncertainty and ambiguity, and to assume ethical responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions.

The testimonials of international experts collected in the volume, therefore, offer valuable insights into how artificial intelligence can be constructively integrated into sustainability-oriented educational processes. AI tools can support the analysis of large masses of data on global phenomena, facilitate the modeling of future scenarios, automate translation and cross-cultural communication, and optimize the management of educational resources. However, strategic decision-making, ethical evaluation of priorities, and building trusting relationships with local communities remain areas where skilled human intervention is irreplaceable.

The issue of artificial intelligence is closely intertwined with the theme of justice and equity that runs throughout the 2030 Agenda. As highlighted in analyses of religious contributions, spiritual traditions insist on the need to place human dignity at the center of any development process. The use of AI in university education and research must, therefore, be guided by strict ethical criteria that avoid the amplification of existing inequalities and instead promote inclusion and democratic participation.

The university of the future, as outlined by the experience documented in these contributions, is thus configured as an institution “augmented” by technology but guided by deeply human values. Artificial intelligence may multiply research capabilities, improve the efficiency of educational processes, and personalize educational pathways, but the direction of meaning, the motivation for engagement, and the ability to imagine creative alternatives to existing problems remain specifically human prerogatives that the university is called upon to cultivate and develop.

From this perspective, integrating Agenda 2030 into university curricula is not only a response to contemporary global challenges, but also a forward-looking strategy to prepare the university institution for the age of artificial intelligence. By training students capable of critical thinking, ethical sensitivity, intercultural competence, and civic engagement, the university is positioned to play an irreplaceable role in tomorrow’s world, complementary to and not competitive with AI capabilities.

Of course, several issues remain open and deserve further investigation. Scalability of the experience, its transferability to different institutional contexts, measurement of educational impact in the long term, and integration with national and international evaluation systems are all challenges for the future development of this approach. To these are now added the specific issues related to the responsible integration of artificial intelligence into educational and research processes.

It is hoped that this book will stimulate a broader dialogue in the Italian and international academic community on the need for and ways of transforming the university in a more sustainable, inclusive and common good-oriented direction. The global and “glocal” challenges of our time, amplified and made more complex by the advent of artificial intelligence, require educational institutions that are up to contemporary complexity, capable of training not only technically competent professionals but also conscious and responsible global citizens. The university has the intellectual, methodological and organizational resources to assume this *leadership* role in the transition to a more just and sustainable future. It is up to the academic community to seize this historic opportunity and turn it into reality, building bridges between tradition and innovation, knowledge and action, local and global, human and artificial.

INTRODUCTION TO INTERVIEWS

Antonio Angelucci, Giovanni Camilleri

Each path of deepening requires moments of pause, not to interrupt the journey, but to orient it better. The following section is configured as one of these moments: a passage that, despite the analytical rigor of its contributions, invites to a deeper listening and an inner synthesis. The part of the interviews in this volume addresses the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as an educational and transformative challenge, moving between theoretical perspectives, innovative teaching experiences and direct testimonies of international operators. The texts collected here not only illustrate the complexity inherent in the concrete implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also question deeply: they relate the local reality with the national and global dimension, the international standard with the national strategies of the different countries and with the territorial practice, the technical data with the professional experience lived in the field.

Among the guiding threads clearly emerge the need for a multidisciplinary approach to human rights education, the centrality of the dynamics between national and local dimensions, the resource represented by the projection of local experiences in global dynamics and the urgent need to rethink communication and participation mechanisms. Basically, these profiles are not the subject of academic research, but rather tools for pedagogical and social discernment, especially if they are inserted in the broader context of contemporary educational reflection on human rights and sustainable development.

The teaching experience of the University of Insubria, which since 2020 has integrated the specific module “Agenda 2030” in the course “Human Rights of Religions and Cultures” represents more than a simple curricular innovation. It is a concrete response to the challenge of articulating global priorities with the needs and experiences of local communities, making understandable and operational principles that would otherwise risk remaining abstract. Indeed, the direction in which this volume attempts to look is not confined to a static analysis of the well-known contents of the 17 Objectives; on the contrary, it tends towards the direct relationship that exists between each of them and the conditions of daily life. The module addressed what we might call the paradox of

necessary complexity: on the one hand, the 2030 Agenda requires an intersectoral approach that goes beyond traditional disciplinary divisions. On the other hand, it must be communicated and implemented in a way that is accessible and motivating to local communities. This correlation crosses all the contributions collected, from interviews with national and international experts to the reflections of students, configuring itself as a living laboratory of pedagogical translation of complexity.

The method adopted is particularly significant: the two-way articulation between local, national, and global dimensions. This is not a simple multi-level exercise, but a systemic approach that recognizes that the challenges of sustainable development require both an overall vision and territorial rootedness. The effectiveness of the Agenda depends on the ability to generate local ownership without losing the universal dimension of human rights.

The discussion with the students, documented in the second part of this section, reveals one of the most valuable achievements of the teaching experience: the emergence of mature critical thinking capable of simultaneously grasping the transformative potentials and structural limits of the 2030 Agenda. The students do not only take on content, but also develop concrete proposals ranging from the reform of the UN Security Council to the exploitation of horizontal subsidiarity in local communities. This generative process demonstrates how human rights education, when it is authentic, does not result in a one-way transfer of knowledge, but active co-construction processes of knowledge. This is not limited to the internal coherence of the contributions but is also measured by the ability to open avenues towards broader issues. The attentive reader will find ideas to critically reconsider the role of the university in this challenge, the dialectic between sovereign state and territory, and the need to rethink and invent different mechanisms of vocational training in an interdisciplinary key, maturing a more integral look at the processes of social change, in a logic that is both academic and sapiential.

The interviews with experts involved in the course offer a particular contribution in this direction, as they are not mere thematic insights, but represent open windows on the operational complexity of the implementation of the Agenda. Through the voices of those who work daily in UN mechanisms, sustainable development, international cooperation, global communication, a realistic picture emerges of the challenges and opportunities that characterize the process of this ambitious global transformation project. Particularly enlightening is the contribution on the relationship between media and the 2030 Agenda, which highlights one of the most acute contradictions of our

time: how to effectively communicate complex and long-term issues in a media context structurally oriented towards immediate newness. This reflection opens scenarios that go far beyond the 2030 Agenda, touching on the very foundations of participatory democracy in the digital age. In this perspective, reading Part One means not only assimilating content related to the Sustainable Development Goals, but also accepting the call for a broader cognitive and transformative responsibility. It is a matter of recognizing that human rights education in the 21st century cannot be separated from its global dimension but must simultaneously be able to take root in local specificities and activate processes of democratic participation.

The experience documented in these pages suggests that precisely in the face of the obvious and current questioning of international law, such a challenge is not only possible but due and necessary to form what we might call a responsible cosmopolitan citizenship: people able to think globally and act locally, to understand the interdependence of phenomena without losing identity and the capacity for concrete intervention, to combine technical competence and ethical sensitivity. The challenge of the 2030 Agenda is, ultimately, the challenge to imagine and build together a more just and sustainable future by valuing the potential and role of university education, which, when it is up to its mission, can and must be the protagonist of this construction.

INTERVISTE

IL MODULO NAZIONI UNITE AGENDA 2030 NEL CORSO DI DIRITTI UMANI DELLE CULTURE E DELLE RELIGIONI

L'Agenda 2030, (Sustainable Development Goals, SDG's nella dizione inglese) è stata adottata dai 193 Paesi membri dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite il 25 Settembre del 2015 e rappresenta l'impegno formale di tutti paesi del mondo per il *"rispetto della dignità umana, lo stato di diritto, la giustizia, l'uguaglianza e la non discriminazione, quali diritti universalmente rispettati"*. Questo impegno è il prodotto di un ampio lavoro di dialogo, confronto e negoziato tra i Paesi Membri per definire una strategia comune articolata in 17 Obiettivi che abbia come *finalità perseguire la pace e lo sviluppo sostenibile* nel nord e nel sud del mondo. I 17 Obiettivi sono



Un piano d'azione 5P: persone, pianeta, prosperità, partnership, pace.

1

La definizione di "sviluppo sostenibile" appare per la prima volta nel 1987 nel Rapporto Brundtland dal nome della Presidente della Commissione mondiale su Ambiente e Sviluppo: *"Lo sviluppo sostenibile è uno sviluppo che soddisfi i bisogni del presente senza compromettere la possibilità delle generazioni future di soddisfare i propri"*. Quindi Agenda 2030 come quadro di riferimento politico, strategico ed operativo per generare coerenza ed impatto in forma

continua e coordinata tra i Paesi membri dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite a fronte di tale importante e complesso obiettivo. Una strategia comune per discutere, riflettere, analizzare ed operare, partendo dalle diversità e specificità dei molteplici contesti sociali, economici, culturali e religiosi.

È evidente che affrontare una materia così ampia e complessa determini spunti, approcci, angoli di visuale, referenze culturali diversi, talvolta contrapposte che attraversano nel tempo la tradizione, la modernità, la contemporaneità e la loro proiezione a futuro. Anche per questi motivi l'Agenda 2030 non è stata approvata come «vincolante» in quanto la sua applicazione non è una formula unica per tutti i paesi del mondo ma piuttosto un riferimento strategico comune per essere interpretato e declinato da ogni paese in base alla propria realtà, contesto, priorità e caratteristiche. Si tratta inoltre di un impegno universale cioè che coinvolge tanto per le popolazioni dei paesi del nord come del sud del mondo.

Una sfida ambiziosa certo ma figlia di una oggettiva complessità difficile da affrontare operativamente con strumenti ed approcci tradizionali. Una sfida globale che per questo richiede strumenti globali di comunicazione, dialogo, intercambio di esperienze ed innovazioni di carattere tecnico, tecnologico, gestionale, di modalità di programmazione, di valutazione, indicatori e *targets*, analisi dei risultati condivisi, nonché formazione al loro utilizzo ed evidentemente tante risorse economiche da far convergere sui 17 Obiettivi, in una parola la complessità dell'Agenda 2030.

A 6 anni dal fatidico 2030 è legittimo e doveroso chiedersi quali siano gli aspetti positivi ed i limiti registrati fin qui nell'applicazione dell'Agenda sia a livello nazionale che internazionale. Il rapporto ONU 2024 registra che solo il 17% degli Obiettivi sono stati raggiunti nei Paesi che l'hanno sottoscritta. Il Rapporto dell' Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (ASVIS) 2024 al riguardo dice chiaramente per esempio che l'Italia è in assoluto ritardo. Da cui il recente *"Patto per il Futuro"* firmato dall'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite lo scorso Settembre 2024 nel quale si conferma la centralità dell'Agenda 2030 come elemento fondante per un futuro sostenibile e che invita a concentrare gli sforzi nei 6 anni a venire su cinque aree tematiche: sviluppo sostenibile e finanza per lo sviluppo; pace e sicurezza, scienza, tecnologia ed innovazione; cooperazione digitale; giovani e future generazioni; governance globale.

A partire dal 2020 il Corso di Diritti Umani delle Religioni e delle Culture della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza dell'Università dell'Insubria ha attivato un modulo specifico sull'Agenda 2030 per far conoscere lo spessore di tale sfida approfondirne i componenti specifici, collegarla al contenuto accademico e quindi alla formazione dei futuri professionisti. L'obiettivo è stato quello di arricchire il corso di Diritti Umani delle Religioni e delle Culture facendo conoscere meglio questo strumento globale di collegamento tra la Dichiarazione dei Diritti Universali con le responsabilità, pubbliche e private, collettive ed individuali, trasversali alle diverse discipline del sapere.

L'angolo di visuale da cui abbiamo affrontato tale obiettivo è da una parte l'ineluttabile necessità di un'Agenda globale per poter affrontare le comuni priorità dei paesi che, e su questo tutti concordano, non possono essere risolte unicamente da un singolo stato; dall'altro l'oggettiva complessità che una strategia transnazionale per lo sviluppo sostenibile comporta. Ci sono complessità intrinseche come l'attivazione del quadro di riferimento rappresentato dall'Agenda, l'azione intersettoriale, la necessità di operare contemporaneamente a livello locale, nazionale e globale, la necessità di comunicazione la sua importanza, il necessario maggior coordinamento del Sistema UN, la definizione ed utilizzo di strumenti *ad hoc* cui si è accennato sopra, la raccolta dati e relativa analisi e monitoraggio ed ovviamente le risorse finanziarie ed il capitale umano necessario. Ma anche complessità estrinseche come sono la difficoltà nel modificare in tempi brevi logiche economiche speculative predatorie sull'ambiente, grandi diseguaglianze tra i paesi e nei paesi, interessi geopolitici divergenti, i tempi necessari per cambi culturali tanto nella produzione come nel consumo, cambi di governo, solo per citarne alcune. Senza dimenticare l'impatto negativo che "policrisi, come sono i disastri ambientali o ancora sanitari come il Covid o i conflitti bellici, determinano non solo in termini di ostacolo al raggiungimento dei 17 Obiettivi ma di retrocesso rispetto ad obiettivi parziali. Nella maggior parte dei casi si tratta di cause ed effetti a migliaia di chilometri di distanza, innescando processi perversi che causano un altissimo prezzo in termini di convivenza pacifica, povertà, movimenti massivi di popolazioni, perdita vite umane, conservazione del pianeta ed ovviamente dispendio enorme di risorse economiche in armamento e ricostruzioni sottratte a quelle per lo sviluppo sostenibile.

Per questi motivi l'approccio adottato dal modulo è stato quello di relazionare i 17 Obiettivi dell'Agenda con il quotidiano delle persone, delle comunità locali, delle pubbliche amministrazioni, del settore privato, focalizzando così l'imprescindibile l'articolazione bidirezionale tra dimensioni locale, nazionale

e globale che impone questa sfida. Un approccio sostenuto dalla necessità di comunicare le ragioni di una sfida complessa, forse ambiziosa, ma di fatto unica alternativa per raggiungere un obiettivo che, come già ricordato, un solo paese non può assumere contando solo con le proprie forze.

Il modulo ha trattato alcuni riferimenti concettuali come lo Sviluppo Umano, i Summit degli anni 90, così come il percorso realizzato per arrivare alla definizione dell'Agenda. Un percorso commentato con l'aiuto di esperti in ognuno dei 17 obbiettivi e che ha posto enfasi inoltre su aspetti forse meno evidenti ma certo determinanti per l'effettiva applicazione dell'Agenda, come per esempio: la negoziazione tra i Paesi per la sua definizione ed approvazione, la comunicazione ed informazione alla cittadinanza, l'implementazione a livello locale e nazionale, il monitoraggio dell'implementazione, il suo finanziamento, la cooperazione internazionale collegata all'Agenda.

Sono stati discusse anche alcune delle limitanti riscontrate nell'applicazione dell'Agenda. Per esempio in fatto che in ambito amministrativo ogni settore si "sceglie" il suo obiettivo e vi lavora separatamente dagli altri riproducendo di fatto i limiti del lavoro settoriale che genera, a fronte dei pochi fondi disponibili, duplicazioni, sovrapposizioni, sfasature, approcci tecnici e procedure amministrative diverse (il risultato di vettori che vanno in direzioni diverse... è zero!, mentre l'impatto di vettori che vanno nella stessa direzione è superiore alla loro somma!). Questo esempio di limitante si esprime spesso responsabilizzando dell'applicazione dei 17 Obiettivi il solo settore ambiente. Benché molte conseguenze dello *sviluppo non sostenibile* si esprimono in termini ambientali, attaccarne le cause richiede un approccio multisettoriale: sociale, economico, ambientale e culturale. Per questo uno dei punti critici più significativi sta nel concepire, formare per, ed applicare una diversa logica di programmazione già a partire dai piani di sviluppo regionali e municipali ma anche nel settore privato:

- da una visione a 5 anni ad una di 20-30 anni
- da una logica settoriale ad una intersettoriale
- da una logica solo istituzionale ad una partecipativa (perché tutti hanno un ruolo!)
- allineare dati con politiche e bilanci è il vero indicatore del potenziale di trasformazione

Parlare di programmazione significa parlare di risorse finanziarie correnti. La prima risposta infatti non sta nei fondi internazionali (che hanno comunque un ruolo importante!) ma nell'applicare appunto una diversa logica di programmazione nei budget locali e nazionali!

Altro aspetto cruciale é dare effettiva centralità ai territori e relativi attori e strumenti (*Localizing SDG's*). Infatti é nei territori dove si concretizzano (o no) il 70% dei 17 Obiettivi e dove programmare congiuntamente energie e risorse per il “*Comune Interesse*” risulta più facile (o meno difficile) .

I partenariati, nazionali ed internazionali, centrati e focalizzati sulla condivisione critica di rispettivi progressi e risultati (anche quelli non brillanti) è la prima risorsa da utilizzare per la Localizzazione degli SDG's utilizzando per esempio la Cooperazione Internazionale ed in particolare con la modalità di cooperazione decentrata.

Queste tematiche, lo stato attuale di implementazione e lo scenario da qui al 2030 ed oltre, sono state appunto approfondite e dibattute nelle lezioni del Modulo con gli ospiti nazionali ed internazionali e conseguentemente discusse con gli studenti. Tale contributi sono sintetizzati nei seguenti paragrafi.

1. Il contributo dei “Guests” nazionali ed internazionali

Hanno contribuito 41 esperti nazionali ed internazionali intervenuti in presenza ed in remoto nei Moduli realizzati tra il 2020 ed il 2024 che hanno trattato sia gli specifici Obiettivi sia tematiche trasversali . Nello spazio disponibile per questa pubblicazione abbiamo voluto dare risalto ad 10 approfondimenti che hanno in comune il fatto di non trattare appunto uno degli specifici 17 obiettivi perché, pur nella loro complessità, sono generalmente i più conosciuti e divulgati. Ma abbiamo voluto dare risalto appunto ad aspetti della già menzionata “complessità”, forse la sfida maggiore per l’ applicazione dell’Agenda 2030, ed in particolare:

1. Come si arriva all’Agenda 2030 ed il suo valore politico.
2. L’operatività di una Convenzione Internazionale.
3. L’Agenda 2030 tra nord e sud del mondo.
4. Articolazione multilivello.
5. Perché la Localizzazione dell’Agenda?
6. L’Agenda 2030 nella Regione Lombardia.
7. Strategie di comunicazione istituzionale per far conoscere l’Agenda.
8. I media e l’Agenda 2030: diverse logiche e modalità di informazione.
9. Criteri e logiche dei finanziamenti internazionali per l’applicazione Agenda.
10. Sviluppo Sostenibile ed Aiuto Umanitario: strategie parallele o convergenti?

10 approfondimenti meno presenti forse nel dibattito generale e nei media ma dai quali molto dipende l'effettiva applicazione dell'Agenda 2030 ed , indirettamente, il senso e la prospettiva di un organismo intergovernativo multilaterale, le Nazioni Unite, che vive un momento difficile tra la tendenza dei Governi a ridurre l'importanza del multilateralismo e la contraddizione, come ha detto il Segretario Generale delle Nazioni Unite Guterres, di voler *“creare un futuro adatto ai nostri nipoti con un sistema costruito dai nostri nonni”*.

1. Intervista a Barbara Pesce Monteiro, Direttore UN Europa fino al 2022, Bruxelles.
2. Intervista Marco Zupi, Direttore Scientifico Cespi, Agenda 2030 tra nord e sud del mondo.
3. Intervista a Sebastian Vauzelle, Direttore Local UN 2030 Coalition, Bilbao.
4. Intervista a Marina Ponti, UN SDG's Action Campaign, Comunicare l'Agenda 2030.
5. Intervista a Emanuele Giordana, Giornalista, Comunicare l'Agenda attraverso i media.
6. Intervista ad Alessandro Casartelli, Banca Mondiale.
7. Intervista a Giacomo Negrotto, Dipartimento crisi Programma delle Nazioni Unite per Sviluppo (UNDP NY).
8. Intervista a Egidio Crotti, Diritti Umani e Convenzione Internazionale per l'infanzia.

2. Il dibattito con e tra gli studenti

Gli studenti del Corso hanno svolto un ruolo attivo e critico ed hanno dibattuto il contenuto del Modulo e gli interventi dei Guests. Come prodotto di tale dibattito ricco di analisi e riflessioni sono emersi due orientamenti definiti ed apparentemente divergenti:

Da un lato un orientamento piuttosto scettico, per non dire pessimista, rispetto all'effettiva possibilità di realizzazione entro il 2030 dei 17 obiettivi evidenziati da diversi elementi:

- il rischio di un'applicazione solo formale piuttosto che sostanziale lasciando in realtà la situazione invariata.
- L'intricato groviglio di posizioni politiche contrastanti in un panorama geopolitico mondiale sempre più variegato, frammentato e di messa in discussione del Diritto Internazionale.

- Una percepibile indifferenza dell'opinione pubblica nei confronti dell'Agenda 2030 e più in generale verso l'utilità del sistema NU.

Dall'altra però è emersa l'imprescindibile necessità di affrontare comunque la sfida per lo sviluppo sostenibile posta dall'Agenda 2030 rivalutando per esempio la possibilità di rendere "vincolanti" per i Paesi i 17 Obiettivi. Un'ipotesi, peraltro del tutto teorica, che non risponde ad una tendenza crescente unicamente centrata sulle immediate priorità nazionali.

Anche l'ipotesi di creare una sovrastruttura di tipo amministrativo in capo all'ONU contrasterebbe con le modalità di creazione del diritto internazionale di cui l'ONU è espressione. La discussione si è orientata piuttosto verso la necessità di prioritizzare la riforma del Consiglio di Sicurezza vista come la svolta per l'attualizzazione di questa entità sovranazionale creata nel lontano 1945, in un mondo assai diverso che usciva dal terribile conflitto della seconda guerra mondiale in cui i Paesi avevano un'assoluta priorità comune: la Pace.

Nello specifico le proposte degli studenti hanno enfatizzato:

- un approccio basato sulla trasparenza, che rifletta il desiderio, attraverso una divulgazione efficiente, di coinvolgere la società, possibilmente anche fornendo i feedback positivi rispetto alla realizzazione stessa dei 17 obiettivi dell'Agenda 2030.
- Investire quanto più possibile sulla dimensione locale attraverso l'identificazione nel proprio territorio di "*micro-obiettivi*" connessi con i 17 "*macro-obiettivi*" dell'Agenda per far vivere la relazione diretta che esiste tra ciascuno dei 17 obiettivi e le condizioni di vita nel quotidiano.
- Sussidiarietà orizzontale che si esprime attraverso il livello di collaborazione e dialogo nelle Comunità locale tra i diversi soggetti che la integrano: imprese, organizzazioni non governative, associazionismo, Università, senza dimenticare la partecipazione delle singole persone.
- Per questo è importante che le istituzioni siano a misura di identificare e mettere a disposizione strumenti adeguati per questo fine.
- Si deve capitalizzare infine sul lavoro già realizzato in termini di capacità di negoziazione tra i diversi paesi. Un esempio è la ricchezza della stessa negoziazione realizzata per la definizione dell'Agenda: il dialogo, la mediazione ed il compromesso. Solo dal confronto può nascere la risposta non solo come scelta condivisa da tutti, ma anche di effettiva possibile realizzazione.
- Gli Atenei, pur adottando un approccio più multidisciplinare rispetto al passato, potrebbero rafforzare tale indirizzo. Così a partire da tale ap-

proccio si formerebbero riflessioni trasversali traducibili in proposte di *policy* e strumenti necessari per l'implementazione dell'Agenda.

- Il ruolo della Società Civile e non solo degli Stati nella fase di negoziato degli obiettivi e della loro implementazione è determinante. Le istituzioni infatti hanno bisogno di tutti noi per realizzare gli obiettivi e quindi il massimo coinvolgimento di coloro che devono attuare l'agenda permette una migliore attuazione a futuro.

Tali proposte sono state inviate come contributo del Corso all'Iniziativa "Local 2030 Coalition" del Segretariato delle Nazioni Unite che le ha condivise con quelle di Università di altri paesi e proposte nelle specifiche iniziative ed attività.

Intervista a Barbara Pesce Monteiro
Direttore UN Europa fino al 2022
Bruxelles

Buongiorno Barbara dicci subito quel'è la tua responsabilità Bruxelles?

Rappresento il Segretario Generale presso le istituzioni dell'Unione Europea e coordino un team di Agenzie UN per assicurare che le Nazioni Unite ed Unione Europea possano convergere per raggiungere obiettivi comuni come sono la Pace e lo Sviluppo Sostenibile.

Raccontaci in sintesi come siamo arrivati a questa Agenda.

Fino all'anno 2000 c'erano state tante agende settoriali che però avanzavano in parallelo, tutte molto importanti, però forse un po' disarticolate. Ricordo la Conferenze di Rio per il tema dell'ambiente, la conferenza di Copenaghen per i temi sociali, quella di Habitat per le città, quella per il tema di genere in Cina, insomma, tutti temi importanti, ma trattati separatamente. Il Segretario UN Kofi Annan si rese conto che c'era il bisogno reale di metterle insieme e di spingere per un compromesso politico comune dell'insieme dei governi per la loro attuazione. Da qui si accordarono le Mete del Millennio (MDG's) un gruppo di 8 obiettivi su cui nei successivi 15 anni la comunità internazionale si sarebbe allineata. I concreti risultati raggiunti stimolarono a continuare in quella direzione.

Una Agenda delle Nazioni Unite per lo sviluppo sostenibile quindi?

Sì, però mi preme ricordare che le Mete di sviluppo e del Millennio, e anche gli SDGs, non sono gli “obiettivi delle “Nazioni Unite” ma sono gli obiettivi dei paesi, perché in realtà, in entrambi i casi, chi li ha approvati questi e chi si è compromesso ad applicarli sono stati i Capi di Stato e di Governo dei Paesi membri all’Assemblea Generale. Si è trattato del movimento globale contro la povertà più importante della storia che è riuscito a ridurre la povertà estrema di un miliardo di persone, a diminuire la fame, ad aumentare, in modo molto importante, il numero di bambini che andavano a scuola. Però molte disuguaglianze esistono ancora, sia tra paesi, ma anche all’interno dei paesi.

Quindi un bel passo in avanti?

Si è avanzato molto ma non abbastanza! Infatti ci si rese conto che il tema ambientale andava collegato al tema sociale ed al tema economico e quindi che l’insieme dei settori andavano trattati in maniera **integrata**. Si è cercato un maggior coinvolgimento dei paesi del sud e del nord e delle rispettive società civili, per arrivare infine a questa nuova Agenda 2030. Un’Agenda molto più ampia e **trasformativa**, molto più ambiziosa, perché passiamo da 8 a 17 obiettivi, che non sono più solamente dei *basic needs*, ma sono espressione di un nuovo paradigma che deve coinvolgere i modelli di produzione, i modelli di consumo tanto dei paesi del sud come dei paesi del nord del mondo. **Un’Agenda universale!** Il problema della disuguaglianza delle donne per esempio, non è solo un problema del sud, ma è anche un problema del nord. Il problema dell’accesso alla salute, come abbiamo visto durante il covid, non è solo un problema del sud, ma è anche un problema del nord. E così via. Il tema del clima e delle vulnerabilità climatiche è un problema del nord e del sud.

Questo significa un agenda universale?

Sì, un’agenda che si applica ovunque, naturalmente con modalità differenti, perché il mondo è molto diverso e quindi deve essere adattato alle diverse situazioni. Un’Agenda **trasformativa**, ed **un’agenda integrata**. Per capirla meglio, si parla delle **5P, cioè: le persone, il pianeta, la prosperità, la pace e il tema planetario e ambientale**. E quindi, arriviamo forse a una terza caratteristica di quest’agenda, che è **un’agenda inclusiva**, cioè di “leave no one behind”, di essere applicata a chiunque, qualsiasi sia la sua razza, la sua religione, il suo genere, i più vulnerabili e gli esclusi.

Stiamo parlando quindi di applicazione dei diritti umani?

Chi studia i diritti umani, come fate voi, avrà visto che l'accesso all'educazione, alla salute, deve essere trattato in modo uguale, nonostante siano uomini, donne, giovani o poveri. L'obiettivo 16 infatti si lega appunto al tema della governance, alla pace, alla sicurezza ma anche dei governi che devono rispettare i diritti dei propri cittadini. Quindi ci sono i diritti e doveri dei cittadini simmetrico a quello degli Stati.

Che ruolo hanno le Nazioni Unite in questo percorso?

Le Nazioni Unite sul terreno hanno la responsabilità e l'obbligo di accompagnare i paesi nella applicazione dei diritti umani in maniera più solida e sistematica. Qual è il nostro lavoro? Innanzitutto aiutiamo i paesi a determinare dove sono rispetto agli obiettivi, cioè la linea di base, qual è la situazione dei paesi e cosa bisognerebbe fare in modo prioritario per arrivare al loro raggiungimento. È vero che è una agenda molto ambiziosa, però come io direi in inglese, *it's inspirational*, e quindi spinge gli Stati, ma anche tutti gli altri attori, a tenerne in conto per poterla raggiungere. E nello specifico: quali logiche finanziarie per mettere a disposizione risorse sufficienti per questa agenda?, quali spazi di azione per diversi attori sociali ed economici? Naturalmente quando parlo dei governi parlo anche dei governi regionali, dei governi locali, perché hanno un ruolo molto importante, essendo gli enti pubblici che stanno più vicini ai cittadini. Abbiamo visto infatti che nei differenti paesi le disuguaglianze spesso sono a livello territoriale, perché non è la stessa cosa essere un giovane in una città o in una zona rurale o essere in un piccolo paese rispetto ad una grande città. Quindi, insomma, la vicinanza dei governi e l'analisi e la risposta dei governi locali a questi bisogni è molto importante.

Nazioni Unite e l'Unione Europa ne discutono in modo molto attento e continuo in una logica **multilateralista**.

Insomma, voglio chiudere qua: un'agenda complessa, ma un'agenda possibile, per questo ci sono questi *goals*, che ci permettono di focalizzarci con un approccio di uguaglianza, di inclusione, di diritti umani, ma anche della *realpolitik*, che è quella che bisogna fare.

Grazie per occuparvi di questi temi, vi consideriamo i nostri campioni e continueremo a parlare con voi, i giovani, meno giovani, i governi cittadini, le società civili, i governi locali e il settore privato sono molto importanti, così come lo è anche la stampa. Arrivederci e buon lavoro.

Alcuni risultati delle mete del Millennio (2000-2015)



Millennium Development Goals *Achievements*



Extreme poverty rate in developing countries



Global number of extreme poor



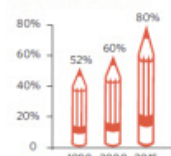
Source: MDG report 2015



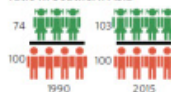
Global out-of-school children of primary school age



Primary school net enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa



Primary school enrolment ratio in Southern Asia



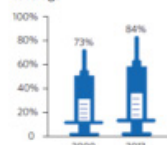
90% of countries have more women in parliament since 1995



Global number of deaths of children under five



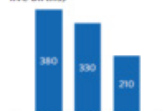
Global measles vaccine coverage



Millennium Development Goals *Achievements*



Global maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)



Global births attended by skilled health personnel



Source: MDG report 2015



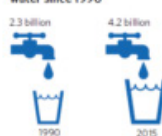
Global antiretroviral therapy treatment



Number of insecticide-treated mosquito nets delivered in sub-Saharan Africa, 2004-2014



1.9 billion people have gained access to piped drinking water since 1990



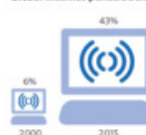
98% of ozone-depleting substances eliminated since 1990



Official development assistance



Global internet penetration



Intervista a Marco Zupi**Direttore Scientifico Cespi****Agenda 2030 tra nord e sud del mondo**

Oggi abbiamo l'opportunità di sentire il parere del dottor Marco Zupi che è il Direttore Scientifico del Centro Studi Politiche Internazionali (Cespi).

Grazie Marco. Come sai, l'Agenda 2030 è stata approvata dai 193 Paesi dell'Assemblea Generale, il che è di per sé un risultato importante. Ora, detto questo, è realistico pensare ad un'unica Agenda per 193 Paesi ognuno diverso dall'altro. Qual è la tua opinione?

Questa preoccupazione è più che giustificata. C'è una ragione però perché l'Agenda 2030 sia così ambiziosa ed è quella di prefiggersi **un orizzonte strategico comune tra i diversi paesi per vincere la sfida per lo sviluppo sostenibile**. Infatti sempre più la vita di ciascuno di noi ma anche della legislazione e dei processi di cambiamento nazionali è attraversata dalla dimensioni globale. Questo fa sì che, effettivamente, pur nella specificità dei contesti, dei problemi, dei cambiamenti istituzionali e politici ci sono grandi sfide che interessano tutti i paesi e sempre più sono sfide che richiedono un'Agenda comune per farvi fronte. Noi per esempio adesso stiamo discutendo attraverso la rete internet che appunto ci permette di superare la barriera fisica e la dimensione locale e nazionale ed è anche per questo che l'approccio globale all'Agenda 2030 ha molto senso.

Prima dell'Agenda 2030 c'erano le Mete di Sviluppo del Millennio che però erano un'iniziativa non globale, non universalistica,. Era più simile ad una attività di cooperazione allo sviluppo per migliorare le situazioni dei paesi più poveri. Il rischio, dato che la coperta in termini finanziari è corta, è **evitare la falsa alternativa: "occuparsi del proprio paese o guardare in maniera più ampia cercando gli interessi comuni tra nord e sud del mondo?"**. Certamente l'Agenda 2030 ha questa ambizione che si traduce in 17 obiettivi che poi si articolano in traguardi, indicatori. Questo stimola i vari Paesi nel personalizzarla, cioè concentrarsi tra l'ampia gamma di indicatori su quelli di proprio immediato interesse.

Il contesto geopolitico fortemente polarizzato di oggi, parlo con riferimento evidentemente agli effetti delle guerre in Ucraina ed in Medio Oriente crea molti problemi ad una sfida comune in termini di impegni, di sottoscrizione da parte di tutti i principali attori, a cominciare dai grandi cosiddetti *global*

play. Quest'anno momenti politici globali come i Summit dei Capi di Stato e di governo, hanno deciso molto poco su temi quali l'ambiente, i cambiamenti climatici perché c'è la difficoltà a sgombrare il campo dalla forte contrapposizione tra grandi potenze: Russia, Stati Uniti, Cina ed altri attori globali. Quindi c'è una situazione certamente difficile per permettere, all'Agenda 2030 perseguire quell'ambizione di cui accennavo. Un'Agenda che in realtà mette insieme due Agende: quella dello sviluppo e quella ambientale-climatica che richiedono risorse, volontà politica e capacità di impegnarsi molto maggiori rispetto a quanto si sta facendo oggi. Quell'elemento di vulnerabilità che era nella tua domanda, in particolare oggi, è sotto gli occhi di tutti.

Il primo obiettivo dell'Agenda è l'eliminazione della povertà in tutte le sue forme. Quanto influiscono i fattori esterni che hai citato nel ritardare o ostacolare il percorso per il raggiungimento di questo obiettivo?

Evidenziamo ulteriori difficoltà: la pandemia e le guerre ostacolo che ritarda od addirittura inverte il conseguimento dei risultati. Ma al di là delle molteplici priorità congiunturali c'è poi un altro problema: **quanto sappiamo della povertà nel mondo?** Se vogliamo eliminare la povertà dobbiamo avere conoscerla. Avere delle informazioni è costoso, soprattutto nei paesi in via di sviluppo, perché richiede una dotazione infrastrutturale capillarmente diffuso sul territorio. Pensiamo in Italia l'Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, l'ISTAT, che è però solo un perno centrale di coordinamento di una raccolta di informazioni che vede mobilitati nei diversi territori tanti soggetti pubblici e non solo che forniscono informazioni sulla povertà.

Siamo confortati dal fatto che annualmente possiamo avere dei dati, a cominciare da quelli che pubblica la Banca Mondiale sulla povertà che fissa una soglia di povertà internazionale a 2,15\$ al giorno pro-capite. Ma noi abbiamo questi dati nei paesi più poveri? No. Quindi quello che poi noi utilizziamo sono meccanismi di estrapolazione statistica su dati raccolti dieci anni fa per stimare la povertà di oggi. Quindi c'è un problema generale che richiede grande investimento.

Non abbiamo certezza, ma quello che si stima è che c'è stata come conseguenza diretta della pandemia un incremento significativo del numero dei poveri nel mondo; pensiamo al lockdown cioè le chiusure che sono state un pesante fardello per tutti noi e sono state però una politica primaria per contenere la diffusione del virus che ha comportato anche perdita di reddito soprattutto per quelli che non possono lavorare da casa. Le stime oggi disponibili ci dicono che

nei paesi in via di sviluppo, dove è più concentrata la povertà, solo una minoranza, si parla addirittura del 15, 20% di lavori che sono stati svolti da remoto. Invece nei paesi 'occidentali', ad esempio, negli Stati Uniti, il 40 % delle occupazioni sono stati svolti da casa. Quindi, lo smartworking, il lockdown ha avuto un impatto ma lo ha avuto pesantemente soprattutto nelle fasce vulnerabili della popolazione e questo vuol dire che **l'economia si riprende dalle devastazioni economico-sociali della pandemia, ma questa ripresa non è distribuita equamente nel mondo. All'interno dei paesi e tra i paesi ci sono differenze che sono legate alla vulnerabilità e la povertà** è uno dei fattori principali. La conseguenza è che i redditi delle popolazioni più povere sono quelli che hanno risentito maggiormente e quindi non solo di quelle poverissime, anche quelle di gravitavano appena al di sopra della povertà. Il Covid ha fatto precipitare nella povertà, persone che stavano appena al di sopra della soglia di povertà. Quindi anche in questo caso abbiamo solo delle stime. **C'è una distribuzione iniqua delle crisi globali**, la crisi climatica, pensiamo ai problemi di accesso all'acqua: chi può, chi ha le disponibilità economiche, chi ha la possibilità di muoversi prende provvedimenti per limitare il rischio; lo stesso nella pandemia: chi può riesce in qualche modo ad attrezzarsi, chi è più vulnerabile, fragile. È un aspetto drammatico e importante per la povertà multidimensionale. Non c'è infatti solo il reddito ma anche il livello di istruzione, il livello di salute etc . Ebbene, il dato sulla povertà da istruzione è stato uno dei peggioramenti più significativi, cioè il gap, il divario, la distanza tra chi ha la possibilità di studiare e non studiare è cresciuto; l'abbandono scolastico avviene soprattutto nelle fasce vulnerabili. Quindi si è allargato il divario della distribuzione, la disuguaglianza è aumentata penalizzando la fascia più debole. Tutto questo si concretizza anche in una perdita di diritti, dal diritto alla salute, il diritto allo studio e la relazione diretta tra diritti e servizi, coperture e qualità di vita.

Tu ritieni che l'obiettivo di sviluppo sostenibile e Agenda 2030 come strategia per conseguirlo abbia sufficiente spazio nella percezione sia dell'opinione pubblica che della politica in Italia?

La relazione tra servizi e diritti è un tema centrale che ereditiamo dalla pandemia nel senso che, non solo c'è un problema di povertà ma anche i gradi di povertà, lo spazio di manovra nei paesi più poveri è molto ridotto perché l'indebitamento estero, la scarsa disponibilità di reddito fa sì che le misure necessarie per contrastare la povertà come sono la protezione sociale, il sostegno economico, i servizi di cui parlavi sono ancor più difficili e la mano pubblica è

meno capace là dove c'è più bisogno. In Italia fortunatamente per noi ci sono misure di protezione sociale, sostegno al reddito. Certamente c'è anche un elemento caratterizzante l'Italia che è la diversità, dei territori e anche una certa predisposizione dei diversi soggetti, pensiamo alla ricchezza dell'espressione dell'organizzazione della società civile. C'è però un altro elemento ricorrente e che morde il freno: **c'è paura!, e questo è un tratto significativo della contemporaneità**. Paura per la pandemia delle guerre, dei cambiamenti climatici, uno scenario a tinte fosche per il futuro! E allora tutto questo crea paura e nella paura tende ad esserci una chiusura che si traduce poi in bisogno poi di rassicurazioni sul proprio ristretto perimetro. Da cui tensioni, conflittualità e certamente meno predisposizione, per esempio, a principi di condivisione di problemi, di soluzioni. L'Europa fa molto ma è divisa al suo interno, così come la società italiana. Pur nella sua capacità d'iniziativa c'è però anche una forte spaccatura **anche intergenerazionale, tra giovani e anziani**.

Qual è a tuo parere il ruolo che possono avere le Università in questa sfida alla complessità?

Un ruolo essenziale e cruciale! Anche per gettare lo sguardo oltre con un po' più di passione ed entusiasmo rispetto ai rischi, la paura di cui parlavo prima. Questa predisposizione dei giovani ad avere lo sguardo lungo, a pensare al proprio futuro che vuol dire proiettarsi non all'indomani ma a decenni. A fronte di questa grande potenzialità c'è un attivismo delle università che si muovono. Citavo prima il discorso dei territori. Proprio in Italia, c'è la legge prevede che esistano i cosiddetti dottorati comunali legati alla strategia per le aree interne dove si è detto: visto che c'è un protagonismo che non è solo del centro, ma bisogna dare spazio, voce anche nel campo della formazione universitaria, i comuni delle aree interne, cioè i comuni che sono a rischio di marginalizzazione dal protagonismo delle metropoli che hanno meno servizi accesso alle vie di comunicazione, meno accesso alle università, meno accesso ai servizi sanitari. **È necessario e possibile per i Comuni mettersi d'accordo per disegnare con le Università dei territorio progetti per affrontare le grandi sfide di accessibilità degli abitanti ai servizi essenziali, ricchezza del territorio, ricchezza delle comunità locali, risorse naturali, culturali, tutte le grandi potenzialità dello sviluppo delle aree che rischiano di svuotarsi**. Progetti ma anche dottorati nel proprio paese. Ecco, in una prospettiva di Agenda universalistica, che è appunto quella Agenda 2030. **C'è un'altra grande potenzialità: numericamente più importante che è quella dei giovani, che sono la maggioranza, che vivono nei**

paesi in via di sviluppo, che non devono essere pensati come passivi beneficiari delle politiche dei propri governi o della cooperazione internazionale, ma possono essere protagonisti attivi. I giovani possono partecipare attivamente da protagonisti alle strategie per la definizione delle proprie priorità all'interno degli indicatori dello sviluppo e l'università può diventare protagonista in questo non imponendo un percorso didattico e riproponendolo all'estero, ma affiancando l'eccellenza delle università dei paesi partner, includendo i paesi di Africa, America Latina e Asia che spesso hanno esperienze che possono sicuramente arricchirsi del confronto con giovani studenti di altri continenti italiani. **Quindi c'è la possibilità e la necessità di rafforzare il dialogo orizzontale nord-sud** che finora è marginalissimo, ancor di più nell'università. C'è molto da costruire, e da condividere nel campo del sapere, della ricerca, della conoscenza, in sinergia con i processi delle decisioni politiche e delle pratiche conseguenti. E questo è un sentiero tutto da esplorare assai promettente su cui sicuramente potrebbero investire, in maniera positiva, tanto i Paesi dell'Occidente con la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo, tanto i Paesi in via di sviluppo con il loro importante potenziale.

Interessante anche perché questo corso dell'Università dell'Insubria è condiviso anche con le Università dei Paesi del Mediterraneo ed è un po' la pista che si sta cercando di sviluppare quindi c'è sintonia. Grazie per il tuo contributo!

***Intervista a Sebastian Vauzelle
Direttore Local UN 2030 Coalition
Bilbao***

Sebastien Vauzelle è il direttore dell'UN Local 2030 Coalition, che è un'iniziativa del Segretariato delle Nazioni Unite, a cui partecipano tutte le Agenzie del sistema per la Localizzazione dell'Agenda 2030 a livello locale.

Buongiorno Sebastien. Nel corso abbiamo già trattato il contesto dell'Agenda dando molta enfasi all'importanza della sua applicazione a livello locale. Da qui nasce l'interesse per la Local 2030 Coalition di cui sei Direttore. Quindi, la prima domanda appunto è: cos'è la Local 2030 Coalition?

La Localizzazione degli SDG è un processo bidirezionale; da un lato vuole garantire che tutti i soggetti interessati allo sviluppo locale, quindi autorità locali,

settore privato, organizzazioni della società civile, abbiano il dovuto ruolo per il processo di attuazione dell'Agenda 2030, favorendo che la loro voce abbia un impatto anche a livello nazionale e globale. Dall'altro lato promuovere modalità di lavoro per un'Agenda 2030 a livello locale che sia espressione delle specificità dei territori, dai bisogni, alla cultura, agli ecosistemi locali. Quindi, come vedete, si tratta di un processo bidirezionale per garantire che i protagonisti sociali ed economici dello sviluppo locale abbiano un ruolo concreto nei processi globali, ma anche che i processi locali siano espressione della concertazione orizzontale tra i diversi soggetti. Questo è lo scopo della Localizzazione dell' Agenda 2030.

Ed allora quali sono le sfide maggiori per l'implementazione dell'Agenda 2030 a livello locale? Quali sono i "colli di bottiglia" e le complessità da affrontare?

Le sfide sono molte trattandosi di **processi multiattore e multilivello**. Direi che la prima grande sfida è "come lavorare insieme". Questo sia tra i 193 paesi membri dell'Assemblea Generale NU, sia tra i diversi attori sociali ed economici dei territori . La prima grande sfida è assicurarsi che tutti comprendano che i 17 obiettivi rappresentano un quadro di riferimento comune per migliaia e migliaia di realtà locali impegnate ad applicare concretamente come loro priorità lo sviluppo sostenibile. Ci sono nel mondo milioni anzi miliardi di stakeholder, con interessi, visioni della vita, culture diverse ed è importante avere una visione comune sul percorso necessario per raggiungere lo sviluppo sostenibile. Ecco perché penso che sintonizzare i diversi protagonisti sia la sfida più grande. Un'altra sfida è facilitare l'**accesso a finanziamenti, tecnologie e formazione**, in modo che le regioni o le città possano portare avanti l'agenda nel proprio territorio. Lo chiamerei "accesso alle risorse", ed operare per ridurre divari tra coloro che sono in grado di muoversi più velocemente ed gli altri che resterebbero indietro.

E di fronte a queste sfide, qual è l'obiettivo dell' UN Local 2030 Coalition? Come nasce e come è organizzata?

La globalizzazione ha di fatto negato un approccio locale delle politiche pubbliche e delle politiche economiche. Le molteplici crisi attuali però (Covid, crisi climatica, **crisi di disuguaglianza, guerre, movimenti massivi di popolazioni distanti**) **impattano sui territori**. La dimensione locale è dove il contratto sociale si deve materializzare (o no) attraverso la gestione democratica, il rispetto dei

diritti della persona, l'accesso e qualità dei servizi pubblici,,l'iniziativa imprenditoriale che crea posti di lavoro. Per abbordare la complessità del territorio, inteso come città, aree rurali circostanti, sistema alimentare, connessione tra città di medie dimensioni, piccoli borghi, è necessario che i diversi stakeholder operino perché ognuno di loro sia una parte attiva di questa realtà complessa, ognuno ha una chiave per dare risposte e soluzioni. Questo è ciò che significa Localizzazione degli SDG's. Dal punto di vista operativo, la Local 2030 Coalition riunisce oltre 5.000 partners , con modalità diverse. Le Nazioni Unite sono presenti con le loro Agenzie in quelli che noi chiamiamo "gruppi mobili", che si occupano di diversi aspetti specifici, come il finanziamento per lo sviluppo, il Patto per il Futuro, e le 6 transizioni per accelerare l'applicazione degli SDG's. Poi ci sono gli "hubs", ovvero piattaforme in diverse regioni del nord e del sud del mondo, con diversi focus tematici, che pilotano un'azione comune per ottenere soluzioni innovative per la localizzazione degli SDG. Si trovano per esempio nelle Hawaii negli USA; nel Paraná in Brasile; in Giappone; nei Paesi Baschi in Spagna; Il Cairo in Egitto; l'Africa Subsahariana; e così via. **Stiamo raccogliendo tutti i tentativi in corso per pilotare soluzioni innovative all'interno di un ecosistema coeso**, in cui tutti i partner che ho citato siano riuniti da una comune visione strategica, che permetta di far avanzare gli SDG's a livello locale. Lavoriamo in tre campi di intervento principali: il primo è il patrocinio, che ci vede partecipare ad eventi e processi locali con lo scopo di far arrivare le loro voci a livello globale. Poi cerchiamo di attirare risorse finanziarie, tecnologia e soluzioni organizzative in favore delle iniziative locali per accelerarne la crescita ed aumentarne le dimensioni;. In terzo luogo, per monitorare l'impatto usiamo dei pannelli di controllo virtuali, degli indicatori.

Quale entità delle Nazioni Unite ha promosso ed è responsabile di questa iniziativa? Da chi dipende?

È un'iniziativa del Sistema delle Nazioni Unite, il che significa che riguarda tutte le Agenzie;; ci sono due Agenzie coach: una permanente che guida istituzionalmente la coalizione ed è "UN Habitat", l'Agenzia che si occupa di città, insediamenti umani e regioni, quindi di sviluppo locale in generale, che ha come riferimento l'SDG 11. Poi abbiamo un altro coach, che ruota ogni 2 anni: prima era l'UNDP, ora è la FAO, e il prossimo deve essere definito, probabilmente sarà l'UNICEF.

Grazie Sebastian e buon lavoro.

***Intervista a Marina Ponti
UN SDG's Action Campaign
Comunicare l'Agenda 2030***

La comunicazione che è il tema che andremo a trattare oggi. Parlando di implementazione dell'Agenda che, come abbiamo visto, ha elementi di forte complessità, forse la prima strategia da considerare è proprio la strategia di comunicazione più efficace per farla conoscere. Per questo abbiamo invitato Marina Ponti che è la Direttrice della SDG's Action Campaign, iniziativa mondiale delle Nazioni Unite che ha sede a Bonn.

Ringrazio Marina per aver accettato questo invito che so non è stato facile incastrare in un'agenda già fitta di impegni e partirei con la prima domanda. Che cos'è la Action Campaign e com'è organizzata?

È un piacere per me partecipare a questo corso. Ogni opportunità per parlare e confrontarmi con giovani io la colgo con molta gioia. Allora io dirigo ormai da due anni e mezzo, sono molto contenta di farlo, questa Campagna che è stata avviata dal Segretario Generale delle Nazioni Unite con l'obiettivo di creare un movimento di opinione e un movimento di azione a favore degli obiettivi di sviluppo sostenibile.

Il punto di partenza della Campagna è che **gli obiettivi si raggiungeranno solo se ogni persona diventa attore e promotore per il loro raggiungimento**, e per questo è una campagna fortemente rivolta all'azione, a tutti i livelli a partire dalle persone. L'obiettivo è di promuovere il cambiamento. E ciò avviene solo se i cittadini e tutti i diversi settori della società sono pronti a mettersi in gioco.

Nella lezione scorsa abbiamo presentato agli studenti che l'Agenda 2030 è in continuità con le Mete di Sviluppo del Millennio (MDG's).

Visto che tu eri responsabile anche della Campagna per gli MDG's dicci, qual è la differenza da un punto di vista comunicazione tra la campagna per le Mete e la campagna invece per l'Agenda 2030?

C'è un'enorme differenza. Le Mete del Millennio erano obiettivi molto tangibili, molto limitati e che assegnavano responsabilità diverse a paesi diversi: l'obiettivo n°8 per esempio era indirizzato ai paesi sviluppati e chiedeva loro di dare più risorse per lo sviluppo, di migliorarne l'efficacia, di ridurre il debito e di rendere il commercio più giusto. Mentre gli altri sette obiettivi erano

indirizzati ai paesi cosiddetti in via di sviluppo con lo scopo di far aumentare gli investimenti in settori chiave quali educazione, la sanità, l'accesso all'acqua potabile e parità di genere. Un limite delle Mete di Sviluppo del Millennio era che prevedevano compiti diversi a paesi diversi senza però affrontare le cause strutturali della povertà e delle disuguaglianze. A questo riguardo, la novità maggiore dell'Agenda 2030 è che affronta le cause strutturali delle sfide attuali. Inoltre questa è un'Agenda universale che coinvolge i cittadini ed i governi di tutto il mondo **senza più differenziare tra “donatori” e “beneficiari”**. Questa Agenda richiede l'impegno di tutti i governi a fare di più per le donne, per la sanità, per il diritto al lavoro, per la lotta a povertà, malnutrizione, disuguaglianze e cambiamenti climatici. Cioè per la prima volta, e questo da un punto di vista di comunicazione è molto forte, questi obiettivi sono condivisi da tutti i paesi comunicando un senso di appartenenza ad una cittadinanza globale. L'Agenda è inoltre trasformativa, cioè pone sotto i riflettori quanto gli attuali meccanismi di redistribuzione delle risorse, delle opportunità non siano efficaci né giusti. In altre parole lo Sviluppo Sostenibile mette in discussione alcune delle logiche di sviluppo delle nostre società e chiede a tutti di attuare dei cambiamenti trasformativi che non si limitino ad aumentare le risorse per sanità o educazione, come era il messaggio degli MDG, ma che portino alla ridefinizione dei principi di funzionamento dei nostri modelli di sviluppo. **Una difficoltà però nel comunicare questa agenda è la complessità: 17 obiettivi** sono tanti, e spaziano in tutti gli ambiti della vita dagli oceani ai deserti, dalle energie rinnovabili al lavoro dignitoso alla priorità di genere e alla lotta alle disuguaglianze. La complessità dell'Agenda fa perdere facilmente l'attenzione del pubblico. Per cui l'obiettivo è stato di identificare due o tre messaggi prioritari che in qualche modo possano farsi portatori dei principi dell'Agenda. Questi sono la lotta alle disuguaglianze, la lotta ai cambiamenti climatici e la protezione del nostro pianeta e la promozione dell'eguaglianza di genere.

Quando hai detto che c'è il rischio che l'audience si perda mi veniva in mente che l'attenzione dell'opinione pubblica ad una campagna di comunicazione è spesso limitata nel tempo; inoltre comunicare cose positive, comunicare buone intenzioni è sempre meno impattante che comunicare cose negative. Allora la mia domanda è: ma voi che strategia avete scelto “per acchiappare” l'attenzione e mantenerla?

Innanzitutto sono stati fatti negli anni tantissimi studi che aiutano a identificare i messaggi che vengono meglio recepiti. Anche se può sembrare che il

messaggio negativo sia quello più forte in realtà è provato che un messaggio costruttivo che dia speranza è un messaggio che viene recepito in maniera più forte e che porta al cambiamento.

Detto questo, noi abbiamo scelto un'altra via e cioè quella della creatività. Utilizzare l'arte, la cultura, dalla musica, alla Street Art, alla land art, ai musei, alla narrativa, ai film per aiutare a veicolare un messaggio di possibilità e di costruzione di un futuro migliore. Noi non vogliamo né spaventare né dire che questa Agenda è la panacea che risolve tutti i problemi perché non è vero. Vogliamo catturare l'attenzione usando l'arte, usando la creatività perché di fatto l'arte, nei millenni, ha sempre avuto anche il ruolo di aiutare a far capire alle persone i contesti in cui vivono, le sfide e le opportunità del tempo e, in qualche modo, l'arte e la creatività hanno dato in molti casi il coraggio alle persone di affrontare le ingiustizie che li circondano.

Il nome è 'Action Campaign' e quindi, ritengo, che prevedete anche azioni concrete. Quali sono le azioni che prevedete per la campagna e perché sono importanti ?

Durante il percorso tra gli MDG e gli SDG's abbiamo realizzato quello che è stato il *survey* più grande della storia delle Nazioni Unite, cioè sia con mezzi digitali, ma anche attraverso volontari in tutti i paesi, siamo andati dalle persone per chiedere quali erano le loro priorità e quali erano gli obiettivi che avrebbero voluto vedere in questa nuova agenda. In totale sono state consultate più di 10mln di persone. Coinvolgere le persone è stato molto importante ed è stato anche il nostro *survey*, che si chiamava 'My World', uno degli elementi riconosciuto dagli Stati membri dell'Assemblea Generale delle NU.

Quello che è avvenuto dopo questo coinvolgimento è stato, attraverso anche qui analisi e ricerche, che le persone imparano attraverso un'azione e cioè: se io voglio essere efficace nella mia comunicazione non è sufficiente che io spieghi qualcosa; io come soggetto, come target, comprenderò meglio un messaggio se lo sperimento, se in qualche modo vengo coinvolto in maniera diretta. Per cui tante azioni, tante campagne dove si chiede. Per esempio: "mangia meno carne" piuttosto che "vai a scuola in bicicletta invece che con il motorino", quest'azione ovviamente ha un impatto, ma l'impatto più importante è quello che aiuta le persone ad appropriarsi del cambiamento.

Per esempio, ogni anno a settembre organizziamo delle mobilitazioni globali, in cui chiediamo alle persone di fare delle azioni a sostegno degli SDG, da eventi nei parlamenti, a clean up di spiagge e parchi, a piantare alberi, a realiz-

zare eventi culturali, murali e altre forme di comunicazione e di azione.

Noi crediamo anche in quello che definiamo l'effetto farfalla, il *butterfly effect*, e cioè che ogni azione individuale può portare a un cambiamento trasformativo. Ognuno di noi può essere un agente di cambiamento. La pandemia, nostro malgrado, ha dimostrato che l'azione individuale di mantenere la distanza, lavarsi le mani e indossare una mascherina ha fatto la differenza.

Un esempio appunto di come l'azione individuale possa avere impatto nelle sfide globali.

A questo proposito ho visto alcune iniziative chiamate 'SDG Action Awards' oppure anche la 'Global festival'. Fanno parte di questa strategia che ci stai descrivendo?

Assolutamente. Crediamo molto nel potere dell'individuo, della creatività, dell'innovazione per cui ogni anno abbiamo questi SDG Action Awards su tre pillar: uno è "inspire" per le iniziative più creative, più innovative volte a mobilitare persone e raggiungere obiettivi; la seconda categoria è "mobilize" e cioè le iniziative che mobilitano un numero straordinario di persone e il terzo pillar è 'connect' cioè tutte le iniziative che riescono a mettere in comunicazione diversi stake holder e diversi settori. Grazie a questo programma ogni anno ci sono più di 5000 applicazioni da tutti i paesi. Si tocca con mano cioè che nonostante le difficoltà che le persone vivono in molto paesi c'è una forza creativa propositiva di risoluzione dei problemi fortissima.

Vi cito solo un esempio dal Libano. Nel 2021 nella categoria "inspire" abbiamo premiato una campagna bellissima, si chiamava "A white dress does not cover the rape". Dovete sapere che in Libano, prima di questa campagna, se l'aggressore appunto chiedeva in sposa la vittima di stupro quest'ultimo non era più considerato colpevole di un reato. Questa campagna ha consistito nel appendere abiti da sposa nelle spiagge, in cima all'abito da sposa invece che il viso della persona c'era un cappio, per cui immagini molto forti. Questa campagna ha determinato una mobilitazione che ha portato all'introduzione dello stupro come reato nella legislazione. Un esempio che dimostra come la comunicazione, la creatività possano generare impatto.

Le tue parole mi fanno fatto pensare che questa strategia di comunicazione basata nella creatività e basata nel coinvolgere l'individuo, le persone in tutto il mondo. Ma quindi utilizzate lo stesso messaggio con popolazioni con culture, tradizioni, religioni, con percezioni. Non potrebbe essere un limite questo?

Ogni campagna per essere efficace dev'essere molto *tailor* al contenuto nazionale, alla lingua, ma anche alla cultura ed ai codici culturali del paese. Per cui noi come campagna globale quello che possiamo offrire sono dei messaggi ampi con la chiara indicazione che questi messaggi diventeranno efficaci solo laddove a livello nazionale, a livello locale o a livello di un gruppo etnico, di un gruppo religioso, siano adattati ai contesti nazionali e locali.

Un'ultima domanda. Rimangono 6 anni al 2030. Avete già dei ritorni in termini qualitativi o anche quantitativi di quanto la campagna stia mobilitando nelle diverse aree geografiche del mondo?

Questa mobilitazione ha coinvolto oltre 58 mln di persone di cui attorno ai 20 mln attorno al Mediterraneo. Noi utilizziamo molto il *digital*, abbiamo organizzato tantissimi eventi che hanno raggiunto milioni di persone. Il digitale infatti, nonostante sia un limite all'esperienza diretta, consente di raggiungere molte più persone ed alcuni indicatori ci dicono quante persone hanno letto i contenuti, li hanno condivisi, ed hanno portato avanti delle azioni concrete. Quello che per noi è prioritario è aiutare a identificare una nuova narrativa. Per cui, da un lato l'azione individuale sono le campagne, ma anche l'obiettivo di riscrivere tutti insieme una narrativa diversa che descriva come si può costruire un futuro che sia più equo, più inclusivo e più sostenibile.

Finisco con una *quote* di Mandela: «Una cosa può essere considerata impossibile finché non la si realizza».

Intervista a Emanuele Giordana

Giornalista

Comunicare l'Agenda attraverso i media

Emanuele in quanto giornalista ti chiederei come meglio ha impatto l'informazione sui cittadini al di là di quelli che sono gli obiettivi e le strategie istituzionali; cioè, ci sono delle modalità, degli aspetti tecnici o tecnologici, psicologici su come meglio far arrivare la notizia, come coinvolgere l'utente?

Intanto partirei dalla **differenza tra comunicare ed informare**. La comunicazione la può fare un giornalista, la può fare chiunque conosca bene l'italiano e le regole della comunicazione; invece l'informazione è proprio il mestiere del giornalista. Qual è la differenza? Che chi comunica qualcosa non è obbligato,

come dire, in un certo senso, a dire tutta la verità e soltanto la verità, tenderà a dire soprattutto le cose che gli stanno a cuore. Pensiamo a un'azienda privata, certo non verrà a raccontarvi delle sue difficoltà sindacali, vi dirà piuttosto che vende tante automobili o tanti elettrodomestici.

Il giornalista che cosa deve fare? Deve verificare che le informazioni date dal comunicatore siano reali: il mio Governo mi sta dicendo che i posti di lavoro sono aumentati? Beh, io andrò a cercare sui dati dell'Istat se questo è vero; le Nazioni Unite mi dicono che la fame nel mondo che sta diminuendo grazie all'Agenda 2030? Io dovrei cercare di verificarlo anche con altre fonti. Questa è la prima grande differenza: una cosa è comunicare un fatto, un avvenimento, una cosa futura ed altra cosa è andare a cercare se effettivamente le cose stanno come dice il comunicatore. Mi riferisco ad un approccio che deve far convergere comunicazione e informazione perché una comunicazione corretta può essere un'informazione veritiera e precisa anche se però poi c'è sempre quella percentuale di coinvolgimento da cui il giornalista dovrebbe astenersi.

Esiste un approccio che combina l'informazione e la comunicazione e che rende più facile o meno difficile questo coinvolgimento delle persone e delle comunità?

Intanto è bene fare una premessa. Parliamo un po' del paese delle fate perché tante cose che io dirò sul giornalismo non sono poi esattamente così. Lo stesso vale per la comunicazione istituzionale, ci sono luci e ombre e spesso un lavoro che dovrebbe essere molto etico per il rispetto della verità cede al tentativo di raccontarla in modo accattivante per parlare a un pubblico determinato. Però, il giornalista che cosa deve fare? Innanzitutto si deve occupare di fatti e non di opinioni, di cose che sono accadute realmente. Le cose che accadono diventano notizie quando hanno, come dire, una loro forza, una loro novità, rispetto alla quotidianità. Si fa di solito un esempio: il cane che morde l'uomo non è una novità, ma un uomo che morde il cane invece sì! un esempio classico di che cos'è questa è una notizia. Allora i fatti in se non bastano, devono essere notiziabili, ossia dire qualcosa di importante e di nuovo. Ma a volte i fatti li ignoriamo e tendiamo a prendere per fatti le parole: quelle che dicono i decisori politici e gli osservatori, gli analisti perché sono persone importanti... anche quando dicono banalità! Ovviamente è chiaro che **se noi parliamo di una cosa che si svolge adesso ma anche nel futuro, come l'Agenda 2030, dobbiamo trovare un aggancio con un fatto del momento per renderla "notiziabile"** ed evitare che appaia solo come una costruzione teorica. In realtà l'Agenda

2030 l'aggancio ce l'ha perché tutti i giorni abbiamo a che fare con problemi di sanità, con problemi di fame, acqua, ambiente e così via; però se non c'è un aggancio alla realtà notiziabile, che può essere un conflitto, un'alluvione, un'emergenza, la carestia in un paese, la siccità, ecco che diventa difficile parlare dell'Agenda 2030. Quindi la prima cosa è cercare di agganciare uno dei temi dell'Agenda 2030, che sono tanti, declinarlo dentro un fatto che faccia notizia che appunto può essere un conflitto, un'emergenza o anche il discorso di un rappresentante politico.

Quindi la realtà, da un punto di vista giornalistico, non è tanto l'importanza o la portata di un tema, per esempio la effettiva disponibilità di acqua potabile come prodotto di una strategia di media e lunga durata, ma realtà è solo ciò che fa notizia. Se è così verrebbe da dire che se è una notizia negativa o comunque fuori dagli schemi si prende subito l'attenzione dell'utenza, della persona, della popolazione, se invece è una notizia di prospettiva, che ha la possibilità di incidere profondamente nella quotidianità allora questa attenzione è molto difficile da acchiappare. Come la vedi?

Siamo sempre all'uomo che morde il cane. Ci vuole un elemento di novità e troppo spesso è un fatto negativo. Naturalmente in un mondo ideale il giornalista non dovrebbe limitarsi a guardare solo l'aspetto negativo anzi, dovrebbe anticipare certi temi positivi che sono comunque notizie. Non so, pensiamo all'eolico: l'eolico non è iniziato solo con le pale o le polemiche sulle pale, è nato molti anni prima e un bravo giornalista avrebbe dovuto dare la notizia che c'erano degli studi che cercavano di trasformare i venti in energia elettrica e così per tante altre cose. Questo però succede abbastanza raramente, nei giornali avrà uno spazio del 5%. Di solito sono le notizie cattive, proprio perché fortunatamente non sono ordinarie, quelle che prendono più spazio. E allora in effetti bisogna un po' cinicamente introdursi nel dibattito del momento per cui si parla di una certa cosa. I media sono importanti. Perché sono importanti? **Perché i media possono influenzare i decisori politici, possono influenzare l'opinione pubblica che a sua volta influenza i decisori politici e che a sua volta influenzano i media**, perché non è la stessa cosa se parlo io o tu ma bisogna immergersi in questo circolo vizioso nel momento in cui ci si può attaccare a un elemento forte che può essere, prendiamo il caso italiano, la sanità, le liste d'attesa : non è un problema che si risolve in due minuti. E lì l'Agenda 2030 può essere citata come riferimento per possibili soluzioni.

Mi sembra molto interessante questa cosa che hai detto e cioè che ciò che fa notizia è in funzione del fatto di non essere una cosa normale. Mi viene da pensare ormai alla cronaca che conosciamo tutti purtroppo, di tante cose, di tante situazioni che all'inizio risultano anormali, pensiamo alle bombe d'acqua, fenomeni nuovi; oggi le bombe d'acqua sono diventate un fatto "normale", quindi non dico che non faccia più notizia, fa notizia se ci sono vittime e molti danni, ma è un fenomeno che ormai si dà come acquisito. Oppure, per cambiare tema, anni fa i primi migranti che annegavano nel mare era una notizia che arrivava in prima pagine; oggi, diciamo, fa fatica anche a trovare spazio perché è diventata una cosa "normale". Allora, dobbiamo adeguarci a questa dinamica in questo senso perversa? oppure, come hai detto tu prima, è la questione di un buon giornalista o è anche una questione tecnologica?

Ci sono tanti aspetti insieme credo. Cioè, come dire, un fatto reale è ovviamente quello che un giornale, una televisione, una radio non possono parlare di tutto in tutti i momenti. In questa fase che noi stiamo attraversando, stiamo continuamente sentendo parlare, giustamente, di Gaza, poi sentiamo parlare dell'Ucraina, adesso sentiamo parlare del Libano e Siria, ignoriamo per esempio che tra i più grandi conflitti che ci sono stati - per numero di decessi nell'ultimo anno, nel 2023 - il principale era l'Ucraina (non c'era ancora la guerra a Gaza) quelli in Sudan ed in Myanmar non sono certo di minore efferatezza. Quindi, già c'è un problema in generale del giornalismo che è piuttosto intermittente, non riesce, forse anche non vuole, seguire tutte le cose che accadono nel mondo. Poi c'è un problema anche di scelta politica, quello che tu hai chiamato 'buon giornalismo', cioè decidere se si vuole solamente parlare di notizie che fanno effetto, questa è un po' la tendenza di questi tempi. E allora per farsi leggere ci si mette anche la moda, la star, cose leggere senza andare in profondità.

Questo è un problema in generale del giornalismo che, soltanto in parte, con qualche ombra, adesso ha però un'altra stampella che è la nostra possibilità di informarci di più dal momento che tramite internet noi possiamo leggere un po' i giornali di tutto il mondo. Prima non lo potevamo fare, ci dovevamo affidare alla rassegna stampa. Poi ci sono i social, ma qui dobbiamo fare molta attenzione. Abbiamo la possibilità anche di sentire voci di non giornalisti, che quindi mediano questa realtà, ma anche voci esterne che magari i giornalisti non raccoglierebbero. Sto pensando per esempio a certi movimenti di liberazione che ci sono stati soprattutto in passato che però non avevano voce per dire le loro ragioni perché molto spesso il giornalismo ragiona in termini politici per cui decide che i buoni stanno da una parte, i cattivi dall'altra mentre invece

ci dovrebbe essere uno sforzo quantomeno per rendere note le cose agli spettatori o lettori e poi decidono da soli che scelte fare.

Tu dici: ci sono alcune tematiche che sono più leggere, più facili o più coinvolgenti, per esempio la moda, aggiungo io lo sport o che. Ma non potrebbe essere una strategia quella di legare paradossalmente una tematica così complessa com'è l'Agenda 2030, complessa sia negli obiettivi ma anche nella sua strutturazione, operatività e tutto, a questi temi leggeri o si rischia di banalizzare?

Questa è una scelta che le Nazioni Unite per esempio hanno fatto. I famosi *Goodwill Ambassador* cosa sono? Sono dei personaggi famosi che vanno in un campo profughi e attirano l'attenzione non tanto per la gravità del campo profughi, ma perché sono loro che ci sono andati: Angelina Jolie è andata nel campo profughi? Ecco la notizia. Questo naturalmente succede anche quando un cantante importante si muove, decide di prendere una posizione politica a favore di qualcuno. Penso a Vasco Rossi che ha dedicato un concerto a Gino Strada, o a un calciatore, ancora meglio, che prende una posizione su guerra e pace. È importante perché il divertimento, lo sport, la moda fanno parte della nostra vita quindi perché no... però con l'attenzione a non banalizzare perché se alla fine io guardo il filmato con Angelina Jolie perché mi piace Angelina Jolie e mi dimentico tre minuti dopo di quello che in realtà lei voleva comunicarvi, beh allora non ho fatto un buon servizio. E ci sono credo esempi in cui alla fine anche molte associazioni non governative hanno utilizzato questi metodi che alla fine hanno quasi a che vedere più con la pubblicità e il marketing che non con il senso reale e il coinvolgimento, la consapevolezza per chi vuole fare per esempio una donazione.

Tra le caratteristiche dell'Agenda 2030 è che può essere percepita come un'agenda delle Nazioni Unite, un'agenda che non si sa bene chi l'ha definita nel Palazzo di Vetro, un qualcosa molto lontano dalla nostra realtà quotidiana.

Durante il corso io ho cercato di dare elementi per analizzare questo in maniera critica cioè com'è nata, com'è stata coinvolta, com'è stata approvata, com'è stata un po' tutta la genesi. Ma da un punto di vista giornalistico, il fatto di essere stata promossa da un' entità comunque lontana anche fisicamente e spazialmente da dove siamo noi adesso è un qualcosa che impatta? E come potrebbe essere colmato?

Certo non basta, come giustamente fai notare, non basta. Credo che lo ri-levi un sondaggio, che mi accennavi prima di questa nostra conversazione, su quanto gli italiani, non vorrei sbagliare i dati quindi ti ridò la parola, conoscono dell'Agenda 2030... e non sono molti.

Gli obiettivi delle Mete del Millennio si considerò che furono conosciuti da circa 10/12% della popolazione mentre l'Agenda 2030 credo che si arrivata a un 20/25% . Da un punto di vista meramente di analisi c'è un incremento, ma da un punto di vista dell'impatto di conoscenza e coinvolgimento è estremamente basso.

Io direi che questo sondaggio ci dice sostanzialmente una cosa, anzi due. La prima è che questo **discorso sull'Agenda 2030 è penetrato in una nicchia e questo è comprensibile** proprio per tutti i motivi che abbiamo sviscerato prima, l'ultimo l'hai ricordato tu: la lontananza, un'istituzione che non è presente nella vita quotidiana, il fatto che molti governi l'hanno firmata ma poi non l'hanno sostenuta, il fatto che è difficile raccontare una cosa che non è una notizia di per sé, è un programma che deve raggiungere certi obiettivi.

Però ci dice anche un'altra cosa: che **se le Mete del Millenium, che sono stati l'inizio di questa strada, sono arrivati al 14%, cioè una persona e mezzo su dieci, col tempo siamo arrivati a rendere consapevoli tre persone su dieci che in realtà non è poco.** E dunque tutto il lavoro che è stato fatto, compreso diciamo questo incontro di oggi con voi che vi occupate di questi temi, alla fine produce piano piano una consapevolezza generale. È una strada lunga, ma non c'è da stupirsi: questo genere di cose richiede una strada lunga. Sarebbe disonesto dire alle Nazioni Unite che con una campagna mirata si possa arrivare a sette persone su dieci. Questi sono temi che richiedono tempo e costanza però ci si può arrivare e alla fine, anche se lentamente, questi diventeranno un patrimonio della consapevolezza senza che quasi uno se ne renda conto. Oggi Agenda2030 non è qualcosa che è nell'immaginario comune ma quantomeno qualcuno ne ha sentito parlare e forse qualcuno deciderà anche di andare a informarsi.

Diciamo che il bicchiere mezzo pieno è questo che hai appena detto, il bicchiere mezzo vuoto è che, come sapete, lo sviluppo sostenibile ha purtroppo dei limiti di tempo cioè, entro il 2050 una serie di obiettivi devono essere raggiunti. Si pone la questione di un atteggiamento intellettualmente onesto rispetto alla complessità della sfida e ai tempi limitati per vincerla. Ma se io ti chiedessi:

suggeriscici una strategia per arrivare alle persone e per meglio coinvolgerle oppure cosa faresti o, ancora meglio, cosa non faresti?

Ma cercherei innanzitutto, e probabilmente le Nazioni Unite stanno anche facendo così, di intervenire nei momenti in cui c'è la necessità di una risposta. C'è una grande alluvione? Beh, che cosa fanno le Nazioni Unite? Certo, apportano gli aiuti alimentari, i medici e così via, ma lì si può arrivare al punto in cui l'Agenda 2030 dà un'indicazione precisa. Lo stesso, c'è un problema di siccità, c'è un problema di carestia, beh, l'Agenda 2030 ha già ottenuto dei risultati. Io questo non lo vedo sempre presente, io che considero di essere una persona che ha consapevolezza di che cos'è l'Agenda, non vedo arrivare questo messaggio molto spesso. Anzi, lo vedo molto raramente, mentre ci sono momenti in cui il giornalista per creare un contesto ha bisogno di mettere elementi e proprio in quel momento lì sarebbe bello che arrivasse questo tipo di informazione legata purtroppo ad avvenimenti tragici, le guerre, gli alluvioni, i terremoti insomma, in genere alle emergenze. Senza contare, ma questo sicuramente lo sta facendo anche se credo in molti casi con difficoltà, che bisogna agire sui decisori politici: sono loro che possono mettere quella parolina, quando fanno un discorso, dicendo per esempio se il nostro paese sta rispettando o no l'Agenda 2030. In alcuni casi lo si fa, in alcuni casi lo fanno le organizzazioni non governative. Credo che sia un cammino da cui non ci possiamo aspettare una cosa immediata anche perché, e qui c'è una valutazione del tutto personale, le Nazioni Unite vivono una crisi particolare ormai da diverso tempo. A volte le percepiamo addirittura come inefficienti, a volte come inutili mentre invece sono convinto che svolgono un ruolo fondamentale. Bisogna, io credo, trovare la maniera di ridare alle Nazioni Unite la credibilità che permetteva ottenere risultati. Per esempio la riforma del Consiglio di Sicurezza in discussione da troppo tempo sarebbe un passo nella giusta direzione.

Un ultimo punto da trattare proprio in pillola. Non abbiamo toccato il tema dell'importanza dei social che oggi sono la via di comunicazione più planetaria, più globale, più impattante. In poche battute, cosa diresti dei social a fronte della sfida per l'applicazione dell'Agenda?

I social credo che siano importanti perché hanno aperto un mondo quindi quando c'è una novità che ci consente di conoscere più cose è sempre una buona esperienza. Naturalmente, lo abbiamo visto e lo vediamo continuamente, sono anche veicolo di notizie false per cui un ruolo importante dei giornalisti

dovrebbe proprio essere quello di mediare tra le mille notizie che girano sul web e ciò che più quella che è invece la cosa che più si avvicina alla realtà. Quindi c'è un aspetto positivo, noi che da soli possiamo andare a sceglierci le cose che magari ci vengono indicate da qualcuno su facebook o su instagram, dall'altra però dobbiamo fare sempre più attenzione. E poi c'è il discorso sull'intelligenza artificiale. Insomma, siamo di fronte a una massa di informazioni che in realtà ci sviano con molta facilità e ci portano su una pista falsa senza contare i messaggi d'odio di cui poi alla fine si vedono gli effetti. Io credo alla fine che il giornalismo, a cui però va richiesto uno sforzo, possa essere un baluardo di fronte alla cattiva informazione e che il nostro ruolo dovrebbe proprio essere quello di tagliare via quello che non va. È una grande responsabilità, non so quanto il giornalismo stia seguendo questa pista: sono tempi bui anche per il nostro mestiere, anche per la capacità di intromissione in questo mondo dei social, le agenzie specializzate nell'inventare notizie false. Quindi un futuro complesso, ragionarci sopra mi sembra l'unica maniera per venirne forse fuori.

Intervista a Alessandro Casartelli Banca Mondiale

Il tema del finanziamento dell'Agenda 2030, è un tema molto articolato e variegato. Nel Corso abbiamo parlato delle fonti locali e nazionali. Adesso parliamo delle fonti di finanziamento internazionali. Per questo abbiamo invitato Alessandro Casartelli, che è un esperto della Banca Mondiale, basato quindi a Washington dove nello specifico segue i finanziamenti degli investimenti privati sui temi della sostenibilità.

*Ma lasciamo a lui parlarci un po' meglio questa responsabilità.
Grazie Alessandro per la tua disponibilità.*

Sì, io lavoro all'interno di un'unità nella Banca Mondiale conosciuta come IFC o Corporazione Finanziaria Internazionale, ed è proprio un braccio della Banca Mondiale che si occupa dei finanziamenti del settore privato. La Banca Mondiale creata negli anni 50 e soprattutto la IFC, che è l'unità in cui opero io, era partita da un concetto fondamentale, e cioè che il settore privato è essenziale nello sviluppo. Sostanzialmente noi operiamo in tutti i paesi emergenti per finanziare progetti di sostenibilità. Sostenibilità è un concetto ampio, ovviamen-

te la IFC si occupa appunto di verificare quali sono i progetti che rispondono ai criteri di sostenibilità. Mi occupo di paesi emergenti in Asia centrale, Turchia e Medio Oriente.

In due parole da dove vengono poi le risorse che voi allocate una volta approvati i progetti ed in quali paesi nello specifico?

Ci sono paesi contribuenti che finanziano la Banca per operare nei paesi emergenti ed in particolare in quelli che noi chiamiamo FCS, Fragile Conflicts States, con il mandato di intervenire affinché si riduca la povertà e ci sia una redistribuzione di benessere nell'investimento del capitale privato. Questa è la funzione essenziale.

Una precisazione, visto che operate come Banca e non come una cooperazione a fondo perduto, le risorse di cui voi disponete vengono da Stati o vengono da altre banche?

Vengono dagli Stati. Vengono precisamente dagli Stati che hanno contribuito nella creazione di questa istituzione. Quindi ci sono capitali della Banca che vengono messi a disposizione per determinati interventi, ma oltre a questi che non sono sufficienti ovviamente si fa da volano per far sì che altre istituzioni nazionali, locali e internazionali possano intervenire con i loro capitali affinché il progetto, il finanziamento sia in sintonia col capitale pubblico.

Quali criteri utilizzate per verificare la sostenibilità dei progetti? E quali sono le garanzie o le modalità che identificate per far sì poi che questi criteri siano effettivamente rispettati nella fase di esecuzione?

La Banca ha dei requisiti in diversi ambiti sia ambientali che sociali; questi requisiti fanno parte della valutazione di ogni finanziamento e di ogni investimento. Quindi questi criteri rispondono sostanzialmente all'Agenda 2030 che coincidono con quelli della Banca Mondiale. Ben 16 dei 17 Obiettivi dell'Agenda 2030 sono parte integrante dei requisiti che vengono richiesti, in forma di valutazione che noi facciamo, per assegnare gli investimenti. Insieme a questi, che sono principi sui quali operiamo, ci sono criteri sui quali noi cerchiamo di fare una valutazione. Come per esempio l'impatto positivo di questi investimenti che deve superare determinate soglie. La ragione è molto semplice: proprio in base al nostro mandato cerchiamo di intervenire laddove c'è un impatto conte-

stuale, sociale che contribuisca alla sostenibilità dell'intervento stesso. Il criterio fondamentale è l'addizionalità anche in termini non finanziari. Si valuta per esempio quali rischi si vanno a ridurre, se ci sono altri capitali, altre risorse per garantire appunto la sostenibilità del progetto.

Detto questo, in sintesi, in che termini l'Agenda 2030 e i relativi 17 obiettivi sono un riferimento per la definizione dei criteri? In parte l'hai detto, ma giusto per chiarirlo nel dettaglio.

Diciamo che la Banca ha vari criteri, che sostanzialmente vanno dalla biodiversità alle tematiche sociali, la salute dei lavoratori, dell'ambiente. I requisiti della Banca Mondiale, vengono messi a confronto con quelli che sono i 17 obiettivi dell'Agenda 2030. Quindi possiamo dire che c'è proprio un allineamento a 360 gradi tra Obiettivi dell'Agenda 2030 con i requisiti della Banca. Per ogni investimento facciamo un'analisi lungo tutta il suo ciclo di vita: da quando viene messo in forma concettuale fino a quando viene implementato il progetto stesso.

Quali sono i maggiori limiti, ostacoli o difficoltà con cui vi confrontate più spesso nel vostro lavoro? Quali sono anche le modalità con cui verificate che i criteri proposti nei progetti poi vengano effettivamente rispettati in fase di esecuzione?

Le difficoltà sono di vario tipo. Innanzitutto la difficoltà Paese, il rischio contestuale in cui operiamo, cioè i paesi in conflitto. Gli ostacoli principali, proprio perché cerchiamo di essere un volano per lo sviluppo nel paese stesso, sono nel cercare di mettere insieme risorse e competenze, perché in questi paesi è particolarmente complesso. I nostri progetti, proprio perché diventano un volano di coesione sociale, richiedono innanzitutto un cambio culturale enorme. Per fare un esempio concreto, io adesso tornavo dall'Uzbekistan, dove c'è un progetto per lo sviluppo agricolo, in modo che ogni piccola cooperativa che opera nella raccolta del cotone, segua criteri di sostenibilità e quindi riduca in maniera concreta un problema storico vale a dire la raccolta manuale del cotone, in particolare da parte dei bambini. Il nostro intervento è stato quello di mettere insieme le cooperative affinché ci sia un ritorno non solo economico a livello individuale, ma anche un cambio culturale all'interno del paese affinché queste pratiche vengano modificate ed eliminate. Un classico esempio di cambio culturale in cui siano le autorità e gli stessi operatori a far sì che il cambio ci sia.

I cambi culturali, come tutti sappiamo, richiedono sempre tempi lunghi, men-

tre la durata dei progetti è definita e chi sfora di solito incorre in tutta una serie di misure come per esempio non erogare la seguente tranche di finanziamento. Ecco come mettete insieme, questa dicotomia tra i tempi lunghi di un cambio culturale e quelli che sono i tempi di un progetto per di più di una banca che, evidentemente, deve lavorare secondo criteri bancari?

Sì, ringrazio la domanda perché è proprio il fulcro del nostro lavoro. Innanzitutto, la parte di valutazione deve essere fatta in maniera coerente; cioè non si può fare un investimento e aspettare che sia il cambio culturale a essere il fattore principale di successo o di insuccesso del progetto stesso. Ci deve essere un insieme di elementi che fanno sì che il progetto possa andare avanti. Quindi cosa mettiamo in campo? Mettiamo in campo le nostre risorse affinché come stimolo per far sì che il cambio culturale avvenga. Quindi questo progetto di cui stavo parlando in precedenza è fatto anche con le autorità locali, affinché che questo obiettivo sia possibile nei tempi previsti dall'investimento; quindi ci sono sicuramente delle contingenze messe in campo, ma ci sono anche degli sforzi nostri e degli operatori che vengono messi a disposizione.

Prima quando ci parlavi appunto dei paesi dove operate e ci facevi presente come nei paesi in conflitto si richiedono approcci particolari. Visto che operi in una zona dove ci sono diverse religioni questo vi porta a determinati criteri nell'entrare in sintonia con diverse sensibilità di culto?

No, assolutamente perché la mission, per usare il termine inglese, della Banca è proprio di entrare in questi paesi tenendo conto di quelle che sono le situazioni locali anche in termini di diversità religiosa. Quindi non c'è differenza da quel punto di vista su come i requisiti vengono interpretati ed implementati. Chiaramente cambiano le condizioni al contorno, ma da un punto di vista dell'investimento e di come si opera, le condizioni sono esattamente le stesse. Si tiene principalmente conto del contesto culturale che cambia da paese a paese.

Solo per avere un'idea quali sono i tipi di finanziamento? I minimi finanziamenti o i massimi finanziamenti? Di che tipo di finanziamento stiamo parlando? In media, diciamo.

La Banca prevede il limite inferiore di 10 milioni di euro, ed un limite superiore di 300 milioni di euro. Quindi oltre i 300 milioni entra in gioco la mobilitazione di altri giocatori, di altri contributi che devono essere messi insieme come volano se l'investimento è superiore a quella della cifra.

Un'ultima domanda: voi che importanza date al ruolo che le Università possono svolgere nello sviluppo sostenibile?

L'università è fondamentale in questo processo e anzi, colgo l'occasione per ringraziare l'Università dell'Insubria per darmi l'opportunità di questo intervento. Ma proprio perché il contesto in cui si opera è fondamentale consideriamo le Università come volano fra il settore privato e le istituzioni pubbliche. L'università opera in maniera più snella rispetto ad altri soggetti e quindi ha la possibilità di fornire le competenze ed essere innovativa per la formazione dei professionisti del futuro. Un ruolo di cerniera tra la realtà territorio con altre competenze settoriali. Infatti se le università forniscono esperti di cambio climatico questi si devono rapportare con le specifiche priorità ambientali, economiche e sociali degli attori locali che sono coinvolti. Per questo ritengo che le Università siano fondamentali nel portare avanti l'Agenda 2030.

Molto interessante è anche quest'ultima nota che hai detto sull'opportunità che hanno le Università di formare quadri. Nello specifico una priorità riconosciuta per la formazione di quadri è l'intersectorialità e la nella programmazione strategica, cioè le competenze necessarie per far interagire i settori che sono una delle grandi difficoltà nell'applicazione dell'Agenda 2030.

Allora io ti ringrazio per il tuo tempo; mi pare che il tuo cognome evochi fortemente il territorio dell'Insubria del lago di Como, e quindi siamo ancora più orgogliosi del tuo contributo!

Intervista a Giacomo Negrotto

Dipartimento crisi

Programma delle Nazioni Unite per Sviluppo (UNDP NY)

Oggi abbiamo come ospite Giacomo Negrotto funzionario di una Agenzia ONU, il PNUD (Programma delle Nazioni Unite per lo Sviluppo), che opera nel dipartimento di crisi a NY.

Buon giorno Giacomo, vado subito alla domanda: di cosa si occupa il tuo Dipartimento e in che contesto operate?

Lavoriamo nei contesti di crisi benché il mandato del PNUD sia quello di sostenere i processi di sviluppo dei territori dei paesi membri. Nello specifico il

nostro mandato come ufficio crisi é di mantenere, con adeguate azioni, l'orizzonte dello sviluppo sostenibile anche in contesti di crisi. Tradizionalmente questo approccio alle crisi si riferisce a due categorie, cioè le situazioni di conflitto e le situazioni di risposta, ma anche di prevenzione, ai disastri cosiddetti naturali. Infatti dal 2020, dall'inizio della pandemia Covid-19 in avanti, si è assistito ad un trend che ha visto aumentare gli interventi in risposta alle crisi e diminuire quelli di prevenzione delle stesse. Questo impone una riflessione su cosa vuol dire "sviluppo" del contesto attuale. Per la prima volta in 25 anni infatti la povertà a livello globale è aumentata. Dopo quasi tre decenni di sostenuta riduzione, sia durante il primo quindicennio delle Mete del Millennio (2000-2015) sia per quella che ancora stiamo vivendo in relazione all'Agenda 2030.

Questo dal 2020 non è più vero: la povertà sta crescendo e, come sappiamo, sebbene ovviamente sia più pesante nel sud globale, impatta anche nel nord globale. E questo è un dato. Il secondo dato, che riguarda la categoria tradizionale di conflitto, è che allo stato attuale, cito il Segretario Generale, 2 miliardi di persone, cioè $\frac{1}{4}$ dell'umanità, il 25% dell'umanità vive in territori o situazioni di conflitto e quindi uno ogni quattro esseri umani si trova nella sua vita giornaliera a dover tenere conto di dinamiche che hanno a che fare con guerra, perdite, distruzioni.

Come questa due variabili, che ormai stanno diventando strutturali, impattano le dinamiche di sviluppo sia a livello macro, sia a livello micro (di sviluppo locale dei territori) è appunto oggetto del nostro lavoro che si svolge in particolare nell'ambito della prevenzione, quando possibile, ma soprattutto nell'ambito della risposta.

E quali sono in sintesi gli strumenti di cui disponete per operare?

Riguardo alle situazioni di conflitto che, tra l'altro, sono quelle che in gran parte determinano anche l'agenda dei nostri governi in questo momento, esiste un'architettura di risposta che si inserisce in uno schema istituzionale che riguarda tutta la Agenzie dell'ONU ed anche oltre, come le ONG internazionali che lavorano in contesti umanitari. In particolare, nel momento in cui viene ufficialmente dichiarata una crisi, sia per un conflitto sia per un disastro, alcuni meccanismi di supporto umanitario vengono attivati, quasi in automatico. Questo sistema viene chiamato 'architettura umanitaria' e suddivide in "settori" o in "cluster", che vanno dagli ambiti di risposta più immediati, (protezione, rifugio, sicurezza alimentare, gestione dei campi profughi), e quindi aiuto umanitario puro, di sollievo immediato, fino a un'evoluzione che punta a riattivare

le dinamiche economiche e sociali e anche capacità locali della popolazione, per accompagnarla verso quello che dovrebbe poi diventare un germoglio di sviluppo sostenibile. Quest'ultimo ambito viene denominato "Early Recovery" ed È un settore, o cluster umanitario, con il mandato esplicito di collegare la risposta umanitaria alla prospettiva di sviluppo.

In questo, appunto, UNDP, che È la agenzia leader nel settore Early Recovery, ha un ruolo di ponte tra la risposta puramente umanitaria, necessaria soprattutto nell'immediato, a fronte di un conflitto o ad un disastro, con il processo di recupero che permetterà di proiettare-traghetare tutto il processo verso un orizzonte più ampio; ciò per consentire alla popolazione di recuperare le proprie capacità, e quindi di mettersi in condizione di camminare verso lo sviluppo, e se vuoi anche alla comunità internazionale, ai donatori, di ridurre il flusso di aiuti emergenziali che oltre ad essere molto più costosi genera anche dipendenza nella popolazione che li ricevono e distorce le dinamiche economiche locali. Per cui, spesso, a lungo andare, l'aiuto umanitario, si rivela portatore potenziale di dinamiche di contro-sviluppo. In questo contesto dell'architettura umanitaria, gli strumenti che abbiamo sono, nell'ambito del settore/cluster *Early recovery*: ripresa e resilienza. Questo settore riguarda proprio la riattivazione nell'immediato dei servizi essenziali, delle dinamiche di mercato e degli attori economici locali. Tale approccio di "Early Recovery" è considerato valido nei primi 18 mesi dall'inizio di una crisi e cioè, accompagna la risposta puramente umanitaria seminando dei germogli che possibilmente daranno poi la base per lavorare su dinamiche di sviluppo più sostenibili. Non è sempre così, perché una delle caratteristiche delle crisi a cui assistiamo adesso, siano esse dovute a disastri sia a conflitti, ma soprattutto di conflitto, è che sono delle crisi che si approfondiscono e protraggono sempre di più, cioè non vengono risolte e anche per questo è importante che la risposta evolva da puramente umanitaria a una risposta che invece punti sul recupero e sullo sviluppo sostenibile delle comunità impattate.

E in termini di impatto, quali sono i punti di forza e i limiti della vostra azione?

Un punto di forza è mettere in sintonia la nostra azione con il resto del sistema umanitario, cioè con il lavoro che fanno le altre agenzie dell'ONU e altri attori come ONG specializzate, sul versante puramente umanitario. Il valore aggiunto è l'expertise di UNDP nel lavorare sul lungo periodo, anche con i governi, e nell'avere una presenza forte nei Paesi. Un valore aggiunto considerato come un asset anche dalle altre agenzie e attori umanitari, per generare una

maggiore interlocuzione e maggiore impatto necessari per coniugare la risposta immediata umanitaria con l'imprescindibile azione di medio-lungo periodo non solo assistenziale. È in questa intersezione che possiamo racchiudere il concetto del nesso HDP, del triplo nesso tra: aiuto umanitario, sviluppo e azione di pace. In inglese lo chiamiamo 'HDP Nexus', ed è il concetto prodotto del summit globale sull'aiuto umanitario tenutosi a Istanbul nel 2016, per il quale si afferma che anche la prima azione di risposta umanitaria immediata, in cui viene semplicemente offerta una coperta o del cibo a una comunità, a una famiglia; quell'azione umanitaria dovrebbe già contenere il seme della visione di sviluppo per il futuro e quindi mai essere puramente assistenzialista; ma anche nella situazione più complessa e urgente, in cui la risposta può essere solo concreta e immediata, comunque prevedere una partecipazione, un livello di ownership/appropriazione da parte dei "beneficiari", che permetta loro di sentirsi anche protagonisti, sentirsi soggetti e non solo oggetti di questa risposta. Direi che questo concetto del nesso HDP, mettendola sul piano teorico, diciamo, è proprio l'alveo in cui possiamo incasellare questa discussione, questo scambio.

Una domanda secca: ma chi finanzia l'aiuto umanitario? E poi quale relazione operativa, di strategie esiste tra la vostra azione e l'applicazione dell'Agenda 2030?

Per quanto riguarda le risorse destinate all'aiuto umanitario, la risposta è semplice, nel senso che sono le stesse entità che finanziano anche investimenti e processi di sviluppo; quindi sono ancora una volta i donatori bilaterali e cioè gli Stati membri, attraverso le loro agenzie di cooperazione e i loro ministeri degli esteri. Quasi tutti i donatori bilaterali hanno degli uffici che si occupano di sviluppo, e degli uffici che si occupano di umanitario come nel caso dell'Italia. La Germania per esempio ha un ministero intero che si occupa di cooperazione di sviluppo, ma quel ministero non si occupa di aiuti umanitari; gli aiuti umanitari sono gestiti dal Ministero degli Esteri con una divisione specializzata in aiuti umanitari.

Riguardo alla coerenza con l'Agenda 2030 è anche oggetto di un dibattito interno sul se e come si riuscirà ad arrivare al 2030 avendo raggiunto gli obiettivi che il mondo si è dato. Le condizioni che erano presenti a livello globale nel 2015, quando è stato firmato il patto globale per l'Agenda 2030, sono ad oggi strutturalmente modificate.

Lo stesso concetto di crisi, che ha un'etimologia greca come penso sappiamo, da una parte vuol dire minaccia, pericolo, dall'altra parte vuol dire opportunità: ogni crisi è opportunità anche quando ci sembra difficile leggere al di là della

crisi contingente. Per cui, tornando alla tua domanda, noi riteniamo che l'unico modo di mantenere la speranza di portare a compimento gli obiettivi previsti dall'Agenda entro il 2030, sia di incorporare il concetto di crisi e non pensare che si possa andare avanti in questo percorso utilizzando semplicemente gli strumenti che furono identificati e messi in campo allora, prima di questa evoluzione drastica che abbiamo avuto negli ultimi cinque anni.

Ti ringraziamo molto Giacomo per questi stimoli che sicuramente saranno oggetto delle discussioni, delle considerazioni e quindi non ci resta che augurarti buon lavoro.

Intervista a Egidio Crotti

Diritti Umani e Convenzione Internazionale per l'infanzia

Egidio Crotti è stato Direttore di UNICEF in diversi paesi di Africa ed America Latina. A lui chiediamo l'aspetto pratico operativo del valore dei trattati, degli accordi internazionali, delle convenzioni.

Quali obblighi e quali effettive implementazioni hai verificato a partire dalla tua specifica esperienza?

Vorrei cominciare dicendo che le convenzioni internazionali, i trattati internazionali sono degli strumenti giuridici e quindi hanno un carattere di esigibilità, sono legalmente vincolanti come per esempio la Convenzione dei diritti dei bambini, o la Convenzione dei diritti della donna. Strumenti che i diversi Stati non solo firmano, ma ratificano, attraverso diverse modalità. Nei Paesi a Repubbliche Parlamentari passano attraverso il vaglio dei Parlamenti o con dei decreti ministeriali o presidenziali. Quindi legalmente vincolante in termini legali e pratici.

Dicci cos'è la Convenzione dei diritti dell'infanzia.

È in primo luogo l'espressione di un consenso universale. Due parole importanti. La prima consenso, espressione della ricerca di un accordo, anche minimo, di standard accettabili e condivisi a livello più ampio dai Paesi. La seconda, universale, nel senso che è una Convenzione che si dirige a tutti i bambini degli

Stati e dei Paesi che l'hanno ratificata. Ed è uno strumento che inquadra le relazioni tra il bambino, la famiglia, la società e lo Stato. Stabilisce che il bambino è soggetto di diritti. Si è ritenuto infatti che l'infanzia, è una condizione di transito verso l'autonomia e necessita di una protezione speciale, cioè gli stessi diritti degli adulti ma con un ampliamento di questa protezione. E poi è importante perché stabilisce un passaggio dalle necessità ai diritti. Cosa significa? Questo può sembrare solo semantica. No, significa che si riconosce che promuovere il benessere e lo sviluppo dell'infanzia in ogni paese non è una questione di carità o di buona volontà, ma è una questione di diritti, cioè che quindi gli Stati che l'hanno ratificata devono impegnarsi a fare in modo che questo transito verso la vita adulta si realizzi nelle migliori condizioni possibili per sviluppare le potenzialità di ogni individuo. La Convenzione insiste anche molto sul ruolo della famiglia, intesa nel senso più ampio. Non si stabilisce quale tipo di famiglia, anche perché giustamente essendo un trattato universale basato su un consenso, il concetto di famiglia varia secondo le latitudini, le tradizioni culturali e il tipo di società a cui ci stiamo dirigendo. Però è importante dire che la famiglia è considerata l'ambito principale di promozione dello sviluppo dell'infanzia e lo Stato interviene in appoggio e in sostituzione della famiglia solo in casi molto specifici e documentati.

Si considerano bambini, cioè persone protette da questa Convenzione, tutti gli esseri umani con meno di 18 anni, a meno che la legge di un Paese non definisca la maggior età o prima o dopo. I principi basici sono: la non discriminazione, cioè nessuna persona, e ancor più nessun bambino può essere oggetto di discriminazione per il colore della pelle, la religione, la lingua che parla, la provenienza, la situazione sociale e economica della famiglia. Tutte le decisioni che si pigliano sia a livello giudiziario, in caso di processi civili o penali, sia in caso di definizioni di politiche economiche, sociali, implementazioni di programmi, devono essere guidate dall'interesse superiore del bambino. Per esempio, in caso di separazioni o di divorzi e in presenza di persone minori di 18 anni, il criterio che orienta la decisione del giudice, o della persona incaricata che prende decisioni, deve essere l'interesse superiore del bambino. E qual è l'interesse superiore del bambino? Quello di poter sviluppare e accedere a tutti i suoi diritti.

Il bambino, l'abbiamo detto, deve raggiungere l'autonomia progressiva, *evolving capacities*, e che quindi implica il suo diritto a partecipare all'espressione delle proprie idee, a una scelta della religione, sempre nell'ambito dello sviluppo della sua autonomia e, quando si parla di partecipazione-espressione, che questa partecipazione non implichi la lesione di diritti umani. È una Convenzione che prevede meccanismi di protezione del diritto, ma anche di pro-

mozione e di sviluppo; infatti ci sono molti articoli che hanno a che vedere con la difesa, con la protezione dagli abusi, ma anche con lo sviluppo e la salute, l'educazione, l'accesso al gioco e allo sport. È una convenzione che ha una parte importante di tre o quattro articoli, che danno le linee guida per la relazione tra lo Stato e adolescenti che per esempio siano accusati di aver infranto la legge con elementi molto specifici. Come la proibizione assoluta di utilizzare la pena di morte per delitti commessi da minori di 18 anni e la carcerazione definitiva senza possibilità di commutazione della pena, cioè l'ergastolo. Tutti gli Stati che ratificano la convenzione sono tenuti ogni cinque anni a presentare un rapporto al Comitato internazionale dei diritti dell'infanzia, che è formato da esperti indipendenti, che sono scelti dai diversi Stati che hanno ratificato la convenzione. Questo ruolo dura cinque anni e non è retribuito, semplicemente si coprono le spese per presenziare alle riunioni. Il Comitato indica delle raccomandazioni, che sono firmate dal Segretario Generale delle Nazioni Unite e che sono rese accessibili e pubbliche sia nei siti web e diffuse a livello del paese.

La Convenzione è per i bambini poveri del sud del mondo o è una convenzione che si applica a tutti i paesi?

Per tutti i paesi, universale appunto. Sia l'Italia, la Francia, la Spagna, per esempio, presentano ogni cinque anni rapporti al Comitato e quindi anche i nostri Paesi economicamente avanzati sono tenuti a seguire i principi della Convenzione. Evidentemente il tipo di raccomandazioni non saranno uguali da paese a paese perché si dovrà tenere in conto delle effettive capacità di un paese, cioè si sarà più esigenti con un paese con un'economia più avanzata, evidentemente, cioè se ci sono disparità enorme in paesi che hanno le risorse, la raccomandazione sarà più stringente e più dura rispetto a paesi che magari hanno fatto dei progressi più lenti ma anche per la situazione reale dell'economia, della guerra o delle risorse disponibili.

A partire dalla tua esperienza di terreno, che difficoltà hai incontrato nell'applicare la Convenzione? In che termini questo diventa realtà o no?

Lavorare nei paesi che hanno ratificato la Convenzione, dà un importante strumento di dialogo e di negoziato con i governi. Perché? Perché prima di tutto c'è un terreno comune su cui stabilire il dialogo per definire quali sono le priorità della cooperazione dell'UNICEF e del sistema delle Nazioni Unite, anche per analizzare come lo Stato, il governo del paese in cui si sta lavorando, sta utilizzando le sue risorse. Quindi si può stabilire un terreno che va al di là

della percezione ideologica della visione che si ha dello sviluppo, perché c'è appunto un terreno comune sul quale misurare anche la coerenza delle leggi e delle politiche. Quindi diciamo che è uno strumento di advocacy importante. È uno strumento importante anche per gli organismi non governativi. La società civile ha uno strumento di pressione rispetto a certe decisioni o a certe leggi che il governo di turno sta implementando. In alcuni paesi, come il Marocco, la Convenzione è, nella nuova Costituzione, messa a livello superiore alle leggi nazionali e vuol dire che in caso di diatriba il Trattato internazionale ha addirittura una supremazia; cioè se una legge va contro a questo trattato si può contestarla. Come sempre dipende dall'ottica con cui guardiamo: c'è molto ancora da fare però se osserviamo alcuni dati degli ultimi 30 anni vediamo che in certi indicatori ci sono stati sensibili miglioramenti: si è avanzato. Non come si dovrebbe però c'è stato sicuramente un ampliamento importante dell'accesso delle bambine alla scuola primaria e secondaria che quindi stabilisce il criterio di non discriminazione, una riduzione della malnutrizione e della mortalità infantile. Sicuramente poi c'è anche l'altra parte, come abbiamo detto. Non ci sono strumenti coercitivi, per esempio per paesi che hanno ratificato la convenzione e continuano ad applicare la pena di morte ai minori di 18 anni. C'è il fatto che molti paesi non hanno le risorse disponibili per sviluppare i programmi sociali che potrebbero favorire lo sviluppo dell'infanzia o sono in situazioni di guerra, di guerra civile. Quindi evidentemente la Convenzione non è la risoluzione di tutti i problemi, non è una bacchetta magica, ma è uno strumento di valore etico in un certo peso, che permette di operare nel tempo per assicurare alle nuove generazioni la possibilità di stare meglio e sviluppare le loro caratteristiche e le loro potenzialità.

Rimane un fatto che nonostante i trattati, nonostante i meccanismi di monitoraggio, esistono situazioni dove non c'è applicazione del trattato. Bene, in questi casi, cosa si può fare?

Abbiamo detto dei rapporti quinquennali per poter dare conto di come si sono implementati i cambiamenti necessari in termini legislativi e programmatici, c'è il compromesso del paese di redigere un rapporto che implichi un'interconnessione tra i livelli nazionali e locali, la partecipazione della società civile. Quindi è anche un momento importante in cui la società si guarda e dice 'ma stiamo veramente facendo qualcosa di serio per l'infanzia?' e ancora una volta permette alla società civile, alla comunità, ai gruppi comunitari, alle università di essere parte di questo dibattito. Da alcuni anni inoltre, il comitato dei diritti

dei bambini può ricevere anche dei ricorsi individuali, cioè un po' come quando si ricorre alla Corte europea quindi anche questo è uno strumento in più. In caso di violazione a individui, a parte la sola advocacy, in molti paesi ci sono associazioni, a volte università che danno un'assistenza legale gratuita alla persona che sta facendo un ricorso perché è stato discriminato o per altre ragioni. Molti paesi hanno creato degli istituti nazionali di diritti umani con mansioni e missioni diverse e a cui si fare ricorso in caso di discriminazione o violazione dei diritti.

Altri paesi, quelli più nordici e anglosassoni, si sono creati gli Ombusperson, che sono il equivalente di un istituto nazionale di diritti umani.

Ci sono poi le Campaign. Sicuramente molti di voi studenti e studentesse riceveranno messaggi che vi invitano a 'firmare a questa petizione, unisciti a questa campagna per tale persona che è stata imprigionata per tali motivi o per mancanza di rispetto dei diritti di minoranza, ecc.', e ci sono le Corti Internazionali come quella sui crimini contro l'umanità che invece hanno un ruolo esecutivo più importante. Abbiamo visto che cosa si può fare rispetto a violazioni massive, ci sono questi monitoraggi periodici dei vari trattati, la convenzione dei diritti dell'infanzia, quella della donna, ecc.; c'è la possibilità di fare dell'advocacy a volte a livello multilaterale, a volte bilaterale, cioè un paese che ha più di influenza rispetto ad un altro può usare questi strumenti per avviare delle negoziazioni rispetto a situazioni di possibili guerre o guerre civili già in atto; ci sono gli avvertimenti warning, cioè quando il Consiglio di Sicurezza o il Segretario Generale delle Nazioni Unite o alcuni paesi fanno degli avvertimenti pesanti rispetto a situazioni di guerre interne o di discriminazioni massive. Pensiamo a quello che succede in Ucraina, Palestina ma anche in Birmania rispetto a Rojina, a situazioni di guerra civile che ci sono state in Sudan, Colombia o in Congo; ci sono le sanzioni economiche, l'embargo, che è stato spesso giustamente criticate perché non sempre facilitano quello che è la vita quotidiana delle persone con meno risorse e spesso i governi hanno dei sistemi per evitarlo o per fare in modo che le classi al potere ne risentano meno, c'è l'invio delle Forze di Pace delle Nazioni Unite come quelle che sono presenti in Libano. Questi sono gli strumenti, ognuno ha i suoi pro e i suoi contro e non c'è nessuno strumento magico che ci permetta di arrivare a un'effettiva protezione universale dei diritti delle persone.

Ma questa dicotomia tre principi della Convenzione ed effettiva applicazione può esistere anche in altri ambiti diciamo più culturali come per esempio le tradizioni, identità culturali, religioni e rispetto dei diritti umani e dell'infanzia? Qual è la tua opinione?

Evidentemente c'è una tensione tra l'universalismo e il particolarismo, tra l'universalismo inteso come uniformare il tutto e quello che sono i diritti all'identità. Un trattato internazionale non significa che tutti la devono pensare alla stessa maniera e che le eredità culturali, sociali, tradizionali debbano essere uguali o dissolte. Credo che, se guardiamo la Convenzione, tutti i trattati riconoscono il diritto delle persone a svilupparsi attraverso della propria cultura, delle loro tradizioni e religioni, e il diritto alla scelta. Primo bisogna chiarire una cosa, le culture non sono qualcosa di statico e di storico e questo è un po' il difetto che a volte hanno gli argomenti della difesa dei particolarismi. Le culture si alimentano con la storia, le culture e le tradizioni evolvono. Pensiamo, giusto per fare un esempio, direi quasi scioccante, fino al 1969 in Italia esisteva il delitto d'onore; questa è una tradizione che va preservata? Evidentemente no, è una tradizione che va in contrasto con l'uguaglianza delle persone, che è contro l'idea che nessuno può usare la violenza rispetto, per esempio, alla donna. Cambiando tema, per lungo tempo si è pensato in molti paesi che di fronte a una diarrea la cosa migliore era non dare del liquido, e invece è stato dimostrato che la cosa nel caso che un bambino abbia una diarrea bisogna dargli liquidi. Quindi ci sono tradizioni e tradizioni. Evidentemente in certe zone, in certi paesi, c'era la tradizione che un bambino albino viene eliminato perché elemento che porta disagio e sfortuna. Questa non è una tradizione, è un infanticidio!. Certe tradizioni, quando sono in contrasto con il diritto allo sviluppo, della salute e dell'educazione vanno superate. In certi paesi si è sempre considerato che le bambine non dovessero andare a scuola o che facessero solo la scuola elementare. Però le cose sono cambiate per esempio paesi come la Tunisia, il Marocco e l'Algeria adesso hanno dei dati sull'accesso delle bambine alle scuole molto positivi rispetto a 20 o 30 anni fa.

Ti ringrazio perché ci hai dato una visione completa e poi anche esempi molto concreti. Evidentemente materia, appunto, in evoluzione.

INTERVIEWS

THE UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030 MODULE IN THE COURSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF CULTURES AND RELIGIONS

Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs in English) was adopted by the 193 member countries of the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 and represents the formal commitment of all countries in the world to «*respect for human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination, as universally respected rights*». This commitment is the product of a broad work of dialogue, discussion and negotiation between Member States to define a common strategy articulated in 17 Goals that has as its *purpose to pursue peace and sustainable development* in the North and South of the world. The 17 Goals are:



Un piano d'azione 5P: persone, pianeta, prosperità, partnership, pace.

1

The definition of “sustainable development” appears for the first time in 1987 in the Brundtland Report named after the President of the World Commission on Environment and Development: “*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*”. Therefore Agenda 2030 as a political, strategic and operational reference framework to generate coherence

and impact in the form continuous and coordinated among the member countries of the United Nations General Assembly in the face of this important and complex objective. A common strategy to discuss, reflect, analyze and operate, starting from the diversity and specificity of the multiple social, economic, cultural and religious contexts.

It is clear that addressing such a broad and complex subject determines different ideas, approaches, angles of vision, cultural references, sometimes contrasting, that cross tradition, modernity, contemporaneity and their projection into the future. Also for these reasons, the 2030 Agenda has not been approved as “binding” since its application is not a single formula for all the countries of the world but rather a common strategic reference to be interpreted and declined by each country based on its own reality, context, priorities and characteristics. It is also a universal commitment, that is, it involves both the populations of the countries of the north and the south of the world.

An ambitious challenge, certainly, but the result of an objective complexity that is difficult to address operationally with traditional tools and approaches. A global challenge that therefore requires global tools for communication, dialogue, exchange of experiences and innovations of a technical, technological, managerial nature, of programming methods, evaluation, indicators and targets, analysis of shared results, as well as training in their use and evidently many economic resources to converge on the 17 Goals, in a word the complexity of the 2030 Agenda.

Six years after the fateful 2030, it is legitimate and necessary to ask what are the positive aspects and the limits recorded so far in the application of the Agenda both at national and international level. The 2024 UN report records that only 17% of the Goals have been achieved in the countries that have signed it. The 2024 Report of the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASvIS) clearly states, for example, that Italy is absolutely behind. Hence the recent *“Pact for the Future”* signed by the United Nations General Assembly last September 2024, which confirms the centrality of the 2030 Agenda as a founding element for a sustainable future and which invites us to concentrate our efforts in the coming 6 years on five thematic areas: sustainable development and finance for development; peace and security, science, technology and innovation; digital cooperation; young people and future generations; global governance.

Starting from 2020, the Course of Human Rights of Religions and Cultures of the Faculty of Law of the University of Insubria has activated a specific module on the Agenda 2030 to raise awareness of the depth of this challenge, deepen its specific components, connect it to the academic content and therefore to the training of future professionals. The aim was to enrich the course of Human Rights of Religions and Cultures by making this global instrument of connection between the Declaration of Universal Rights with the responsibilities, public and private, collective and individual, transversal to the different disciplines of knowledge.

The angle of view from which we have approached this objective is on the one hand the unavoidable need for a global Agenda to be able to address the common priorities of the countries that, and on this everyone agrees, cannot be resolved solely by a single state; on the other hand the objective complexity that a transnational strategy for sustainable development entails. There are intrinsic complexities such as the activation of the reference framework represented by the Agenda, intersectoral action, the need to operate simultaneously at local, national and global levels, the need for communication and its importance, the necessary greater coordination of the UN System, the definition and use of *ad hoc* tools mentioned above, data collection and related analysis and monitoring and obviously the financial resources and the necessary human capital. But also extrinsic complexities such as the difficulty in quickly modifying speculative predatory economic logics on the environment, large inequalities between countries and within countries, divergent geopolitical interests, the time needed for cultural changes in both production and consumption, changes in government, just to name a few. Without forgetting the negative impact that «polycrises, such as environmental disasters or health disasters such as Covid or war conflicts, determine not only in terms of obstacles to the achievement of the 17 Goals but of regression with respect to partial objectives.

In most cases, these are causes and effects thousands of kilometers away, triggering perverse processes that cause a very high price in terms of peaceful coexistence, poverty, massive population movements, loss of human lives, conservation of the planet and obviously enormous waste of economic resources in armaments and reconstructions taken away from those for sustainable development.

For these reasons, the approach adopted by the module was to relate the 17 Goals of the Agenda to the daily life of people, local communities, public administrations, the private sector, thus focusing on the essential two-way articulation between the local and national dimensions.

Some of the limitations found in the application of the Agenda were also discussed. For example, in the administrative sphere each sector “chooses” its own objective and works on it separately from the others, thus reproducing the limitations of sectoral work which, given the limited funds available, generates duplications, overlaps, mismatches, technical approaches and different administrative procedures (the result of vectors that go in different directions... is zero!, while the impact of vectors that go in the same direction is greater than their sum!). This example of a limitation is often expressed by making the environment sector alone responsible for the application of the 17 Objectives. Although many consequences of *unsustainable development* are expressed in environmental terms, attacking the causes requires a multi-sectoral approach: social, economic, environmental and cultural. For this reason, one of the most significant critical points is to conceive, train for and apply a different programming logic starting from regional and municipal development plans but also in the private sector:

- from a 5-year vision to a 20-30 year vision
- from a sectoral logic to an intersectoral one
- from a purely institutional logic to a participatory one (because everyone has a role!)
- aligning data with policies and budgets is the true indicator of transformation potential

Talking about programming means talking about current financial resources.

The first answer in fact does not lie in international funds (which still have an important role!) but in applying a different programming logic in local and national budgets!

Another crucial aspect is to give effective centrality to the territories and related actors and tools (*Localizing SDG's*). In fact, it is in the territories where 70% of the 17 Objectives are realized (or not) and where jointly programming energies and resources for the “*Common Interest*” is easier (or less difficult). *Partnerships*, national and international, centered and focused on the critical sharing of respective progress and results (even the less than brilliant ones) is the first resource to be used for the Localization of the SDGs using for example International Cooperation and in particular with the decentralized cooperation modality.

These issues, the current state of implementation and the scenario from now to 2030 and beyond, have been explored and debated in the Module lessons with national and international guests and subsequently discussed with the students. These contributions are summarized in the following paragraphs.

1. The contribution of national and international “Guests”

41 national and international experts contributed to person and remotely in the Modules created between 2020 and 2024 that addressed both the specific Objectives and cross-cutting issues. In

the space available for this publication, we wanted to highlight 10 insights that have in common the fact that they do not address one of the 17 specific objectives because, despite their complexity, they are generally the best known and most disseminated. But we wanted to highlight aspects of the aforementioned “complexity”, perhaps the greatest challenge for the application of the 2030 Agenda, and in particular:

1. How we arrived at Agenda 2030 and its political value.
2. The operation of an International Convention.
3. Agenda 2030 between the North and the South of the world.
4. Multi-level articulation.
5. Why Agenda Localization?
6. Agenda 2030 in the Lombardy Region.
7. Institutional communication strategies to publicise the Agenda.
8. The media and Agenda 2030: different logics and methods of information.
9. Criteria and rationale for international funding for the application Agenda.
10. Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Aid: parallel or convergent strategies?

10 insights perhaps less present in the general debate and in the media but on which much depends the effective application of Agenda 2030 and directly, the meaning and perspective of a multilateral intergovernmental body, the United Nations, which is experiencing a difficult moment between the tendency of governments to reduce the importance of multilateralism and the contradiction, as the Secretary General of the United Nations Guterres said, of wanting to *«create a future suitable for our grandchildren with a system built by our grandparents*

1. Interview with Barbara Pesce Monteiro, Director of UN Europe until 2022, Brussels.
2. Interview with Marco Zupi, Scientific Director of Cespi, Agenda 2030 between the North and the South of the world.
3. Interview with Sebastian Vauzelle, Local Director UN 2030 Coalition, Bilbao.
4. Interview with Marina Ponti, UN SDG's Action Campaign, Communicating the A- schedule 2030.
5. Interview with Emanuele Giordana, Journalist, Communicating the Agenda through the media.
6. Interview with Alessandro Casartelli, World Bank.
7. Interview with Giacomo Negrotto, Department of Crisis Programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP NY).
8. Interview with Egidio Crotti, Human Rights and International Convention for childhood.

2. The debate with and among students

The students of the Course played an active and critical role and debated the content of the Module and the interventions of the Guests. As a product of this debate rich in analysis and reflections, two defined and apparently divergent orientations emerged. On the one hand, a rather sceptical, if not pessimistic, orientation with respect to the actual possibility of achieving the 17 objectives by 2030, highlighted by various elements:

- the risk of a merely formal rather than substantial application la- skiing in reality the situation unchanged.
- The intricate tangle of contrasting political positions in an increasingly varied, fragmented and international law-questioning global geopolitical landscape.
- A perceptible indifference of public opinion towards the 2030 Agenda and more generally towards the usefulness of the UN system.

On the other hand, however, the essential need has emerged to address the challenge for sustainable development posed by Agenda 2030 by re-evaluating, for example, the possibility of making the 17 Objectives “binding” for countries. A hypothesis, which is also entirely theoretical, that does not respond to a growing trend solely focused on immediate national priorities.

Even the idea of creating an administrative superstructure at the head of the UN would conflict with the methods of creating international law of which the UN is an expression. The discussion

was oriented rather towards the need to prioritize the reform of the Security Council seen as the turning point for the actualization of this supranational entity created way back in 1945, in a very different world that was emerging from the terrible conflict of the Second World War in which the Countries had an absolute common priority: Peace.

Specifically, the students' proposals emphasized:

- an approach based on transparency, which reflects the desire, through efficient disclosure, to involve society, possibly also by providing positive feedback regarding the achievement of the 17 objectives of the 2030 Agenda.
- Invest as much as possible in the local dimension by identifying in one's own territory "*micro- objectives*" connected with the 17 "*macro-objectives*" of the Agenda to bring to life the direct relationship that exists between each of the 17 objectives and everyday living conditions.
- Horizontal subsidiarity which is expressed through the level of collaboration and dialogue in the local community between the different subjects that integrate it: businesses, non- governmental organisations, associations, universities, without forgetting the participation of individuals.
- For this reason, it is important that institutions are able to identify and make available adequate tools for this purpose.
- Finally, we must capitalize on the work already done in terms of negotiation capacity between different countries. An example is the richness of the same negotiation carried out for the definition of the Agenda: dialogue, mediation and compromise. Only from the comparison can the answer arise not only as a choice shared by all, but also of effective possible realization.
- Universities, while adopting a more multidisciplinary approach than in the past, could strengthen this direction. Thus, starting from this approach would form transversal reflections that can be translated into *policy* proposals and tools necessary for the implementation of the Agenda.
- The role of Civil Society and not only of the States in the negotiation phase of the objectives and their implementation is crucial. The institutions in fact need all of us to achieve the objectives and therefore the maximum involvement of those who must implement the agenda allows for better implementation in the future.

These proposals were sent as a contribution from the Course to the “Lo-cal 2030 Coalition” Initiative of the United Nations Secretariat, which shared them with those of Universities in other countries and proposed them in specific initiatives and activities.

Interview with Barbara Pesce Monteiro
Director of UN Europe until 2022
Brussels

Good morning Barbara, tell us right away what is your responsibility in Brussels?

I represent the Secretary General at the European Union institutions and coordinate a team of UN Agencies to ensure that the United Nations and the European Union can converge to achieve common goals such as Peace and Sustainable Development.

Tell us briefly how we arrived at this Agenda.

Until the year 2000 there had been many sectoral agendas that advanced in parallel, all very important, but perhaps a little disjointed. I remember the Rio Conference for the theme of the environment, the Copenhagen conference for social themes, the Habitat conference for cities, the one for the theme of gender in China, in short, all important themes, but treated separately. UN Secretary Kofi Annan realized that there was a real need to bring them together and push for a common political compromise of all governments for their implementation. From here the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed upon, a group of 8 objectives on which the international

community would align itself in the following 15 years. The concrete results achieved encouraged us to continue in that direction.

A United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development then?

Yes, but I would like to point out that the Development and Millennium Goals, and also the SDGs, are not the “objectives of the “United Nations” but are the objectives of the countries, because in reality, in both cases, those who approved them and those who committed to applying them were the Heads of State and Government of the member countries at the General Assembly.

This was the most important global movement against poverty in history that managed to reduce extreme poverty by a billion people, to decrease hunger, to increase, in a very significant way, the number of children who went to school. However, many inequalities still exist, both between countries, but also within countries.

So a big step forward?

Much progress has been made but not enough! In fact, it was realized that the environmental issue had to be connected to the social issue and the economic issue and therefore that all the sectors had to be treated in an **integrated manner**. Greater involvement of the countries of the South and the North and their respective civil societies was sought, to finally arrive at this new Agenda 2030. A much broader and more **transformative Agenda**, much more ambitious, because we go from 8 to 17 objectives, which are no longer just *basic needs*, but are the expression of a new paradigm that must involve the production models, the consumption models of both the countries of the South and the countries of the North of the world. **A universal Agenda!** The problem of women's inequality, for example, is not only a problem of the South, but is also a problem of the North. The problem of access to health, as we saw during Covid, is not only a problem of the South, but is also a problem of the North. And so on. The issue of climate and climate vulnerability is a problem of the North and the South.

Does this mean a universal agenda?

Yes, an agenda that applies everywhere, of course with different modalities, because the world is very different and therefore must be adapted to different situations. A **transformative agenda**, and an **integrated agenda**. To understand it better, we talk about the **5Ps, that is: people, the planet, prosperity, peace and the planetary and environmental theme**. And so, we come perhaps to a third characteristic of this agenda, which is an **inclusive agenda**, that is, of "leave no one behind", of being applied to anyone, whatever their race, religion, gender, the most vulnerable and the excluded.

So are we talking about the application of human rights?

Those who study human rights, as you do, will have seen that access to education, to health, must be treated equally, regardless of whether they are men, women, young or poor. Goal 16 is in fact linked to the theme of governance, peace, security but also of governments that must respect the rights of their citizens. So there are the rights and duties of citizens symmetrical to those of States.

What role does the United Nations have in this process?

The United Nations on the ground has the responsibility and obligation to accompany countries in the application of human rights in a more solid and systematic way. What is our work? First of all, we help countries determine where they are in relation to the objectives, that is, the baseline, what the situation of the countries is and what should be done as a priority to achieve them. It is true that it is a very ambitious agenda, but as I would say in English, *it's inspirational*, and therefore it pushes the States, but also all the other actors, to take it into account in order to achieve it. And specifically: what financial logics to make sufficient resources available for this agenda?, what spaces for action for different social and economic actors? Of course, when I speak of governments I also speak of regional governments, local governments, because they have a very important role, being the public bodies that are closest to the citizens. We have seen in fact that in different countries inequalities are often at a territorial level, because it is not the same thing to be a young person in a city or in a rural area or to be in a small town compared to a big city. So, in short, the proximity of governments and the analysis and response of local governments to these needs is very important.

The United Nations and the European Union are discussing this very carefully and continuously in a **multilateralist logic**.

In short, I want to close here: a complex agenda, but a possible agenda, this is why there are these *goals*, which allow us to focus on an approach of equality, inclusion, human rights, but also *realpolitik*, which is what we need to do.

Thank you for taking care of these issues, we consider you our champions and we will continue to talk to you, the young, the less young, the city governments, civil societies, local governments and the private sector are very important, as is the press. Goodbye and good work.

Some results of the Millennium Goals (2000-2015)



Millennium Development Goals

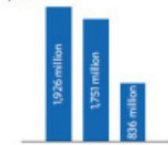
Achievements



Extreme poverty rate in developing countries



Global number of extreme poor



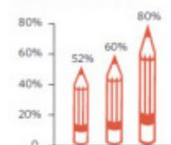
Source: MDG report 2015



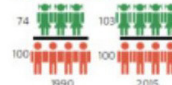
Global out-of-school children of primary school age



Primary school net enrolment rate in sub-Saharan Africa



Primary school enrolment ratio in Southern Asia



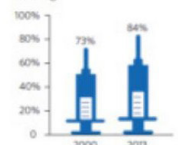
90% of countries have more women in parliament since 1995



Global number of deaths of children under five



Global measles vaccine coverage

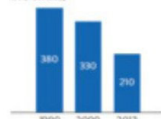


Millennium Development Goals

Achievements



Global maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)



Global births attended by skilled health personnel



Source: MDG report 2015



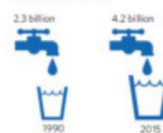
Global antiretroviral therapy treatment



Number of insecticide-treated mosquito nets delivered in sub-Saharan Africa, 2004-2014



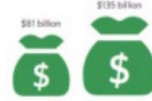
1.9 billion people have gained access to piped drinking water since 1990



98% of ozone-depleting substances eliminated since 1990



Official development assistance



Global Internet penetration



Interview with Marco Zupi**Scientific Director Cespi****Agenda 2030 between the North and the South of the World**

Today we have the opportunity to hear the opinion of Dr. Marco Zupi who is the Scientific Director of the Center for International Political Studies (Cespi).

Thanks Marco. As you know, the 2030 Agenda was approved by the 193 countries of the General Assembly, which is in itself an important achievement. Now, having said that, it is realistic to think of a single Agenda for 193 countries, each different from the other. What is your opinion?

This concern is more than justified. There is a reason, however, why Agenda 2030 is so ambitious and that is to set **a common strategic horizon among the different countries to win the challenge of sustainable development**. In fact, the life of each of us but also of legislation and national change processes is increasingly crossed by the global dimension.

This means that, in fact, despite the specificity of the contexts, problems, institutional and political changes, there are great challenges that affect all countries and increasingly they are challenges that require a common Agenda to address them. For example, we are now discussing via the Internet which allows us to overcome the physical barrier and the local and national dimension and this is also why the global approach to Agenda 2030 makes a lot of sense.

Before the 2030 Agenda there were the Millennium Development Goals, but they were not a global, non-universalistic initiative. It was more similar to a development cooperation activity to improve the situations of the poorest countries. The risk, given that the financial blanket is short, is **to avoid the false alternative: «take care of your own country or look more broadly, seeking common interests between the north and south of the world?»**. Certainly the 2030 Agenda has this ambition that translates into 17 objectives that are then divided into targets, indicators. This encourages the various countries to personalize it, that is, to focus on those of immediate interest among the wide range of indicators.

The highly polarized geopolitical context of today, I am speaking with evident reference to the effects of the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, creates many problems for a common challenge in terms of commitments, of subscription by all the main actors, starting with the so-called big *global* players.

This year, global political moments such as the Summits of Heads of State and Government have decided very little on issues such as the environment, climate change because it is difficult to clear the field of the strong opposition between great powers: Russia, the United States, China and other global players. So there is certainly a difficult situation to allow the 2030 Agenda to pursue that ambition I mentioned. An Agenda that actually brings together two Agendas: that of development and that of environmental-climate which require resources, political will and the ability to commit much more than what is being done today. That element of vulnerability that was in your question, especially today, is there for all to see.

The first goal of the Agenda is the elimination of poverty in all its forms. How much do the external factors you mentioned influence in delaying or hindering the path to achieving this goal?

We highlight further difficulties: the pandemic and wars are obstacles that delay or even reverse the achievement of results. But beyond the multiple cyclical priorities there is another problem: **how much do we know about poverty in the world?** If we want to eliminate poverty we must know it.

Having information is expensive, especially in developing countries, because it requires a capillary infrastructure spread across the territory. Let's think about Italy's National Institute of Statistics, ISTAT, which is however only a central hub for coordinating a collection of information that sees mobilized in the various territories many public and non-public bodies that provide information on poverty.

We are comforted by the fact that we can have data annually, starting with those published by the World Bank on poverty, which sets an international poverty line of \$2.15 per day per capita. But do we have this data in the poorest countries? No. So what we then use are statistical extrapolation mechanisms on data collected ten years ago to estimate today's poverty. So there is a general problem that requires great investment.

We are not certain, but what is estimated is that there has been a significant increase in the number of poor people in the world as a direct consequence of the pandemic; let's think about the lockdown, that is, the closures that have been a heavy burden for all of us and have been a primary policy to contain the spread of the virus which has also led to a loss of income especially for those who cannot work from home. The estimates available today tell us that in developing countries, where poverty is most concentrated, only a minority, we

are talking about 15, 20% of jobs that have been carried out remotely. Instead, in 'Western' countries, for example, in the United States, 40% of jobs were carried out from home. So, smart working, the lockdown had an impact but it had a heavy impact especially on vulnerable groups of the population and this means that **the economy is recovering from the economic and social devastation of the pandemic, but this recovery is not distributed equally in the world. Within countries and between countries there are differences that are linked to vulnerability and poverty** is one of the main factors. The consequence is that the incomes of the poorest populations are those that have felt the most and therefore not only the very poor, but also those who were just above poverty. Covid has caused people who were just above the poverty line to fall into poverty. So even in this case we only have estimates. **There is an unequal distribution of global crises**, the climate crisis, let's think about the problems of access to water: those who can, those who have the economic resources, those who have the possibility of moving take measures to limit the risk; the same in the pandemic: those who can manage to equip themselves in some way, those who are more vulnerable, fragile. It is a dramatic and important aspect for multidimensional poverty. In fact, there is not only income but also the level of education, the level of health etc. Well, the data on poverty from education has been one of the most significant worsenings, that is, the gap, the gap, the distance between those who have the possibility of studying and those who do not study has grown; school dropout occurs especially in vulnerable groups.

So the distribution gap has widened, inequality has increased penalizing the weakest group. All this also materializes in a loss of rights, from the right to health, the right to education and the direct relationship between rights and services, coverage and quality of life.

Do you think that the sustainable development goal and Agenda 2030 as a strategy to achieve it have sufficient space in the perception of both public opinion and politics in Italy?

The relationship between services and rights is a central theme that we inherit from the pandemic in the sense that, not only is there a problem of poverty but also the degrees of poverty, the room for maneuver in the poorest countries is very limited because foreign debt, the low availability of income means that the measures necessary to combat poverty such as social protection, economic support, the services you were talking about are even more difficult and the public hand is less capable where there is more need. In Italy,

fortunately for us, there are social protection measures, income support. Certainly there is also an element characterizing Italy which is the diversity, of the territories and also a certain predisposition of the different subjects, let's think of the richness of the expression of the organization of civil society. However, there is another recurring element that champs at the bit: **there is fear!, and this is a significant trait of contemporaneity.**

Fear of the pandemic of wars, of climate change, a gloomy scenario for the future! And then all this creates fear and in fear there tends to be a closure that then translates into a need for reassurance on one's own narrow perimeter. From which tensions, conflicts and certainly less predisposition, for example, to principles of sharing problems, of solutions. Europe does a lot but is divided internally, as is Italian society. Despite its capacity for initiative, however, there is also a strong **intergenerational divide, between young and old.**

What role do you think universities can play in this challenge? to complexity?

An essential and crucial role! Also to look beyond with a little more passion and enthusiasm towards the risks, the fear I was talking about before.

This predisposition of young people to have a long-term view, to think about their own future which means projecting themselves not to the next day but to decades. In the face of this great potential there is an activism of universities, which are moving. I mentioned the issue of territories earlier. In Italy, there is a law that provides for the existence of so-called municipal doctorates linked to the strategy for internal areas where it was said: given that there is a protagonism that is not only of the center, but we must give space, a voice also in the field of university education, the municipalities of the internal areas, that is, the municipalities that are at risk of marginalization from the protagonism of the metropolises that have fewer services, access to communication routes, less access to universities, less access to health services.

It is necessary and possible for the Municipalities to reach an agreement to design projects with the Universities of the territory to address the great challenges of accessibility of the inhabitants to essential services, wealth of the territory, wealth of local communities, natural resources, cultural resources, all the great potential of the development of the areas that risk being emptied. Projects but also doctorates in their own country. Here, in the perspective of a universalistic Agenda, which is precisely Agenda 2030. **There is another great potential: numerically more important, which is that of young people, who are developing countries,** which should not be thought of as passive ben-

eficiaries of their governments' policies or international cooperation, but can be active protagonists. Young people can actively participate as protagonists in the strategies for defining their own priorities within the development indicators and the university can become a protagonist in this not by imposing an educational path and reproposing it abroad, but by supporting the excellence of the universities of partner countries, including countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia that often have experiences that can certainly be enriched by the comparison with young students from other Italian continents.

So there is the possibility and the need to strengthen the horizontal North-South dialogue that up to now is very marginal, even more so in the university. There is much to build, and to share in the field of knowledge, research, knowledge, in synergy with the processes of political decisions and the resulting practices.

And this is a very promising path to be explored, in which both Western countries with Development Cooperation and developing countries with their important potential could certainly invest in a positive way.

Interesting also because this course of the University of Insubria is also shared with the Universities of the Mediterranean Countries and it is a bit the track that is being tried to develop so there is harmony. Thanks for your contribution!

Interview with Sebastian Vauzelle
Local Director UN 2030 Coalition
Bilbao

Sebastien Vauzelle is the Director of the UN Local 2030 Coalition, which is an initiative of the United Nations Secretariat, in which all the Agencies of the system participate for the Localization of Agenda 2030 at the local level.

Good morning Sebastien. In the course we have already discussed the context of the Agenda, giving much emphasis to the importance of its application at the local level. This is where the interest in the Local 2030 Coalition of which you are Director comes from. So, the first question is: what is the Local 2030 Coalition?

The Localization of the SDGs is a two-way process; on the one hand it wants to ensure that all stakeholders in local development, therefore local authorities, private sector, civil society organizations, have their due role in the implemen-

tation process of the 2030 Agenda, encouraging their voice to have an impact also at national and global level. On the other hand, it promotes working methods for a 2030 Agenda at local level that is an expression of the specificities of the territories, from needs, to culture, to local ecosystems. So, as you can see, it is a two-way process to ensure that the social and economic protagonists of local development have a concrete role in global processes, but also that local processes are an expression of horizontal concertation between the different stakeholders. This is the purpose of the Localization of the 2030 Agenda.

So what are the major challenges for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level?

What are the “bottlenecks” and complexities to be addressed?

There are many challenges as these are **multi-actor and multi-level processes**. I would say that the first big challenge is “how to work together”. This is both between the 193 member countries of the UN General Assembly and between the various social and economic actors in the territories. The first big challenge is to make sure that everyone understands that the 17 goals represent a common reference framework for thousands and thousands of local realities committed to concretely applying sustainable development as their priority. There are millions, indeed billions, of stakeholders in the world, with different interests, visions of life, cultures and it is important to have a common vision on the path needed to achieve sustainable development.

That’s why I think tuning the different protagonists is the biggest challenge. Another challenge is to facilitate **access to finance, technology and training**, so that regions or cities can push the agenda forward in their territory. I would call it “access to resources”, and work to reduce gaps between those who are able to move faster and others who would be left behind.

And in the face of these challenges, what is the goal of the UN Local 2030 Coalition? How did it come about and how is it organised?

Globalization has effectively denied a local approach to public policies and economic policies. However, the many current crises (Covid, climate crisis, **inequality crisis, wars, mass movements of di- satri**) **impact on the territories**. The local dimension is where the social contract must materialize (or not) through democratic management, respect for the rights of the person, access and quality of public services, entrepreneurial initiative that creates jobs. To

address the complexity of the territory, understood as cities, surrounding rural areas, food system, connection between medium-sized cities, small villages, it is necessary that the different stakeholders operate so that each of them is an active part of this complex reality, each has a key to provide answers and solutions. This is what Localization of the SDGs means.

From an operational point of view, the Local 2030 Coalition brings together over blacks , 5,000 partners in different ways. The United Nations is present with its Agencies in what we call “mobile groups”, which deal with different specific aspects, such as financing for development, the Pact for the Future, and the 6 transitions to accelerate the application of the SDGs. Then there are the “hubs”, that is, platforms in different regions of the North and South of the world, with different thematic focuses, which pilot a common action to obtain innovative solutions for the localization of the SDGs. They are found for example in Hawaii in the USA; in Parana in Brazil; in Japan; in the Basque Country in Spain; Cairo in Egypt; Sub- Saharan Africa; and so on. **We are gathering all the ongoing attempts to pilot innovative solutions within a cohesive ecosystem**, where all the partners I mentioned are brought together by a common strategic vision, which allows to advance the SDGs at the local level. We work in three main fields of intervention: the first is advocacy, which sees us participate in local events and processes with the aim of making their voices reach the global level. Then we try to attract financial resources, technology and organizational solutions to local initiatives to accelerate their growth and increase their size. Third, we use virtual dashboards, indicators, to monitor the impact.

Which United Nations entity promoted and is responsible for this initiative? Whose responsibility does it depend on?

It is an initiative of the United Nations System, which means that it concerns all the Agencies: there are two coaching Agencies: a permanent one that institutionally guides the coalition and is “UN Habitat”, the Agency that deals with cities, human settlements and regions, therefore local development in general, which has SDG 11 as a reference. Then we have another coach, which rotates every 2 years: first it was the UNDP, now it is the FAO, and the next one has to be defined, probably it will be UNICEF.

Thanks Sebastian and good work.

Interview with Marina Ponti
UN SDG's Action Campaign
Communicating the 2030 Agenda

Communication is the topic we are going to discuss today. Speaking of the implementation of the Agenda which, as we have seen, has elements of great complexity, perhaps the first strategy

to consider is precisely the most effective communication strategy to make it known. For this reason we invited Marina Ponti who is the Director of the SDG's Action Campaign, a global initiative of the United Nations based in Bonn.

I thank Marina for accepting this invitation which I know was not easy. fit it into an already busy schedule and I'll start with the first question.

What is the Action Campaign and how is it organized?

It is a pleasure for me to participate in this course. I take every opportunity to speak and engage with young people with great joy. So I have been directing for two and a half years now, I am very happy to do so, this Campaign that was launched by the Secretary General of the United Nations with the aim of creating a movement of opinion and a movement of action in favor of the sustainable development goals.

The starting point of the Campaign is that **the objectives will be achieved only if each person becomes an actor and promoter for their achievement**, and for this reason it is a campaign strongly aimed at action, at all levels starting from the people. The objective is to promote change. And this happens only if citizens and all the different sectors of society are ready to get involved.

In the last lesson we introduced to the students that Agenda 2030 is in continuity with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since you were also responsible for the MDG Campaign, tell us, what is the difference from a communication point of view between the campaign for the Goals and the campaign for the 2030 Agenda?

There is a huge difference. The Millennium Goals were very tangible very limited and that assigned different responsibilities to different countries: goal no. 8 for example was addressed to developed countries and asked them to give more resources for development, to improve its effectiveness, to reduce debt

and to make trade fairer. While the other seven goals were addressed to the so-called developing countries with the aim of increasing investments in key sectors such as education, health, access to drinking water and gender equality. A limitation of the Millennium Development Goals was that they provided different tasks to different countries without however addressing the structural causes of poverty and inequalities.

In this regard, the major novelty of the 2030 Agenda is that it addresses the structural causes of current challenges. Furthermore, this is a universal Agenda that involves citizens and governments around the world **without differentiating between «donors» and «beneficiaries»**. This Agenda requires the commitment of all governments to do more for women, for healthcare, for the right to work, for the fight against poverty, malnutrition, inequalities and climate change. That is, for the first time, and this is very strong from a communication point of view, these objectives are shared by all countries, communicating a sense of belonging to a global citizenship.

The Agenda is also transformative, that is, it highlights how the current mechanisms of redistribution of resources and opportunities are neither effective nor fair. In other words, Sustainable Development calls into question some of the development logics of our societies and asks everyone to implement transformative changes that are not limited to increasing resources for health or education, as was the message of the MDGs, but that lead to the redefinition of the operating principles of our development models.

However, one difficulty in communicating this agenda is its complexity: 17 objectives are a lot, and they range across all areas of life from oceans to deserts, from renewable energy to decent work to gender priority and the fight against inequality. The complexity of the Agenda easily makes the public lose attention. Therefore, the objective was to identify two or three priority messages that can somehow convey the principles of the Agenda.

These are the fight against inequality, the fight against climate change and the protection of our planet and the promotion of gender equality.

When you said that there is a risk that the audience gets lost, it came to mind that public attention to a communication campaign is often limited in time; furthermore, communicating positive things, communicating good intentions is always less 'impactful' than communicating negative things. So my question is: but what strategy have you chosen to «catch» attention and keep it?

First of all, many studies have been done over the years that help identify the messages that are best received. Although it may seem that the negative message is the strongest, it is actually proven that a constructive message that gives hope is a message that is received more strongly and that leads to change. That said, we have chosen another path, that of creativity.

Using art, culture, from music, to Street Art, to land art, to museums, to narrative, to films to help convey a message of possibility and of building a better future. We do not want to scare or say that this Agenda is the panacea that solves all problems because it is not true. We want to capture attention using art, using creativity because in fact art, over the millennia, has always had the role of helping people understand the contexts in which they live, the challenges and opportunities of the time and, in some way, art and creativity have in many cases given people the courage to face the injustices that surround them.

The name is 'Action Campaign' and therefore, I believe, you also foresee concrete actions. What are the actions you foresee for the campaign and why are they important?

During the journey between the MDGs and the SDGs we carried out what was the largest *survey* in the history of the United Nations, that is, both with digital means, but also through volunteers in all countries, we went to the people to ask what their priorities were and what objectives they would like to see in this new agenda. In total, more than 10 million people were consulted. Involving people was very important and our *survey*, called 'My World', was also one of the elements recognized by the Member States of the UN General Assembly. What happened after this involvement was, through analysis and research here too, that people learn through action and that is: if I want to be effective in my communication it is not enough for me to explain something; I as a subject, as a target, will understand a message better if I experience it, if I am somehow directly involved. So many actions, many campaigns where it is asked. For example: "eat less meat" rather than "go to school by bike instead of by moped", this action obviously has an impact, but the most important impact is the one that helps people to take ownership of the change.

For example, every September we organize global mobilizations, where we ask people to take actions in support of the SDGs, from events in parliaments, to clean up beaches and parks, to planting trees, to creating cultural events, murals and other forms of communication and action. We also believe in what we call the butterfly effect, that is, that every individual action can lead to

transformative change. Each of us can be an agent of change. The pandemic, despite ourselves, has shown that the individual action of keeping our distance, washing our hands and wearing a mask has made a difference. An example of how individual action can have an impact on global challenges.

In this regard I have seen some initiatives called ‘SDG Action Awards’ or even the ‘Global festival’.

Are they part of this strategy that you are describing to us?

Absolutely. We believe a lot in the power of the individual, of creativity, of innovation, which is why every year we have these SDG Action Awards on three pillars: one is “inspire” for the most creative, most innovative initiatives aimed at mobilizing people and achieving goals; the second category is “mobilize” and that is the initiatives that mobilize an extraordinary number of people and the third pillar is ‘connect’, that is all the initiatives that manage to put different stakeholders and different sectors in communication. Thanks to this program, every year there are more than 5,000 applications from all countries. You can see first-hand that despite the difficulties that people experience in many countries, there is a very strong creative and proactive force for solving problems.

I’ll give you just one example from Lebanon. In 2021, in the “inspire” category, we awarded a beautiful campaign, it was called “A white dress does not cover the rape”. You should know that in Lebanon, before this campaign, if the aggressor asked the rape victim to marry him, the latter was no longer considered guilty of a crime. This campaign consisted of hanging wedding dresses on the beaches, on top of the wedding dress instead of the person’s face there was a noose, so very strong images. This campaign has determined a mobilization that has led to the introduction of rape as a crime in the legislation. An example that demonstrates how communication, creativity can generate impact.

Your words make me think that this communication strategy is based on creativity and based on involving the individual, people all over the world. But then you use the same message with populations with cultures, traditions, religions, with perceptions. Couldn’t this be a limit?

Every campaign to be effective must be very *tailor-made* to the national content, the language, but also to the culture and cultural codes of the country. So what we as a global campaign can offer are broad messages with the clear indication that these messages will become effective only when at the national

level, at the local level or at the level of an ethnic group, of a religious group, they are adapted to the national and local contexts.

One last question. There are 6 years left until 2030. Do you already have any qualitative or even quantitative feedback on how much the campaign is mobilizing in different geographical areas of the world?

This mobilization involved over 58 million people, of which around 20 million around the Mediterranean. We use *digital a lot*, we have organized many events that have reached millions of people. In fact, digital, despite being a limit to direct experience, allows us to reach many more people and some indicators tell us how many people have read the contents, shared them, and carried out concrete actions.

What is a priority for us is to help identify a new narrative. So, on the one hand, individual action is the campaigns, but also the goal of rewriting together a different narrative that describes how we can build a future that is more equitable, more inclusive and more sustainable.

I end with a *quote* from Mandela: “A thing can be considered impossible until it is achieved.”

Interview with Emanuele Giordana Journalist Communicating the Agenda through the media

Emanuele, as a journalist, I would ask you how information has a better impact on citizens beyond the institutional objectives and strategies; that is, are there methods, technical or technological, psychological aspects on how to best get the news across, how to involve the user?

First of all, I would start from the **difference between communicating and informing**. A journalist can communicate, anyone who knows Italian well and the rules of communication can do it; instead, information is precisely the journalist's job. What is the difference? That whoever communicates something is not obliged, as it were, in a certain sense, to tell the whole truth and only the truth, he will tend to say above all the things that are close to his heart. Let's think of a private company, he certainly won't come to tell you about his union difficulties, he will instead tell you that he sells a lot of cars or a lot of

household appliances. What should the journalist do? He must verify that the information given by the communicator is real: my Government is telling me that jobs have increased? Well, I will go and look at the Istat data to see if this is true; the United Nations tells me that world hunger is decreasing thanks to the A- genda 2030? I should try to verify it with other sources as well. This is the first big difference: it is one thing to communicate a fact, an event, a future thing and another thing to go and look to see if things are actually as the communicator says. I am referring to an approach that must bring together communication and information because correct communication can be truthful and precise information even if there is always that percentage of involvement from which the journalist should abstain.

Is there an approach that combines information and communication and makes this involvement of people and communities easier or less difficult?

First of all, it is good to make a premise. Let's talk a little about fairyland because many things that I will say about journalism are not exactly like that. The same goes for institutional communication, there are lights and shadows and often a job that should be very ethical for the respect of the truth gives in to attempt to tell it in an engaging way to speak to a specific audience. But what should the journalist do? First of all, he must deal with facts and not opinions, with things that have actually happened. Things that happen become news when they have, so to speak, their own strength, their own novelty, compared to everyday life. An example is usually given: the dog biting the man is not news, but a man biting the dog is! A classic example of what this is news. So the facts in themselves are not enough, they must be newsworthy, that is, say something important and new. But sometimes we ignore the facts and tend to take words for facts: those that political decision-makers and observers, analysts say because they are important people... even when they say banalities!

Obviously it is clear that **if we talk about something that is happening now but also in the future, like Agenda 2030, we must find a connection with a current fact to make it "newsworthy"** and avoid it appearing only as a theoretical construction. In reality, Agenda 2030 has a connection because every day we deal with health problems, with problems of hunger, water, environment and so on; but if there is no connection to the newsworthy reality, which can be a conflict, a flood, an emergency, famine in a country, drought, then it becomes difficult to talk about Agenda 2030. So the first thing is to try to connect one of the themes of Agenda 2030, which are many, to decline it within a newsworthy

fact which can be a conflict, an emergency or even the speech of a political representative.

So reality, from a journalistic point of view, is not so much the importance or the scope of a topic, for example the actual availability of drinking water as a product of a medium and long-term strategy, but reality is only what makes the news. If this is the case, one could say that if it is negative news or in any case outside the box, it immediately captures the attention of users, of the person, of the population, but if it is news with a perspective, which has the possibility of having a profound impact on everyday life, then this attention is very difficult to catch. How do you see it?

We are always at the man who bites the dog. An element of novelty is needed and too often it is a negative fact. Of course in an ideal world the journalist should not limit himself to looking only at the negative aspect, indeed, he should anticipate certain positive themes that are news anyway. I don't know, let's think about wind power: wind power did not begin only with the blades or the controversy over the blades, it was born many years before and a good journalist should have reported the news that there were studies that tried to transform the winds into electrical energy and so on for many other things. This happens quite rarely, in the newspapers it will have a space of 5%. Usually it is the bad news, precisely because fortunately they are not ordinary, that take up the most space. And then in fact you have to cynically introduce yourself in the debate of the moment for which a certain thing is being talked about. The media are important. Why are they important?

Because the media can influence political decision makers, they can influence public opinion which in turn influences political decision makers and which in turn influences the media, because it is not the same thing if I speak or you but you have to enter this vicious circle when you can attach yourself to a strong element that can be, take the Italian case, healthcare, waiting lists: it is not a problem that can be solved in two minutes. And there the 2030 Agenda can be cited as a reference for possible solutions.

I find this thing you said very interesting, that is, that what makes the news is because it is not a normal thing. I am now thinking about the news that we all know unfortunately, of so many things, of so many situations that at first seem abnormal, think of water bombs, new phenomena; today water bombs have become a «normal» fact, so I am not saying that it is no longer news, it

is news if there are victims and a lot of damage, but it is a phenomenon that is now taken for granted. Or, to change the subject, years ago the first migrants who drowned in the sea was news that made the front pages; today, let's say, it struggles to even find space because it has become a «normal» thing. So, do we have to adapt to this dynamic in this perverse sense? Or, as you said before, is it a question of a good journalist or is it also a question of technology?

There are many aspects together I think. That is, as if to say, a real fact is obviously that a newspaper, a television, a radio cannot talk about everything at all times. In this phase that we are going through, we are continually hearing, rightly, about Gaza, then we hear about Ukraine, now we hear about Lebanon and Syria, we ignore for example that among the largest conflicts that have occurred - in terms of number of deaths in the last year, in 2023 - the main one was Ukraine (there was no war in Gaza yet) those in Sudan and Myanmar are certainly not less brutal. So, there is already a problem in general of journalism that is rather intermittent, it is unable, perhaps even unwilling, to follow all the things that happen in the world.

Then there is also a problem of political choice, what you called 'good journalism', that is, deciding whether you just want to talk about news that have an impact, this is a bit of a trend these days. And so to get yourself read you also use fashion, stars, light things without going into depth. This is a general problem of journalism that, only in part, with some shadows, now has another crutch which is our possibility to inform ourselves more since through the internet we can read a bit of newspapers from all over the world.

Before we couldn't do it, we had to rely on press reviews. Then there are social media, but here we have to be very careful. We also have the possibility to hear the voices of non-journalists, who therefore mediate this reality, but also external voices that perhaps journalists wouldn't pick up. I'm thinking for example of certain liberation movements that have existed especially in the past that however didn't have a voice to express their reasons because very often journalism reasons in political terms for which it decides that the good are on one side, the bad on the other while instead there should be an effort at least to make things known to spectators or readers and then they decide for themselves what choices to make.

You say: there are some topics that are lighter, easier or more engaging, for example fashion, I would add sports or whatever. But couldn't it be a strategy to paradoxically link a topic as complex as Agenda 2030, complex both in its objectives but also in its structure, operations and everything, to these light topics or is there a risk of trivializing?

This is a choice that the United Nations, for example, has made. What are the famous *Goodwill Ambassadors* ? They are famous people who go to a refugee camp and attract attention not so much for the gravity of the refugee camp, but because they are the ones who went there: Angelina Jolie went to the refugee camp? Here's the news. This naturally also happens when an important singer takes action, decides to take a political position in favor of someone. I'm thinking of Vasco Rossi who dedicated a concert to Gino Strada, or a footballer, even better, who takes a position on war and peace. It's important because entertainment, sport, fashion are part of our lives so why not... but be careful not to trivialize because if in the end I watch the video with Angelina Jolie because I like Angelina Jolie and I forget three minutes later what she actually wanted to communicate to you, well then I haven't done a good job. And I believe there are examples where in the end even many non-governmental associations have used these methods which in the end have almost more to do with advertising and marketing than with real meaning and involvement, awareness for those who want to make a donation for example.

Among the characteristics of Agenda 2030 is that it can be perceived as a United Nations agenda, an agenda that no one knows exactly who defined it in the Glass Palace, something very far from our daily reality.

During the course I tried to give elements to analyze this in a critical way, that is, how it was born, how it was involved, how it was approved, how the whole genesis was. But from a journalistic point of view, is the fact of having been promoted by an entity that is still distant, even physically and spatially, from where we are now something that has an impact? And how could it be filled?

Of course it's not enough, as you rightly point out, it's not enough. I think a survey that you mentioned to me before our conversation shows it, on how much Italians, I don't want to get the data wrong so I'll give you the floor again, know about Agenda 2030... and they're not many.

The Millennium Development Goals were considered to be known by about 10/12% of the population while I believe that the 2030 Agenda reached 20/25%. From a purely analytical point of view there is an increase, but from the point of view of the impact of knowledge and involvement it is extremely low.

I would say that this survey essentially tells us one thing, or rather two.

The first is that this **discussion on Agenda 2030 has penetrated a niche and this is understandable** for all the reasons we have discussed before, the last one you mentioned: the distance, an institution that is not present in everyday life, the fact that many governments have signed it but then have not supported it, the fact that it is difficult to tell something that is not news in itself, it is a program that must achieve certain objectives.

But it also tells us something else: that **if the Millennium Goals, which were the beginning of this path, reached 14%, that is one and a half people out of ten, over time we have managed to make three people out of ten aware, which is actually quite a lot.** And so all the work that has been done, including, let's say, this meeting today with you who deal with these issues, in the end slowly produces a general awareness. It is a long road, but there is no need to be surprised: this kind of thing requires a long road. It would be un-nest to tell the United Nations that with a targeted campaign you can reach seven out of ten people. These are issues that require time and perseverance but you can get there and in the end, even if slowly, these will become a heritage of awareness without anyone even realizing it. Today Agenda2030 is not something that is in the common imagination but at least someone has heard about it and maybe someone will also decide to go and find out.

Let's say that the glass half full is what you just said, the glass half empty is that, as you know, sustainable development unfortunately has time limits, that is, by 2050 a series of objectives must be achieved. The question arises of an intellectually honest attitude towards the complexity of the challenge and the limited time to overcome it. But if I were to ask you: suggest a strategy to reach people and better involve them or what you would do or, even better, what you would not do?

But I would try first and foremost, and probably the United Nations is also doing this, to intervene in moments when there is a need for a response.

Is there a big flood? Well, what does the United Nations do? Sure, they bring food aid, doctors and so on, but there you can get to the point where Agenda

2030 gives a precise indication. The same, there is a drought problem, there is a famine problem, well, Agenda 2030 has already achieved results. I don't always see this present, I who consider myself a person who is aware of what the Agenda is, I don't see this message coming very often. In fact, I see it very rarely, while there are moments in which the journalist needs to put elements in order to create a context and right at that moment it would be nice if this type of information could arrive, unfortunately linked to tragic events, wars, floods, earthquakes, in short, generally to emergencies. Not to mention, but this is certainly being done even if I believe in many cases with difficulty, that we need to act on political decision makers: they are the ones who can put that little word, when they make a speech, saying for example whether our country is respecting the A-genda 2030 or not. In some cases it is done, in some cases non-governmental organizations do it. I believe that it is a path from which we cannot expect something immediate also because, and here there is a completely personal evaluation, the United Nations has been experiencing a particular crisis for some time now. Sometimes we even perceive them as inefficient, sometimes as useless while instead I am convinced that they play a fundamental role. We need, I believe, to find the way to restore the credibility to the United Nations that allowed it to achieve results. For example, the reform of the Security Council that has been under discussion for too long would be a step in the right direction.

One last point to be treated in a nutshell. We have not touched on the importance of social media, which today are the most planetary, global, and impactful means of communication. In a few words, what would you say about social media in the face of the challenge of applying the Agenda?

I think social media is important because it has opened up a world so when there is something new that allows us to know more things it is always a good experience. Of course, we have seen it and we see it continuously, they are also a vehicle for fake news so an important role of journalists should be to mediate between the thousands of news that circulate on the web and what is closest to reality. So there is a positive aspect, we who alone can go and choose the things that are perhaps indicated to us by someone on Facebook or Instagram, on the other hand we must be increasingly careful. And then there is the issue of artificial intelligence. In short, we are faced with a mass of information that in reality leads us astray very easily and leads us down a false trail, not to mention the hate messages whose effects we then see in the end. I believe in

the end that journalism, which however must make an effort, can be a bulwark against bad information and that our role should be to cut out what is wrong. It is a great responsibility, I don't know how much journalism is following this trail: these are dark times also for our profession, also for the ability to interfere in this world of social media, the agencies specialized in inventing fake news. So a complex future, thinking about it seems to me the only way to get out of it perhaps.

Interview with Alessandro Casartelli
World Bank

The topic of financing the 2030 Agenda is a very complex and varied topic. In the Course we talked about local and national sources. Now let's talk about international sources of financing. For this reason we invited Alessandro Casartelli, who is an expert of the World Bank, based in Washington where he specifically follows the financing of private investments on sustainability issues.

But let's let him tell us a little more about this responsibility. Thank you Alessandro for your availability.

Yes, I work in a unit in the World Bank known as the IFC or International Finance Corporation, and it is actually an arm of the World Bank that deals with private sector financing. The World Bank created in the 50s and especially the IFC, which is the unit where I work, started from a fundamental concept, and that is that the private sector is essential to development. Basically we operate in all emerging countries to finance sustainability projects. Sustainability is a broad concept, obviously the IFC deals with verifying which projects meet the sustainability criteria. I deal with emerging countries in Central Asia, Turkey and the Middle East.

In a nutshell, where do the resources that you allocate once approved come from? Where are the projects and in which countries specifically?

There are contributing countries that finance the Bank to operate in emerging countries and in particular in what we call FCS, Fragile Conflicts States, with the mandate to intervene so that poverty is reduced and there is a redistri-

bution of well-being in the investment of private capital. This is the essential function.

A clarification, given that you operate as a Bank and not as a non-repayable cooperative, do the resources at your disposal come from States or from other banks?

They come from the States. They come precisely from the States that contributed to the creation of this institution. So there is capital from the Bank that is made available for certain interventions, but in addition to these that are not sufficient obviously a driving force is made to ensure that other national, local and international institutions can intervene with their capital so that the project, the financing is in tune with public capital.

What criteria do you use to verify the sustainability of projects? And what are the guarantees or methods that you identify to ensure that these criteria are actually respected in the execution phase?

The Bank has requirements in various environmental and social areas; these requirements are part of the evaluation of each loan and each investment. So these criteria essentially respond to the 2030 Agenda which coincide with those of the World Bank. As many as 16 of the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda are an integral part of the requirements that are requested, in the form of an evaluation that we do, to assign investments. Together with these, which are principles on which we operate, there are criteria on which we try to make an evaluation. Such as, for example, the positive impact of these investments which must exceed certain thresholds. The reason is very simple: precisely on the basis of our mandate we try to intervene where there is a contextual, social impact that contributes to the sustainability of the intervention itself. The fundamental criterion is additionality also in non-financial terms. For example, we evaluate which risks are going to be reduced, if there is other capital, other resources to guarantee the sustainability of the project.

That said, in summary, in what terms are Agenda 2030 and its 17 objectives a reference for defining the criteria? You said it in part, but just to clarify it in detail.

Let's say that the Bank has various criteria, which essentially range from the health of workers, the environment. The requirements of the World Bank are compared with those that are the 17 objectives of the 2030 Agenda. So we can say that there is a 360-degree alignment between the Objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the requirements of the Bank. For each investment we do an analysis throughout its life cycle: from when it is put into conceptual form until the project itself is implemented.

What are the major limitations, obstacles or difficulties you most often face in your work? What are also the ways in which you verify that the criteria proposed in the projects are then actually respected during the execution phase?

The difficulties are of various types. First of all the country difficulty, the contextual risk in which we operate, that is, countries in conflict. The main obstacles, precisely because we try to be a driving force for development in the country itself, are in trying to bring together resources and skills, because in these countries it is particularly complex. Our projects, precisely because they become a driving force for

social cohesion, first of all require a huge cultural change. To give a concrete example, I was just returning from Uzbekistan, where there is a project for agricultural development, so that every small cooperative that operates in cotton harvesting follows sustainability criteria and therefore concretely reduces a historical problem, namely the manual harvesting of cotton, especially by children. Our intervention was

to bring the cooperatives together so that there is not only an economic return at an individual level, but also a cultural change within the country so that these practices are modified and eliminated. A classic example of cultural change in which the authorities and the operators themselves ensure that the change occurs.

Cultural changes, as we all know, always require a long time, while the duration of projects is defined and those who go over it usually incur a series of measures such as not providing the next tranche of funding.

So how do you put together this dichotomy between the long times of a cultural change and the times of a project, especially for a bank that, evidently, has to work according to banking criteria?

Yes, I thank you for the question because it is the very core of our work. First of all, the evaluation part must be done in a coherent manner; that is, you cannot make an investment and wait for the cultural change to be the main factor of success or failure of the project itself. There must be a set of elements that allow the project to move forward. So what do we put in place? We put our resources in place so that as a stimulus to ensure that the cultural change occurs. So this project that I was talking about previously is also done with the local authorities, so that this objective is possible within the time frame set by the investment; so there are certainly contingencies put in place, but there are also efforts from us and from the operators who are made available.

Before, when you were talking to us about the countries where you operate and you pointed out how in countries in conflict, particular approaches are required. Since you operate in an area where there are different religions, does this lead you to certain criteria in getting in tune with different cult sensibilities?

No, absolutely not because the mission, to use the English term, of the Bank is precisely to enter these countries taking into account the local situations also in terms of religious diversity. So there is no difference from that point of view on how the requirements are interpreted and implemented. Clearly the surrounding conditions change, but from an investment point of view and how one operates, the conditions are exactly the same. The cultural context that changes from country to country is mainly taken into account.

Just to get an idea what are the types of financing? The minimum financing or the maximum financing? What type of financing are we talking about? On average, let's say.

The Bank provides a lower limit of 10 million euros, and an upper limit of 300 million euros. So beyond 300 million comes into play the mobilization of other players, of other contributions that must be put together as a flywheel if the investment is higher than that figure.

One last question: what importance do you give to the role that universities can play in sustainable development?

The university is fundamental in this process and indeed, I take this opportunity to thank the University of Insubria for giving me the opportunity to speak. But precisely because the context in which we operate is fundamental, we consider universities as a flywheel between the private sector and public institutions. The university operates in a more streamlined way than other entities and therefore has the possibility of providing skills and being innovative for the training of the professionals of the future. A hinge role between the local reality with other sectoral skills. In fact, if universities provide climate change experts, these must relate to the specific environmental, economic and social priorities of the local actors who are involved. This is why I believe that universities are fundamental in carrying forward the 2030 Agenda.

Also very interesting is this last note you said about the opportunity that universities have to train managers. Specifically, a recognized priority for the training of managers is inter-sectorality and strategic planning, that is, the skills needed to make the sectors interact, which are one of the great difficulties in the application of the 2030 Agenda. So I thank you for your time; it seems to me that your surname strongly evokes the territory of Insubria of Lake Como, and therefore we are even more proud of your contribution!

Interview with Giacomo Negrotto

Crisis Department

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP NY)

Today we have as our guest Giacomo Negrotto, an official from a UN agency, the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), which operates in the crisis department in NY.

Good morning Giacomo, I'll get straight to the question: what does your Department and in what context do you operate?

We work in crisis contexts although the mandate of the UNDP is to support the development processes of the territories of the member countries. Specifically, our mandate as a crisis office is to maintain, with appropriate actions, the horizon of sustainable development even in crisis contexts. Traditionally, this approach to crises refers to two categories, namely conflict situations and situations of response, but also prevention, to so-called natural disasters.

In fact, since 2020, since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic onwards, there has been a trend that has seen an increase in interventions in response to crises and a decrease in those for their prevention. This requires a reflection on what “development” means in the current context. For the first time in 25 years, in fact, poverty has increased globally. After almost three decades of sustained reduction, both during the first fifteen years of the Millennium Goals (2000-2015) and for the one we are still experiencing in relation to the 2030 Agenda. This is no longer true since 2020: poverty is growing and, as we know, although it is obviously heavier in the global south, it also impacts the global north. And this is a fact. The second fact, which concerns the traditional category of conflict, is that at present, I quote the Secretary General, 2 billion of people, that is $\frac{1}{4}$ of humanity, 25% of humanity lives in territories or situations of conflict and therefore one in four human beings finds himself in his daily life having to take into account dynamics that have to do with war, losses, destruction. How these two variables, which are now becoming structural, impact the development dynamics both at the macro and micro level (of local development of the territories) is precisely the object of our work which is carried out in particular in the context of prevention, when possible, but above all in the context of response.

And what are, in summary, the tools you have available to operate?

With regard to conflict situations, which, among other things, are those that largely determine the agenda of our governments at this time, there is a response architecture that fits into an institutional scheme that concerns all UN Agencies and even beyond, such as international NGOs that work in humanitarian contexts. In particular, when a crisis is officially declared, whether due to a conflict or a disaster, some humanitarian support mechanisms are activated, almost automatically.

This system is called ‘humanitarian architecture’ and is divided into «sectors» or «clusters», which range from the most immediate response areas (protection, shelter, food security, management of refugee camps), and therefore pure humanitarian aid, immediate relief, up to an evolution that aims to reactivate the economic and social dynamics and also local capacities of the population, to accompany it towards what should then become a sprout of sustainable development. This last area is called «Early Recovery» and is a sector, or humanitarian cluster, with the explicit mandate to connect the humanitarian response to the development perspective.

In this, precisely, UNDP, which is the leading agency in the Early Recovery sector, has a bridging role between the purely humanitarian response, necessary above all in the immediate aftermath of a conflict or disaster, with the recovery process that will allow the entire process to be projected-ferried towards a broader horizon; this is to allow the population to recover its own capacities, and therefore to put itself in a position to walk towards development, and if you want also to the international community, to donors, to reduce the flow of emergency aid which, in addition to being much more expensive, also generates dependence in the population that receives it and distorts local economic dynamics. Therefore, often, in the long run, humanitarian aid turns out to be a bearer potential for counter-development dynamics. In this context of humanitarian architecture, the tools we have are, within the sector/cluster *Early recovery*: recovery and resilience. This sector concerns the immediate reactivation of essential services, market dynamics and local economic actors. This “*Early Recovery*” approach is considered valid in the first 18 months from the beginning of a crisis and that is, it accompanies the purely humanitarian response by sowing seeds that will possibly then provide the basis for working on more sustainable development dynamics. This is not always the case, because one of the characteristics of the crises we are witnessing now, whether they are due to disasters or conflicts, but above all conflict, is that they are crises that deepen and prolong more and more, that is, they are not resolved and also for this reason it is important that the response evolves from purely humanitarian to a response that instead focuses on the recovery and sustainable development of the impacted communities.

And in terms of impact, what are the strengths and limitations of your action?

A strong point is to align our action with the rest of the humanitarian system, that is, with the work done by other UN agencies and other actors such as specialized NGOs, on the purely humanitarian side. The added value is the expertise of UNDP in working in the long term, also with governments, and in having a strong presence in the countries. An added value considered as an asset also by other humanitarian agencies and actors, to generate greater dialogue and greater impact necessary to combine the immediate humanitarian response with the essential medium-long term action that is not only assistance. It is in this intersection that we can enclose the concept of the HDP nexus, the triple nexus between: humanitarian aid, development and peace action. In English we call it ‘HDP Nexus’, and it is the concept produced by the Global Summit

on Humanitarian Aid held in Istanbul in 2016, which states that even the first immediate humanitarian response action, in which a blanket or food is simply offered to a community, to a family; that humanitarian action should already contain the seed of the development vision for the future and therefore never be purely welfare-based; but even in the most complex and urgent situation, in which the response can only be concrete and immediate, it should still include participation, a level of ownership/appropriation by the “beneficiaries”, which allows them to also feel protagonists, to feel subjects and not just objects of this response. I would say that this concept of the HDP nexus, putting it on a theoretical level, let’s say, is precisely the context in which we can pigeonhole this discussion, this exchange.

A direct question: but who finances humanitarian aid? And then what operational, strategic relationship exists between your action and the application of Agenda 2030?

As regards the resources allocated to humanitarian aid, the answer is simple, in the sense that they are the same entities that also finance investments and development processes; therefore, they are once again the bilateral donors, namely the Member States, through their cooperation agencies and their foreign ministries. Almost all bilateral donors have offices that deal with development, and offices that deal with humanitarian as in the case of Italy. Germany for example has an entire ministry that deals with development cooperation, but that ministry does not deal with humanitarian aid; humanitarian aid is managed by the Foreign Ministry with a division specialized in humanitarian aid.

Concerning the coherence with the 2030 Agenda, it is also the subject of an internal debate on whether and how we will be able to reach 2030 having achieved the objectives that the world has set itself. The conditions that were present at a global level in 2015, when the global pact for the 2030 Agenda was signed, are today structurally modified.

The very concept of crisis, which has a Greek etymology as I think we know, on the one hand means threat, danger, on the other hand it means opportunity: every crisis is an opportunity even when it seems difficult to read beyond the contingent crisis. So, returning to your question, we believe that the only way to maintain the hope of achieving the objectives set out in the Agenda by 2030 is to incorporate the concept of crisis and not think that we can move forward on this path simply by using the tools that were identified and put in place then, before this drastic evolution that we have had in the last five years.

We thank you very much Giacomo for these stimuli that will surely be the subject of discussions, considerations and therefore we can only wish you good work.

Interview with Egidio Crotti

Human Rights and International Convention for the Protection of Children

Egidio Crotti has been Director of UNICEF in several countries in Africa and Latin America. We ask him the practical operational aspect of the value of treaties, international agreements, conventions.

What obligations and what actual implementations have you verified since the your specific experience?

I would like to start by saying that international conventions, international treaties are legal instruments and therefore have an enforceable character, they are legally binding such as for example the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the Convention on the Rights of Women. Instruments that the different States not only sign, but ratify, through different methods. In countries with Parliamentary Republics they pass through the scrutiny of Parliaments or with ministerial or presidential decrees. Therefore legally binding in legal and practical terms.

Tell us what the Convention on the Rights of the Child is.

It is first and foremost the expression of universal consensus. Two important words. The first is consensus, an expression of the search for an agreement, even a minimal one, of acceptable standards shared at a broader level by the countries. The second is universal, in the sense that it is a Convention that is addressed to all children in the States and countries that have ratified it.

And it is an instrument that frames the relationships between the child, the family, society and the State. It establishes that the child is a subject of rights. In fact, it has been believed that childhood is a condition of transition towards autonomy and requires special protection, that is, the same rights as adults but with an expansion of this protection. And then it is important because it establishes a passage from needs to rights. What does it mean? This may seem like

just semantics. No, it means that it is recognized that promoting the well-being and development of childhood in every country is not a question of charity or good will, but a question of rights, that is, that therefore the States that have ratified it must commit themselves to ensuring that this transition to adult life takes place in the best possible conditions to develop the potential of each individual. The Convention also places great emphasis on the role of the family, understood in the broadest sense. It does not establish what type of family, even that because rightly being a universal treaty based on a consensus, the concept of family varies according to latitudes, cultural traditions and the type of society to which we are heading. However, it is important to say that the family is considered the main area of promotion of childhood development and the State intervenes in support and in substitution of the family only in very specific and documented cases.

All human beings under the age of 18 are considered children, that is, persons protected by this Convention, unless the law of a country defines the age of majority either earlier or later. The basic principles are: non-discrimination, that is, no person, and even more so no child, can be discriminated against because of the color of their skin, their religion, the language they speak, their origin, the social and economic situation of their family. All decisions taken both at the judicial level, in the case of civil or criminal proceedings, and in the case of defining economic or social policies, implementation of programs, must be guided by the best interests of the child. For example, in the case of separations or divorces and in the presence of persons under the age of 18, the criterion that guides the decision of the judge, or of the person in charge who makes decisions, must be the best interests of the child. And what is the best interests of the child? That of being able to develop and access all of their rights.

The child, we have said, must reach progressive autonomy, *evolving capacities*, and that therefore implies his right to participate in the expression of his own ideas, in a choice of religion, always within the scope of the development of his autonomy and, when we speak of participation-expression, that this participation does not imply the violation of human rights. It is a Convention that provides mechanisms for the protection of the right, but also for promotion and development; in fact there are many articles that have to do with defense, with protection from abuse, but also with development and health, education, access to play and sport. It is a Convention that has an important part of three or four articles, which give the guidelines for the relationship between the State and adolescents who for example are accused of having broken the law with very specific elements. Such as the absolute prohibition of using the

death penalty for crimes committed by minors under 18 and definitive imprisonment without the possibility of commutation of the sentence, that is, life imprisonment. All States that ratify the Convention are required to submit a report every five years to the International Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is made up of independent experts, who are chosen by the different States that have ratified the Convention. This role lasts five years and is unpaid, simply covering the expenses for attending meetings. The Committee makes recommendations mandates, which are signed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and which are made accessible and public both on websites and disseminated at country level.

Is the Convention for poor children in the global south or is it a convention that applies to all countries?

For all countries, universal indeed. Be it Italy, France, Spain, for example, presents reports to the Committee every five years and therefore our economically advanced countries are also required to follow the principles of the Convention. Obviously the type of recommendations will not be the same from country to country because the actual capabilities of a country will have to be taken into account, that is, we will be more demanding with a country with a more advanced economy, obviously, that is, if there are enormous disparities in countries that have the resources, the recommendation will be more stringent and harsher than with countries that perhaps have made slower progress but also because of the real situation of the economy, of the war or of the available resources.

From your experience of the field, what difficulties did you encounter in approaching to implement the Convention? In what terms does this become a reality or not?

Working in countries that have ratified the Convention provides an important tool for dialogue and negotiation with governments. Why? Because first of all there is common ground on which to establish dialogue to define the priorities of cooperation between UNICEF and the United Nations system, also to analyze how the State, the government of the country in which you are working, is using its resources. So you can establish a ground that goes beyond the ideological perception of the vision you have of development, because there is a common ground on which to measure the coherence of laws and policies. So let's say that it is an important advocacy tool. It is also an important tool for

non-governmental organizations. Civil society has a tool for putting pressure on certain decisions or certain laws that the government in office is implementing. In some countries, such as Morocco, the Convention is, in the new Constitution, placed at a higher level than national laws and this means that in the event of a dispute the international Treaty even has supremacy; that is, if a law goes against this treaty, it can be contested. As always, it depends on the perspective with which we look: there is still a lot to do, but if we look at some data from the last 30 years, we see that in certain indicators there have been significant improvements: we have advanced. Not as it was. However, there has certainly been a significant increase in girls' access to primary and secondary school, which therefore establishes the criterion of non-discrimination, a reduction in malnutrition and infant mortality.

Surely then there is also the other part, as we said. There are no coercive instruments, for example for countries that have ratified the convention and continue to apply the death penalty to minors under 18. There is the fact that many countries do not have the resources available to develop social programs that could favor the development of childhood or are in situations of war, civil war. So evidently the Convention is not the solution to all problems, it is not a magic wand, but it is an instrument of ethical value in a certain weight, which allows to operate over time to ensure that new generations have the possibility of being better and developing their characteristics and their potential.

It remains a fact that despite the treaties, despite the monitoring mechanisms, there are situations where there is no application of the treaty. Well, in these cases, what can be done?

We have spoken of the five-year reports to be able to account for how the necessary changes have been implemented in legislative and programmatic terms, there is the country's commitment to draft a report that implies an inter-connection between national and local levels, the participation of civil society. So it's also an important moment where society looks at itself and says 'are we really doing something serious about childhood?' and again allows civil society, the community, community groups, universities to be part of this debate.

Furthermore, for some years now, the Committee on the Rights of the Child can also receive individual appeals, a bit like when one appeals to the European Court, so this too is an additional tool. In case of violation to individuals, apart from advocacy alone, in many countries there are associations, sometimes uni-

versities that give free legal assistance to the person who is making a complaint because he has been discriminated against or for other reasons.

Many countries have established national human rights institutions with different tasks and missions and which can be appealed to in cases of discrimination or violation of rights. Other countries, the more Nordic and Anglo-Saxon ones, have created Ombudspersons, which are the equivalent of a national human rights institution. Then there are the Campaigns. Surely many of you students will receive messages inviting you to 'sign this petition, join this campaign for this person who has been imprisoned for such reasons or for lack of respect for minority rights, etc.', and there are the International Courts such as the one on crimes against humanity which instead have a more important executive role. We have seen what can be done with respect to massive violations, there are these periodic monitoring of the various treaties, the convention on the rights of the child, that of women, etc.; there is the possibility of doing advocacy sometimes at a multilateral level, sometimes bilateral, that is, a country that has more influence than another can use these tools to start negotiations with respect to situations of possible wars or civil wars already underway; there are the warnings, that is when the Security Council or the Secretary General of the United Nations or some countries make strong warnings with respect to situations of internal wars or massive discrimination. Let's think about what is happening in Ukraine, Palestine but also in Burma with respect to Rojinga, to situations of civil war that have occurred in Sudan, Colombia or Congo; there are economic sanctions, the embargo, which has often been rightly criticized because they do not always facilitate the daily life of people with fewer resources and often governments have systems to avoid it or to ensure that the ruling classes are less affected by it, there is the sending of United Nations Peace Forces like those present in Lebanon. These are the tools, each has its pros and cons and there is no magic tool that allows us to arrive at an effective universal protection of people's rights.

But can this dichotomy between the three principles of the Convention and its effective application also exist in other, let's say more cultural, areas such as traditions, cultural identities, religions and respect for human rights and children? What is your opinion?

Evidently there is a tension between universalism and particularism, between universalism intended as making everything uniform and what are the rights to identity. An international treaty does not mean that everyone must

think the same way and that cultural, social, traditional heritages must be equal or dissolved. I believe that, if we look at the Convention, all treaties recognize the right of people to develop through their own culture, their traditions and religions, and the right to choose. First, one thing must be clarified, cultures are not something static and ahistorical and this is a bit the defect that sometimes the arguments of the defense of particularisms have. Cultures are nourished by history, cultures and traditions evolve. Let's think, just to give an example, I would almost say shocking, until 1969 in Italy there was the crime of honor; is this a tradition that should be preserved? Evidently not, it is a tradition that conflicts with the equality of people, that is against the idea that no one can use violence against, for example, women. Changing the subject, for a long time it was thought in many countries that in the face of diarrhea the best thing was not to give liquid, and instead it has been demonstrated that in the case of a child with diarrhea you have to give him liquids. So there are traditions and traditions. Evidently in certain areas, in certain countries, there was the tradition that an albino child is eliminated because he is an element that brings discomfort and misfortune. This is not a tradition, it is infanticide! Certain traditions, when they conflict with the right to development, health and education, must be overcome. In certain countries it has always been considered that girls should not go to school or that they only attended primary school. However, things have changed, for example, countries like Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria now have data on girls' access to schools that are very positive compared to 20 or 30 years ago.

I thank you because you gave us a complete vision and then also very concrete examples. Evidently matter, precisely, in evolution.

FOR A (RI)READING OF SUSTAINABILITY

Alessandro Cupri

1. Some concluding remarks

The present volume represents an important contribution to the debate on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, offering an interdisciplinary perspective that integrates legal, religious, and cultural aspects. This work comes at a particularly critical historical moment: five years before the 2030 deadline, with only 17% of the objectives achieved according to the UN 2024 report, there is an urgent need to rethink (and relaunch) strategies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. The main strength of this edited book lies in the attempt to overcome disciplinary barriers, proposing a complex and articulated reading of the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda. The choice to integrate legal perspectives, analysis of religious traditions and reflections on cultural dynamics does not only respond to a methodological need but reflects also the awareness that sustainable development requires an approach capable of grasping the multiple dimensions of human life.

Particularly significant is the decision to devote ample space to the role of religious traditions in implementing the SDGs. This approach aims to fill a gap in existing literature, which has overlooked the potential of faith communities as actors of social and ecological transformation. The contributions in this book demonstrate how religious traditions not only share principles compatible with sustainability goals but can also offer spiritual and community resources essential to their achievement. The volume offers several original points of reflection. The notion of *integral ecology*, developed particularly in the contributions on the Catholic tradition but present transversely throughout the book, aims at overcoming the dichotomy between the environmental and the social dimensions of development. This perspective, echoed in the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* and the Islamic view of *khilāfah*, suggests that the ecological crisis cannot be addressed separately from the issue of social justice and intergenerational equity.

From the standpoint of methodological and object-related choices that emerge from the process of exploitation, the paper identifies both the conver-

gences and the specificities of the various traditions. For example, the analysis in relation to the positions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church on environmental sustainability reveals how, even within the same Christian tradition, different visions can coexist, influenced by specific cultural and political contexts.

2. Elements of originality and discontinuity

Compared to existing literature on the subject, this volume presents several elements of originality. Firstly, the focus on the local dimension of the implementation of the SDGs, as highlighted by the case study of the Val Sanagra Ecomuseum, offers a concrete counterpoint to theoretical reflections, showing how global principles must necessarily be translated into concrete territorial practices. Secondly, the section on interviews with experts and practitioners introduces a pragmatic dimension, which is often absent in academic work on these subjects. The voices collected - from UN officials to journalists, from World Bank operators to humanitarian program directors - reflect on the complexity of the operational challenges of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting the gap between theoretical aspirations and practical realities.

A further element of discontinuity compared to existing literature is represented by the critical analysis of the relationship between universalism of rights and cultural particularism. The book does not avoid the tension between universal principles and local traditions, but addresses it with balance, showing how intercultural dialogue can generate creative syntheses capable of respecting diversity without giving up shared standards of human dignity and environmental sustainability.

For the academic community as well, this work offers a few valuable insights. In terms of research, it opens new avenues for investigating the role of religions in global governance of sustainability, a topic that is still little explored in Italian literature.

Last but not least, the volume presents itself as a valuable teaching tool for university courses dealing with sustainable development, human rights, and interreligious dialogue. The modular structure, which alternates theoretical contributions and practical cases, facilitates the selective use of materials in different training contexts. Particularly useful is the module dedicated to the teaching experience at the University of Insubria, which offers a replicable model of integration between academic training and SDG awareness.

3. *What prospects?*

Looking to the future, the analyses carried out in the book various surveys raise questions that deserve further investigation. The first concerns the need to develop indicators for measuring the contribution of religious communities to the achievement of the SDGs. How to quantify, for example, the impact of the “ecological conversion” invoked by Pope Francis or the “cultural change” promoted by Islamic green finance initiatives?

A second area of future research is a more systematic examination of the synergies between different religious traditions in sustainability actions. The inter-religious documents cited in the volume - from the Document on Human Brotherhood to joint climate statements - suggest a still largely unexplored potential for ecumenical and interfaith collaboration.

Finally, there is a need to deepen the link between the spiritual dimension and systemic transformation. If, as several contributions to the volume suggest, the ecological crisis is fundamentally a spiritual and moral crisis, what are the implications for public policy and global governance? How to integrate the inner dimension of change with the necessary structural reforms?

In conclusion, this book represents an important and timely contribution to the global sustainability debate. Its originality lies not only in the interdisciplinary approach, but in the ability to combine academic rigor and practical sensitivity, theoretical analysis and attention to territorial dynamics, global perspective, and local roots.

These intertwine and amplify each other making this volume to remind us that solutions cannot be merely technical or merely political.

Religious traditions, with their ability to mobilize communities, inspire behavioral changes, offer alternative visions of the relationship between humanity and nature, and emerge as indispensable allies in this transformation. It is not a matter of replacing political action or technological innovation with moral preaching, but of recognizing that the complexity of contemporary challenges requires the mobilization of all available resources - material and spiritual, scientific, and sapiential, global, and local.

This book offers a strengthened awareness: time is short, the challenges are immense, but the resources to tackle them - if we know how to activate and coordinate them - are richer and more diverse than we can often imagine. In this sense, the present volume is not only an academic plus, but also a call to informed and conscious action, in the perspective of authentically sustainable development that remains the necessary horizon of our time.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, represents more than a roadmap of goals. It articulates a vision of deep transformation, calling for a rethinking of economic models, cultural values, ecological responsibilities, and social structures. While often framed in terms of political action and technological innovation, the Agenda's deeper ambitions demand an ethical and spiritual reorientation. In this light, religious traditions are not peripheral to the global sustainability conversation—they are essential interlocutors. *Human Rights, Religions and the United Nations Agenda 2030* investigates how diverse religious and cultural actors are engaging, interpreting, and even expanding the vision of the 2030 Agenda, offering insights, critiques, and innovations that challenge conventional paradigms of development. The contributors demonstrate that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing the symbolic, spiritual, and affective dimensions of human experience. In this context, the religious imagination asserts itself as a vital force capable of inspiring new narratives, shaping collective identities, and anchoring development in values of justice, humility, reciprocity, and hope. The volume expresses a coherent and shared conviction: that the religious imagination, when engaged with the realities and urgencies of our time, can emerge as a powerful force for ethical transformation and cultural innovation. The Agenda 2030 is thus not only a technopolitical document but a spiritual and cultural horizon. The contributions gathered here invite the reader to reflect, engage, and act at the intersection of faith, innovation, and global responsibility.

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