



Praise be to You, my Lord, for our common home

Pope Francis' inescapable appeal

Introductory remarks by Sandro Calvani

at the FIAC-IFCA webinar on the Enciclica *Laudato si'*, June 25th, 2020

The encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, published in May 2015, is an urgent call for a mobilization of humanity to save the planet from the risks of destruction caused by unruly development, implemented by the societies and governments of our time. Already the first words indicate the correct feeling of humanism that should guide us:

"Laudato si', mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".

In these two postulates on mother Earth is the essence of the change that Pope Francis proposes to us, using the vision of St. Francis. "The Earth sustains us, and governs us". And these two non-negotiable conditions are the inescapable rules of our action of urgent reparation.



Of the thirty invitations that Pope Francis makes in paragraphs 13 to 16, with the title "My Appeal" two groups seem to me to be central: First **"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change"**. The Pope refers in particular to **"young people [who] demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded"**. If we manage to find a way, a map of response to this call, we can already begin to heal the common house. Today we see the open veins of fake development manifesting itself, which for four decades has aimed at building wealth without taxation and work without dignity, instead of focusing on welfare and inclusion, the concentration of dominant power instead of cooperation, knowledge without character and - even - religion without sacrifice.

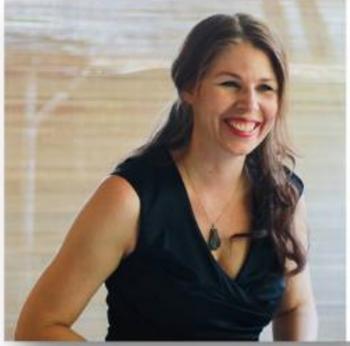
If we recognize that globalization has been savage up to now, we should aim for an ethical globalization instead, one that cares for humanity without leaving anyone behind. The temptation or shortcut to take refuge in a wild localism would in fact be a surrender, leaving other threats to dominate freely. The humanity of 7.7 billion people cannot hope to unravel the complexities that we have touched by giving full power to 194 governments, who only want to pull their own skein.

For fifty years, we have worshipped the golden lamb, the false idols of unbridled capitalism, unruly market competition, the exploitation of environmental and energy resources, the free slaughter of all

animal species, the priority investment in armaments, rather than focusing on our health and education. The result is now clearly visible and it can be heard strong and clear. The planet has been shouting "Enough!" since we started breaking planetary boundaries; everything happened as the Club of Rome forecasted in its report on the limits of development in 1972.

The second set of calls from the Pope are calls for personal and collective action: **"I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective, not only because of powerful opposition but also because of a more general lack of interest. Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: "Everyone's talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God's creation". All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents".**

How can we identify and call this new universal solidarity, and what is really new about this concept? While many of us, almost all, have heard of the global consensus on the ways to sustain the planet and the new economics, few have really understood the nature and order of magnitude of the sustainability challenge, which will reduce poverty and inequality. Moreover, I believe that this is an epochal transformation that is better understood by living it than by studying it. What I have understood, I got it by observing and living with the few communities in the world that have truly implemented a comprehensive form of inclusive prosperity, which adds the happiness of all to the sustainability of socio-economic systems. More than a final destination or a goal to achieve, I see sustainability as a process of transforming the bases and practices of life together with people, whether in the city or in other territories. I would define inclusive sustainability as the path of a group of people moving away from unsustainable socio-economic practices towards a world where everyone has a high quality of life, a voice and a natural environment that supports them. This path passes through all systems of intermediation and subsidiarity of people, civil society, economy and state, asking them to evolve the human way of being together and collaborating, so that wisdom and collective action will produce a prosperous world and a happy life for all. If we accept this definition, then it is clear that all the principles and methods of community organization must be reset, from families to schools, from businesses to the third sector, from the economy to the state.



In order to investigate these new visions, or the “new normality” as some sociologists of evolution in Europe call them, we can ask experts, academics and writers. The first researcher and expert who stands out for work published on the subject of inclusive prosperity (AKA thrivability in English) is professor Anneloes Smitsman, Ph.D. in her 2019 book “Into the Heart of Systems Change”. Professor Smitsman (pictured left) is an expert on society's evolutionary systems, futurologist, activist, and founder of EarthWise, an organization that wants to engender creative leadership for a new civilization based on the capacity to grow.

According to her, thrivability is "the developmental potential intrinsic to our lifetimes for our self-realized evolutionary growth. As a potential for progress, thrivability is developed through an evolutionary process of ecosystem learning. Through this process, we develop creative future skills, awareness and love for implementing and embodying the actualization of the potentials for prosperity within the worlds and systems of which we are a part. Embodied in social systems, these potentials become possibilities for further growth and development in a way that life becomes generative and creates the conditions to make each of us and life in general prosper. In all her studies, speeches and lectures, prof. Smitsman emphasizes that to be genuine, thrivability must be collective, tend to be global and based on the main common value of humanity, love for other people.

Another well-known promoter and leader of inclusive prosperity is Alexander Laszlo, in his 2019 book, “Syntony Sense: Evolutionary Intuition for World Changers”. For Laszlo (pictured right), the capacity for growth is "a concept that is based on sustainability and promotes it by embracing and encouraging the human capacity to lead a prosperous, joyful and loving life in coexistence with one's living environment”. As such, it cultivates a sense of wonder, sacredness and celebration of life as an integral part of all development processes. It can be said that the capacity for growth encompasses the dynamics that promote the affirmation of life, future creation, and opportunities that increase the avenues of human expression in harmony with the Earth and all life within it.



Laszlo has been the protagonist and long-time president of the International Society for Systems Science (ISSS), which promotes a holistic approach to the challenges of the changing times in which we live. Furthermore, he has always emphasized the priority that must be given to educational ecosystems, in order to understand changes in society and to provide a good foundation for the necessary transformations.

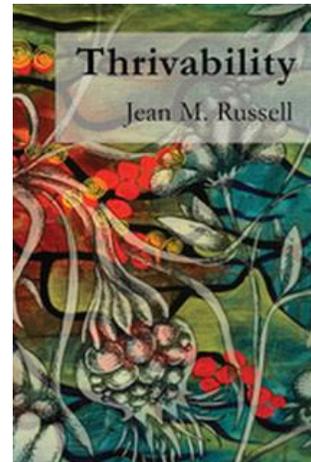
Many other researchers have helped define the concept of inclusive prosperity or thrivability. We do not have time today to mention them all. However, I would like to mention the work that I found most comprehensive. This is the book “Thrivability” by writer and essayist Jean M. Russell.



Jean M Russell (pictured left) is a social ecosystem designer, cultural facilitator and writer on a quest to catalyze group productivity. As a founder of the Thrivability movement, Jean's work with change agents, innovators, and new economy builders, has been cited in the Economist, Harvard Business Review, Stanford Social Innovation Review and Worldchanging magazines. She received an honorable mention on the Enrich List as one of the top 200 people enriching our path to a sustainable future.

According to Jean Russell, thrivability (inclusive prosperity) transcends patterns of survival, sustainability and resilience. It embraces the flow of growth as a source of life, joy and meaning, it joins the flow and rides its waves, rather than trying to cancel out its

effects. Each layer also includes and transcends the previous level, expanding both the interconnections and the awareness of the system, while each layer reaches new limits and discovers that there are more forces than can be explained within its sphere of competence. Furthermore, the capacity for growth is not a progression, where one must go from one stage to the next. Instead, you can have aspects of each person's or organization's development at various points on the growth capacity map and then the movement of transformation can go from one area to another. <http://thrivable.net/2013/02/resilience-aint-enough/>



Sandro Calvani is Senior Strategic Planning Advisor at the Mae Fah Luang Foundation (Royal Patronage) in Bangkok, Thailand and former Director of the ASEAN Centre of Excellence on the UN Millennium Development Goals at the Asian Institute of Technology. Professor of Sustainable Development Policy and Humanitarian Affairs at Webster University, Master of Arts in International Relations. Former Director General of UNICRI, Calvani has worked for 35 years as a senior official of the United Nations and Caritas and head of mission in 135 countries in five continents. Calvani has personally written 26 books, 27 books by various authors and over 700 articles on sustainable development, humanitarian aid, public health, convergence of emerging threats to human security.

www.sandrocalvani.it en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sandro_calvani