

PROJEKT: Laudato Si'

'Discourse on the papal encyclical for a great transformation'

Event series and research project

by the **Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU)**
and the **Federation of German Scientists (VDW)**



Summary as of June 2, 2017 (halfway point)

Project start date: December 7, 2015; project end date: April 30, 2018

Head of project: Prof. Dr. Ulrich Bartosch

(Professor of Education, Faculty of Social Work, KU • Chair of the VDW Advisory Board)

Project coordinators: Christian Meier (KU), Till Weyers (VDW)

Project partner: Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam



Project website: www.laudato-si-transformation.de

▪ **The pope's appeal:**

- ❖ '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. [...] Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. [...] Young people demand change.' (LS, 13)
- ❖ '**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.' (LS, 14)
- ❖ 'It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.' (LS, 139)
- ❖ 'Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge.' (LS, 201)

▪ **Laudato Si' at the KU:**

'I will begin by briefly reviewing several aspects of the present ecological crisis, with the aim of drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows.' (LS, 15)

This sentence from the encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (LS) implicitly outlines the role that the KU can and must play in preserving creation and ensuring social justice. As a research location, it is dedicated to producing top-quality research findings. Furthermore, as a unique institution for higher education and research, it can and should combine these activities with ethical and spiritual reflection. It can play a role in ensuring that students and researchers allow themselves to be *'touched deeply'*. Then *'... science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both.'* (LS, 62)

▪ **The project's mission: Background – Content – Aims**

With his encyclical *Laudato Si' – On Care for our Common Home* (Vatican City, June 18, 2015), Pope Francis has provided an incredibly useful resource that can be used as a basis to increase awareness of the issue of sustainability within the Catholic Church and in the wider world, allowing its vital spiritual and political significance to be reevaluated. Science, politics, business, and society are called to lead the discussion, and to consider and develop new paths towards transformation.

The Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KU) and the Federation of German Scientists (VDW) have taken on this challenge. They have made it their mission to study, contextualize, and develop the targets set out in LS through a series of academic

events and a variety of other activities as part of a two-year project. In doing so, the KU and the VDW aim to generate impetus for a 'great transformation' (see, for example, WBGU report 2011) towards sustainable development.

In this project, major statements from the encyclical are discussed in the context of the latest research findings. The areas that it targets are analyzed, debated, and made a part of a critical discourse in dialogue with experts from science, business, politics, the Church, and civil society organizations. The resulting current global challenges are examined and possible solutions for a great transformation towards a more sustainable society are developed.

The KU-VDW project provides an open and critical discussion forum and platforms for exchange. The project team is monitoring and investigating the status and effects of the encyclical on the basis of scientific analysis. The studies being carried out as part of the project focus on interdisciplinary research into sustainability and transformation.

The project's **core formats** and **fields of action** are:

- (1) **Series of events** (congresses, conferences, symposiums)
- (2) **Education** (transformative education/education for sustainable development)
- (3) **Research** (transformative science), documentation, publication

These will be achieved through:

- Dissemination of information, education
- Dialogue, discourse, connections, networking
- Increasing sensitivity, raising awareness, strengthening, stimulation
- Generation of research findings and knowledge of transformation
- Exchange within the KU/VDW, as well as with other regional and international civil society organizations (participation/'third mission')
- Multiplying, catalytic effect and contribution to more sustainable development – within the KU, in the town and the region, nationally and internationally

Project launch on Dec. 7, 2015, with a public lecture on 'Climate Change. Creation in the Anthropocene' by Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Hartmut Graßl (former director of the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology and chairman of the VDW Board of Directors) at the KU's *Dies Academicus*



▪ Core formats, fields of action, and outcomes

❖ Core formats/fields of action 1: Series of academic events (congresses, conferences, symposiums)



Event 1:
'The Encyclical LS and Science' – expert forum 7 as part of the DBU's environmental week; participants included Auxiliary Bishop DDr. Anton Losinger, Prof. Dr. Konrad Raiser, Prof. Dr. Hartmut Graßl, Prof. Dr. Peter Henricke, and KU seminar groups

Berlin, June 8, 2016



Eichstätt, June 14, 2016

Event 2:
'The Encyclical LS and Friedrich Schorlemmer' – *'A Letter from Wittenberg to Rome. Presentation and Discussion of F. Schorlemmer's New Book'* – participants included F. Schorlemmer, Prof. Dr. Engelbert Groß, DDr. Oliver Putz, and Matthias Kiefer; preceded by a press conference

Event 3:
'The Encyclical LS and World Food Supplies, Social Justice' – expert discussion with Dr. Beatrix Tappeser, Dr. Angelika Hilbeck, Wiltrud Rösch-Metzler, Lisa Amon

Eichstätt, June 24, 2016



Potsdam, Sep. 12–14, 2016



Event 4:
'The Encyclical LS as a Catalyst for Societal Transformation?' – International academic workshop by IASS, PIK, KU, and VDW; participants incl. Prof. Dr. K. Töpfer, Prof. Dr. H.-J. Schellnhuber, Prof. Dr. H. Graßl, and Prof. Dr. M. Lawrence

Event 5:
'The Encyclical LS and Concrete Transformation through Bamboo Reforestation' – expert discussion and fundraising for bamboo saplings for the Philippines; participants incl. Bishop Valentin Cabbigat-Dimoc, Prof. Dr. E. Groß, and DDr. O. Putz

Eichstätt, Oct. 17, 2016



Event 6:

'Business in the Service of Life? Economics as Theory and Practice of Eco-social Responsibility', academic symposium with public discussion evening (KU/WFI and Audi Konferenz Center)

**Ingolstadt,
May 12,
2017**



participants included Prof. Dr. E. U. von Weizsäcker

**Eichstätt,
May 16–17,
2017**

**Event 7:
'Environmental Law
under Pressure';**

sustainability
symposium with BUND
Naturschutz in Bayern e. V. and
others; Prof. Dr. Hubert Weiger
(BUND chairman) as keynote speaker;
LS World Café



Outcomes:

- 7 events held with between 50 and 200 participants at each
- Contextualization and discussion of key topics in the encyclical → raising awareness
- Networking with around 50 institutions from science, politics, religion, and civil society (within the KU, in the town and the region, nationally and internationally)
- Increased sensitivity and awareness among event participants (transformative education; potential multipliers) and among the wider public (around 40 reports on the project and its activities in the local, regional, national, and international media in the first 12 months). This is strengthened through documentary videos and transcriptions of presentations, expert discussions, expert interviews, etc., which are published on the project website.

❖ Core formats/fields of action 2: Education (transformative education/education for sustainable development)

→ Seminar courses by Prof. Bartosch and C. Meier at the KU on the main goals of Laudato Si' and the concept of the great transformation (since summer semester 2015); intensive discussion of the major current global challenges



→ Students strongly motivated to act:

- Students participate in LS events, sometimes through field trips
- Students actively involved in events as discussion participants, hosts, and presenters (e.g. at the World Café)
- Background discussions with the speakers at the LS events



Outcomes:

- A total of between 400 and 500 students of Bachelor's and Master's programs in social work participated in the courses in the past 5 semesters
- Challenges of sustainable development discussed with regard to the students' future profession (social work)
- Increased sensitivity and awareness among students; they may act as multipliers in the future



❖ Core formats/fields of action 3: Research (transformative science), documentation, publication



- (1) First research workshops (2016 and 2017, Berlin) on a planned **collaborative research project** involving **KU, VDW, IAASS, PIK**, Ecologic Institute, and BMUB on 'The Role of Religions(s) in Societal Transformation'
- (2) **Doctoral research** linked to the project on the role of transformation agents in change management processes in religious organizations (at the KU; project coordinator Christian Meier) (starting in June 2016)
- (3) **Doctoral research** linked to the project in the field of the history of ideas: which sources/texts is Laudato Si' based on? (at the KU; project coordinator Till Weyers) (starting in June 2016)
- (4) **Book chapter**
Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si' as a Catalyst for Societal Transformation? Critical remarks and presentation of an inspired exemplary project as a driver for sustainability for the Federal Environment Agency/Ecologic Institute (to be published by Springer-Verlag in 2018)



- (5) **Publication of volume 1** of a **series of expert interviews** on the reception, significance, and impact of LS (September 2017)

- (6) **Continuous documentation** of lectures, discussions, research findings, and outcomes of all events through videos, films, transcriptions, photos, reports (academic publications planned), the project website, media



- (7) **International Sustainability Transitions Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, June 19–21, 2017:**

Dialogue session (90 min.) on the topic:

'Laudato Si' – A papal encyclical as driver for transformation towards sustainability?' (convenors: Prof. Bartosch, C. Meier, T. Weyers; external presentation partners: Prof. Graßl, T. Sporer, DDr. O. Putz)

IST 2017

Outcomes:

- Networking in the (inter)national sustainability/transition research community
- Increased visibility of the KU and the VDW in academic discourse on sustainability/transition
- Project team's knowledge, skills, and expertise broadened

■ **Opinions** on the encyclical from the KU/VDW events and interviews:



'It is fantastic! [...] To anyone who sees it [the encyclical]: [...] Hurry up and read it and make it a real issue in our society!' 'I hope the Catholic Church will consider it in even more depth and spread the message to the public.' (Prof. Dr. **Klaus Töpfer**, June 8, 2016)

'The pope has done something sensational with the encyclical Laudato Si': The Church is directly taking in the current state of scientific knowledge and reinforcing it.' (Prof. Dr. **Hartmut Graßl**, June 8, 2016)



'What is said and how it is said is nothing new. But a pope saying it – that is sensational!' (Prof. Dr. **Peter Hennicke**, June 8, 2016)

'Laudato Si' provides the ideal basis for further work at the KU. It gives momentum to the many activities and initiatives at the University. In addition, the series of events as part of the Laudato Si' project has brought together various stakeholders from the University and from Eichstätt and the surrounding area and provided them with networking opportunities.' (Prof. Dr. **Ingrid Hemmer**, KU sustainable development coordinator, at the LS symposium on May 17, 2017)

