



PONTIFICIA  
UNIVERSITÀ  
GREGORIANA

Faculty of Social Science  
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## **International Conference on**

### *Transitioning to Integral Ecology?*

### *Transdisciplinary Approaches for the Grounding and Implementation of a Holistic Worldview*

Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, 6-8 June 2022

## **Origin and Objectives of the Event**

The title of the conference highlights two major notions: "integral ecology" and "transdisciplinarity". We decided to bring these two concerns together after a series of online meetings held in 2020-21, organized by the *Laudato Si' Observatory* (LSO), of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, representatives of the German Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (KUEI), initially led by Professor Ulrich Bartosch, the Federation of German Scientists, and "The Club of Rome". Several academics from University of Passau joined the process when prof. Bartosch became president of that university. The online meetings served to build momentum for an international conference, which had to be postponed repeatedly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the pandemic showed us the importance of including holistic thinking in our approach to the ecological crisis and transition.

During our two-year online process, participants came from a diversity of backgrounds, in natural sciences, social sciences, philosophy, and theology. We realized that the collaboration of academics from different disciplines is at once highly important, stimulating, and difficult. Any progress in coming to joint conclusions takes time. This reminded us of a recent text by Pope Francis which calls academics to a style of reflection blending interdisciplinarity with a deeper, more holistic and more challenging form of academic dialogue which he calls transdisciplinarity (or "cross-disciplinarity", in some translations). We understand the latter concept to refer to a broader "unity of knowledge" towards which each distinct academic discipline makes its contribution (Pope Francis, *Veritatis*

*Gaudium*, Introduction, paragraph 4.) Such a notion of transdisciplinarity lies at the heart of this conference.

In the main title of the conference, we privilege the notion of “integral ecology”, following the terminology of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si’*. However, we recognize that ecological debate is producing a move toward what the subtitle calls a “holistic worldview” that employs a variety of vocabularies. This is evident, for instance, when The Club of Rome speaks of “New Enlightenment” (in the publication *Come On!*), or in documents such as the UN Agenda 2030 (which refer to “Sustainable Development Goals”), and in those used in the implementation of the 2015 COP 21 Paris Agreement. We believe that the transition toward a culture and practice of integral ecology is already underway in many parts of the world, but we believe that this needs to be assisted by further transdisciplinary reflection.

This conference is as interested in modelling a process of reflection as in arriving at concrete proposals; nevertheless, we hope to produce a publication on the basis of some of the presentations. In the conference’s three afternoon sessions, prominence is given to one kind of academic discipline in each afternoon: natural sciences; social sciences; and philosophy/theology. In each afternoon, we will first listen to speakers coming from the disciplines being featured. Then, in two panel discussions, we welcome other perspectives on the topic from scholars pertaining to other disciplines.

The structure of each afternoon has two further characteristics. The first relates to the terms “grounding” and “implementation” in our subtitle. Each afternoon, we devote one panel to the question of “grounding” the notion of integral ecology, and another to that of its “implementation”. The questions we will ask in the first panel are, for instance: Which are the key notions that our disciplines can contribute to anchor the debate on “integral ecology”? What are the presuppositions we need to share in order to orient our individual disciplines towards a transdisciplinary outcome? What method need we use to achieve this? The second panel (i. e. implementation) involves asking ourselves how integral ecology is being (or can be) realized in one or other field of endeavour. We explore ways in which, also here, a transdisciplinary perspective is important.

The second characteristic of our conference method is that at the end of each afternoon, we offer a series of “best practices” of the implementation of integral ecology, providing a practical complement to the more academic discussions that precede them. Workshops with additional presentations and reflections are scheduled for the morning.