

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY AND MEDIA IN *LAUDATO SI*: SAVING PLANET THROUGH MEDIA

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Abstract

‘Praised Be: On the Care of Our Common Home’ (Laudato Si)¹ is an encyclical letter issued by Pope Francis in 2015, focusing on environmental and ecological concerns from a moral and religious perspective while calling for a new ecological consciousness and sense of interconnectedness. The encyclical is variously lauded for reframing the environmental discourse on the critique of capitalism and consumerism,² for birthing ecological spirituality paving the way for an evolution of Catholic Social Teaching,³ for being rich in interfaith perspectives thereby fostering interreligious dialogue and cooperation on environmental issues,⁴ for using gender-inclusive language on environmental care,⁵ and for its alignment with the critique of overly optimistic environmental narratives.⁶ LS calls for dialogue with the environment at all levels of decision-making, politics, economy, religion and science. Less emphasized or neglected in scholarly commentaries is the role of the media in LS. Using the media ecological approach, this paper explores the power of the media both as a medium and message in saving the environment.

Introduction

Laudato Si's definition of ecology as the relationship between the living organism and the environment⁷ and of the environment as the relationship between nature and the society that lives in it⁸ provides insights into the interconnectedness of all things and the danger of

¹ Pope Francis, ‘Laudato Si’: Our Care for Our Common Home,’ 24 May 2015, <http://www.audatosi.com>. Henceforth, *Laudato Si* will be referred to as LS

² Naomi Klein ‘Naomi Klein: To change everything, we need everyone’ <https://www.lastampa.it/vatican-insider/en/2015/07/01/news/naomi-klein-to-change-everything-we-need-everyone-1.35237514/>. Giles Fraser “Pope Francis is a bot like Naomi Klein in cassock” <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2015/jun/19/pope-francis-bit-like-naomi-klein-cassock>. Naomi Klein: “This Changes Everything” <https://thischangeseverything.org/watch-naomis-press-statement-at-the-vatican/>

³ Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian Theologian “In Dialogue with Leonardo Boff – Reflections on *Laudato Si*’ in International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture” <https://www.issrnc.org/2020/05/16/leonardo-boff-laudato-si/>

⁴ Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim “**Integrating Ecology and Justice: The Papal Encyclical**” *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, September 2016, Vol. 91, No. 3

⁵ Confer the views of the theologian Elizabeth Johnson in McCartin, James P. (2016) ‘A Theologian Looks at “Laudato Si”: An Interview with Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., by James P. McCartin,” *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 49, Article 48. Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol49/iss1/48>

⁶ Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), Timothy Morton, *Humankind: Solidarity with Non-Human People* (London: Verso Books, 2017). Timothy Morton, „*Spectral Depth*” in [Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology](#) Volume 22 (2018): Issue 1 (12 Mar 2018), pp 1-10 in Print ISSN: 1363-5247.

⁷ LS. No. 130.

⁸ LS No. 139

disrupting the order in the environment. Integral ecology as espoused by LS includes all of the environmental, economic, social, cultural and daily life ecology and how a disbalance in this ecosystem affects other members. The growing understanding of this network of connection and disruption within the ecosystem has awakened a discussion on the connection between environmental degradation and the current climate change. The growing awareness provides the motivation for extending the discussion on environmental rescue to media ecology. Why should integral ecology matter and what contributions can media ecology bring to the theme of the environment and climate change? While we return later to the latter, it is good to answer the former by saying that integral ecology matters because the environment matters. We illustrate why the environment matters at least to me with four reasons.

Firstly, some of us with deep roots in media hermeneutics can sometimes be helplessly configured to view the world from the prism of the interconnectedness of things, and how a minute invention alters all existing orders. When this view of media ecology is stretched an inch into integral ecology, we may be inclined to exaggerate the dangers we face if we refuse to hear the cry of the environment. Again, even if we lack all the scientific instruments to measure them accurately, we are all living witnesses to the changes- and not good ones for that matter- that have been occurring in our environment. While the causes of these changes are unexplainable to us as laymen, we can attest that this is no longer the world we were born into although it is the world in which we live,⁹ because we feel something we cannot explain. Thirdly, there exists abundant literature on environmental determinism and scientists have over the centuries written about the connection between the environment and the disparity in religions, economy, politics, culture, and social life of man across the world. Finally, in acknowledging the contributions of scientists, philosophers, theologians, thinkers, and civil groups¹⁰ on the themes of the environment, Pope Francis has integrated ecological discourse with spirituality and the social teaching of the church while exposing the interconnectedness of all things. This interconnectedness calls our attention to the centrality of the environment and why it matters that we not only talk about the phenomenon of climate change but act swiftly. Yes, the environment matters; and in rescuing it no discipline should stand aloof, not even the media.

Environment: Why does it matter?

If we have learned anything from reading LS, it is that things are connected in a web where we cannot escape the wrath of unsettling the harmony in our ecosystem. When LS connects the cries of the earth to the cries of the poor,¹¹ it exposes the connection between the environment and man's economic, cultural, and social conditions.

In scholarship, there exist profound attempts by scholars to connect the environment, geography and social well-being of man. Outstanding among them are two scholars who have done exhaustive analyses of the interconnectedness of this which Pope Francis highlighted in LS. Firstly, in dismantling racist theories of human history that reinforce racial racial superiority, an evolutionary biologist, Jared Diamond in 'Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies,'¹² tied differences between people to the environment. He examines the factors that have contributed to the unequal distribution of wealth and power among different societies throughout history. In Diamond's argument, geographic and environmental factors are the primary drivers of societal development, rather than inherent racial or cultural superiority.

⁹ Gary Krug, *Communication, Technology and Cultural Change* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), xi.

¹⁰ LS No. 7

¹¹ LS No. 47

¹² Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel- The Fates of Human Society* (Norton & Company: 2017)

Diamond outlined certain geographic and environmental factors such as the availability of domesticable plants and animals and chronicled how they influenced the development of agriculture. The presence of suitable plants and animals for domestication allowed some societies to transition from a nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settled agriculture. This transition, in turn, led to the development of complex societies, surplus food production, and population growth.

While connecting this to poverty, Diamond hinted that not all regions of the world have the same advantages regarding domesticable plants and animals. Some areas, such as the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East and parts of Asia, had a head start in the development of agriculture due to the presence of suitable crops and animals. This agricultural advantage, according to Diamond, set the stage for the development of advanced societies in these regions. In contrast, regions like Australia and parts of sub-Saharan Africa had fewer domesticable plants and animals, which hindered the development of agriculture and complex societies. Diamond argues that these geographic and environmental differences, rather than any inherent cultural or racial inferiority, explain the disparities in wealth and power between different societies.

Diamond through this showed the strong tie between the environment and development and opined that poverty and societal development are largely shaped by environmental and geographic factors. He emphasizes the importance of understanding these factors to explain why some societies have historically been more successful in achieving prosperity and technological advancement while others have struggled to do so. Diamond's work challenges traditional notions of racial or cultural superiority as the primary drivers of societal success. Instead, it highlights the role of geography, agriculture, and environmental factors in shaping human history.

A second author who has devoted time to the topic of the environment and development is David Saul Landes, a professor of Economics and history at Harvard University. After undertaking a holistic study of the economic development of many nations for nearly five decades, Landes observed a pattern that explains the differences among peoples. In 'The Wealth and Poverty of Nations- Why Some So Rich and Others So Poor,'¹³ Landes explores the historical factors that have contributed to the economic disparities between different countries and regions. On geographic determinism, Landes discusses how geography and the natural environment have played a significant role in shaping the economic fortunes of nations. He argues that regions with favourable geographic conditions, such as fertile land, navigable rivers, and access to natural resources, had a head start in terms of economic development. This head start favoured agricultural productivity which for Landes is the foundation of economic development. This is because regions with fertile soil and a climate suitable for agriculture were more likely to develop surplus food production, which in turn allowed for the growth of urban centers, trade, and industry. Resource endowments like valuable natural resources, such as minerals, timber, and waterways, are key also for Landes key factors can mar or make a people depending on its utilisation.

Again, Landes explores environmental challenges such as diseases, climate variations, and natural disasters, which have impacted societies' ability to generate wealth and reduce poverty. For example, regions with high disease burdens may struggle to maintain a productive workforce and economic stability. Landes also talks of technological adaptation arguing that societies that were able to adapt to their environmental challenges through technological innovations and organizational changes were more likely to escape poverty and achieve economic prosperity. While 'The Wealth and Poverty of Nations' covers a wide range of factors contributing to economic development and disparities, the author acknowledges the

¹³ David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Are Some So Rich and Others So Poor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998) 544pp

significance of the natural environment and geographic conditions in shaping the economic trajectories of different nations. He suggests that environmental factors can both facilitate and hinder a nation's path towards prosperity or poverty.

This suggestion of Landes has become clear in our time when general environmental factor poses an Armageddon to this generation. effect generated by industrial development of the society has become a danger to human society and it is appearing in areas of climate change. This is the topic that the Holy Father would take up in *Laudato Si*.

Other scholars have written extensively on the interrelated topics of the environment, development, and poverty. A German-British statistician and economist, Ernst Friedrich Schumacher argues for the importance of sustainable, small-scale, and appropriate technologies in addressing poverty and environmental issues. He emphasizes the need to prioritize human well-being over relentless economic growth.¹⁴ Some scholars have compared living in an unhealthy environment to poverty. For an Indian economist and philosopher, Amartya Sen, whose capability approach focuses on expanding individual capabilities and freedoms as the primary goal of development, poverty is not just about income but also about the ability to lead a fulfilling life, which includes a healthy environment.¹⁵ The position equates the current world to a world descending in poverty. The connection between poverty and the environment is also evident in the work of Elinor Ostrom, an American political scientist and political economist. Ostrom emphasizes the importance of local, community-based management of common resources (like forests and fisheries) as a means to achieve sustainable development and reduce poverty.¹⁶

Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan political activist and a Nobel laureate, emphasizes the critical link between environmental conservation and poverty reduction. She founded the Green Belt Movement, which promoted tree planting and women's empowerment in Kenya.¹⁷ While primarily focused on income inequality, a French economist and professor, Thomas Piketty's work highlights the potential for wealth disparities to exacerbate poverty and environmental degradation. He advocates for progressive taxation and wealth redistribution.¹⁸ Naomi Klein, a Canadian writer and social activist, argues that addressing climate change necessitates a fundamental shift away from unfettered capitalism, which she sees as a root cause of environmental destruction and social inequality.¹⁹ For Kate Raworth, an English economist who introduced the concept of the "doughnut economy," which balances social and environmental needs, economic development should operate within the ecological boundaries of the planet while ensuring basic human needs are met.²⁰ In this line, an anthropologist, Jason Hickel, critiques the conventional development narrative and argues for rethinking global economic systems. He contends that the current development model perpetuates poverty in the Global South while benefiting the Global North.²¹ It is for this reason that an American economist and

¹⁴ Ernst Friedrich Schumacher 'Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered' (New York: Harper & Row, 1973)

¹⁵ Amartya Sen 'Development as Freedom' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)5pp.

¹⁶ Elinor Ostrom in 'Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, Online publication date: June 2012, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511807763>)280pp.

¹⁷ Wangari Maathai 'Unbowed: A Memoir' (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006)352pp

¹⁸ Thomas Piketty 'Capital in the Twenty-First Century.' Published in French as *Le Capital au XXIe siècle* in 2013 and translated into English by Arthur Goldhammer in 2014 (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2014)816pp

¹⁹ Naomi Klein 'This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate' (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014)' 576pp

²⁰ Kate Raworth 'Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist' (Manhattan: Random House Business, 2017) 384pp

²¹ Jason Hickel 'The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions' (London: Heinemann, 2017) 368pp

academic, Jeffrey Sachs, argues that extreme poverty can only be eradicated through a combination of targeted aid, investments in health and education, and sustainable development.²²

Our authors have demonstrated no doubt the interconnectedness of all things- how what happens in our environment affects man and vice versa. However, most of the discussions centered on the political, and socio-economic environment to the ignorance or neglect of the media environment, which in our opinion is part of the integral ecology not in terms of organisms, but as unseen but powerful forces that sustain hegemony.

Between Integral and Media Ecology

In the introductory part of this work, we queried if the environment matters and why the media should be dragged into environmental discourse. To this latter question, we now return to. While the media is not a natural environment, it is part of the environment and it influences and is influenced also by the environment. Media is considered an environment in various ways, especially in the context of modern communication and information technologies. As a multifaceted environment, it impacts various aspects of our lives, from our culture and society to our personal experiences and understanding of the world. Its influence can be profound, and it is ever-evolving with technological advancements and changes in the media landscape. There are many ways of considering the media environment.

Firstly, the media whether traditional forms like newspapers, television, and radio, as or digital platforms like websites, social media, and streaming services creates an information ecosystem that shapes how people receive, perceive, and interact with information. In this way, the media influences public opinion, culture, and societal norms in much the same way that physical environments affect people's behavior and perceptions. Again, With the invention of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), the media has proven its capacity to entirely create immersive and interactive environments known as virtual environments. These environments which are experienced as if they were real, impact our senses and emotions. Thirdly, media plays a significant role in shaping cultural environments. Through books, movies, music, and other forms of creative content, media helps establish and reinforce cultural norms, values, and identity.

Related to the view of the media as an information and virtual environment, is the understanding of the media as a social environment since its social media platforms have become a part of many people's daily lives. They create online social environments where people connect, communicate, and share information. These environments influence social interactions and can lead to the formation of digital communities and subcultures. Furthermore, there is also the sense of viewing the media as a political environment where democracy is made or marred. It is a space where political ideologies and propaganda are disseminated thereby affecting public discourse and policy-making. As an economic environment, the media is a significant economic force, with businesses, advertising, and revenue models that influence the economic environment. Changes in the media landscape can have far-reaching economic impacts.

Moreover, there could also be a way of talking about the media as a psychological environment because of the way they influence our emotions, attitudes, and perceptions. It can create a sense of presence, impact our moods, and even affect our mental well-being. Media could also be seen as a global environment because it connects people across borders and cultures, making the world more interconnected. This global environment has implications for diplomacy, international relations, and the spread of ideas and values. Finally, media also plays a role in shaping our understanding of the physical environment. It can influence public

²² Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York, Penguin Group, 2005) 416pp.

perception and awareness of environmental problems leading to changes in behaviour and policies. This is the aspect of environmental awareness.

It is through the quest for a holistic understanding of the media as both hardware and software that media ecology emerged as a communication theory and interdisciplinary field of study that examines the complex relationship between media, technology, communication, and the broader sociocultural environment. It was developed by Marshall McLuhan, Neil Postman,²³ and other scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. Media ecology focuses on how different communication technologies and mediums shape human perception, culture, and society, emphasizing the interconnectedness between media and their surrounding environment by the way they coexist and interact with one another, creating a complex ecosystem

While understanding media as an environment, media ecology sees media as not just tools or conduits for information but environments that envelop and immerse us. The famous phrase, the medium is the message, coined by Marshall McLuhan, suggests that the form and characteristics of a medium have a more significant impact on individuals and society than the content it conveys.²⁴ As a theoretical framework, media ecology views media as dynamic and interrelated components of a larger cultural and technological environment. It encourages critical examination of how media shape our perceptions, values, and social interactions, and how they, in turn, are influenced by the broader cultural and technological context. McLuhan's idea of the "global village" portrays how electronic media, such as television and the internet, creates a sense of interconnectedness among people worldwide, breaking down geographical barriers and influencing how we perceive distance and communication.

Neil Postman introduced a tetrad, a framework for analyzing the effects of a medium on society,²⁵ which derives from McLuhan's four laws of media: enhancement, obsolescence, retrieval, and reversal.²⁶ These four dimensions help us understand how a medium changes the way we perceive the world and ourselves. In the context of media ecology, media literacy is crucial because it allows individuals to understand the biases, affordances, and implications of different media. It empowers people to navigate and critically engage with various forms of communication. Media ecologists often explore the concept of technological determinism, which suggests that technologies have a deterministic impact on society, shaping human behaviour and culture. Media ecology often employs ecological metaphors to describe the interdependence and balance within media systems. Changes in one part of the media ecosystem can have cascading effects throughout the whole system.

Integral Ecology and *Laudato Si*

In *Laudato Si*, hence known as LS, Pope Francis provides a comprehensive understanding of the environment from a Catholic perspective, inverting the discussion on poverty by prioritising the environment as a way to safeguard man and the environment too, and adding integral ecology to the church's social teaching.²⁷ Comparing care for the planet to the call to be Good Samaritans to the wounded traveller, Pope Francis recommends that we should not only play the Good Samaritan to a traveller who fell to bandit attacks on his way to Jericho, but should rise to ensure that all roads leading from Jerusalem to Jericho are made safe so that no traveller

²³ Postman Neil, *Technopoly* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 18.

²⁴ Read Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (San Francisco: HardWired, 1996). Here McLuhan argues against the convention that it is how the media are used that matters insisting the content of a media is like a juicy piece of meat carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind meaning that media has the power to shape and cannot be judged solely based on its use

²⁵ Neil, *Technopoly*, 18.

²⁶ Marshal McLuhan and Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988)

²⁷ Pope Francis *Laudato Si* (LS No. 15)

would have to fall to bandit attacks. In this way, Pope charges the world not only to see the effects of climate change as cries of Mother Earth for the injury we have inflicted on her²⁸ but actively respond to root causes and avoid actions by committing to actions that will revise the trend and save the planet, our common home.²⁹ What makes LS so special?

Firstly, LS takes seriously the issue of integral ecology and emphasizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of creation, including human beings, nature, and the environment. It argues for an "integral ecology" that recognizes the interdependence between social, economic, and environmental issues. It says that a true ecological approach must also be a social approach such that questions of justice should be an integral part of the debates on the environment. This paves the way for us to hear 'both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.'³⁰

Consequently, LS adopts a human-centered approach by acknowledging the intrinsic value of every human being and their right to live in a healthy environment. It emphasizes that environmental degradation, an effect of 'rapidification',³¹ disproportionately affects the poor and vulnerable, calling for honesty, justice and solidarity in addressing ecological concerns.³²

With this LS wades into the topic of stewardship and responsibility and in promoting the concept, emphasizes our responsibility to care for and protect the Earth.³³ It criticizes an exploitative attitude towards nature and calls for responsible management of resources to ensure sustainability for future generations.

Consequently, the encyclical recognizes climate change as a global problem with serious consequences³⁴ caused primarily by human activity like pollution, waste and throwaway culture.³⁵ It urges immediate action to mitigate its effects, highlighting the moral obligation to protect the planet and future generations from its consequences. Again, while acknowledging the benefits of technological advancements,³⁶LS warns against their indiscriminate use without considering their impact on ecosystems and human well-being.³⁷

It calls for a more ethical approach to technology that prioritizes sustainable development. The encyclical critiques consumerism and a culture of waste that leads to excessive consumption and disposal of goods.³⁸ It advocates for simpler lifestyles that prioritize quality over quantity, adopting a circular model³⁹ that reduces waste generation and promotes sustainable consumption patterns. On biodiversity conservation, LS stresses the importance of preserving biodiversity as it plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological harmony. It highlights the need to protect ecosystems, endangered species, and fragile habitats from further destruction.⁴⁰

In this way, LS presents a holistic approach to the environment, emphasizing the moral and ethical dimensions of ecological issues and how the environment connects to social issues while calling for a collective response from individuals, communities, governments, and international organizations to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable development. It is interesting how LS adopts the same integration in weaving many disciplines

²⁸ LS No. 2

²⁹ Ls No.13

³⁰ LS No. 49

³¹ Rapidification is used to describe the globalisation of technological pattern. Confer LS No. 18, Nos. 106-109

³² LS No. 61.

³³ LS No. 32-36.

³⁴ LS No. 25

³⁵ LS No. 20-23.

³⁶ LS No. 102-103

³⁷ LS No. 46, 104-105.

³⁸ LS No. 20-22.

³⁹ LS No. 22

⁴⁰ LS No. 32.

into a book. Two theological themes, namely, creation theology and social justice emerge in LS. In creation theology, LS emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation and placing emphasis on the intrinsic value of the environment. There is also the encyclical's strong emphasis on social justice, linking care for the environment with concern for the poor and vulnerable, viewing it as a call for a more just and equitable global society. In Environmental science, LS discusses ecological crisis and interconnectedness. It recognises the severity of the ecological crisis and calls for action to address issues such as climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Also, it emphasizes the ecological interconnectedness and the importance of adopting an ecological perspective in environmental policies and practices. In ethics, LS promotes the concept of "integral ecology," which involves recognizing the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic factors as a way of guiding ethical decision-making in complex environmental issues, using the common good as a guiding principle for addressing environmental challenges. In social science and economics, LS critiques consumerism and the uncritical use of technology as contributory factors to environmental degradation and social inequality. Analyzed in the context of economic systems, LS discusses the challenges of reconciling the pursuit of economic growth with environmental sustainability and social justice. On interreligious engagement, LS pushes for an effort to engage with other religious traditions on environmental issues. On political and policy analysis, LS highlights how debates and actions related to climate change and sustainable development can be influenced.

Media and Laudato Si

In the beginning, we queried why the media should be dragged into a discussion on the environment. To answer this question, we need to remark that LS has already dragged the media into its proposal for an integral ecology. As one would believe, LS did not drag the media into the discourse on the environment out of naivety, but from a perfect understanding of the media and how it interacts with integral ecology in two-edged sword functions.

Let us look at the negative effects of the interaction highlighted in the document. While "Laudato Si" primarily addresses issues related to the environment from a religious and ethical perspective, *LS frowns at the media and the digital world for their omnipresence fearing that their "influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously."*⁴¹ LS criticises the digital media for flooding the social space with data thereby polluting the mind. 'True wisdom' it says should be the 'fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution.' It accuses the internet of replacing relationships with others and birthing 'contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature.'⁴²

'Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise.'⁴³

⁴¹ LS No. 47.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

When LS talks about economic powers justifying screwed global order which elevates financial gains and ignores human dignity and the environment,⁴⁴ it indirectly indicts the media narratives that support the order. LS frowns at the usual attempts to deny wrongdoings by these powers and of promoting distractions to ‘constantly dull our consciousness of just how limited and finite our world really is’.⁴⁵ The action and inactions of the media whose narratives are meant to support the global order according to LS make our fragile environment defenceless. LS fears that such complacency and cheerful recklessness in areas where bold decisions should have been promoted would do us no good but rather promote destructive lifestyles and models of production and consumption.⁴⁶ On the individual levels, LS fears that by deepening miserable discontent with interpersonal relations, the media creates room for dangerous feelings of isolation from global issues.⁴⁷

On the positive side, LS does acknowledge the role of media and communication in the fight against climate change and environmental issues thereby providing several insights into the media's role in this context. Firstly, while emphasizing the importance of education and awareness-raising about environmental issues, LS acknowledges the media’s role in educating the public about the scientific, ethical, and moral dimensions of climate change and environmental degradation. It sees the media as a powerful tool for disseminating knowledge and information. Secondly, while talking about responsibility and accountability, LS suggests that media organizations have a responsibility to provide accurate and balanced coverage of environmental issues. It, therefore, advises the media not to be swayed by economic or political interests but to hold both individuals and institutions accountable for their environmental actions or inactions. Again, as an instrument for advocacy and mobilisation, LS encourages the media to live up to its status as a platform for advocacy and mobilization. This means giving a voice to those who are affected by environmental injustices and being a catalyst for collective action. The media can help raise awareness, promote environmental initiatives, and influence public opinion and policy decisions.

Furthermore, while highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental and social issues, LS suggests that the media should help people understand how environmental problems are linked to issues such as poverty, inequality, and human suffering. Pope Francis opines: ‘Efforts need to be made to help these media become sources of new cultural progress for humanity and not a threat to our deepest riches.’⁴⁸ What this means is that the media has the responsibility to simplify the complex relationships between ecological and social challenges through its educational programs and promote a global dialogue on environmental issues suggested by LS by becoming a platform for discussions and debates on climate change, sustainable development, and other ecological concerns. This can blur cultural and geographic divides that arise in the topic. In calling for a deeper ethical and spiritual reflection on humanity's relationship with the environment, the media can foster this reflection by providing space for discussions on the moral and spiritual dimensions of ecological stewardship.

Saving the Planet Through Media

Clearly, rhetoric has been a prop in the manipulation of perception. The feeling of safety and risk is a speech act and it is a function of structure, design, and performance demonstrated in narrative which creates consciousness to act or withdraw. Structurally, narratives are used to create a sense of risk or safety by a special design that supports the intention. Intentional

⁴⁴ LS No. 56

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ LS No. 59.

⁴⁷ LS No. 47

⁴⁸ LS No. 47.

linguistic expressions are used in socio-architectural design and fashion to create a feeling of security, freedom, or otherwise. This design appears in performance aimed to alter perception using rhetoric like ‘Keep Off, Military Control’, and ‘Danger’ which arouse a particular consciousness.

For this reason, securitisation or de-securitisation is more of a speech act than of a weapon amassment or renunciation. Alluding to this, the emeritus professor of International Relations, Barry Buzan, says that securitisation is an outcome of designating an existential threat as well as the acceptance of the designation by a large audience. Buzan explains that in institutionalized securitisation, coercion or acceptance is not needed since the message is implicitly assumed in rhetoric that prioritizes the area of interest, for example, security.⁴⁹

This ecological understanding of the media which uses a holistic approach inclines us to explore the power of the media in saving our environment and in the spirit of media ecology, to group literature, digital or analogue, under a book technology and to a large extent view the encyclical *Laudato Si* itself as a media contribution to saving our planet. There are two ways the media can contribute to the environmental discourse, namely, by the nature of the media themselves and by their content.

By its very nature, we understand from McLuhan that the medium is the message which means that the nature of a medium itself is more powerful than its content since the medium is not a purveyor but a message on its own. In this way, McLuhan entrenched the non-neutrality of a medium in media ecology stressing every media carries a hidden narrative.⁵⁰ With computer coding now commonplace, we can see how certain ideologies are translated with algorithms. Writing on how technology especially informational technologies alters our perception of reality, Stephen Monsma, a professor of political science, writes that “any technological object...embodies decisions to develop one kind of knowledge and not another, to use certain resources and not others, to use energy in a certain form and quantity.”⁵¹ In saving the planet, therefore, the nature of our media has to be considered. This may suggest the adoption of environmentally friendly media and abandoning the media whose productions compromise our environment. It may be a case of reviewing how books and tablets are produced and deciding which of the two compromises our environment. It is also a call to redesign our everyday media in ways to incorporate rhetoric that supports the current environmental discourse so as to create consciousness for every user. The media is understood here in its holistic approach already noted.

Secondly, we take an example from the LS which as a booklet is both an informational medium and a narrative. It is a media in the sense of a book technology. It is a narrative because its informational content supports the cause of saving the environment. It is typical in this area of creating environmental care narratives that the function of the media stands out. Just as LS has intensified discussion on the environment, the media can take the narratives in its content and through there change people’s negative perception of climate change. The power of the media in agenda-setting theory is a fact well noted. Bringing this role into the current debate will securitise the planet and pave the way for the future where everyone is a key player in saving the planet. The media has a significant role in raising awareness, educating the public, advocating for environmental issues, and fostering a global dialogue on climate change and environmental challenges. This can be done when the media sticks not only to conveying information from relevant physical sciences on the environment but also contributing to the ethical and moral dimension of environmental stewardship.

⁴⁹Barry Buzman, “Rethinking Security after the Cold War.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 32. 1(1997), 5-28, 14.

⁵⁰ Confer Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962)

⁵¹Stephen V. Monsma, ed., *Responsible Technology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 23.

It is precisely in those areas that the media can contribute to rescuing the environment.

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