

Editorial

Human Development and the Future of the Earth

This thematic issue on human development and the future of the Earth critically reflects on the concept of human development and human society, which has long been an unquestioned part of Western culture, but which has been showing serious cracks for several decades – especially in its most reckless form. In this concept, man is seen as the one who, on the basis of often problematic criteria, sovereignly and self-centredly determines what is or is not desirable in reality. He decides what is considered development, and sets and triggers processes. Development is supposed to mean several things: permanent growth; the accumulation of disposable knowledge, material goods and wealth; ever-increasing efficiency in all possible and hardly imaginable areas; and attainable happiness as an entitlement and an achievement. But it is precisely the self-evidence of these assumptions that is being shattered today. As a theoretical concept based on Enlightenment ideas, development was first massively challenged by some Western intellectuals – especially philosophers and artists – in response to two world wars fought within a civilisation espousing ideas of reason and progress. It was technological sophistication put at the service of ideological rampage and wanton destruction – a slap in the face of an idealised future for man on planet Earth. The next shock came with the ecological question, awakened by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). Against the backdrop of the subsequently nascent and no longer unstoppable environmental movement, concepts such as growth, development, progress, or well-being are fundamentally relativised. The flip side of technological processes is perceived, and voices calling for a non-anthropocentric optic are growing. The ecological question is turning out not to be an isolated issue for a few specialists, but one that affects nature and the lives of people on the planet as one large complex ecosystem. Humanity is gradually becoming aware of the interconnectedness of all the sub-systems and their interdependent dynamics. Human development and the future of the Earth can henceforth only be adequately considered in the context of three aspects: social, environmental, and economic. It is therefore an interdisciplinary issue in which the knowledge and reflection of the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences are integrally linked. The present issue of *Caritas et veritas* opens with an interview with the environmental anthropologist Vojtěch Pelikán on sustainability, development, justice, and environmental grief. The thematic section contains five studies. In the first, three authors (Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi, Timothy Opeyemi Yayi, Tosin Success Abolaji) describe and reflect on the role of the church in using information and communication technology in promoting regional peace and security in Nigeria. Locally situated issues outline the theme of development through the social and political lens of global security, which is one of the basic conditions for its realisation. The authors of the second study (Zdeňka Dohnalová, Iveta Zelenková) present an interesting concept of volunteering by university students in the Czech Republic as a possible path to sustainability. It shows the importance of any social and environmental 'grassroots initiative', which – unlike legislative directives – has a dynamic potential to change the mindset and specific attitudes of the majority society. The third study

(Dana Jakšičová) explores whether and how persons living a consecrated lifestyle take seriously contemporary environmental and social challenges in the context of Christian theology and what their readiness is to accept the major cultural changes associated with them. This interesting probe reflects the differences between 'Western' and 'Eastern' mentalities and shows the difficulty of the paradigmatic transition of which we are all part. The last two contributions are purely theoretical reflections. The study dealing with the status of nature in the so-called Anthropocene (Lucie Kolářová) reflects on the question of nature's autonomy as well as the complexity of the ongoing ecological crisis in the face of the limits of narrowly specialised scientific discourse. The text aims to inspire a discerning work with environmental issues, as does the latest thematic study. In it, the author (Michael Forest) presents and analyses two proposed approaches to the environmental crisis, showing that the future lies neither in an idealised return to a technology-free state of primitiveness nor in techno-futuristic optimism under the unchanged inertia of the capitalist economy. *Varia* offers two contributions from a collective of authors – one on the transformation of agape love values in theology students (G. P. Harianto, Ester Widiyaningtyas, Urbanus Sukri, Desire Karo Karo, Victoria Woen, David Ming) and the other on the multidimensional scales of sources of social support in the MSPSS questionnaire (Katarína Šiňanská, Magdaléna Hovanová, Lucia Tóthová). Two relevant reviews are also included at the end of the issue.

Finally, I add a small update to our topic. In early spring 2024, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) voted on whether the Anthropocene should become a formal epoch in the geological record of the Earth. The most competent of stratigraphy experts opposed. However, the present thematic issue can also be read as a subtle reminder that by not recognising the formal concept we have by no means gotten rid of the content that this imprecise term denotes. And it does not change the seriousness of human responsibility for the state of the planet.

I wish you stimulating reading!

Lucie Kolářová
co-editor of the Issue