

Chapter 10

Integral Ecology as a Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm Towards Destination Conscience. Fostering a More Respectful Interaction of Human and Non-Human Creatures

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Abstract

In this world of complexity, disruption, multi-layered crises and insecurity, people seek orientation, stability and meaning. This desire exists in everyday life, in working environments and even more in vacation time. Therefore, the way we see the world and how we interact with each other and with nature should also be reflected by tourist destinations. ‘Destination Conscience’ seems to be a promising conception that offers the desired contemporary design of destination realities and travel experiences. Accordingly, destinations and their products should be characterised by authenticity, meaning, sensitivity and humaneness on all levels. In this chapter, the concept of ‘integral ecology’ as a holistic worldview and new paradigm is presented. Integral ecology can be a source of perception and wisdom that enriches the ‘conscience’ of a destination and all its actors. Hence, this chapter addresses the question of how integral ecology can contribute to Destination Conscience. The essay uses the methods of literature review, application, transfer and case study.

Firstly, the concept of integral ecology will be presented. In the second part, this worldview will be applied to destinations. The enrichment of

Destination Conscience, 111–126



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Destination Conscience by the principles of integral ecology can manifest in the destination's self-image and in the interaction in business relations and business actions. It can find expression in the operational management, organisation and development of a destination and in the design of the touristic services and products. In the third part, the case study of a Catholic monastery in the Altmühltal will be presented for further illustration.

Keywords: Sustainability; integral ecology; transformation; religions; spirituality; worldviews

Introduction

In a time of multi-layered crises, insecurity and complexity, the attitudes of sensitivity and humanness are gaining in importance. This goes for all human interactions, but especially for tourist destinations as networks of actors, attractions and experiences, as they provide the preconditions for vacations – the ‘most important days of the year’ for many people. In this context, vacations should not only give people recovery, deceleration, respectful treatment and increased appreciation: given that vacations can be exempt from everyday constraints, they should also offer the setting to satisfy people's search for meaning and purpose. To achieve this, destinations should give their visitors the possibility to truly experience the area they visit with authentic and in-depth touristic offers, and, especially, the opportunity to reflect on themselves, who they are and what their role in the world could be. From this can emerge that they feel resonance, that they feel (re-)connected to the world and to their fellow human beings, and that they recognise what is essential in life and what their role in the world is.

To take the need of sensitivity and humanness and the outlined requirements demanded from a destination into account, a strong and well-calibrated moral and ethical compass becomes more relevant – firstly for the touristic providers and then also for visitors – for a conscious destination experience. This compass can be comprehended as ‘Destination Conscience’: an inner voice for moral deliberations, an orientation skill and a basis for moral judgements that results in corresponding decisions and actions.

‘Integral ecology’ as a holistic worldview and new paradigm can be helpful for further conceptualisation of Destination Conscience. Furthermore, it can enrich the process of realisation of conscious destinations. The concept of integral ecology can augment and strengthen a destination's moral-ethical compass as it offers concrete moral standards and implications for treating others and nature – in vacation time and in everyday life. Integral ecology can support the positive formation of an inner compass and can give more substance to it by bringing in strong moral and ethical reference standards and by enforcing certain values and virtues for interaction. The integration of principles of integral ecology in destination's conscience can have various forms and expressions.

As the basis of the argument, the concept of integral ecology will be described more thoroughly in the first section to lay the foundation for its application to

destinations in the second section and to answer the guiding question: how can integral ecology concretely contribute to destination's conscience?

Integral Ecology – A Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm

Integral ecology is the core of the encyclical letter 'Laudato si' – On care for our common home' of Pope Francis of 2015.¹ Facing the global environmental crisis (LS 3)², Francis addresses Laudato si' to 'every person living on this planet' (LS 3). It is a text of religious origin. But Pope Francis not only presents religious-theological derivations for his explanations but always complements them with scientific, 'secular' argumentations – Bals calls this 'double coding' (Bals, 2016a, p. 46). The encyclical gained worldwide attention. It was highly received by believers and non-believers, scientists, politicians and civil society all around the world.

Integral ecology can be denominated as an environmental and social-ethical conception. It describes the objective of an environmentally and socially just way of life and of a corresponding economic and political model. It defines an attitude towards the entire created reality, which respects this reality for its own sake, which appreciates it with attention and which treats it with care through a frugal lifestyle (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 27).

The central element and basis of Pope Francis' integral ecology is that in the world '*everything is interconnected*'³ (LS 138, see also LS 16). Therefore, a 'more integral and integrating vision' (LS 141) is needed:

Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions (LS 137).

In the view of this 'systems view of life',⁴ humans should be aware of the significance of every action and decision they take and of their responsibility. As one explanation of the interconnection of everything, Pope Francis underlines 'our common origin' (LS 202). 'A good part of our genetic code is shared by many

¹Integral-ecological, holistic worldviews can be found also in other literary philosophical traditions and schools of thought, for example, in the natural philosophical works of Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich (for instance, in Meyer-Abich, 1988). Nonetheless, the integral-ecological conception in Laudato si' contains manifold original and determined approaches and argumentations, which make it comprehensive and particularly efficacious.

²In this chapter, citations from Laudato si' will be indicated with "LS" and a number. These numbers refer to the numbered sections in the encyclical. This is the common style of citing encyclicals.

³Emphasis by Christian Meier.

⁴This is also the title of a book of Capra and Luisi (2014), which can deepen the discourse and understanding of a certain worldview.

living beings' (LS 138), he recalls (Bals, 2016a, p. 48). Pope Francis expresses the conviction that 'as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us . . . form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion' (LS 89). He states that '[t]his basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life' (LS 202).

Pope Francis' integral ecology executes a significant paradigm change with far-reaching consequences: The superiority of humans over other humans and especially the dominion of humans over nature correlated with its exploitation should be overcome. It should be replaced by the new paradigm of a 'universal fraternity' (LS 228) between all human and non-human life. This is the second core element of integral ecology. Every creature – human and non-human – is conceded an intrinsic value (LS 208). If humanity would really internalise and respect this paradigm, it would have tremendous consequences on human interaction and on behaviour towards nature. 'This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails' (LS 90) – with this, Pope Francis expresses that humans are a very particular part of creation with particular responsibility (LS 68), as guardians of creation, as conservers and protectors.

The Pope executes a profound paradigm shift away from a 'tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures' (LS 68) and a 'technocratic or technical and economic paradigm that allocates a central position to human beings as rulers and owners' (Bals, 2016a, p. 44, with reference to LS 106). The Pope considers the "technocratic paradigm", the rational-instrumental understanding of the world and the capitalist-instrumentalist dominance over nature' (Bals, 2016a, p. 44) as the cause of the twofold socio-ecological crisis (Bals, 2016a, p. 44).

In the new perception of the world and humans' role in it, '[n]ature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live' (LS 139), the Pope points out. Rather, '[w]e are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it' (LS 139). Thus, '[w]e are faced not with two separate crises . . . but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental' (LS 139). The result of this is that 'a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*' (LS 49). Therefore, '[i]t is essential to seek comprehensive solutions' to consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems to combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded and at the same time protect nature (LS 139). Therefore, for Pope Francis, a holistic ecology not only encompasses the classic triad of sustainable development – environment, economy and social affairs (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 17) – but also includes *cultural, ethical and spiritual* dimensions.

To further illustrate his argumentation, the Pope refers to *Saint Francis* (cf. for the following also Federbusch, n.d., pp. 55 and 57). '[T]o him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists' (LS 11). He 'was particularly concerned for God's creation and for the poor and outcast' (LS 10) – empathy, connectedness, care,

attention, compassion, altruism and mindfulness are underlined. The prerequisite of a new philosophy of society based on real compassion and solidarity with others is to overcome individualism, egoistic immediatism and alienation and to (re-)enter into an appreciative and respectful relationship with others (cf. also LS 162 and 119) and the world around us.

When the Pope gives an overview of the current ecological crisis, the ‘results of the best scientific research available today’ (LS 15) should ‘touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows’ (LS 15). We should ‘become painfully aware, dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it’ (LS 19), [Heimbach-Steins and Stockmann \(2019, p. 27\)](#) point out. This is indispensable for being able to initiate a real change of course in lifestyle and politics ([Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 27](#)). Furthermore, this confrontation can lead to a personal goal and the task of ensuring the continuity of the earth, to a ‘vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork’ (LS 217), and to put it into practice. This can open a perspective of meaning for oneself and one’s life, to find purpose. ‘What does the earth need us for?’ Pope Francis puts up for discussion in LS 160.

The Pope adds at this point that Saint Francis ‘helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to *categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology*, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human’⁵ (LS 11). You can name love and the attitudes of being able to experience awe and wonder here. Moreover, the quote can be seen as a reference to transcendence, spirituality and religiosity. In a novel way, Pope Francis’ integral ecology combines a scientifically founded perception of the ecological crisis with the interpretative potentials of cultural, spiritual and religious traditions and wisdoms as resources ([Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, pp. 28–29](#)). Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, former president of the Club of Rome, supports this, referencing *Laudato si’* when he says: ‘It could be wise to pay attention as well to the spiritual and religious dimensions of all civilizations’ ([von Weizsäcker & Wijkman, 2018, p. 64](#)).

The text passage on Saint Francis also reveals another central aspect of integral ecology: The saint ‘lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace’ (LS 10). Thus, integral ecology aims to regain the different levels of the *ecological equilibrium* ([Bals, 2016b, p. 2](#)).

A ‘global perspective’ (LS 164) and solidarity is necessary, and an intergenerational perspective (LS 159). Long-term thinking (LS 166 and 178) and patience is needed ([Zink, 2016, p. 22](#)). This universal solidarity brings with it a changed economy – a certain reduction of growth is inevitable (LS 193) – and a change of lifestyles (cf. also Federbusch, p. 64). Orientation of activities to the common good is required (LS 157). The reflections also focus on the conditions of quality of life and their improvement as part of an ‘[a]uthentic development’ (LS 147) in

⁵Emphasis by Christian Meier.

human dignity and for securing human rights (LS 158). These conditions must also include participation- and relationship-friendly living spaces. These conditions have to include the establishment of an economy that conserves resources and that is based on frugality, environmental education and the practice of a corresponding lifestyle (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 28, referring to Birkel, 2016). Such a lifestyle should focus on intensity instead of extensiveness, on frugality and mindfulness instead of maximum consumption (Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019, p. 28).

Integrity of creation (LS 13), balance (LS 225), sacredness of all life (LS 80–85), reverence for life (LS 207), appreciation (LS 119) and subsidiarity (LS 157) are further central ethical principles and virtues (see also Zink, 2016, pp. 23–30) that provide the basis of how to see the world and for action orientation.

The Pope dedicates Chapter 6 of *Laudato si'* to 'Ecological education and spirituality' as propositions for human maturation that results from integral ecology. 'Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a . . . lifestyle . . . capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption' (LS 222). '[L]ess is more' (LS 222) and sufficiency (LS 223) can provide guidelines. With education in environmental responsibility, developing new habits and the right motivation is crucial, Federbusch (no date, p. 114) points out, referring to LS 209 and LS 211. This can be part of a personal transformation process.

Integral Ecology Applied to Destinations

As outlined above, a strong and well-calibrated moral and ethical compass becomes increasingly relevant for destinations. How can integral ecology contribute concretely to this inner, ethical compass and reference medium for decisions, framed as Destination Conscience?

Integral ecology as a worldview with certain ethical principles can enrich, augment and strengthen a destination's ethical compass and its conscience as it offers moral standards and implications for human interaction and towards nature. This means that the principles of integral ecology as a new paradigm can set reference standards and orientation parameters for destination's conscience. They function as frames of reference and orientation and enforce certain values and virtues for interaction. They support the development of a strong inner compass and can give more substance to it. Furthermore, the integration of integral ecology into destination actors' conscience and thoughts can intensify the feelings and attitudes of humanness, sensitivity and compassion as supporting elements of a strong and well-formed moral compass. They can strengthen orientation, recollection and the feeling of interconnection. This can lead to a more respectful, mindful and conscience-based interaction of destination actors, responsible business decisions, sustainable destination development and meaningful, enriching offers and destination services. Thus, an enrichment of the conscience by integral ecology can resonate in all destination actors' way of thinking, communication and interaction.

Before looking in more detail at the different areas of possible manifestations of the enrichment of Destination Conscience by integral-ecological principles, it should be emphasised that in order to step from knowing and wanting to doing, it is crucial that normative claims and values become *binding* for individual actors and destinations as a whole, that they find their way into the inner compass as a reference standard in the course of conscience formation processes.⁶ Inner commitment is essential. Moral appeals and knowledge of the need for change alone often do not result in corresponding actions (Vogt, 2021, p. 40).

Many integral-ecological principles and perspectives – universal fraternity, the interconnectedness of everyone and everything, inter- and intra-generational justice and the resulting necessary solidarity – and their illustration in *Laudato si'*, not least through the double coding and its very touching linguistic style, could per se already have the potential to touch people in such a way that these principles and perspectives become binding in the course of conscience-forming processes.

Nevertheless, the importance of supporting factors for moral claims to become binding and to be internalised in the inner compass should be pointed out. These factors should be incorporated into processes in all the fields of a destination highlighted below in which the Destination Conscience is enriched.

On the one hand are the *emotional* level and the internalisation possibilities through *experiences* that one makes in certain settings. In addition to knowledge and reason, further motivations are needed that address the affective-emotional and spiritual dimension of human action. Humans find these motivating factors in their culture, in the ethos of the communities they belong to and in deeper encounters with other people, themselves and nature. In this, religions – which are always woven into specific sociocultural contexts – also play an important role (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, 2018, pp. 85–86).

On the other hand, it seems very useful in all destination areas and contexts examined below to *'translate'* religiously inspired orientations into *'secular language'*. This translation is not a matter of course. According to *'Public Theology'*, one can methodically presume that the churches can only fruitfully contribute their cultural and normative orientation knowledge to society if all participants openly engage in mutual learning processes. *'Multilingualism'* is required in the sense of a permanent *'translation'* of ethical and theological guiding terms and concepts into *'secular language'*. At the same time, a translation of ecological extreme experiences and search processes into theological language or a connectivity to it is also necessary (Vogt, 2021, p. 64). Even in societies with a liberal political culture, secularised citizens should also participate in efforts to translate relevant contributions from the religious sphere into publicly accessible language (Vogt, 2021, p. 63 with reference to Habermas, 2005, p. 115).⁷ Under the prerequisites of the methodological standards of Public Theology, the discourse on

⁶On the requirement of bindingness: see explicitly the contribution “The binding nature of the sustainability principle. Towards a new level of morality” in this book.

⁷On the *'translation'* of religion into secular language and contexts: see, e.g. Menne (2019).

the environment offers excellent potential for a new appropriation of Christian traditions of spirituality and explanation of the world (Vogt, 2021, p. 64). Under these conditions, the involvement of multilingual-competent translators in the abovementioned sense in possible integration processes of integral-ecological principles at destination level seems to be helpful.

In view of these preliminary considerations, in the following presentation of possibilities for a manifestation of integral ecology, suitable supporting factors for moral claims to become binding and to be internalised in the conscience are also mentioned.

The enrichment of Destination Conscience by integral ecology means that, as a first manifestation, the ethical principles of an integral ecology, an integral-ecological understanding of oneself and the world can be incorporated into *destination's self-image*. If the principles are integrated, they augment the Destination Conscience. A kind of conscience-forming process takes place among the destination and responsible providers. The destination's self-image takes on a new orientation. To raise awareness and acceptance among providers, it could be helpful that they attend seminars and make use of services that make experiencing and appropriating the principles of integral ecology possible.

If the ethical principles of an integral ecology enrich the Destination Conscience by being set, accepted and internalised as moral standards, then, secondly, this is reflected in the *interaction in business relations* and decisions of a destination. If integral-ecological principles like universal fraternity, solidarity, mindfulness, respect, integrity of creation, common good orientation and reverence for life become decisive, then the interaction of destination actors is shaped by these principles. The relationships will then be based on real appreciation for each other. Interaction will be characterised by solidarity, a cooperation mindset and altruism instead of egoism and an exaggerated competitive mindset. These principles then become guiding in operative business decisions, actions and in behaviour towards others. As a result, the 'Little Way of Saint Teresa of Lisieux' can also find application. This is 'not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures, which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness' (LS 230). The visitors will feel, notice and appreciate this changed, more sensitive and human destination character.

If the principles of integral ecology, which comprehensively include sustainability principles,⁸ are integrated in the Destination Conscience, then, thirdly, this can find a practical, visible and measurable expression in the *operational management, organisation and development of a destination*.

If respect, human dignity, universal fraternity and common good orientation enrich the destination's conscience as moral standards, operational activities and destination development should be characterised by humanness. Customers and employees must then be perceived and treated not as objects that serve for earning

⁸For the implementation of sustainability in tourism, see, e.g. Bieger & Beritelli (2013, pp. 42–45).

money (Bals, 2016a, p. 44) but treated with appreciation, sensitivity and humanness. Destination's public architecture, paths and squares should be designed in a way that they can strengthen opportunities to meet, to come into relationship and to experience interconnection.

If those responsible for the destination incorporate the option for the poor (LS 158), the principles of a universal brotherhood, of solidarity and human dignity in their conscience – no one should be excluded – then they consequently should implement measures of participation and empowerment for the poor, excluded and marginalised persons in their destination.

If the interconnectedness of everything and the universal fraternity of humans and with nature, correlated with the principle of integrity of creation and with the sacredness of all life, finds entry into destination's conscience, then natural resources, landscape, flora and fauna are also treated with high sensitivity and respect, are protected and cared for. Biodiversity loss has to be prevented and ecological equilibrium conserved. Operational management of destination businesses – food, building materials, resources, energy, supply chains – should then be characterised by sustainability.

A sincere and deep integration of integral-ecological principles and norms into destinations and into the destination's conscience requires destination managers and developers to think about a qualitatively different understanding of progress, growth and prosperity – with consequences for the destination orientation, its organisation, its development and especially the operational target parameters.

Integral ecology requires a global and intergenerational perspective and solidarity, as indicated in the Section 'Integral Ecology – A Holistic Worldview and New Paradigm'. This brings with it a changed economy – a certain reduction of growth is inevitable – and a change of lifestyles, as Pope Francis states. Orientation of activities to the common good is required. An economy that conserves resources and that is based on frugality and a lifestyle that focuses on intensity instead of extensiveness, on frugality and mindfulness instead of maximum consumption, is requested.

From an environmental and socio-ethical perspective, the required basis for this is an ethical-cultural reorientation (Vogt, 2021, p. 497). The modern progress paradigm of unlimited growth should be replaced by the guiding idea of developments that are integrated into the material cycles and time rhythms of nature. According to Vogt, a 'culture of sustainability' integrates environmental quality as a fundamental value in the cultural, social, health and economic definition of prosperity. It is an expression of a revitalisation of the ethic of moderation. At the societal level, a culture of sustainability aims for a new ecological model of prosperity through structures of use and distribution that are intelligent, resource and environmentally friendly (Vogt 2021, p. 497). Vogt states that the optimisation of quality of life and chances of participation for as many as possible in the present and in the future is 'sustainable', not the maximisation of growth. Only a resource-light prosperity fulfils justice standards and is justifiable. The 'Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare', which measures prosperity not in terms of gross national product but by criteria of a comprehensive concept of ecosocial

development, can serve as a measure and control concept for this objective (Vogt, 2021, p. 498).

All these reflections also apply to destinations' orientation. Post-growth economy and sufficiency, degrowth and common good economy as alternative concepts for economic operation (Pufé, 2017, pp. 289–302) come into view at this point,⁹ also for the tourism industry and destinations. If integral-ecological norms and standards become guiding principles for the Destination Conscience, this is related with giving up the modern progress paradigm of unlimited growth and profit maximisation as the central target parameter. Of course, such a reorientation, which affects turnover and profits, is not insignificant. Such a change of course first affects the owners and providers of tourism infrastructure and services, the shareholders and the destination management organisation. Tensions are to be expected, as a tourist destination operates in a global competitive environment. However, this change of course does not mean a loss of quality of life from an integral-ecological perception. This transformation into a more human, sustainable and value-based destination can provide benefits for everyone. It can become a USP and thus pay back in the form of monetary values and the destination's welfare.

In-depth dialogue processes for agreement involving all destination actors, stakeholders and residents appear to be necessary. Taking this step requires courage and a pioneering spirit and, ideally, support from politicians who change the framework conditions in a supportive way (Vogt, 2021, p. 498). The path seems feasible if one is fully convinced of it and follows the inner voice.

If the principles of integral ecology are integrated into the destination's conscience, then this, fourthly, finds expression regarding the design of the touristic *services and products* such as guided tours, seminars, hikes, exercises and other activities. At the latest at this point, the conscience of the costumers as destination actors also comes into focus. Services and products are then configured in such a way that they illustrate the ethical principles of integral ecology and that costumers can experience and internalise them. This can result in costumers adopting new, more respectful, more sensitive, more human standards for dealing with other humans and nature, and integrating them into their conscience.

Offers like *simulation games and joint exercises* can illustrate the integral-ecological guiding principle that *everything is interconnected* and that the extinction of one element threatens the whole system and can cause its collapse. By having these experiences and becoming aware of these principles, the protection of natural resources and biodiversity becomes a requirement – which can further strengthen the formation of conscience.

Courses for a lifestyle that is shaped by *Christian creation spirituality*, and courses for an integral-ecological lifestyle and a corresponding world and self-image, seem promising. That is, these courses have the character of ecological education and education on ecological spirituality. In addition to scientific and

⁹For a socio-ethical analysis and evaluation of post-growth strategies, see Deutsche Bischofskonferenz 2018.

secular reasons and motivations for the care of environment and engagement on behalf of the poor, explicitly spiritual motivations are also presented in these courses. Conversion to a *frugal lifestyle* (LS 223) and a redefinition of *quality of life* can be elements of an integral-ecological, spiritual lifestyle, which can be thematised in seminars and which are suitable to enrich conscience. Frugality involves (re)gaining inner peace and taking time to live in harmony with creation (Federbusch, p. 51, referring to LS 225). ‘To be serenely present to each reality . . . opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment’ (LS 222). For this, the seminars can also focus on mindfulness, enable real nature experiences through hikes or be aligned with the Kneipp philosophy and its five elements – of which the central one is the order of life and a corresponding balance ([Verband der Gesundheitspädagogogen im Kneippbund e.V.](#)).

For the aim of training, specifically, *mindfulness* – calm attention in the here and now (LS 226) – courses for meditation, Thai Chi or Yoga, and courses for creativity, art and handicrafts can be offered. These courses can also focus on *meaning* making and can have the character of self-discovery courses with personal coaching – ‘what does the earth need us for?’ ([Heimbach-Steins & Stockmann, 2019](#), pp. 18–19, citing LS 160).

Highlighting the relevance and effects of an (un)sustainable lifestyle and the maxim of the *option for the poor* (LS 10) can be the main topic of such courses, too. In destinations where it is appropriate, social hotspots – townships, slums, homeless shelters – can be visited with the aim of illustration and experience, always with a high level of sensitivity and respect.

Destinations can establish offers to *co-work* in sustainably designed nurseries or gardens. In this way, participants can regain a relationship to nature and food cultivation, linked with the internalisation of corresponding values.

The Pope emphasises that, along with others, the Church is entrusted with helping to raise people’s awareness (LS 214) of sustainability requirements. Therefore, it seems obvious that those responsible for a destination initiate cooperation with Christian congregations and actors when establishing offers like those described.

Configuring touristic products in such a way that they illustrate the ethical principles of integral ecology gives recipients the possibility to experience that everything is interconnected and that they are embedded in a universal web of life, to develop compassion, mindfulness and other attitudes and moral standards that can enrich the conscience. Customers can find their way back to their inner stability and balance; they can become aware of what is essential and can have conscious experiences. This meets today’s customers’ desires and needs.

All the principles, orientations, rationales and motivations described above can augment the conscience as a moral compass of destinations and its actors, and thus influence decisions and lifestyles. They can be meaningful as individual tasks are pointed out that can put one in connection with ‘something bigger’ and ‘a big whole’.

Best Practice Example – Plankstetten Monastery

Destinations that want to become integral-ecological and conscious can be inspired by the example of the Catholic monastery of Plankstetten, situated in the Altmühltal in Bavaria. This monastery can, according to the definition of Freyer (2015, p. 320), be denominated as a destination.¹⁰

The example of this monastery has been chosen because, along with being a faith-based destination, it is a pioneer in becoming a more sustainable, human and values-based destination. Business decisions in particular seem to be guided by determined standards of conscience. The transformation of the monastery in recent years, among other things towards a regional and ecological circular economy, organic farming and high resource conservation, required courage. Furthermore, this monastery offers good opportunities for the necessary ‘translation’ of religious language and concepts into secular language through its open conversation culture, exchange and cooperation, the manifold educational offers and platforms for discussion. Plankstetten Monastery seems suitable for inspiration and orientation for secular destinations, too, even if it is clear that enriching the conscience with normative reference standards of religious origin, supported by dedicated ‘translation work’ and a corresponding transformation of a destination, is a challenge for secular destinations that should not be underestimated; it requires a profound conviction of the meaningfulness of the envisaged path.

If you take a closer look at the monastery of Plankstetten, one can attribute many characteristics, guidelines and principles of integral ecology to its organisation, management and destination life. These can enrich the conscience of this destination.

Life from the origin – this is the motto of the Benedictine monastery (Plankstetten Monastery (a)). The monastic life follows the Rule of Saint Benedict. The search for God is the primary task of the monastic community. In this is also included everyday work. A culture of mindfulness emerges, which also finds expression in a responsible approach to life. The ecological orientation of the monastery of Plankstetten wants to serve this goal (Plankstetten Monastery (b)).

The *monks* as central actors of this destination cultivate frugality, sufficiency and mindfulness. They are capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. The principles of reverence for life, sacredness of all life, appreciation and integrity of creation are applied. When you meet and interact with the monks, empathy, attention, compassion, altruism, connectedness, care and mindfulness are perceptible. They seem balanced, in relation and harmony with God, with themselves, with others and with nature.

These principles of a high appreciation for humans and nature are also expressed in the visible and measurable *operational management* of the monastery. The monastery has implemented a regional and ecological circular economy

¹⁰By this definition, destinations are geographical, landscape, sociocultural or organisational units with their attractions that tourists are interested in. A bundle of tourism services is produced and jointly offered by different providers to foreign visitors.

(Plankstetten Monastery (b)). The conscious and efficient use of *energy* is central. Wherever possible and economically viable, energy and resources are saved. The energy management aims at CO₂-neutrality (Plankstetten Monastery (c)). The monastery affirms on its homepage that, in accordance with their regional self-sufficiency concept, they want to build and arrange the monastery so that it is close to creation and sustainability. For this, healthy and climate-friendly *building materials* are used. This has best been realised with the recently constructed wood-straw passive house. It is a unique, awarded reference project for climate-friendly building in Europe (Plankstetten Monastery (d)). Plankstetten Monastery has practised organic *farming* since 1998 (Plankstetten Monastery (f)), regionality and seasonality is guiding. They work according to Bioland guidelines. The products serve for self-sufficiency but are also marketed in organic food shops. The monastery also shows a global perspective of solidarity, among other things with a store where One World Fair Trade goods and handicrafts are sold.

It is possible to spend holidays in the monastery with accommodation and meals. Guests can also take part in the monastery's religious life to a certain degree and can co-work in the garden and monastery nursery. One can participate in one-day and multi-day courses and other *educational offers*, in which many principles of integral ecology are evident. These principles can be experienced and internalised by the participants in multiple ways and can enrich the conscience of the destination actors. The educational programme follows a holistic approach and focusses on spirituality, sustainability, lifestyle, health and creativity. Some current and past offers are: *Learning to live a sustainable life*, *Exercising body, soul and spirit*, *Retreat – Mindful forest experiences*, *From faith to ecological action* (Plankstetten Monastery (e)). The recently founded 'Centre for Creation Spirituality' (Bistum Eichstätt, 2022) manages some of these offers. They serve for reflection, recollection and (re-)orientation of the mindset and of individual action based on certainty about the meaning and purpose of human life. They can give experiences of reconnection. From this one can conclude that the monastery's understanding and realisation of sustainability encompasses not only environment, economy and social affairs but also cultural, ethical and spiritual dimensions.

The whole destination 'Plankstetten Monastery' embodies 'universal fraternity' and that everything is interconnected. Humanness, sensitivity and compassion can be felt everywhere and in all things. Christian creation spirituality shapes the monks' lives and they make it visible, experienceable and teach it. This addresses lifestyles and quality of life. It can change habits. The combination of sustainability, spirituality, nature, history and special hosts makes this destination very authentic and impressive.

Conclusion

Integral ecology as a worldview based on certain principles can augment and strengthen destinations' moral-ethical compass, as it offers moral standards and implications for human interaction and towards nature. If applied, the principles

of integral ecology as new paradigm can set standards and orientation parameters for destination's conscience. This strengthens the profound development of a destination's conscience. Furthermore, they can intensify the feelings and attitudes of humanness, sensitivity and compassion as supporting elements of a strong and well-formed moral compass.

The enrichment of Destination Conscience by the principles of integral ecology can manifest in the destination's self-image. It can find reflection in the interaction in business relations, decisions and actions of a destination. It can find a visible and measurable expression in the operational management, organisation and development of a destination. Moreover, it can find manifestation in the design of the touristic services and products.

A transformed mindset, interaction and behaviour can result from this transformational process: These processes and products of a transformative character based on integral ecology can strengthen and (re-)activate the conscience on a destination and individual level. They can provide recollection and orientation for destination's actors, inner clarity and peace with oneself, with each other and the environment. They can increase the feelings of (re-)connection and embeddedness, of purpose, meaning and balance and the attitudes of humanness, sensitivity, compassion, kindness and appreciation. From this can result a more respectful, conscience-based and mindful interaction of humans towards each other and towards nature in a destination, and sustainable action.

These human and more sensitive destinations, which are based on values, authenticity, credibility and sincerity, not only meet the desires and needs of our times, but they also contribute to a comprehensive transformation of society towards sustainability. What could be more desirable than happy guests who are reconnected and in balance, with outreach into their everyday life and destination operators who are filled with the knowledge that they have contributed to a more sustainable and better world?

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