RELIGION AND MULTICULTURALITY: EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

(CULTA)

HANDBOOK
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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook is a training handbook, written by an international editorial group within the project RELIGION AND MULTICULTURALITY: EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS (CULTA), within the Lifelong Learning Programme (Grundtvig Multilateral Projects, Call EAC/27/11 /2011/C 233/06 – Agreement Number 2012-3305/001.001). The project started its work in October 2012 and it will finish in September 2014.

Six institutions from different European countries have taken part in this project: MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo (Norway), EUROPE DIRECT - Carrefour europeo Emilia (Italy), EELC Institute of Theology, Tallinn (Estonia), Protestant Theological University (PTHU) (Netherlands), University of Craiova - Faculty of Theology, History and Educational Sciences (Romania), and Regional Development Foundation, Sofia (Bulgaria).

The overall goal of the project is to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of advanced knowledge and skills of church representatives so as to respond adequately to the changing society.

The specific projects objectives are the following:

- To broaden the access and the delivery of non-formal education to local clergy and church representatives through development, production, testing and dissemination of innovative teaching methodology, based on “peer-to-peer” knowledge, which will help them to increase their intercultural competences, civic and conflict management skills in order to enable them to better cope with “modern” problems such as exclusion, social uncertainty, multireligious and multicultural challenges
- To provide local church representatives with educational pathways to become strong leaders in their everyday practices in a context of conflict and violence
- To facilitate the transfer of innovative teaching practices, knowledge and methods used on local level
- To facilitate the volume of cooperation among the project partners and their capacity for the development of similar strategies and projects in the field

In its first phase, the project went through a research period, where case studies from five countries were accomplished in order to provide results that could be used to establish the objectives of the training methodology and the training programs. This has been done also to set the key competences based on the training needs presented in the articles.

This training handbook aims to develop a common teaching/methodological approach for the target group and will hopefully serve as a practical tool aimed at religious
leaders/teacher in their lifelong learning processes. It aims to facilitate the efforts of the church representatives and teachers in the field of non-formal education, when planning their training activities or dealing with problems in the field. It aims also to provide them with knowledge about the field of non-formal education and to acquaint them with a range of competencies, which define their role as leaders in their local communities.

The training handbook, therefore, is a product both of the research and of the training courses within the CULTA project, and we hope that it will be a useful tool for courses and training programs in different European countries.

The Handbook is structured in the following way:
The starting point is a short introduction into some basic elements of the “peer-to-peer” teaching methodology and peer learning. This is a method with a strong focus on the sharing of experiences as a method for learning.

The following part offers a description of five key competences that could be acquired through training courses for target group members, based on peer learning, intercultural, social, civic, entrepreneurship and conflict management competences.

Although peer learning is based on the participants’ experiences, there will still be a need for those who take part in a learning process to gain access to important information that could inform the discussions and give new insights. Through seven chapters, we will present both theoretical concepts from social science and theology and insights from some cases based on the research work that has been done within the CULTA project. The last chapter offers some guidelines for starting new projects based on improved competences, especially in conflict management and bridge-building.
BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE “PEER–TO-PEER” TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Peer-to-peer teaching methodology is rooted in the understanding of the learning process as participatory, open, and community-based. Peers are often defined as members of a group with similar complementary skills. This methodology leads to participatory community-based learning groups, in contrast to a client-server model for teaching. The idea is that in a community of practice, within a group with shared interests, it is possible for the members to interact and learn together and develop a shared repertoire of resources (Atkins, Brown and Hammond, 2007).

Overview of the basic elements of peer-to-peer learning in Open Education:

Sharing experiences in a reciprocal manner

Social theory / theology

Consequences for contextual challenges / Glimpse into possible new practices...

- Identifying the needs of the clergy and church workers, by inviting them to write these down and to submit them to each other and to the ‘teacher’...

- Triggering the story telling

By writing assignment:

a. a specific challenge to work on

b. experiences with bridge-building practices, what Works and what did not work;

c. motivation to participate

Suggested reading assignment: Articles (EMBRACING THE OTHER)

Suggested experiences

- TYPE 1 Exchanging experiences with regard to mediation and conflict management

- TYPE 2 Exchanging experiences with regard to “cooperation” with problems like exclusion, social uncertainty, poverty, immigration, refugees, etc.
• TYPE 3 Exchanging experiences with regard to interreligious dialogue, relationship with local municipalities...

• Giving feedback upon experiences

• Lectures on social theory / intercultural theory / theology etc.

• (Exposure / Fieldtrip)

• Imagining new practices, who could have the same interest, who are you constructing the bridge with?

• Writing assignment: Going back to your challenges and experiences, did you find new solutions? / Have the objectives been met?

Main methods:

• Information

• Dialogue

• Describing experiences,

• Sharing and discussing experiences,

• Giving feedback

• Text reading

• Diary
KEY COMPETENCES

Both the national and the international training courses within the CULTA Project (Religion and Multiculturality: Educational Pathways for Local Church Leaders) aim at developing some key competences that are supposed to help local church leaders facing multicultural challenges in their local communities.

Competence is often described as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and motivations which are required in a particular job or task. There is no standard definition of competence, but generally, it is assumed that persons who show positive attitudes towards a specific challenge and who have the required knowledge and skills are able to deploy the necessary competences to face the challenges and uncertainties involved in the particular task.

The competences described in this Handbook are the following:

- Intercultural competences
- Social competence
- Civic competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Conflict management competences/Mediation skills

In this introduction, we will provide a brief description of the five key competences and the aims of the training courses.

1. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

Description

Intercultural competence can be defined as the ability to communicate in an effective and appropriative manner with people of other cultures. This requires a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills that enables interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.
The cognitive skills needed are cultural self-awareness, general and specific cultural knowledge and the ability to use interaction analysis within the communication process.

The most important affective skills are curiosity, flexibility, motivation and open-mindedness.

Among the behavioral skills, the following should be mentioned: curiosity, empathy (which enables the understanding of other people’s behaviors and ways of thinking), information gathering skills, listening, problem solving, and the ability to express one’s own way of thinking.

Aims

A religious leader who has participated in a training course, will have acquired:

- A raised sensibility for cultural diversity habits and cultural perspectives
- An increased awareness of one’s own cultural background in the light of the confrontation with other cultures
- A raised sensitivity with regard to one’s own Christian/denominational background in the light of meeting representatives of other churches
- An attentiveness to meanings attributed to specific cultural habits
- An attentiveness for different communication styles

2. SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Description

Social competence can be defined in many different ways. Some definitions emphasize relationships, others focus on skills or outcome. Usually, social competence is understood to include effectiveness in interaction with others and the ability to use environmental and personal resources to achieve a good outcome in a developmental perspective.
In our context, we understand social competence as the ability to understand what is going on in different social groups, to analyze different social contexts and to have an adequate knowledge of socio-economic differences and social needs.

According to the EU Recommendation on Lifelong Learning (Dec 2006), social competence refers to “personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential.” It is underlined that “understanding the multi-cultural and socio-economic dimensions of European societies and how national cultural identity interacts with the European identity is essential”.

The EU Recommendation also underlines that social competence “is based on an attitude of collaboration, assertiveness and integrity. Individuals should have an interest in socio-economic developments and intercultural communication and should value diversity and respect others, and be prepared both to overcome prejudices and to compromise”.

**Aims**

A religious leader who has participated in a training course, will have acquired:

- Attentiveness of what is going on in real life
- Insights about socio-economic differences
- Ability to read and analyze the differences between different social groups
- Awareness of social needs

**3. **CIVIC COMPETENCE

**Description**

Civic competence is often seen together with social competence as an important goal for basic education in school. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for Lifelong Learning (December 2006) states that “Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures
(democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation”.

The Recommendation also says that “full respect for human rights including equality as a basis for democracy, appreciation and understanding of differences between value systems of different religious or ethnic groups lay the foundations for a positive attitude. This means displaying both a sense of belonging to one’s locality, country, the EU and Europe in general and to the world, and a willingness to participate in democratic decision-making at all levels. It also includes demonstrating a sense of responsibility, as well as showing understanding and respect for the shared values that are necessary to ensure community cohesion (such as respect for democratic principles). Constructive participation also involves civic activities, support for social diversity, cohesion and sustainable development, and a readiness to respect the values and privacy of others”.

Development of citizenship and civic competences therefore means developing social responsibility, participation, and active citizenship for the benefit of the community. Strategies for developing civic competence often focus on cooperative learning methodologies (pair and group work, projects and active learning) and on interdisciplinary programs. This also means promoting a culture of legality as an important step both towards participatory citizenship and towards the development of the social and civic competences required for life-long learning. Mobility and exchanges are important tools, not only to improve language competences, but also to fight against prejudice and to develop a variety of social and civic skills.

Aims

A religious leader who has participated in a training course, will have acquired:

- Insights to reflect upon the relationship between local faith communities and local municipalities
- Insights with regard to European legislation (rights) concerning mobility
- Insights with regard to juridical/legal responsibilities of different actors in local contexts
- Insights with regard to legal restrictions
- Ability to resolve problems on the lowest possible level (subsidiarity)
- Ability to acquire help from ‘higher levels’ (in church and society)
- Ability to take the initiative to start dialogue with other faith communities
- Ability to empower people to give shape to human dignity and to strengthen solidarity

4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPETENCE (RESPONSIBILITY, CREATIVITY AND CONNECTEDNESS)

Description

Entrepreneurship competence has been an important concept within business, but it could also be applied to projects aiming at specific goals, for instance in the field of intercultural conflicts and bridge-building. Among the skills described in entrepreneurship education, the following are often mentioned: Creativity, ambiguity tolerance, opportunity identification, deal making, networking, and ethical assessment.

Different competences are mentioned in literature about entrepreneurship. Opportunity competences are linked to identifying, assessing and seeking opportunities for carrying through successful projects. Relationship competences refer to the ability to build, keep, and use networks within the project. Conceptual competences are abilities associated with intuitive thinking, innovate behavior and assessment of risk. Organizing competences are related to the management of a project, through planning, organizing, leading, motivating, delegating, and controlling, while strategic competences are about setting, evaluating, and implementing the strategies of the project. There is also a need for commitment competences, motivating the project members to work hard and face the difficulties involved in sustaining a project.

Aims

A religious leader who has participated in a training course, will have acquired:

- Insights into the necessary tools or new practices (for a project) and the ability to use them
- Insights into the material resources (economic, organizational) and means that are necessary in order to start a new project
- Ability to organize meetings
- Ability to find cooperation partners who are willing to play a role in the project
- Ability to motivate and convince people to participate in a bridge-building practice
- Ability to attribute roles/tasks to volunteers in the project, ability to see and use the competences of the other people
- Ability to invite people to use their imagination
- Ability to encourage members to become ambassadors of the project

5. **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCES AND MEDIATION SKILLS (FORGIVENESS/ RECONCILIATION)**

**Description**

Conflict management competence requires a good understanding of the characteristics of conflict and how it manifests itself into cultural and social contexts, especially in a multicultural and multireligious context. Conflict management competence, therefore, includes mediations skills and a good knowledge of ethics of collaborative conflict resolution.

Since religion plays an important part in many conflicts, the competence on the role of religion both in conflicts and in mediation and reconciliation processes is important. In analyzing a particular conflict, competence is needed to decide whether the conflict is usually economic, social or ethnic at root, with religion becoming a part of it only secondarily, or whether religious communities in themselves lead to isolation, exclusion and conflict.

From a religious point of view, conflict management and mediation could be seen as closely related to concepts like forgiveness and reconciliation, which often have religious roots. Through religion people often come to understand that they are part of a greater whole and to realize that they must work at restoring good relationships with others in situations of deep conflict. In Christian theology reconciliation is seen both as reconciliation with God and with one another, both as a gift and as a task (2 Cor 5:17-20).

Religion has contributed to both conflict and peace. This ambivalence is the reason why there is a need for competence on how religion can promote peace rather than conflict. Therefore, it is important to provide education so as to develop religious actors, who can be more knowledgeable of their traditions, in particular ideas justice and peace. The competence for reconciliation and mediation is not only an intellectual pursuit, but an...
expression of character and personhood. Therefore, peace and reconciliation always go together with transformation and empowerment.

Openness and bridge-building are important competences, giving opportunities to cultivate tolerance and openness toward the other, also in alliances with secular peace-builders. Religious leaders should therefore develop their own traditions of peace-related practices and concepts by lifting up, celebrating and empowering those elements of religious community as acts of civic responsibility in today’s world. This should include traditions and practices of hospitality, providing safe space for the silenced and marginalized, and the ability to go beyond and to risk new paths for the sake of reconciliation. The concept of forgiveness is an important part of this task. Forgiveness preceds reconciliation and it is an alternative to revenge, being able to resolve “the predicament of irreversibility” (Hannah Arendt). Forgiveness empowers victims and disempowers oppressors.

Conflict management and mediation competence includes peace-related values and virtues as friendship, compassion, humility, service, respect for strangers, repentance, forgiveness and responsibility for past errors. The aim of mediation and reconciliation work is to shape a “community beyond communities”, where myths can be replaced with common narratives.

Religious peace-building and conflict transformation includes the competence of conflict management, which includes early warning through prophetic voices against the escalation of conflict, advocacy for oppressed groups and people, and religious communities as safe havens.

Establishing a shared identity between the conflicting parties is a crucial part of the complex process of social reconciliation. This could contribute to sharing a common past and a platform for a different future. Since memory is an essential part of identity, suppressing or hiding memory could have dangerous consequences. There should be a dialectic process of remembering and forgetting. Narratives should be told and shared in a way that restores truth and makes healing possible. The truth about a conflict is multidimensional, including the objective (forensic) truth, the personal (narrative) truth in the personal and collective histories shared, the dialogical truth as a result of the sharing of narratives, and lastly the healing and restorative truth as the result of this process.

Religious traditions could, therefore, become communities of memory and hope, creating social space for reconciliation, being open to the transcendent and serving as communities of memory and hope. As a matter of fact, competence in reconciliation includes the personal, the interpersonal, the societal and the political dimension of reconciliation.
Aims

A religious leader who has participated in a training course, will have acquired:

- Insights into the factors that transform conflicts into violence
- Insights into the dynamics of group conflicts
- Insights into restorative justice
- Sensitivity to distinguish between cultural differences and potential conflict material
- Sensitivity for ‘We-They’ language
- Sensitivity for enemy-pictures
- Sensitivity for the internal dynamics within competing groups in a conflict
- Sensitivity for the transformation of a conflict into violence
- Sensitivity for the power of remorse and forgiveness
- Ability to listen to the narratives and memories of different groups
- Ability to understand cross-cultural considerations in dealing with conflict
- Ability to counsel / paraphrase what someone is telling or asserting
- Ability to hold people accountable for their statements
- Ability to expose ethical attitudes needed for collaborative conflict resolution: Neutrality, confidentiality, objectivity, respect for differences and honesty
- Ability to distinguish between levels of dialogue
- Ability to formulate common interests
CHAPTER 1

CASE STUDIES, PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS: AN ESTONIAN CASE STUDY - Liina Kilemit and Matthias Burghardt

In the framework of the study on multi-ethnic and multi-confessional contacts in the congregations of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church sixteen clergy and congregation workers were interviewed. The main aim of the study was to what kind of challenges do the EELC congregations in more multi-ethnic (and multi-confessional) regions of Estonia face, whether the local congregations or the EELC in general have responded to these challenges and how.

The sample was firstly selected following the principle of representation of people from different regions in Estonia with larger Russian speaking minority. Secondly, the selection has taken into account the variety of different church ministries, including congregation workers who are more likely to interact with minorities and know their problems (diaconal workers, prison chaplains etc.).

The interviews have been agreed on and carried out by 4 people, mainly in March and April 2013. Afterwards, they have been recorded and transcribed.

The studied congregations vary a lot as far as the size of the congregation is concerned. Often, the respondents have distributed the members of their congregation into different subgroups and identified them as e.g. "souls" on the list of members, donating members and active members attending worship services and congregation activities. In some cases the respondents were able to define even the so-called activity percentage. If the congregation was involved in the ministry in some other languages, we asked them to provide further information. There were 3 larger urban congregations and one countryside congregation ministering or offering activities in other languages in a considerable extent. Four congregations provide social services or projects having ethnic minorities as a significant target group. Several priests among the respondents minister more than one congregation, while some of them simultaneously work as prison chaplains. It is quite common practice for a parish priest to have a second job as a chaplain or pastoral counselor in a health care or social care institution. In addition to parish priests, our study sample represents also one diaconal worker, one youth worker and one manager of a Christian social welfare institution.

Congregations, which are engaged in the ministry of some other ethnic group, mentioned working languages such as Finnish (Ingrian), Russian, English and Latvian, sign language. Among the Russian and English speaking population we can meet again many different nationalities. Among the studied congregations there were two priests having a different nationality than Estonian.
Study results:

1. Apart from few exceptions, emigration is not a burning issue in the congregations. The main reason for that lays in the fact that emigrants are predominantly young people, but the majority of active parish members are already in old age. The problems are more explicit in the immediate social environment, but in general it is not considered to be a major problem as far as the emigrants express their intention to return home in future. Emigration for economic reasons is seen as inevitable.

2. The relations to emigrants, if at all, are more of a personal nature and in congregations there is no organized approach in dealing with this group of people. They usually send each other e-mails, letters or postcards. In many cases emigrants prefer to remain members of their previous congregations, in order to keep up the links to their home country, but relations to emigrated parishioners tend to fade over time. More often the main problem appears to be the fact that these people don’t inform their congregations about their status.

3. In general, the relations of a congregation to other local Christian confessions are close and they are addressed in a very positive context. The respondents do not mention any specific problems connected to that. They emphasize - with pride - the openness and tolerance of their congregations towards other Christian confessions, and highlight that Estonia must be the most tolerant country in the religious landscape. The relations to non-Christian denominations are rather limited and sporadic. The main reasons for that are the lack of a (religious) driving force and the fact that in less populated areas there are no other religious denominations existent.

4. There is no awareness of an official opinion or line of the Church as far as the cooperation with other confessions or communication with people of different nationalities are concerned, and the respondents don’t feel any particular need for that either. Only a couple of respondents felt otherwise and wanted to see an official line taken. EELC is considered to be a very open and ecumenical community having intense and friendly relations to other Christian confessions. There are functioning cooperation councils like Estonian Council of Churches and Evangelical Alliance. Local congregations are given a full freedom to act in this matter and they have not experienced any conflicts or restrictions so far. The respondents find that, if needed, the Church government gives them its support for maintaining the relations with other confessions/ethnic groups. Only the congregations engaged in the ministry in Russian language mentioned the need for more help as far as material and human resources are concerned.

5. The main (and successful) platform for the contacts between a local congregation and the people of other language minorities is the social work and services. The interest of other ethnic groups in the Lutheran church is mostly of a pragmatic nature: they are either in
need of social assistance or have a cultural interest in church as a historic monument or architectural object; in religious issues the interest is very often of a temporary nature, sometimes mixed with the feelings of a slight disaffection and distrust.

6. As far as the necessity for the ministry in Russian language is concerned, the opinions of the priests diverge clearly - there are priests, who don’t see the necessity for that and question its effectiveness, but on the other side there are priests, who consider it to be a very important task and want to see the church more active. In general, the attitude towards other ethnic groups in congregations is open-minded, and they are called welcome.

7. Practically all respondents shared the opinion, that they have never encountered the issue of discrimination on the basis of nationality, religion, gender or sexual orientation. It has occurred neither in the congregation nor in their surrounding social environment. Particularly significant and interesting are the topics raised by the respondents in the context of discrimination. They have mentioned predominantly ethnic and sexual minorities, to a lesser extent also people with disabilities, but they don’t think that any discrimination against these groups is happening in Estonia right now.

8. As far as the secular organizations are concerned, the main cooperation partners for the congregation are the local municipalities. In particular cases local municipalities have delegated some essential social services to congregations. There are functioning partnerships with schools, hospitals, day care centres, social services centres and other organizations. The respondents addressed in quite many interviews cooperation with NGO-s. The practice of partnerships to other religious organizations is rather marginal.

A longer version of this case study is available at the CULTA homepage: www.cultaproject.eu
CHAPTER 2

RESULTS FROM THE RESEARCH - Henk de Roest

Overview of the national researches
The results from our empirical research in this project show that at local level, in their practical everyday pastoral work many officials of local churches, national and local non-governmental organizations and diaconal centres are prepared, willing and motivated for more active involvement in the field of social and charitable work. The world economic crisis which started in 2008 shows major changes in the public policies, particularly in the social policies and the local parishes that are represented by the local church leaders interviewed in this project play a major role for the support of the vulnerable groups, now that the budget allocations traditionally administered by the State have decreased. Local municipalities delegate social services to congregations, e.g. soup kitchen, services for children from at-risk families or distribution of clothing to the people in need. Many parishes and dioceses, along with the organization of spiritual and educational initiatives, develop different forms of social and charitable service. The Norwegian report shows for example that most parishes are involved in multi-cultural social issues through their traditional work on catechesis, and social activities toward elderly people in the parish. In all the reports we see that parishes often provide material support, including money, to the elderly or disabled living in a parish. In Estonia, respondents highlight especially diaconal ministry and different social projects: activities for children in need and from at-risk families, for elderly people, people with disabilities, and distribution of humanitarian aid. They mentioned also projects from the period of economic recession such as distribution of pillows and blankets to people released from prison, collection of food for the parishioners in need. Several congregations host self-help groups for alcohol addicts. One of the congregations has had years of experience in the work with ex-convicts and with various social risk groups, including youth and children.
In remote and less developed areas of Romania and Bulgaria parish communities experience demographic problems in a direct and tangible way. They are the result of social and economic processes leading to depopulation of villages, generating heavy migration. Social exclusion and depopulation are, according to the representatives of the Church, two of the main problems facing these areas. Respondents are worried by the negative demographic evolution. In many families are left only the elderly (retired) and minor children. In these families, social and economic problems are immediately felt. Grandparents are not able to handle the education of children, some of them showing a total lack of interest in education or even quitting school. Another situation, even more worrying, is of children abandoned financially by their parents. Left to work in Western Europe, many Romanians and Bulgarians discovered that also in this part of Europe the effects of severe economic crisis are felt. Without a job, they are not able to financially support the children left in the care of grandparents. These are the premises for a genuine social and educational crisis. An essential concern is to retain young people rather than have them leave the country in search of better living. Emigration is not an issue in these countries alone. In parts of Estonia, emigration has a remarkable, influence on the life of congregation. Respondents mentioned issues like instability and dissolution of families, abandonment of children, decline of the working-age population. In few interviews the issue of domestic migration has emerged as well. One respondent from a congregation in Tallinn addressed the difficulties the migrants from other regions of Estonia to Tallinn might face in adjusting ("they have difficulties finding housing and are forced to settle with lower-paying jobs").

The way that local church professionals deal with these social problems is primarily by activating the social function of their parish communities, for example by recruiting and educating volunteers. These volunteers are active in social centres, actively supporting families and young people. In Romania for example, the development of life skills of children, for example Roma children, is a particular goal of activities, conducted by volunteers, in these areas. According to the respondent priests in Bulgaria, the main concern of the Church and the other relevant public institutions should be to ensure the social
commitment of young people, as well as their integration, encouragement and motivation to actively participate in the life of the community. They should also be supported throughout their studies for acquisition of valuable professional qualification in order to find employment. In Rumania skills that are acquired by doing volunteer work, for example in a diaconal centre, are explicitly recognized and count as work experience. Both in Bulgaria and Rumania, the reports demonstrate that priest believe that for the peace of the community, the Roma citizens should be economically and socially integrated, giving them the religious assistance that they request. The reports also state that in some Roma communities we can speak of a self-exclusion from the economic, social and cultural life of the community. In Norway, diaconal organizations such as the Oslo City Mission, the Salvation Army, but also a few local congregations within the Church of Norway have provided practical assistance to the immigrant Roma in Norway. There seems to have been made only a few practical efforts to integrate the Roma community into the church, although this issue is programmatically addressed in several public statements made by church officials.

In the reports we read that globalization and migration processes are often reasons for changes in the ethnic and cultural environment in larger cities and different regions, which can at times cause a certain amount of tension. For example, the growing number of refugees from Near Eastern countries in which there are religious and ethnic conflicts gives rise to fears that such conflicts can be transferred at regional or European level. In Bulgaria there has been a growing need for undertaking concrete charitable action in support of Syrian refugees housed in numerous camps and centres in Bulgaria’s major cities. A project organized by the Norwegian Christian Council called Church network for the integration of refugees and immigrants aims at strengthening the churches’ involvement with refugees and immigrants in Norway and organizes courses, joint discussions and information sharing between various churches and local congregations, as well as government authorities and other actors. On the other hand, although local clergy and church members have made a range of practical arrangements to integrate immigrants into various activities in the congregations, the intentions have proved difficult to put into practice. For such reasons, it
has been suggested to consider multi-ethnic congregations as an ideal that can only be realized after migrant congregations have been established.

Apart from social and charitable work, several parish communities in the different countries of our project deliberately seek to establish interreligious and/or interdenominational dialogues in order to build a stable social and peaceful environment in the communities they live. Our study shows that there exist initiatives and practices of cooperative social work and of structured dialogue with local governments, with other denominations and religious groups, including specific initiatives aimed at the social inclusion of different vulnerable groups, for example migrants. The analysis of the interviews in the Dutch report show different ‘axes’ or fields of interreligious dialogue and cooperation. Some dioceses and parishes in Bulgaria have introduced practices for establishing and maintaining a good tradition of regular meetings and mutual visits between Orthodox officials and representatives of the Muslim community. The Norwegian report demonstrates how Catholic parishes in Oslo are dealing with the influx of Polish immigrants. The growing number of members is changing the position of the Catholic Church in the society of Norway. Within the parishes, Norwegian born Catholics becomes a decreasing minority. And while more people arrive in Norway with no money, no jobs and no job contacts than before, they come and knock on the door of local Catholic parishes, that are not prepared to receive so many immigrants.

**Limitations**

The different research reports indicate that at different levels and in different regions the potential for church engagement is not fully exploited. The reports illustrate that communities can be viewed as public utilities, in that they can provide services free at the point of need and by living in solidarity with those who have no choice but to live in this place. Resources, however, like space (buildings), people (both professionals and volunteers), money and time are not to be overlooked. They provide the conditions *sine qua non*, not only for outreach or help with problems but also for interreligious and
interdenominational contact, dialogue and cooperation. Do people, for example, set aside time to be active in a social centre on a voluntary basis and can their motivation to do so be stimulated by ‘rewards’? For example, in Estonia the majority of the respondents keep strong and positive inter-confessional relations to other local Christian congregations. In case the relations are inexistent or for some reasons not active, the reasons are more of a formal than of a substantive kind: they are lacking time or other resources; relations to an orthodox church "faded away" because of their limited language skills etc. Sometimes respondents just say: we have no time and no capacity for that. Money can of course also be a serious problem. What to do when there are so many people in need? Space can also form a limitation. In Oslo, almost every church in the diocese is too small, lacking space for the members wishing to use it, and nearly all are involved in a project to expand the buildings. Interestingly, parishes with settled and bigger migrant groups seem to be better to take care of new immigrants speaking the same language. They sometimes offer language courses, job-applying information etc. Establishing parish councils with people from different parts of the world, not letting one group being too dominant is important too.

**Different axes of interreligious and/or interethnic contact**

The Dutch experts in the Grundtvig-project interviewed a sample of different religious professionals with experience in interreligious and / or intercultural dialogue, thereby noticing that the work of intercultural and interreligious dialogue also takes place in informal settings with persons that meet people from other cultural and religious background by accident, or at least not with the intended goal of interreligious communication as the professionals do. The Dutch report demonstrates that interreligious contact takes part along four different axes:

- **Celebrating** together (for example in worship services, reading the Bible and/or Koran together, preaching in services, celebrating the end of fasts). Despite the differences, the worship service can function as a place where "things can happen" and the threshold between groups is lowered.
• The **formal circuit** of regular meetings and discussions in which representatives of religious groups meet with the explicit intention of having a religious dialogue, staying in touch with each other and sharing information to promote understanding between different groups. These formal contacts or ‘platforms’ as they are often called, may also lead to common celebrations. Local governments can play a role in formalizing relations between religious groups. They have a vested interest in making different groups work and live together harmoniously.

• **Informal contacts.** Getting acquainted can be a 'first step' in establishing a formal relationship. It can be stepping stone toward a platform. The leadership of a religious community may however be unaware of informal contacts or even forms of cooperation that may exist 'below the radar'. In addition, the Dutch report stresses that in more 'strict' religious communities there may not be a formal relationship with other religious communities, but there can be an awareness that informal relationships matter;

• The **diaconal field.** Diaconal organizations are often involved in helping people of non-Christian origin, for example migrants and asylum seekers. Offering support, for example to immigrants, does however not necessarily lead to dialogue with other religious communities. In offering help and support the interviewees in the Dutch report indicate that they cooperate not only with other religious communities, but with governmental and non-governmental, secular organizations as well. This includes the representatives of more ‘strict’ religious communities.

These four axes are also mentioned in the other reports.

In Bulgaria for example, we read that official inter-church relations at national level include exchange visits of Orthodox officials to mark certain feasts or historic events. In Estonia we see **joint worship services** with organizers from different confessions, joint training courses, singing festivals, annual Good Friday's Way of the Cross, consecrations and inaugurations,
Independence Day celebrations, prayer-breakfasts organized by a local municipality. Here also a celebration with the Jewish community is mentioned.

In Norway, co-operation is being established between Catholics and Buddhists, in relation to the celebration of Vietnamese New Year, and in funerals that gather local people from both religions. Vietnamese from these two religious groups in Norway seem to have even more contact here, than in Vietnam.

*Formal* contacts are mentioned in the research reports too, but in the contexts of our research, these contacts can also have an inter-denominational character, also due to the fact that in less populated areas there are no other religious denominations existent. An example of a formal interdenominational platform is the Estonian Council of Churches that has been the main dialogue partner for the State in matters concerning religion and religious associations. In the other reports we find these councils too.

In Norway, Bulgaria and Rumania, but also in Estonia, *informal* contacts are mentioned. We read: “Even in the most minimal cases of contacts the priests of different denominations sustain at least some personal relations, since they meet in official receptions and events, trainings, even sports competitions, and have a conversation.”

In Rumania, particularly the *diaconal field* is the field for close cooperation between local parishes and local government. In this field the emergence of foundations is noticeable. These foundations, that were already created in the twentieth century, like *Renasterea* made it possible to establish diaconal centres, offering opportunities for volunteers to work in educational and charitable work. Specific programs were created to help children and the poor population by supporting their inclusion in schools and offering their needed daily nutrition within social or school eating houses. Communal city halls supported largely the good operation of school eating houses delegating from their staff people able to find support and funds.
In Estonia, the social work context is also explicitly named for activities for people from other ethnic groups. The respondents noted the percentage of Russian speaking population among their target groups or beneficiaries of aid. It will depend however on the Russian language skills of the priest and the specifics and scope of the congregation, i.e. does the congregation feel more socially engaged or not. The respondents even raised the fact, that among the clients of social work Russians outnumber Estonians (according to respondents' estimation they make up 50-80% of the people in need). Respondents also mention this diaconal field in general as the ‘most active level of cooperation’. It includes immediate, regular and conscious contacts and cooperation projects e.g. for people in need, for example in founding a food bank. The main (and the successful) platform for the contacts between a local congregation and the people of other language minorities is social work and services.

**Motivations**

The professionals are *motivated by*

- ‘Being neighbors’, that is an awareness of each other’s presence in the same neighborhood; interreligious and interdenominational activities enable religious communities to become better rooted in their respective local contexts. The awareness of social problems is increased, possibilities for learning are enhanced and prejudices are confronted.

- The awareness that links may help to find each other when it is needed, for example in times of crisis and interreligious and / or interethnic tensions.

- the occurrence of an economic or social crisis or of critical incidents; this can strongly contribute to the motivation of religious leaders to meet each other in order to formulate a common response.
- Just a personal interest of a church official in dialogue, that is a curiosity or a willingness to learn from the other, without an official backing of the church he or she is representing.

- A sense of being called to help or give support to people; for the more ‘orthodox’ or ‘strict’ communities this motivation cannot be untied from an evangelistic agenda.

- The expectations of wider groups of the population and different categories of professionals, such as educators, social workers and representatives of the specialized administration, about the duties which a local parish should assume in the administration of social services – working with orphans, elderly, lonely and sick people, prisoners and their families, drug addicts etc.

- The official line of their national churches if it is supportive for ecumenical contacts. Also support for maintaining the relations with other confessions/ethnic groups is considered motivating. In Estonia, the congregations engaged in the ministry in Russian language mentioned the need for more support as far as material and human resources are concerned.

- A motivating factor is also the belief or conviction of a church leader with regard to ‘what the church is for’. In the Norwegian report we read that the respondents’ conception of the role of the Church as a sacramental Church is essential. Theological traditions for being “one Church for all kind of people” are motivating.

- A vision to create inclusive communities through congregations that are open and inclusive. It creates a positive attitude to cultural and ethnic pluralism.

- Good experiences, such as sharing the gifts of the cultural diversity, for example by especially by sharing different food.
Attitudes

Church leaders that are ‘successful’ in this field show a willingness to learn the history, the language, the customs and the traditions of other religious communities in the parish. Respect and openness are two of the words that were mentioned often for describing the attitudes respondents had towards other religious groups. In the report from Rumania all respondents stressed the importance of religious freedom, Christianity in general and Orthodoxy in particular, considering freedom (of any kind, including religious one) as a gift of God. The respondents in the Estonian report emphasize - with pride - the openness and tolerance of their congregations. In the Dutch report, interestingly, there is a clear divide between the more conservative, evangelical and Pentecostal respondents and the liberal respondents. The conservatives spoke of "respect", while the liberals used varieties of the word "openness". Conservative respondents are careful to mention that interreligious contact will not stop them to talk of their specific religious convictions. In addition, while respect and openness may be seen as attitudes that offer starting points for contacts, trust is the attitude that sustains a relationship. Trust is not necessarily hampered by an exclusivist position with regard to convictions. Interreligious dialogue and mission often are seen as contradictory. Several respondents didn’t see it this way. For them, transparency, integrity and the absence of a hidden agenda are essential when it comes to establishing trust. Critical for reducing interethnic and interreligious tensions and for establishing of an intercultural dialogue is the adherence to ethics in the communication. These ethical principles take the lead role in the interpersonal communication, regardless of whether it takes place between different ethnicities, races or nationalities. Also sharing of stories proves to be a powerful way of building trust. With regard to the notion of respect, we also find this in the other reports. Collected data of the Bulgarian research indicates that at household level, Orthodox Christians “communicate freely and live peacefully with representatives of other religious communities”. The report hastens to add that “at the same time, having to defend or profess their faith this can force them to reconsider the limits of their tolerance and dialogue (...) they realize the need to defend their religious truths and preserve the doctrinal core of
their faith.” There is, however, also a flipside to this coin, because another attitude that we encountered in our research can be labeled as ‘restraint’. It is caused by the ‘aggressive proselytism practiced by other religious communities.’ Sometimes we also observe an attitude of distrust from other communities. In the Estonian report we read that there may be a ‘careful or even suspicious attitude’ towards the Lutheran church among some members of the Russian population.

**Methods used at local level**

*First*, the main target groups of socially vulnerable people who should be considered a priority for the social and charitable work are determined and identified.

Who are they? What are their specific needs? Do they have access to social assistance? *Second*, the administrative and organizational capacity of the Church to participate in partnership initiatives aimed at changing the dismal condition of disadvantaged people is analysed. *Third*, this calls for an analysis of the provisions and the organizational forms of cooperation between the Church as a religious institution and its local divisions and government institutions and public organizations in the social sphere. *Fourth*, the willingness of people to turn to the Church for support and assistance has to be established in order to enable the local church to give charitable support. Their awareness of the churches presences can be raised. *Fifth*, voluntary groups can be formed, also to work in centres for charitable work and in therapeutic centres. *Sixth*, particularly the Rumanian report shows how a common enterprise, a ‘society’ or foundation, created by and supported by the church on a national or on a regional level is helpful and even necessary for stimulating social work at the local level. Boarding houses, diaconal or social emergency centres for homeless people, information centres for people with disabilities, children centres, ‘eating houses’, orphanages and day centres, offering the elderly people counseling, primary and specialized social services, occupational therapy, leisure time activities and serving lunch, can only be created when there is support from a national or regional foundation. Mid-twentieth century for example, priests were encouraged by the Metropolitan to become
involved in the establishment of school eating houses in their parishes. Also in the current situation, the report emphasizes the necessity of non-governmental organizations, in Rumania operating under the sponsorship of the eparchies. An example described is the organization called ‘Vasiliada’. Seventh, seeking contact with and cooperation with non-governmental organizations is not widespread practice, but is addressed in all the reports. Caritas Norway (on a national level) for example has tried to meet the development of the rapid influx of migrants and offers juridical and information help Eight, an effective method to deal with potential tensions and for maintaining a suitable climate for fruitful intercultural dialogue is so-called “ethnic marketing”. It embraces the idea that many, perhaps the majority of the people tend to overlook and even abandon their negative attitude towards the “other” if this brings them personal benefit, such as trade or business. The method is to identify and promote the benefits from the contact and dialogue with various religious communities.

Orthodox priests and their parishes in Bulgaria for example offer missionary and pastoral services to different groups of the population, such as young people, children and youths at risk, drug addicts, people with disabilities, representatives of minority groups and prisoners. The returned questionnaires show that there is active educational work at parish and diocesan level achieved with the help of Sunday schools, organizing talks with young people at risk (drug addicts and homeless youths), people with disabilities and orphans. Together with these catechetical, spiritual and educational activities, charitable Christian work is also being done in the form of fund raising for treatment of sick children, building of shelter homes, orphanages and kitchens for the poor, and support for other needy parishioners. An innovative method is the establishment of a lasting bond between godparent and godchild, typical of the Orthodox Church, when a member of the parish provides social assistance to the inmates of a particular social institution and adopts the role of a spiritual parent, or godparent, for a particular child.
Communication is also maintained by means of new information tools and technologies. Spiritual connections can be maintained by priests visiting the families of migrant Bulgarians and giving them moral support and spiritual guidance via the internet.

**The competences and skills of church leaders**

It is necessary to strengthen the specialized education and training of students in theology and of local church leaders who are interested in developing church social work and who organize charitable activities in their parishes. The survey data of the reports show that local church leaders long for further targeted training in the field of the Church’s relations with public institutions and in the implementation of rules and practices of inter-Christian (ecumenical) dialogue and principles of interreligious dialogue. In connection with this, the cooperation between local churches and local governments should be concretized and complemented with new practical content through the creation of mixed working groups and specialized committees to coordinate the work and implementation of common activities. Interestingly, the Estonian report emphasizes how skills and competences acquired in one job can prove helpful in the other. It is quite common practice for a parish priest to have a second job as a chaplain or pastoral counsellor in a health care or social care institution. As for the cooperation with local municipalities, quite remarkable is the fact, that priests have been or still are members of local councils.
CHAPTER 3

KEY CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL THEORY - Marten van der Meulen and Ringo Ringvee

When we talk about building bridges between different religious and cultural groups, there are some key concepts of social theory that are important to take note of. Social theory has grappled with different aspects of migration and the consequences this has for interreligious and intercultural bridge-building; as a matter of fact it helps our understanding to clarify these concepts. Because of the length of this chapter and the complexity of the subject at hand, the following can only be seen as a minimal summary, a starting point for a more thorough investigation by anyone willing to know more.

We will discuss several key social theoretic concepts: civil society theory and associated terms such as social capital and civic engagement, migration and the adjacent term migrant religious communities, interreligious dialogue and intercultural communication.

Civil society

The concept of civil society is important to understand the public and social role of religious communities in societies. The concept has quite a long history. Already in ancient Greek times the term was used to denote the fact that citizens have rights to govern their own polis. In modern times many well known scholars from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (see Cohen 1994, 97) to Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor have taken the concept as one of the core concepts of their philosophical discussion.

The “civil” in civil society essentially has two meanings: on the one hand it refers to citizens and on the other hand to civility. The underlying idea is that the gathering of citizens who freely govern themselves and society will have civilizing effects on society. The idea is that there exists a societal sphere of civil society, which is comprised of groups of citizens, such as political parties, labour unions, news media, churches, leisure organizations, sport associations, etc. etc.

Religious groups play a central role in civil society, although this statement is heavily disputed (see for an extended discussion Van der Meulen 2006, 32 – 36). There are some theorists, like Jürgen Habermas who in the past have argued that religion runs counter to modern ideals of communicative rationality, where especially religious discourse - with a
reference to transcendent entities -, stands in opposition to the goal of a society where people can freely discuss with each other and govern themselves (Habermas 1981, 282). 20 years later Habermas has somewhat modified its standpoint. He still argues that by making “reference to the dogmatic authority of an inviolable core of infallible revelatory truths” (Habermas 2006, 9) religious convictions are no match to other, secular ethical orientations, but he also states: “the liberal state has an interest in unleashing religious voices in the political public sphere, and in the political participation of religious organizations as well. It must not discourage religious persons and communities from also expressing themselves politically as such, for it cannot know whether secular society would not otherwise cut itself off from key resources for the creation of meaning and identity”. (Habermas 2006, 10).

Others have been much more positive about the role of religious communities in civil society. Social theorist Charles Taylor argues that religious groups can be centre points in “communities of common understanding” (Taylor 1995, 277) which link citizens, through their own communal organizations to the broader political process. José Casanova holds a similar line of arguing, interestingly based on Habermas ideas from the Theorie Des Kommunikativen Handelns, and argues that religious communities may “unintentionally help modernity save itself” (Casanova 1994, 234), because it supports humanizing and democratizing developments in many modern societies.

The point here with reference to immigrant religious groups, is that a number of social theorists argue that migrant religious groups can play a positive role in the communication and interaction with society, even though they are organized along cultural and religious lines.

Nancy Ammerman makes a similar point. She argues that religious congregations are “particularistic spaces of sociability” (Ammerman 1997, 355), but that this doesn’t prevent them to have an important civic contribution, both in social work and in the public domain. Ammerman quotes Walter Brueggeman, a theologian and biblical scholar, who in an interpretation of a biblical story in 2 Kings argues that (religious) communities can be and even need to be bilingual. They need a public language (“from the wall”) for discussion and conversation with other parties and a common language (“within the wall”) within the group to function as a positive force in the public debate.

**Civic engagement**

The term civic engagement is often used to denote the contribution of religious groups to civil society. There are a great number of studies on the relation between religion - often in
its Christian form - and civic engagement. These studies consistently show a positive relation between high levels of religious involvement – measured by a variety of indicators – and individual civic engagement (see Van der Meulen 2012 for a case study, literature references and an extended discussion of this point). Compared to other forms of religious activity, regular participation in a religious congregation has the strongest influence on civic engagement. People who regularly attend worship services usually spend much more time and money to volunteering than non-churchgoing persons (cf. Bekkers 2002, Smidt 1999). Recent work by Rene Bekkers suggests that the “civic core” of Dutch society is increasingly made up by religious active persons, which is bad news for societies as the number of religiously active persons is still declining (Bekker 2011).

It is not yet known whether immigrant religious groups are just as civically active as non-migrant religious groups. Rene Bekkers and Christine Carabain (2011) have seen mixed results in their study of volunteering by different migrant and non-migrant groups in Dutch society, but the results suggest that a similar dynamic is at work: being religiously active is linked to civic participation (See Jamal 2005 for the American situation).

In our Handbook about bridge-building this aspect is especially important. We can expect religious immigrant groups to have a positive contribution to society, just as other religious groups have. However, because these groups can be expected to be less integrated in the networks of the host society, migrants might have less access to other groups and other resources.

Social capital
The term social capital is often mentioned in relation to civic engagement. It denotes the capital that is embedded in social relations. The term has gained great popularity and is used by well known social theorists such as James Coleman (1988), Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Robert Putnam (1995, 2000). The concept refers to the capital that is available in social networks.

Next to social capital, other forms of capital are used, such as human capital, which consists of the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, physical capital, which is embodied in tools, machines and other material resources, financial capital, which is often considered to be a dimension of physical capital, cultural capital, used by Bourdieu to denote skills, styles and languages which individuals have learned, and spiritual capital, e.g. theological ideals and religious views on civic engagement (see Verter 2003).
Religious communities are often seen as sources of social capital. Robert Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bridging social capital, that is social capital that exists between different communities and individuals and bonding social capital, which is the social capital that exists within communities. In general bridging capital is seen as the more helpful of the two when it comes to bridge-building and interreligious communication. This however can be criticized of juxtaposing these two versions of social capital, keeping in mind, as we argued earlier, that religious groups need to have bilingual skills in intercultural communication. Putnam himself is against pitting bonding and bridging social capital against each other: “Too often, without really thinking about it, we assume that bridging social capital and bonding social capital are inversely correlated in a kind of zero-sum relationship: if I have lots of bonding ties, I must have few bridging ties, and vice versa. As an empirical matter, I believe that assumption is often false. In other words, high bonding might be well compatible with high bridging, and low bonding with low bridging” (Putnam 2007).

Social capital and migration

Putnam (2007) has applied insights from migration studies to the social capital. He argues that immigration and ethnic diversity are in the short run detrimental to social capital, as it undermines social solidarity, creates divisions across ethnic lines and makes people withdraw from public life. “Diversity, at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us” (Putnam 2007, 151). However, based on his research, he argues that in the long run immigration creates economic benefits and creativity, if societies are able to construct shared identities, which transcend immigrant identities. Putnam (2000, 164 – 165): “… locally based programs to reach out to new immigrant communities are a powerful tool for mutual learning. Religious institutions have a major role to play in incorporating new immigrants and then forging shared identities across ethnic boundaries. … Bonding social capital can thus be a prelude to bridging social capital, rather than precluding it”.

Transnationalism

A note on the use of “immigrant” and "migrant" is in order. The term “migrant” better captures the flexibility of migration patterns. "Immigrant" suggests someone is coming from another place to settle in a new country. However, nowadays many migrants have flexible connections with the countries of residence, especially in the European Union. Migrant groups may move from one country to another because of better work opportunities, a higher change of success in acquiring visas or better access to valuable goods, such as good housing and schooling.
One of the developments in migrations studies since the mid-nineties is a focus on this flexibility with the term “transnationalism”. Nina Glick-Schiller (Glick-Schiller et al. 1995) was one of the firsts to theorize this shift from a particular focus on migration from one country to another towards a focus on the transnational dynamic of migration. The consequences of this perspective for religion have been researched and theorized in particular by Peggy Levitt (see Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004, Levitt 2004, 2007, 2008).

Although hyped language about the “transnational power” of these cosmopolitan transnational migrants (see Favell 2003 and Van der Meulen 2009) should be avoided, it is a fact that the continuing globalization has made migration patterns ever more flexible and has created new ways of connection from home country to receiving countries, but also between receiving countries. E.g. Ghanaian migrants living in Berlin might have closer connections to Ghanaians relatives and friends living in London, Amsterdam and Brussels, than with their neighbours in their own city, let alone other nearby German cities. One of the scholars tracking this dynamic for African (Christian) religions is Afe Adogame (see for example 2000).

Then there is the question of how long one remains a migrant. In the Netherlands, in policy and academic circles, a first generation migrant is a resident of the Netherlands who was born outside of the Netherlands. A second generation migrant is a resident of the Netherlands who was born in the Netherlands, and at least one of his/her parents was born in another country. Other countries may have different definitions of when and how a migrant ceases to be a migrant, but a generation perspective is very common. Third generation migrants are officially not seen as migrants, although in practice and in theory often they are identified as such. For example Moluccan Christians - who have migrated from an island that is now part of Indonesia - arrived to the Netherlands in the aftermath of the Second World War still actively retain their migrant status, even though there are now third and fourth generation Moluccans. According to Jeung (2002) migrants not always follow the traditional paths of assimilation (see Emerson and Kim 2003, Mullins 1987).

**Reasons for emigration, immigration and economic migration**

Emigration and immigration are part of normal human behavioral patterns. The main reasons for migration are political, social or economic ones, and they are also called push and pull factors for migration. The political migration is due to political persecution, the social migration is related to the social status and/or discrimination, whereas the most important form of migration in Europe is by now the economic migration.
For centuries Europe was considered as a source of emigration. However, due to the political, social and economic changes since the mid-20th century Europe has become a destination region. Until the 1990s the immigrant population of Western Europe was dominantly Asian, African and/or South American background.

After the collapse of the Communist regimes in the Central and Eastern Europe changes in the migration trends took place. Enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, and the opening of the European Union labour market for the new member states increased European migration.

Migration has effects both to the host as well as to the home country. While the host countries face problems concerning the effective integration of immigrants accompanied with the growing criticism concerning the migration policies, then emigration has become a significant social factor in several countries with post-communist past. Countries like, for example, Bulgaria, Romania and Estonia have been countries with negative migration rates throughout the 21st century. However, despite of the negative migration rates also these societies have become increasingly culturally diverse due to the immigration, and face questions as how to integrate immigrant population to the society and to the labour market as the Western European countries do. It should also be remembered, as the OECD indicators of the integration of immigrants from 2012 notes, that immigrants have different socio-demographic characteristics, and their labour market outcome is often less favorable if compared to the native-born population of the host countries (OECD 2012).

The economic motives have become the most important reason for migration, and better economic opportunities pull people towards a new country. The enlargement of the EU and the opening of the European labour market for the new EU countries have created new negative migration rates in Europe (for Central and Eastern Europe) and changed the composition of migrant population in countries with positive migration rates. Thus, for example in Norway - although not the EU member state, as well as in the Netherlands - the immigrants from Poland make up by now the largest immigrant group (Statistics Norway 2014; Statistics Netherlands 2012).

**Migration, migrant religious communities and diversity**

Migration to Europe has led to a diversification of religious options for Europeans, at least in theory. According to British sociologist Grace Davie “there are effectively two religious economies in Europe, which run alongside each other. The first is an incipient market, which is emerging among the churchgoing minorities of most, if not all, European societies, and in
which voluntary membership is becoming the norm, de facto if not de jure. The second economy resists this tendency and continues to work on the idea of a public utility, in which membership is ascribed rather than chosen”. (Davie 2006, 293). Migration plays an important role in the emerging prominence of a marketplace of religions.

Religious migrant communities can be seen as hubs in this migration process. They often function as ‘home away from home’ (Guest 2003, see also Ter Haar 1998), with important cultural, social and diaconal functions for members.

Many people think that migration to Europe is mainly a Muslim affair. However, besides Muslims, most European countries also receive substantial numbers of immigrants with other religious backgrounds, such as Hindus, Buddhists and, not to be forgotten, Christians. In the Netherlands, for instance, the majority of first and second generation migrants has a Christian background: 1.3 million, compared to 850.000 immigrants with a Muslim background (Stoffels and Jansen 2008, Van der Meulen forthcoming). This has led Phillip Jenkins – well known for his books The Next Christendom (2011), and its sequel, which focuses on the European religious situation, God’s Continent (2007) – to argue that migration will bring a “revitalized Christian presence” to the European continent, and that migrant churches will “represent the future face of Christianity” (Jenkins 2011, 98).

Whether this is true remains to be seen, but a fact seems to be that migration is closely connected to the diversification of religious options. Formerly homogeneous regions with an almost complete dominance of one religion now have other religious options available, particularly in gateway cities for migration.

However, for a long time now, Europe has been a religiously diverse region, with many ethnicities, religions and cultures living alongside each other. Many dictators, nationalists and people with extremist ideas have tried to construct myths of national and / or cultural unity that did no justice to the actual diversity in many parts of Europe. Or as Ecclesiastes warns us (ch 1, vs 9): There is nothing new under the sun.

Building bridges, interreligious dialogue and intercultural communication

There is extensive research being done with regard to the theme of interreligious dialogue. Yet, to our knowledge, empirical research in interreligious contacts at the grassroots level or intentionally created interreligious dialogue or interreligious celebrations of people in local multicultural and multireligious communities stays somewhat behind. There is not much

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1 Some parts of this paragraph are quoted from the Research report for the Dutch section of the Grundtvig CULTA project, “Building bridges at the grassroots.”
research into bridging between groups from different ethnic backgrounds or from different countries. Most of the research is devoted to intentional fora where representatives meet to discuss the differences between religions, with regard to convictions (beliefs), ideas and practices.

Local ‘bridge-building’ refers to “activities intended to increase interpersonal contacts between diverse ethnic, faith and nationality groups” (Harris & Young 2009). Interreligious dialogue is communication between groups of different religions. For the purposes of this Handbook, Intercultural dialogue or communication is defined as communication between groups within the same faith, but with a different cultural background.

As described above, the situation with regard to migration leads us to argue that, in many cases, intercultural dialogue is as important as interreligious dialogue. Christians will experience difficulties communicating with their brethren having the same religion, but coming from very different cultural backgrounds, as is the case of immigrant neighbourhoods. In the Netherlands a number of studies of Christian immigrant religious groups have focused on the intercultural difficulties that come to the fore when non-immigrant and / or settled Christian groups come in touch with new immigrant groups (See Van der Meulen 2009, Smit 2009). In Eastern Europe in particular there are also several cases with intercultural friction between Roma minorities and ethnic majorities (Vassilev 2004).

New research suggests that besides intentional forums of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, organizing intercultural communication around local community and neighbourhood issues might well be an important route to a better understanding between different ethnic, cultural and religious groups, although here also dialogue is fraught with difficulties such as unfavourable power dynamics (Phillips et al. 2014).
CHAPTER 4

THE DYNAMICS OF GROUP CONFLICT VS THE DYNAMICS OF BRIDGE-BUILDING - Henk de Roest

This chapter of the CULTA-Grundtvig project Building Bridges Handbook gives some information about the mechanisms of group conflicts. How do these conflicts start? What are group conflicts (defining characteristics)? How do conflicts become violent conflicts? Group conflicts may be latent, become manifest and linger, until a threshold gets passed and people start to fight with each other. For the competences of the leaders of local religious communities this is all highly relevant. Of course, in everyday life you know about the differences between religious groups and the communities to which they belong. You know about different beliefs, habits and practices. In an open society, these differences normally will not lead to conflicts or violence. However, research demonstrates that even in democratic, open societies, group differences can lead to rivalry, hostility and to frame the ‘other group’ as enemy. There are mechanisms at work in the dynamics of group conflicts. On the other hand, the same research demonstrates that there is also an antidote against these mechanisms. It is the knowledge that we have about conflicts that can inform religious groups and their leaders to counteract what may seem to be ‘out of control’. ‘Mechanisms’ may suggest automatisms, but thoughtful and wise leaders may use their sagely wisdom to prevent them to happen. As interpretive guides, religious leaders have a responsibility to draw on theories to understand and respond to particular situations and developments (cf. R. Osmer, Introduction to Practical Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2010, 83ff). Wise judgment is crucial to good leadership. It involves discerning the right course of action, assessing when an action is courageous, not reckless and it is required when initiatives are to be taken. It evokes thinking about proper timing. Revealing the mechanisms or patterns of group conflicts evokes the capacity of leaders to turn processes that may lead to a conflict break out into the opposite direction. Leaders of learned religious communities face a challenge. Much can be learned by careful attending what’s going on and why this is going on (Osmer, o.c. 4ff.). Therefore, in this chapter, first, we summarise research about group conflicts. Second, we suggest to swap the conditions for group conflicts in order to see what it is necessary for bridge-building.

**Group conflict: theories**

Religious loyalties are the root cause of a lot of current political violence. Political boundaries are often marked by rivalry with regard to religious convictions, habits or practices. Demographic trends and the predictions based upon them suggest that religious conflicts will not cease to exist, but will intensify (cf. Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity. Oxford 2002, 163ff.) In the long run, prognoses for interreligious
relationships are not a reason for optimism. Especially in combination with populations that are growing, become poorer and more and more disappointed, extremism will increase.

Now, evil has strong social origins. (cf. J. Alexander, ‘Toward a Sociology of Evil’, in: M. P. Lara, Rethinking Evil. Berkeley 2001, 153-173). Violence against groups is often preceded by an intensification of group oppositions. This intensification has typical characteristics. For his inaugural lecture at Leiden University, the Dutch sociologist Kees Schuyt composed an analytical scheme out of the literature, the theories about conflict and conflict containment, in order to combine as many insights as possible from different empirical research projects (cf. C.J.M. Schuyt, Democratische deugden. [Democratic Virtues]). Cleveringa-oratie (Inaugural speech Cleveringa Chair) Leiden University 2006). We think his analysis is highly valuable for interreligious, interdenominational and inter-ethnic bridge-building. Here we use it for the purpose of this Handbook and we add some of our own reflections, elaborating some of the thoughts that he brings forward.

According to Schuyt, sociological and social-psychological literature with regard to the mechanisms of ‘evil in a social garment’ amounts to converging conclusions. Schuyt mentions Staub’s research about the origins of group violence (cf. The Roots of Evil. The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence 1989) and Hardin’s research about groups with strict boundaries in which the leadership puts high pressure and demands upon the members (cf. One for All. The Logic of Group Conflict (1995), Trust (2006)). In addition Schuyt mentions the well-known work of Hannah Arendt (cf. The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951); Men in Dark Times (1955)), Klemperer (about the language of the Third Empire), Phillips (Equals (2002); Going Sane (2006)) and the books written by Italian author Primo Levi.

Schuyt also refers to James Alfred Aho’s research, for example about anti-semitism among members of extremist, right-wing groups in the northern part of the US. Aho proved that untrue and offensive information on internet websites influences inclinations of group members to violence and even murder (cf. J. A. Aho, This Thing of Darkness. A Sociology of the Enemy. Seattle 1994). Aho argues that ‘the enemy is socially constructed’, but that the enemy should also be ‘socially deconstructed’. We add, that Aho articulated three paradoxes of violence of groups against groups. First, evil is hard to distinguish from good, because evil always starts with combating or fighting a presumed ‘larger’ or ‘greater’ evil. The subject of violence becomes challenging when a group feels justified in acting violently. Violence can, for example, emerge from victimization or from the heroic quest, one form of which is the attempt to “save the world by annihilating the enemy “ (Aho, o.c., 11; Aho, o.c., 151). Second, precisely this fight against evil turns the groups in competition with one another into firm, sturdy units who by a strengthened solidarity are less and less capable to accept other information about ‘the enemy’. Dissenting opinions within the own group will also be systematically suppressed (Aho, o.c., 14ff.). Third, apart from being a projection and an object of fascination, the enemy is also an objective reality, a facticity, and this facticity of
evil should not be overlooked, as Aho adds, romantics tend to do: the other can be a repository of horrors. Aho speaks of the ‘duality of the enemy’ (Aho, o.c., 17).

Schuyt also uses Thomas Scheff’s meticulous analysis of the influence of ‘the master emotions’ like pride, shame and anger, on the origins of domestic violence, but also on the origins of violence among groups of youngsters and even on the origins of both the world wars (cf. Microsociology. Discourse, Emotion and Social Structure (1990; cf. Bloody Revenge. Emotions, Nationalism, and War). We add that in the nineties, Scheff argues that ‘anxiety’ and ‘fear’ are often mentioned in discussions of the source of conflict, but shame and its obverse emotion, pride, are hardly discussed. According to Scheff these emotions often appear in disguise, they are denied or are unacknowledged. Now, ‘each of us is conscious of the amount of attention we get from others’ (Scheff 1994, 51) and a shame response signals to find out if one is being excluded or submerged in a group. Embarrassment and other shame signals warn us when we feel too close (exposed) or too far (rejected). However, when it remains unacknowledged, shame can interfere with an angry desire to be proud, thereby paralyzing the ability and desire to reach a compromise. One sees one’s self negatively in the eyes of the other and then one protests the injustice of the situation produced by this imagination. Scheff argues that unacknowledged shame causes conflict.

Four conditions of group conflict

Combining some elements from the aforementioned theories, Schuyt arrives at four complex conditions that separately and particularly in their mutual interdependency form a strong stimulus in the direction of a destructive development of group conflicts. When these four conditions are realized simultaneously a destructive outcome of group oppositions is more likely to occur than a constructive solution.

The first condition

The first condition can be described as a dominance of collective identity over individual identities. The individual is suppressed by the collective, thereby denying or neglecting the formation or development of a personal, individual self. It refers to internal or intra-group-dynamics, a dynamics within a group. A closed group or closed community is formed, which becomes demanding with regard to its members. There is no space for deviant opinions or one’s own personal convictions. Ethnic, religious or political groups can transform into groups like these. In that case, to be a member of this group is the primary defining characteristic of the individual. It will also lead to a situation in which the behaviour, the choices and decisions of individual group members will be more and more determined by
the leaders of the group. The space for differences is small. Now, when it comes to the
dynamics, these groups can be formed from within, when strong, charismatic leaders exert
their influence; but these processes can also be influenced from outside, by external causes,
be them physical or social.

The potential for conflict between groups can be established by the extent by which
collective identities suppress personal, individual identities. When in a group or community
the collective prevails over the individual, in a conflict with another group or community, it
will stimulate group-responses that will go further than separate members would go.

**The second condition**

The second condition can be described as an intensification of group-oppositions. They
develop into 'We-They'-oppositions, often in the shape of a majority vs. a minority. It refers
to a dynamics between groups, inter-group dynamics. This intensification is often a long-
term process, with recurring patterns, in research referred to as the 'law of group-
polarization'. Polarization is the opposite of pluralism and enduring complexity.
Simplifications lead to mono-causal explanations that in turn lead to predictions.

Polarization and escalating rivalry can be recognized by:

a. Language and symbolic expressions, negative stereotypes, metaphorical
   exaggerations, defamatory labelling, and dehumanizing or demonizing images;

b. Selective and biased information about the other group, combined with restrictions
   on providing counter-information.

c. Setting up and creating historical myths and twisting historical facts.

d. Stories that communities tell themselves- especially stories about our innocence and
   their guilt.

e. The other group is regarded as a threat that should be fought, instead of a group that
   one can negotiate with.

f. An increasing fascination with the other, an obsession which dominates all other
   aspects of reality, structures relationships and reduces the nature of ‘identity’ to
   identity within the confines of the conflict.
g. We add that a ‘mimesis of desire’ (Girard) may lead people into conflict over the same object. Just because I want what you want, we can easily become rivals for the same object – whether that object is a person, a position or a quality. If human rivalry is not somehow diverted or controlled, it has the potential to escalate into reciprocal violence, in which the initial object of conflict gradually fades from view as the conflict with the rival drives the partners into mutual fascination.

**The third condition**

The third condition is the answer to the question whether values and normative meanings of objects or actions are involved, of what counts as absolutely true and sacred and what does not count as sacred. The development of value- and faith conflicts is often more destructive than a conflict about interests. These group conflicts have a different structure than conflicts about interests only. Conflicts about interest can lead to bargaining or exchange; they can be understood by using one’s rationality. We could add that religious convictions will probably lead to hostility when they are connected with social and economic interests. Usually, the influx of migrants only becomes perceived as a problem when ‘they take over our jobs’. Group conflicts also become unsolvable when groups view their demands as sanctioned, legitimized by their own religion. The rights they claim will become non-negotiable.

**The fourth condition**

The fourth and last condition can be described as ‘from conflict to violence’. Unrecognized and unacknowledged emotions (usually pride, shame, but also grief, anxiety, resentment and anger) are a crucial factor in escalating group conflicts. Many historical examples of collective violence demonstrate suppressed ‘shame-anger’-sequences. Damaged esteem or feelings of wounded pride, resentment and anger feed each other vice and versa. For outsiders they lead to sudden and unexpected outbursts of violence.

**Bridge-building**

The mirror, the turnaround of these four conditions, shows the foundation of a well-integrated, healthy society.
First, processes of peace-making and *bridge-building* start with the development of individual identity, the encouragement of learning and enabling access to all possible information. The formation of individual identities of each person is ultimately more important than the promotion of group identities.

Second, alienation between and within disputing groups causes interminable conflict. Therefore, processes of peace-making start with the discovery and acknowledgement that it is necessary to get to know and acknowledge ‘the other’. The peacemaking task is not to ‘abolish conflict’, which will remain a reality in human life, but to find ways to new social relationships in which each can recognize the other and give them a real place in life, in which rivalry is no longer decisive. Group contact is essential to reduce stereotypes. The critical challenge for peace-building is to identify those circumstances, in which passionately held, and absolutely believed, *myths* are set aside and the human in the other appears. It involves unveiling and unmasking ideological language in which ‘we-they’-schemes often occur. This entails a responsibility for each individual and each group.

Third, for *bridge-building* it is necessary to see what a potential conflict is about, whether it involves deeply held personal convictions and values. The challenge is to replace rivalry with *trust*, to listen to what people consider to be sacred to them. For interreligious and interdenominational dialogue it seems necessary to include conversations about what one considers to be sacred or non-negotiable.

Fourth, acknowledging feelings is important and since, as Scheff demonstrates, shame may be considered a master emotion, it is important to acknowledge it in intra- and inter-group dialogue. Scheff states that, under the right conditions, putting feeling states into words helps dispel them or decrease their destructive consequences. He advocates reconciliation as *an acknowledgement of interdependence* (Scheff 1994, 131) and emphasizes the importance of the *ritual of apology*. He also encourages many informal one-to-one encounters and emphasizes how significant interchanges often occur over meals or on social occasions (Scheff 1994, 145). For interreligious and/or interethnic *bridge-building* this is highly relevant: eating together, drinking tea and sharing emotions in order to acknowledge the ‘other’ contributes not only to better understanding, but it also increases tolerance and diminishes the risks of group conflicts, in particular violence.
CHAPTER 5

THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS AND CONCEPTS - Gunnar Heiene

The institutions participating in the CULTA project represent four different denominational traditions: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran and Reformed. In this chapter, we will first present the main theological positions of these four traditions concerning Church responsibility for societal problems. In the second part of the chapter, we will present some main concepts that are relevant for churches in dealing with social issues in a multicultural context.

1. Church and Society - Denominational positions

Roman Catholic Social Teaching

Building upon the theology and ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas, Roman Catholic social teaching emphasizes that man is a social being who can only reach perfection in the State. The goal of the State is the ethical perfection of man in accordance with the principle of justice, and the common good for all men. While the State fulfils the earthly goal of man, the Church represents the supernatural goal of man.

According to Roman Catholic theology, according to nature, the law of nature is the codex which we are inclined. The supernatural law of revelation completes it, but does not replace it. Through its doctrine of Natural Law, the Roman Catholic Church has laid a foundation for a broad ecclesiastical involvement in the political life. This foundation is general, but in principle the church is seen as the ultimate interpreter of the natural law.

Modern Roman Catholic social teaching is based on the papal encyclical Rerum Novarum (Leo XIII, 1891), which underlines the responsibility of the Church to address the social problems created by industrialism and capitalism. Concepts like human dignity, justice, solidarity and subsidiarity are important within the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church (Compendium, 2004, Massaro, 2012). The Church clearly has ambitions to take an active part in the development of the modern society.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) has deeply influenced modern Catholic Social Teaching. In 1963, Pope John XXIII in Pacem in Terris (Peace on earth) addressed not only the Church and Roman Catholic believers, but also “all men of good will” who were called to participating in establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and liberty. Pacem in
Terris underlines the personal character of all men, endowed with intelligence and free will, as the fundamental principle for society.

During the council, the Church’s responsibility to protect human dignity and human rights was underlined, also in the two important documents from the closing day of the council (7 Dec 1965): Dignitatis Humanae (On human dignity), arguing for religious freedom, and Gaudium et Spes (Joy and hope), a Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, addressing all human beings to take responsibility for the development of the world, and for creating international peace. Still, the Church is considered to be the soul of human society.

**Orthodox Social Teaching**

In the last decades, there have been increased efforts also within Orthodox churches to develop a social teaching based on Orthodox principles. The Orthodox concept of the common good is not restricted only to material well-being, peace and harmony in earthly life, but it refers primarily to man's and society's aspiration of eternal life, which is the highest good. This does not mean the material aspect of human existence is denied, but the acquisition of material goods is not seen as an end in itself.

The document “Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church” from the Moscow Patriarchate is an example of a recent text explaining an Orthodox position on social and political issues. Here, the subject of “church and nation” is discussed in relation to “Christian patriotism” (II.3).

Regarding the State, the document says that “in the contemporary world, state is normally secular and not bound by any religious commitments. Its co-operation with the Church is limited to several areas and based on mutual non-interference into each other’s affairs” (III.3).

The following areas are among the many areas of Church-State co-operation mentioned in the document (III.8):

- Peacemaking on international, inter-ethnic and civic levels and promoting mutual understanding and co-operation among people, nations and states
- Concern for the preservation of morality in society
- Spiritual, cultural, moral and patriotic education and formation
- Charity and the development of joint social programs
- Preservation, restoration and development of the historical and cultural heritage
- Dialogue with governmental bodies of all branches and levels on issues important for the Church and the society
As traditional areas of the social efforts of the Orthodox Church, the document mentions “intercession with the government for the needs of the people, the rights and concerns of individual citizens or social groups”.

The idea of “the inalienable rights of the individual” is based on the biblical teaching of man, according to the document, but at the same time, secularism has turned the principles of human rights “into a notion of the rights of the individual outside his relations with God” (IV.7). The document therefore criticizes a modern positivist concept of law.

**Lutheran Social Ethics**

The key concept in Lutheran social ethics is the doctrine of the two kingdoms. The main idea is that God rules the world in a twofold way. He has established two governments, the spiritual and the secular. The secular government preserves external secular righteousness and the physical, earthly life. The spiritual government helps men to achieve eternal life, and serves the redemption of the whole world, bringing the kingdom of God into being as "the kingdom of grace".

Since secular authority is ordered by God, it is not subject to the Church. On the other hand, the State should not rule the Church. The task of the State is to protect from sin, maintain external peace and prevent chaos. This cannot be done by laws alone, or by lawmaking. Without power the law can do nothing. But there is also a link between power and love.

In Lutheran social ethics, secular government includes more than political authorities. It also includes everything that contributes to the preservation of the earthly life, especially marriage and family, the entire household, as well as property, business, and all the stations and vocations which God has instituted.

In modern Lutheran social ethics -especially after World War II -the social and political responsibility of the Church has been underlined. This has been important, since Lutheranism often has taken a passive role in society (Duchrow, ed., 1977). Confronted with the political reality, Lutheran churches face a dilemma: the Church doesn’t want to confuse political action and Christian ethics, but on the other hand, it cannot ignore what happens within the political institutions. In principle, the church cannot distinguish between areas within and without the concern of the Church. The Church can be forced to take a stand to any political issue, from an ethical point of view. Therefore, the responsibility of the Church for marginalized people, both on a global and a local and national level is underlined in today’s Lutheran social ethics. The Church has to protect human dignity and human rights in our society.
Reformed Social Ethics

According to Jean Calvin, the most influential theologian within the Reformed tradition, there is only one absolute and unconditionally authoritative power, namely God's. All legitimate authority in the world is directly or indirectly derived from God's authority. All authority in this world, both civil and ecclesiastical, is conditional and limited. On the other hand, illegitimate use of power is characterized as tyranny.

Calvin uses the term Christian polity to designate a well-ordered polity. He underlines the cooperation between the twofold ministry of magistrates and pastors, both deriving their authority from God, and both charged with governing the same body of persons. The aim of this cooperation is to build up God's kingdom in the world. To make this possible, restraint is necessary from both kinds of government. But restraint is not enough. People have to learn how to act, they need discipline. For Calvin, school or discipline is the main word, while for Luther sword is the main metaphor for political authority (Höpfli, ed., 1991).

The reformation leaders were involved in the total life of their communities. Calvin himself took an active part in all areas of human life in Geneva, education, health and welfare services, refugee settlement, industry, finance, and politics. In Reformed and Presbyterian churches, concern for justice for humankind has been underlined as an important task.

The idea within Reformed churches that the government of the state should be patterned after the form of church government, was an important source of modern constitutional government, as was the belief that no one person should be trusted with unlimited power.

Traditionally, Reformed churches have had the hope that the kingdoms of this world may be brought closer to the will of God and that this would result in a better justice for all. This implies an active participation in politics among the members of the Church.

2. Theological concepts

Human dignity

Human dignity implies that human beings have an innate right to be valued and receive ethical treatment. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) in its “Preamble” speaks about the “recognition of the inherent dignity; the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. Human dignity applies to all human beings.

The concept of human dignity is important both in humanist traditions and in religious traditions. The philosopher Immanuel Kant understands dignity as related to human beings’
morality and ability to choose their own actions. Human dignity is absolute and without limits, and therefore it is impossible to exchange dignity for other things that have a specific price of value.

In religious traditions the dignity of the human person is rooted in his or her creation in the image and likeness of God. According to Roman Catholic theology, the right to the exercise of freedom belongs to everyone because it is inseparable from his or her dignity as a human person, and similar expressions can be found both within other Christian denominations and other religious traditions. Both in humanist and religious traditions, human dignity is understood as the basis for human rights and equal treatment of human beings as unique beings.

The objective character of human dignity implies that dignity is constant and equal for all human beings, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, religious and cultural background, intellectual capacity and level of functioning. Dignity cannot be treated as a relative concept, but it has to be seen as sacrosanct, inalienable and unconditional.

**Human rights**

Human rights as a modern universal concept was developed after World War II through the Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945. One of the main purposes of the UN was to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed.

The human rights are rights with a high rank, they are generally respected and the content is specific. Their aim is to protect vital human interests against serious threats and danger. Human rights are binding for politics and law also beyond the realm of positive law, and they are rights based on a common appraisal of the equal dignity of all human beings. Human rights are universal, comprehending all human beings in the world, regardless of nationality, gender, belief or non-belief, vices or virtues.

In 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) were adopted by the United Nations. Later, also some important treaties and conventions have been adopted:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT)
Human rights have been disputed in many religious traditions, but today, most religious traditions hold an open and affirmative position towards them. Usually, the religious/theological concept of “human dignity” is seen as the fundament for human rights.

**Freedom of religion**

Freedom of religion (or belief) is a human rights principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community, in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. Generally this concept recognized also to include the freedom to change religion or not to follow any religion, cf. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In a country with a state religion, freedom of religion means that the government permits religious practices of other sects besides the state religion, and it does not persecute believers in other faiths.

During the last years, freedom of religion has been a subject of religious dialogues in many countries. The Islamic Council in Norway and The Church of Norway launched a common statement in 2007, claiming that all human beings should choose their own faith in freedom: “*We do not recognize, and we want to act against violence, discrimination and harassment*” because of conversion from one religion to another. The statement also says, “*We interpret our different religious tradition in such a way that everybody has a right to choose his or her belief and religious attendance freely, and to practice his or her belief, in Norway or abroad*”. Finally, the statement underlines the need for respecting sound ethical principles in missionary work and information about one’s faith. All conversions should be based on autonomy and free decision.

**Justice**

Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues and a very important concept within ethics, law and religion, but also in everyday life. Today, justice is often seen as closely related to human rights and international relations. There is a distinction between “retributive” justice, meaning justice as punishment, and “distributive” justice, meaning justice as principle for distribution of goods. An often disputed question is about the relationship between justice and other ethical concepts, like “good”, “utility” and “love”.

An interesting attempt to develop a modern concept of distributive justice is Martha Nussbaum’s “*capabilities approach*”, focusing on the common human conditions for living a
life in dignity. She has framed a list of ten capabilities, defined as real opportunities based on personal and social circumstances:

- Life
- Bodily Health
- Bodily Integrity
- Senses, Imagination, and Thought
- Emotions
- Practical Reason
- Affiliation (Concern for other humans, Being able to be treated as a dignified being with equal worth as others)
- Concern for Other Species
- Play
- Control over One’s Environment (Political and Material)

Although the “capabilities approach” has been criticized, one of the strengths of this concept of justice is that it acknowledges inequalities by focusing on equalizing people’s capabilities, not happiness. Besides, it underlines the intrinsic importance of rights and freedoms for a person’s wellbeing, and focuses on capabilities and opportunities, not on people’s state of mind.

In Christian traditions, “social justice” is seen as an important concept that should be applied at all levels, from our small communities to the national and global level. Social justice is achieved when conditions are approved that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due. Within different Christian denominations, leaders have fought against injustice. An example is John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, who led prison reform and abolitionists movements in 18th-century England.

In our time, churches have promoted Christian engagement in anti-war, environmental, and immigration causes. At the local church level, sex trafficking, fair trade, and environmental campaigns are issues where Christians have been engaged for justice by fighting social ills. In different denominations, there is a common tendency to emphasize the root causes of what keeps people poor, hungry, and powerless. To fight for social justice means to overcome structural factors that perpetuates social injustices that cannot be overcome without broad systemic reforms.

Solidarity

Solidarity refers to the ties in a society that bind people together as one. What forms the basis of solidarity varies among societies. In simple societies it may be mainly based around
kinship and shared values. In more complex societies there are various theories as to what contributes to a sense of social solidarity.

The concept of solidarity is related to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who was primarily interested in what holds society together when it is made up of people with specialized roles and responsibilities. Durkheim described two types of social solidarity, mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Societies with mechanical solidarity tend to be small with a high degree of religious commitment. Societies characterized by organic solidarity, on the contrary, tend to be secular and individualistic due to the specialization of tasks.

According to Roman Catholic social teaching, solidarity “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all”. (John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 38). Solidarity means that each person is connected to and dependent on all humanity, collectively and individually.

**Subsidiarity**

The principle of subsidiarity is developed within Roman Catholic social teaching. In 1931, Pope Pius XI defined subsidiarity as “a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry” (Quadragesimo Anno, 80). The principle of subsidiarity has also been introduced into the EU. According to the Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union, the principle of subsidiarity ensures that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made to verify that action at Union level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level.

The principle of subsidiarity underlines the importance of decentralization, and views local communities and civil society as important arenas for human and societal development. Therefore, it warns against too strong State intervention. The role of the State is not to control everything, but to assist (giving “subsidy”) individuals and groups that need help to maintain life and existence. Similar ideas have been developed within reformed theology, especially in the neo-calvinist theology of Abraham Kuyper through the concept of “sphere sovereignty”. Also in modern Lutheran social ethics, the values of the civil society and decentralization have been underlined.
Reconciliation

Reconciliation is often defined as a process of addressing relationships that are marked by conflicts and fractures. The process of reconciliation could take place at a micro level, between spouses and within families, but also at different levels of society. Today, reconciliation is often used as a concept, which describes how to deal with violations of the past in order to create a common future. A process of reconciliation involves different related strands:

- Developing a vision of a shared future
- Acknowledging and dealing with the past
- Building positive relationships
- Significant cultural and attitudinal change
- Substantial social, economic and political change

Reconciliation is an important theological concept, describing an element of salvation that refers to the results of atonement. Reconciliation is understood as the end of the estrangement, caused by original sin, between God and humanity. Hence, reconciliation also has to do with the relationship between human beings and different groups of people. Therefore, reconciliation is a component of peace building.

Peace-Building

Peace is an important concept in Christian theology. The biblical usage of the term goes far beyond our common conception of “absence of violence.” Injustice breaks peace as much as outright war. Righteousness and justice are therefore integral to peace. Peace includes justice because peace is a relational word. Peacemaking means establishing right relations, harmony, a society where the weak are safe, where there is no oppression and injustice, where needs are met. The theory of “active peace” claims that peace is part of a triad, which also includes justice and wholeness (or well-being).

A theology of peace-building builds on the basic assumption that we are intended, as creatures of God, to live in right relationship with one another. This means that we fulfill our destiny as human beings. As we are created in God’s image, the pattern of right relationships mirrors the very life of God. The Jewish concept of *shalom*, the peace and well-being which is the fruit of living in right relationship with God, one another, and God’s creation, flows from this idea. In recent theology, therefore, the concept of *Just Peace* is seen as a new paradigm that parallels but pushes beyond the Just War tradition that has been a common position within different denominations.
CHAPTER 6

TWO CASES - Klara Toneva and Sergiu Popescu

BULGARIA

Who benefits from the Turkish policy towards Bulgaria and the proposals for amendments to the Religious Denominations Act?

Bulgaria has its own ethnic model, which is traditionally domestic and tolerant. In recent years, however, the long tradition of peaceful co-existence with other religious communities, i.e. the Muslim community - has started to crack. This can be explained by the emergence of a large number of risk factors giving rise to tensions and divisions on ethnic grounds. We will consider two of these factors, which share a common context and are the result of political acts. The first one refers to amendments to the Religious Denominations Act for returning churches and mosques to the Orthodox Church and the Mufti’s Office, and the second concerns the ambitions of Turkey’s foreign policy to build mosques and to make claims to land in Bulgaria. Both of these have led to mixed results.

The first factor is constituted by the submission of a proposal by a group of MPs led by the President of the National Assembly Mihail Mikov for amendments to the Religious Denominations Act providing for a return of monasteries, churches and houses of prayer used for divine service, including the land on which they are built, to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) and to other registered religious denominations in Bulgaria. Should the amendments be adopted, the BOC and the Chief Mufti’s Office will receive at least 20 key churches and no less than 15 major mosques in the whole country. The latter includes St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, St. Sofia Church and the Rotunda (St. George Church) in Sofia, the mediaeval churches in Nesebar, Boyana Church (a branch of the National History Museum) among others, as well as Buyuk Mosque (currently home to the National Archaeological Museum) in Sofia and mosques in Samokov, Kyustendil, Vratsa, Stara Zagora, Vidin and other cities.

What were the reactions after the submission of the proposal? The Holy Synod and the Mufti’s Office voiced great satisfaction with the proposed amendments. The Jewish religious community in Bulgaria similarly favoured the amendments since it will assume ownership of the Sofia Synagogue. The Catholic Church will also be awaiting quite a number of sites - such as the military hospital in Plovdiv and the seminaries in Varna and Yambol - as half of its former property has never been restored.
On the other hand, the local population and mayor’s offices were enraged about the proposal. A dispute arose between Parliament and the Ministry of Culture, which is concerned with the lack of the needed capacity on behalf of religious denominations to look after such property. The vague wording of the proposed changes also provoked the anger of the historians. “In Bulgaria very often a house of prayer was first a church, then a mosque, and after that once again a church” said Prof. Bozhidar Dimitrov, head of the National History Museum, quoting as an example the church of Saint Sofia, for which the BOC does not have any deed. “1,000 years ago it was an Orthodox church, then, for five centuries, a mosque, and today it is once again a church. How are they going to share it?” The case of the Rotunda is very similar; it was converted to a mosque during the Ottoman rule.

Rather special is the case of the Orthodox church of Saints Sedmochislenitsi in Sofia. It was built as a mosque in 1582 and became known as the Black Mosque. At some point between 1901 and 1903, however, it was converted to a church. The Mufti’s Office explained that they are not going to make any claims to it so as not to stir inter-religious tension. Nor are they going to claim the Archaeological Museum. In return, however, certain compensation will be expected, as well as a green light for the construction of a second mosque in Sofia.

The Chief Mufti’s Office has claimed its right to the Fatih Mehmed Mosque in Kyustendil, thus causing the protest of the local population. In fact, however, it is not functioning as a house of worship but as an architectural monument of culture of national significance. An identical case is that of Bayrakli Mosque in Samokov.

The Muslim representation has filed a claim of ownership concerning the Roman Bath in Lovech as, according to the Mufti’s Office, the site was once waqf property. Back in the day it was used as a hospital and the funds raised through charity were given to poor Muslims. In his reply to the court order the District Governor has insisted that the claim be dismissed as ungrounded.

Veliko Tarnovo Diocese has laid claims on the five most popular churches situated in the nearby architectural reserve of Arbanasi. Despite the lawsuit that was filed with the District Court of Veliko Tarnovo, if the proposed changes to the Religious Denominations Act are adopted, the churches will no longer be managed by the Regional History Museum. At present, they operate as museum sites and have been declared national monuments of culture.

Ruse State Opera is former church property; therefore, should the bill be passed, the Diocese will seek compensation. The local Mufti’s Office has not made any claims for the restoration of mosques; however, it has filed several lawsuits for waqf property.

All in all, this first factor is characterized by causing turmoil concerning the ownership of houses of prayer.
The second factor adds fuel to the fire through the dedicated effort of the southern neighbour Turkey to construct mosques. At the end of 2013 Kardzhali, which is home to a large number of ethnic Turks and whose mayor is also Turkish, became the centre of public dissent. The Turkish government has approved the donation of millions of euros for the construction of a mosque in the city, which will be the largest in the country. The anger of the Christian population was stirred by the irony that the mosque will be located in Vazrozhdentsi neighbourhood, which is named after the national revival and will be the most expensive building in the area.

Petitions and protests were initiated, a large part of which even insisting for complete ban on the construction of mosques in Bulgaria. One of these recalled Minister Erdoğan’s words of 1998, “The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers”. Special attention was drawn to the statistical fact that in a country as small as Bulgaria there is a total of 1,280 mosques, ranking it first in Europe in terms of mosques per capita. The purchase of dozens of square metres of land in the Sofia neighbourhood of Malinova Dolina for the purpose of building the largest Islamic cultural centre in the Balkans was similarly brought to mind.

During his visit to Bulgaria in mid-2013 Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ requested to the Bulgarian State to transfer the management of the architectural monuments of the time of the Ottoman Empire to Turkey. As Islamist and advocate of the restoration of the Ottoman Empire, he professed to feeling offended and saddened by the sight of the run-down architectural monuments. In his own words, during his brief stay in the country and his visits to just three cities, he had managed to cover nearly 2,000 kilometres paying particular attention to monuments of the Ottoman period. He had further carefully considered the legal status of these sites. In his opinion, it would be best to transfer their management to the Turkish state. This would enable it to look after the Ottoman heritage.

Such ambiguous political conduct caused strong public backlash. The historian Acad. Georgi Markov angrily attacked Prime Minister Bozdağ’s claims calling the situation neo-Ottomanism in action. He recalled Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s programme book Strategic Depth which outlines the Islamic Arch in the Balkans. This “depth” seems to be constantly increasing. “This is making me wonder where our Foreign Ministry is; it should stop lurking behind”. Such statements are not accidental where territorial claims are concerned. “As a sovereign state we cannot tolerate such claims and the government and the National Assembly should dump domestic bickering and unite around the national interest … The argument that Turkey would look after these monuments much better is beyond comprehension. It’s not only an issue of Turkish but also Arabic foundations. They can’t lay claims to mosques that have long since stopped acting as such. Here for example, Karlovo has a functioning mosque, yet they need another one, right next to where Levski used to live! ... We are just being absurd to the world. We need to pull ourselves together”.
As the most common causes of the situation we could mention first, the current state of the national governance, and second, the state of the current relations and the historic connection between Bulgaria and its southern neighbour Turkey. These lead to rather alarming results.

1. In addition to a unique ethnic model, Bulgaria can also boast a unique government composition. The country is currently “split” in two as a large number of the public oppose the so-called Triple Coalition (the Socialist Party, the ethnic-based Movement for Rights and Freedoms and the nationalistic party Ataka). The unusual symbiosis among former communists, representatives of the Muslim community and nationalists is also the reason for the lack of rational political decisions and proposals for changes, including changes to the Religious Denominations Act. Such would be highly unlikely as long as they are made jointly with representatives of the MRF, while at the same time Ataka is proposing a bill to ban the construction of mosques in Bulgaria.

If the proposed Religious Denominations Bill would be adopted, a number of buildings - among which some monuments of culture - will become active religious sites governed by Sharia law. The lawsuits initiated by the Chief Mufti’s Office may delay or even revoke the implementation of significant Euro-funded projects amounting to millions of leva in favour of buildings that have been declared national monuments of culture and whose management has been entrusted to the respective municipalities.

2. The Turkish foreign policy towards the countries that were once under Ottoman rule has not been analysed sufficiently. Should we allow a foreign country that is seeking to resurrect the model of the Ottoman Empire to falsify history? Does this not verge on aggression and does it not mean denunciation of the homeland by the Bulgarians? It is quite logical that this should give rise to concerns about Turkey’s controversial policy towards Bulgaria for facilitating the border crossing of illegal immigrants with unknown origin and unclear goals.

Valid accusations have been provoked against the Bulgarian government, which remains silent on the issue of Ankara’s multi-billion debt to the descendants of Thracian refugees. More and more unequivocal appeals are being voiced demanding at least an official apology on the part of Turkey for its century-long genocide of the Bulgarian people.

Bozdağ’s words loomed amidst increasingly frequent cases of destruction of Christian heritage under Turkey’s growing Islamisation. Already, several ancient Christian churches were converted into functioning mosques. There have even been claims to restore Hagia Sophia in Istanbul as a mosque.
The demands of the Turkish Deputy Prime Minister during his visit were made only several weeks after the Chief Mufti’s Office had filed a claim for over 1,500 sites of state property. This raises concerns about the possibility of prior coordination.

The proposed case study incorporates a number of contradictions and alarming prognoses concerning the future development of the situation. The latter has caused significant tension between Christians and Muslims, national and local authorities, higher clergy and believers, government and opposition. Parliamentarians must consider any proposal that has to do with a number of different faiths with extreme caution as such matters require insights into the religious and moral outlook of the individual and call for consulting the professional opinion of recognized scholars of theology and experts, as well as for extensive prior public consultation. Unfortunately, the present heterogeneous composition of the government does not allow for reaching a consensus in the making of such decisions. The same applies to the determination of the priorities of Bulgaria’s foreign policy towards Turkey. Last but not least, the case study actually shows how fragile civil society in the country still is.
ROMANIA

The social apostolate of the Church from Oltenia. Past and present

A historical perspective

The Romanian Orthodox Church was always there for those who have suffered from social injustice, being a consolation for the Romanians who put their hope in God. In Romania, the Orthodox Church was involved in the establishment of organized forms of social assistance, the bigger parishes being able to create foundations to support charity acts. These particular cases needed to be generalized through a unified action of the Church, by following a plan set in the smallest details and especially, having the coordination of the local bishop².

The institutionalized social apostolate of the Church from Oltenia³ began shortly after World War I, because back then people hardship, poverty and immorality flooded and tended to escalate. Each priest had to act uniformly, after strict rules, using the same means as everyone else. Thus, it was felt the need to group priests in a society with well-defined statutes and purposes, giving them the possibility to identify and help the neediest and to make responsible for every member so as to struggle against illiteracy, deprivation and immorality⁴. Feeling the delicate moment in the history of Romanian nation, the Church begun a social, cultural and philanthropic unprecedented work, institutionalized with strict rules, a complex work that was called “Social apostolate”. The clergy from Oltenia chose that all would work as one in a society that aimed to bring back Christian precepts in every person’s soul as a spiritual rebirth, suggestively naming their new society „Renașterea” („Rebirth”)⁵.

The Articles of the Society were settled by writing a protocol signed on October 20th 1921⁶, being afterwards printed and distributed to priests. Having initially a provisional character, the Society Renasterea (Rebirth) acquires the right of „moral person” (legal status) after it entered the Legislative Bodies in May 1923⁷.

² D. Cristescu, Life and achievements of His Grace Bishop Vartolomeiu until the age of 60 years, Râmnicu Vâlcea, p. 94 - 108.
³ Oltenia is a historical region in the South - West of Romania bounded on the East by the river Olt, on the South and West by the Danube and on the North by the Southern Carpathians. The surface of Oltenia is of 24.095 km². The most important cities are: Craiova, Drobeta - Turnu Severin, Tîrău - Jiu, Slatina and Râmnicu Vâlcea, residencies of the five counties that make up this region: Dolj, Mehedinți, Gorj, Olt and Vâlcea. It has a population of two million people.
⁵ Episcopacy of Râmnic and Noul Severin, Yearbook for the years 1921 - 1925, compiled by H.G. Bishop Vartolomeu with the collaboration of the culture and administrative directorates’ staff of the district, Bucharest, 1924, p. 1.
⁶ Ibidem.
⁷ „Gazette of Romania”, no. 55 dated June 13th 1923.
The Church’s involvement in social and cultural activities was also required by the State authorities, who fully understood the priest’s role in the community, through his training, theological and moral formation.

Establishing this company enabled all priests to join efforts so that the work of educating and enlightening the parishioners could be seen as soon as possible in the improvement of social life. This unprecedented organization and the way in which they wanted to solve the moral, cultural and social problems of the parishioners, by rising the spiritual level of the people, is totally unique in the annals of Romanian Orthodoxy, and this is an undeniable truth.

The Society Renașterea (Rebirth) had as starting point the fact that the priest was a cultural factor respected by all the villagers; he was in a permanent relationship with the teachers and with other important representatives of the community. In order to meet the ambitious aspirations of the Society „Renașterea” (“Rebirth”) priests were required to have a thorough culture in all areas of activity.

Convinced of the importance of education for young people, but also knowing the difficulties that students from rural areas faced (where most families were poor), the members of the society Renașterea (Rebirth) included in their Organization Bylaw the need to conduct boarding houses for primary and secondary course students and, in addition, founding and conducting orphanages, to relive the suffering and longing of children of their parents. Neither the elderly nor the helpless were forgotten, because they assisted them both through financial aid and labour. An important part of the society’s incomes brought by the choirs in the parish centres returned, in the form of donation, to the needy. Besides financial aid, also collections were made, with the main purpose of helping those with fewer living opportunities.

In the bylaws of the priestly Society Renașterea (Rebirth) it was provided that the Church initiated specific programs to help children and the poor population by supporting their inclusion in schools and by offering their needed daily nutrition within social or school eating houses.

This great work of social assistance should not be understood as exclusive of the clergy in Oltenia; as a matter of fact the initiative belongs to the Church that trained people with faith and moral sensibility able to help those in distress. Through these institutions the Church in Oltenia was close to its pastorated ones, assuming the responsibility to be with those who suffered from the war.

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8 D. Cristescu, Life and achievements of His Grace Bishop Vartolomeiu until the age of 60 years, p. 112.
9 Episcopacy of Râmnic and Noul Severin, Yearbook for the years 1921 - 1925 (Organization bylaws of the priestly Society „Renașterea” (Rebirth), cap. I, art. 2.4), p. 2.
10 Ibidem.
11 Archive of the Cathedral of Oltenia, package no. 5, File no. 42 / 1942, f. 9; Nifon Criveanu, Synod of the abbots and abbasses of the holy monasteries in Oltenia, in the magazine „Renașterea”, year XXII, 1943, no. 9, p. 490.
12 Archive of the Cathedral of Oltenia, package no.17, File no. 128 / 1941, f. 2 - 16.
Each eating house established in Oltenia was meant to persuade children to attend school, being also a form of assistance to the neighbours (part of the social apostolate of the priests in Oltenia). Their beneficiaries were poor children and all communities contributed to their good functioning. The local committees that administered them had the parish priest, many eating houses were directly managed by priests and others by school teachers assisted by the committee. Part of the necessary amounts came from the city halls’ contribution, from public subventions and collections, school festivities and the activity of parish Centres and parish pedlary. The church did its duty towards those in distress, especially in those hard times of war, remaining forever a pillar of support for the Romanian people.

The current situation

As far as the current situation is concerned, after Romania joined the European Union (2007), many Romanian citizens chose to leave the country to seek better paid work in Western Europe. Although there is no exact data on the number of Romanian citizens living abroad, most experts believe that their number has exceeded 3 million. Their integration in countries like Italy, Spain, UK, Germany, France, etc. has been and continues to be a hot topic. On the one hand, the influx of people coming from Eastern Europe has created some difficulties for Western governments (social and economic pressures) and on the other hand, this emigration has caused serious social cases in the country, where in many families only the elderly (retired) and minor children were left living there. In these families, the social and economic problems were immediately felt. Grandparents were not able to handle the education of children, some of them showing a total lack of interest in education or even quitting school. Another situation, even more worrying, is that of the children economically and financially abandoned by their parents. Left to work in Western Europe, many Romanian discovered that also in this part of Europe the effects of the severe economic crisis are felt: without a job, they were not able to financially support the children left in the care of grandparents. These were the premises for a genuine social and educational crisis.

In recent years, the Romanian Orthodox Church has been more and more involved in helping disadvantaged groups (children and elderly). The social programs promoted and run by the Romanian Orthodox Church in conformity with the Regulation for the organization and functioning of the national system of social assistance of the Romanian Orthodox Church, are document which aligns the activity of the territorial administrative units of the church with the principles and standards in the area of social assistance. Chapter IV, Human resources, clearly states that the "social worker’s activating in the social assistance

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13 Archive of the Cathedral of Oltenia, package no. 16, file no. 241 / 1940, f. 41; Inauguration of eating house No. 3 in Craiova, in the magazine „Renăştere”, year XXII, 1943, no. 9, p. 468; Canonical visits and inspections of His Grace Metropolitan Nifon of Oltenia, in the magazine „Renăştere”, year XXIII, 1944, nr. 9, p. 489.
14 The parish pedlary was made through the sale of icons, crosses, praying books, the raised amounts being used as funds for these school eating houses.
15 Internal chronical, in the magazine „Renăştere”, year XXII, 1943, no. 11, p. 594 - 595.
structures of the Romanian Orthodox Church must observe the provisions of the laws enforced in the area of social assistance” (art. 20) and the most important effect at the level of the practical social assistance is the accreditation of the units providing social services.

Sociological research
Knowing the involvement of the Orthodox Church in Oltenia in the social assistance of distressed people (especially children and the elderly), even before the Second World War, but also after the elimination of the communist regime (1989), a number of 15 priests from the Archiepiscopacy of Craiova were asked 12 questions whose purpose was to learn how the social apostolate conducted by the Orthodox Church of Oltenia reflects locally (in each parish), but also its relationship / collaboration with other religions (Christian or non-Christian).

For the first question, **Tell us what do you know about your local church / parish in this city / neighborhood and how do its activities evolve today. (How is it organized, etc.),** the respondents gave different answers showing that they have knowledge about the History of the Orthodox Church, including the one in Oltenia and the parish in which they serve. Most of them (9 answers) believe that the main activity of the parish must remain the liturgy gracious one, 4 respondents highlighted the importance of the parish involvement in various activities and social projects and 2 respondents felt that the priest must also be a good teacher (instructor) of the community on various issues concerning its good functioning.

For the second question, **Show us briefly how is your local church / parish involved in social issues of your local area (assistance in prisons, hospitals, orphanages, charities, voluntary associations etc.)?** The most common answer was to provide material support, (including money), to the elderly or disabled living in the parish. There were three responses highlighting the importance of giving gifts to children in orphanages and the elderly in nursing homes around major holidays (Christmas and Easter). Five respondents felt the need to appoint a priest to each prison. Also, it was appreciated the imperative permanent presence of a priest in hospitals.

For the third question, **We live in a time of major demographic changes resulting from emigration and immigration. What is your local church / parish’ position concerning this issue?**, in four cases it was emphasized the need for the priest’s involvement to support the children left in the care of grandparents (the parents being left to work abroad). Five respondents emphasized the need to involve all the authorities in creating conditions for the country to get closer to the EU standards and determine the return of those who left to work abroad. We will point out that eight respondents were worried about the negative demographic evolution of Romania.
For the next question, *How do you view other local religious (Muslim / Jewish / Other) or local Christian communities?*, all respondents emphasized the need to respect religious freedom. Only in three parishes there were identified neo-protestant religions (Adventists and Baptists).

For the question, *Is there a formal relation to these communities? If yes, describe the character of this relationship*, the three respondents characterized as being limited the relations with these communities, especially due to the aggressive proselytism practiced by them.

For the sixth question, *How does your local church / parish deal with migrants and ethnic minorities in its local area? Could you tell us about activities, programs, contacts and / or cooperation with other religious communities?*, most respondents felt that the priest has the duty to ensure firstly the establishment of correct relationships between the Romanians and the Roma minority, where it exists. Note that in seven parishes subjected to the sociological research there are no emigrants or ethnic minorities. In the other eight cases, the Roma communities have been accepted by the majority of the population and the priest believes that for the peace of the community, the Roma citizens should be economically and socially integrated, giving them the religious assistance that they request / accept. There are no ongoing projects initiated by these parishes exclusively meant for the Roma population.

Regarding the question, *If applicable in your context: How does your local church / parish support parishioners who have immigrated to other countries?*, only in three cases the respondents indicated that they keep, via the internet, a connection with some believers abroad. In other cases it was highlighted the importance of Christmas and Easter, when many of those who are working abroad return to their families and the priest has the opportunity to talk to them. Important events in the life of a family such as baptism or marriage are suitable for a priest to strengthen the spiritual connections with those members of the parish.

For question number eight, *How does the local church etc. deal with discrimination, either ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual, etc. What kind of activities, methods, programs does your local church employ on this matter?*, it was emphasized by all participants in the sociological research that there is no discrimination on grounds of ethnic, religious, cultural, or sexual reasons. Two respondents, however, pointed out that in some Roma communities we can speak of a self-discrimination, a self-exclusion from the economic, social and cultural life of the community. According to the teaching of the Orthodox faith, homosexuality and lesbianism are considered sins. But there is no action taken against these minorities, the Church reserving its right to defend its own dogmas and canons.

For the following question, *How is the official doctrine of your denomination / national church reflected on other religions or other Christian communities in your practices at a local
level? (Motivation? Inspiration? Legitimacy?), all respondents stressed the importance of preserving the teaching of faith and tradition of the Orthodox Church. To understand the other religions or Christian communities, it is necessary to know their past (history) and their attitude towards the majority religion. Only afterwards can we speak of a local practice. However, the starting point in these relations can be: mutual respect, recognition of the Orthodox identity for most Romanians, dignity, freedom, responsibility, concern for others, etc. These principles should be taught by every Orthodox priest and have normative value.

Regarding the question: In your work with people and communities from other religions, would you say your own denomination / national church supports you? What kind of support do you experience in this regard? What kind of conflicts, if there are any, do you experience?, only three respondents (where there are neo - protestant communities) emphasized the importance of involving the Archiepiscopacy in social projects or charitable actions targeting disadvantaged social groups, without taking into account their religious identity. No conflicts were reported.

For question number eleven, How does your local church / parish participate in “peace work”, such as religious dialogue, cooperation with non - Christian (secular) associations etc.?, it was stated once again the principle of religious freedom. In 12 cases, priests mentioned the Ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches, highlighting the importance of these institutions for inter - religious and inter - Christian dialogue. Among the local institutions with whom parishes frequently collaborate, all respondents mentioned the City Hall and Local Council.

For the last question, Does your local church / parish support the idea of religious freedom?

a. If yes - how does your church deal with religious freedom in your local area?

b. If not - why do you think your church is not permissive concerning the concept of religious freedom?

c. Does your local church / parish experience any conflicts with the national church body on this issue?

→ If yes: Could you tell us some examples of specific conflict issues?, all respondents stressed the importance of religious freedom, Christianity in general and Orthodoxy in particular considering freedom (of any kind, including religious one) as a gift of God. In the three parishes where neo - protestant religions were identified, priests claimed that the existence of other faiths motivated them both in performing religious services, but also especially in organizing regular pastoral visits to maintain a permanent dialogue with the believers (including with those who do not regularly attend Church).

In conclusion, in the extremely fluid space marked by the strongest economic crisis of the past 60 years, one can observe that the state and the Church became institutions undergoing major changes, while religion becomes shelter for the people in risk of social and economic exclusion. The global economic crisis which started in 2008 shows major changes
in the public policies, particularly in the social policies and now that the budget allocations traditionally administered by the State have decreased the Church may play a major role for the support of the vulnerable groups. Thus, the complementarity of assisting the vulnerable groups through social programs developed by the Church is beneficial both for the State and for the Church itself due to the predominant social - philanthropic character of the support provided to the believers during this period of economic crisis.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND CHALLENGES - Gunnar Heiene

According to the principles of peer learning presented in this Handbook, it is possible to be a part of an open, two-way reciprocal learning process where knowledge, ideas and experiences could be shared among the participants. The idea behind this project is that this sharing process could be facilitated through local training courses build on these principles. Through such courses, students could learn a lot by sharing their experiences and explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities where they can learn from colleagues.

The main aim of the CULTA project is to contribute to the development of advanced knowledge and skills of church representatives to respond adequately to the changing society, especially the challenges presented by the increased multireligious and multicultural challenges within many European countries. As the case studies have demonstrated, the challenges are quite different, due to particular national, cultural, social and religious contexts. Still, it is possible to learn from others experiences, presented either in a written or in an oral manner.

Members of the main target group for this project, priests, ministers, deacons and other church workers, could learn a lot from listening to stories and experiences shared in an open learning community. Such learning should not be concentrated on giving people a lot of information transforming them into passive recipients of facts from the teacher. Such information would probably be difficult to apply in the work environment. But still, this Handbook presents theoretical concepts, both from a sociological and a theological point of view. These concepts should not be seen as material that should be memorized, but as tools that could be used to illuminate experiences shared in the learning process. Learning is not only about applying theory on practice, but rather the other way round: When we start from our experiences in our own context, sharing the problems and challenges we have identified in our practice, we will better understand the need for using theoretical concepts as tools to build bridges and solve conflicts in our communities.
LITERATURE REFERENCES/ BIBLIOGRAPHY


