

A MISSIOLOGIST'S LOOK AT THE FUTURE: A MISSIOLOGICAL MANIFESTO FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

In many European contexts, the existence of the academic discipline of missiology, including that of ecumenism and evangelism is, according to Dietrich Werner,

fragile and precarious. Missiological institutes get closed or reduced because allegedly they are not in accordance with the core mandates of university bureaucracies or some church policies, the number of chairs for mission and evangelism has been reduced, missiology is pushed out of public universities and driven to private institutes, if at all. On the whole, the existence of the few chairs and institutes of missiology still left is still fragile and not automatically guaranteed for long-term perspectives. The voice of European missiological institutes and European solid and academic training for evangelism becomes weaker and weaker in the international concert, despite the fact that Europe would have to give and to share a lot of its historical expertise on issues of mission and evangelism. Europe does not have any major high-level research institute on World Christianity, evangelism and contemporary world mission which could compete with other centers and hubs of international research in this direction. Therefore, the voice, visibility and international connectedness of Europe at this stage are also endangered at present.¹

This missiological manifesto for the decade seeks to contribute to the ongoing conversation on the future of the church in mission in Europe with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe in the light of Werner's assessment. It is based on my personal experience of three decades living and working as a missionary and missiologist in the eastern part of Europe, but still keeping in touch with developments in my country of birth, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe, and in North America. The result is a missiological manifesto for Europe, with a Central and Eastern European bias. What I offer is a statement of vision and values, reflecting on future perspectives and challenges in six key areas.

My aim is to present food for thought for continuing the conversation within global Christianity on issues important for mission in Europe and to better understand our own biases. My hope is that this process will result in

¹ Dietrich Werner, 'Evangelism in Theological Education in Europe – 12 Considerations from ETE/WCC', in *WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe, 28-31 October 2012* (Bossey, Switzerland: WCC, 2012).

‘acquiring the posture of a missional church’² in our own European contexts, and in a true shift from western to global Christianity by taking away western philosophy-induced hindrances for the advance of the gospel. The term ‘missiological’ is chosen bearing in mind that a missiological approach is all about a critical interaction between mission practice and mission theory, which should always aim at revitalizing the church to grow in missional posture, in which biblical and theological perspectives are dominant.

In this missiological manifesto, I deal with a number of issues to help stimulate critical and constructive discussion about the future of church and mission in Europe, divided along six different themes. These themes originate from an analysis of the images of Europe used in the *Atlas of Global Christianity*.³ Each theme encompasses a number of statements or quotes with brief comments.

The Impact of Secular Values on Church and Mission

‘Business-ization’ of Mission Organizations and Churches

Mission organizations and churches in Europe operate increasingly ‘on the basis of secular business principles instead of theological principles, focusing more on output and results instead of fruits growing in a hidden way, on value for money instead of free grace, on success stories instead of sacrifice and commitment, on quantity instead of quality, on superficial quick results instead of long-term transformation and incarnation, characterized by hanging on to power instead of commitment to offering humble service’.⁴

The ‘secularized Europe’ image does not apply only to European society but also to the European mainline churches. Secularization has impacted the church by embracing secular values or value systems that have ‘affected the church, obscured her mission, and have eroded her credibility in the

² George R. Hunsberger, ‘Acquiring the Posture of a Missionary Church’, in George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (eds), *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996).

³ This chapter is based on the last part of: Anne-Marie Kool, ‘Re-Visiting Mission in Europe through Contemporary Image-Formation: A Missiological Manifesto for the 21st Century’, in *Fuller Theological Seminary: 50th Anniversary Celebration and 2015 Missiology Lectures* (Pasadena, CA: 2015). The first part of that presentation is published in Anne-Marie Kool, ‘Revisiting Mission in, to and from Europe through Contemporary Image Formation’, in Charles E. van Engen (ed), *The State of Missiology Today: Global Innovations in Christian Witness (Missiological Engagements)* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

⁴ Anne-Marie Kool, ‘Spiritual Transformation: A Reponse’, in Mark Oxbrow and Tim Grass (eds), *The Mission of God: Studies in Orthodox and Evangelical Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2015). See also John Drane, ‘Resisting McDonaldization’, in Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen (eds), *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

world', as they are opposed to Christian values.⁵ Secular philosophy has intimidated the church to conform the gospel to a system of 'humanism', therefore a call to confess a lack of discernment and discipline, as well as for an erosion of moral and social standards, with hypocrisy and dishonesty within the church, is addressed. Also the leadership is called to repent as it has more conformed to the world than acted like the disciples of Christ, in bringing in 'the ways of the world and its systems' rather than 'changing the church'.⁶ This theme was taken up in the Lausanne movement, first in 1980 and later in 2010.

The Challenge of New Religiosity and Paganism

Lesslie Newbigin stated in his autobiography: 'I have been forced to recognize that the most difficult missionary frontier in the contemporary world is the one of which the churches have been – on the whole – so little conscious, the frontier that divides the world of biblical faith from the world whose values and beliefs are ceaselessly fed into every home on the television screen. Like others, I had been accustomed, especially in the 1960s, to speak of England as a secular society. I have now come to realize that I was the easy victim of an illusion from which my reading of the gospels should have saved me. No room remains empty for long. If God is driven out, the gods come trooping in. England is a pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church.'⁷

Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, the first General Secretary of the WCC, in a very insightful paper on Evangelism among Europe's Neo-Pagans, written in 1977, concluded with the following words: '... evangelization of Europe's neo-pagans is so urgent, so difficult that it ought to have the highest priority among the tasks of the church. How many of our theologians are working in this field? How many pastors? Far too few. What courses concerning neo-paganism are given in our theological faculties and in our lay training institutes?''⁸

The question is: Do we live in a 'Christian', a secularized or a neo-pagan context? Among nationalistic, extreme-right ideologies, pagan practices reappear. A few years ago, a special pastoral letter was sent out within the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary to warn against these practices.⁹ Students tell stories of occult practices taking place among their peers, how

⁵ LCWE, *The Thailand Report on Secularists: Christian Witness to Secularized People*, Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 8 (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980).

⁶ LCWE, *The Thailand Report*.

⁷ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1993), 236.

⁸ Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, 'Evangelism among Neo-Pagans', in *International Review of Mission*, 66.254 (1977).

⁹ See online at: <<http://www.katolikus-honlap.hu/0610/neo-pog.htm>>, accessed on 3 February 2017.

they are attracted to worshipping the 'Hungarian god', because it is Hungarian. It is a form of over-contextualizing the gospel. On the other hand, the way the gospel is presented in many churches is not conceived of as relevant. It may be faithful to the gospel, but unrelated to the context. We do not get any further by following the advice of one of the bishops: 'We should not deal with this nonsense.' There is thus a huge missiological challenge in our mission and evangelism in relating the gospel to culture.

Looking Afresh at Our 'Chart and Compass'

Lesslie Newbigin emphasized, back in 1962, that our missionary methods have been too much conformed to the world in which we live.¹⁰ We need to look afresh 'to our chart and compass and to ask how we now use the new winds and the new tides to carry out our sailing orders'.¹¹ It contains the 'costly, but exciting task... of fundamental theological thinking, of Bible study, and of discerning the signs of the times'.¹²

This is what Searle and Cherendov¹³ envision as they recommend the creation of an international learning community and professional theological society as a cross-pollution and meeting-point between post-Soviet evangelical Protestantism, western Protestantism and Russian Orthodoxy, to undertake relevant research and to provide the churches with fundamental documents on current issues related to mission and missiology, etc. to reflect together on the theology of national evangelical authors of the 'global North' and the 'global South', as well as to intensify publishing activities and construct a multi-tiered system of formal, non-formal and informal education. It is the task of fundamental theological reflection combined with discerning the signs of the times.

Issues of Otherness and the Reconciling Role of Churches

From Exclusion to Embrace

One of the burning issues all over Europe is undoubtedly that of 'otherness' and exclusion, especially in Eastern Europe with regard to the 10-12 million Roma (Gypsies), but also with regard to e.g. migrants. The

¹⁰ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, 'Bringing Our Missionary Methods Under the Word of God', in *Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library*, XIII.11 (1962), 2.

¹¹ Newbigin, 'Bringing Our Missionary Methods Under the Word of God', 2.

¹² J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 11; cf. Anne-Marie Kool, 'Changing Images in the Formation for Mission: Commission V in Light of Current Challenges – A Western Perspective', in Kenneth Ross (ed), *Edinburgh 1910: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum / Pasadena, CA: William Carey / Bangalore: SATHRI, 2009).

¹³ Joshua T. Searle and Mykhailo N. Cherenkov, *A Future and a Hope: Mission, Theological Education, and the Transformation of Post-Soviet Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

changing landscape in Europe and European Christianity will probably give rise to more exclusion. Overcoming exclusion by the transformation of the deep-seated prejudices towards e.g. the Roma can only flow out of a clear focus on the message of incarnation, of reconciliation with God in Christ, and the implications in everyday life for social reconciliation. Only the Holy Spirit can work out such profound changes in our lives.

When dealing with exclusion, difference becomes the ground for considering 'the other' to be inferior, rather than understanding difference as something to celebrate, that reveals yet something else of the mystery of God present in the world.¹⁴ According to a recent study, the stereotyped image of the impoverished gypsies that was created and repeated over the centuries defines the attitude of exclusion of millions of Europeans.¹⁵ Miroslav Volf has dealt extensively with the concept of 'otherness' and ethnicity, dealing specifically with his own, Croatian, roots. He states that otherness should be placed at the centre of theological reflection. 'The future of the whole world depends on how we deal with ethnic, religious and gender otherness.'¹⁶ His response to otherness is a 'theology of embrace'.¹⁷

The Emergence of Reconciling Communities Needed

The role of pastors is to empower their local congregations to grow into open, welcoming, reconciling and missional communities that embody and radiate the love of Christ to 'indigenous' and 'strangers' alike. To enable such communities to emerge, an emphasis should be placed on the fact that we are all created in God's image, on the unconditional love of God in Christ who died on the cross for our sins to reconcile us with God, and on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Focusing on the future(s) of Pentecostalism in Europe, Raymond Pfister calls for a 'spirituality of reconciliation' to face the challenges brought about by the 'damaging effects of cultural and religious clashes'. The work of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation as the reconciling Spirit enables such a reconciling community to come into existence, defining the ministry of the Spirit as a ministry of reconciliation. In a similar way as Volf, Pfister observes that God's reconciling initiative in Christ is not limited to individual reconciliation, but extends to social reconciliation.¹⁸

¹⁴ See also Anne-Marie Kool, 'The Church in Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges', in *Princeton Theological Seminary Bulletin*, 28.2 (2007).

¹⁵ Klaus-Michael Bogdal, 'Europe Invents the Gypsies: The Dark Side of Modernity', in *Eurozine*, 24 (February 2012): www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-02-24-bogdal-en.html (accessed 23rd September 2014).

¹⁶ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁷ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*.

¹⁸ Raymond Pfister, 'The Future(s) of Pentecostalism in Europe', in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer (ed), *European Pentecostalism* (Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies), (Leiden,

Ecclesiology and Mission: Missional Church, Church Planting, Emerging Churches, Fresh Expressions

From Preoccupation with Power and Control to an Attitude of Humility

In western culture, the starting-point for mission and missiology is most often the reality of a widespread Christendom ecclesiology, characterized by a preoccupation with power, which is heightened in modern culture by a confidence of being in control of our environment, our life, and even our destiny.¹⁹ In Christendom, the church has lived for 1,500 years in a position of power. Her calling is now to let go of power and control,²⁰ accepting a minority position, and to recover the redemptive power of the gospel message as defined by the cross. Nothing less than a *metanoia* of the church is needed, a re-formation,²¹ with an attitude of waiting on God in deep humility.

A widespread search for new, contextually relevant, missional ecclesiologies is taking place in Europe.²² The reality of institutional erosion within the European churches gives rise to probably the greatest challenge of letting go of the high statistics, often with related financial benefits from the state, to accept a minority position. The question is whether the Christian churches in Europe are willing to surrender their resistance to and fear of change, agreeing instead to be transformed as a missional church to affect their own culture as well as serving the rest of the world. In this, non-western churches have much to teach us.²³

At a slightly broader level, letting go of power and control is closely linked with a process of de-westernizing Christianity. The global North is trying to hold on to power and control also in terms of methodology, while the global South seeks to communicate: 'We do not want your methods based on western philosophy as it is detrimental to the evangelistic and missionary zeal and a hindrance for others in becoming Christian. We do not want to buy the western cultural package that is often linked with your

Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2011).

¹⁹ Wilbert R. Shenk, 'Training Missiologists for Western Culture', in *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series, 28), (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 136-37.

²⁰ Drane, 'Resisting McDonaldization', 164-65.

²¹ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (The Gospel and Our Culture Series: Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

²² Henning Wrogemann, *Den Glanz Widerspiegeln: Vom Sinn Der Christlichen Mission, Ihren Kraftquellen Und Ausdrucksgestalten: Interkulturelle Impulse Für Deutsche Kontexte* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2009); Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church: An Ecclesiology of the Visible* (Church of Sweden Research Series, 7: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013); Michael Moynagh and Philip Harold, *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice* (London: SCM, 2012); Michael Herbst, *Kirche Mit Mission: Beiträge Zur Fragen Des Gemeindeaufbaus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2013).

²³ Kool, 'Changing Images in the Formation for Mission', 174.

strategies.’ This would imply a new take on partnerships between ‘South’ and ‘North’, not just on paper but in reality, with a focus on mutual learning to ‘Walk humbly with the Lord’²⁴ and with the ‘North’ to be ready to fulfil – only – the role of facilitator, enabler, in truly equal partnerships, ready to learn from the South, or from churches in post-communist Europe, on their terms! That would give birth to a framework for a real global Christianity.

On a practical level, issues like creating safe spaces, and an open learning environment, where North and South could mutually ask each other honest and probing questions without any fear of financial repercussions, should be given priority. It would require an attitude of admitting one’s weaknesses and strengths, and being ready to give and receive from each other and letting go of triumphalism and self-importance – in short, ultimately, to accept the shift from being in the centre of western Christianity to the periphery of global Christianity.

Fresh Expressions and Mixed Economy Churches

The second statement related to ecclesiology and mission is ‘Fresh Expressions of Church’, based on a ‘serving-first journey’ rather than on a ‘worship-first journey’. It is a process that starts with listening to God and to the community one feels called to serve, an act of love in itself. Out of the listening emerges service. *Being* the Good News precedes *sharing* the Good News, showing genuine concern for others. The community begins to build loving relationships and to engage in a variety of acts of service, as Jesus did, and a climate is created for sharing the gospel. This is the start of ‘incarnational mission’, allowing people to explore becoming disciples of Christ. The last step to decide on is the nature of the worship service. ‘Fresh expressions are not about planting a congregation which worships the way the planters prefer and then hoping that other people like it! Listening come first, decisions about worship styles last.’²⁵

In 2003, the Church of England published a report called ‘Mission-Shaped Church’,²⁶ out of which the ‘Fresh Expressions of Church’ movement emerged. It is spreading from the UK to Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, because of its solid theological and missiological rationale, and a clear contextual focus. Another factor that makes it attractive is that the movement is open to keeping the old and the new together in a ‘mixed economy’ church²⁷ – referring to a double strategy of making financial investments both in established churches and in the so-

²⁴ Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen, *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

²⁵ Moynagh and Harrold, *Church for Every Context*, 206-10.

²⁶ Rowan Williams, *Mission-Shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003).

²⁷ Moynagh and Harrold, *Church for Every Context*, 433-34.

called 'fresh expressions of Church'. The movement is also an exploration into a 'de-McDonaldized' church.²⁸

Apart from the 'Fresh Expressions of Church' initiative, the Gospel and our Culture Network with its focus on the missional church conversation had a significant impact on the search for new missional ecclesiologies, especially in Denmark.²⁹ Tim Keller's Redeemer Presbyterian Church has also gained significant influence in Europe through the Redeemer City to City network, because of their openness in taking the European context seriously. Recently, a European edition of Keller's Center Church was published,³⁰ with several contributions from Central and Eastern Europe, as well as a Dutch edition.³¹ Still some responded: 'Keller is very American.' From Anabaptist perspectives, a wide range of post-Christendom ecclesiologies have been published.³² They contribute to a greater religious plurality in European Christianity, albeit mainly within the 'indigenous' European churches, under whose auspices they operate.

The Myth and Reality of Migrants as 'Outsiders' Reaching Out to 'Insiders' in 'Reverse Mission'

Migration experiences in Central and Eastern Europe differ significantly from those in Western Europe. 'The opening of the political borders after the "changes" in 1989-1990 did generate migration from Central and Eastern Europe to mainly Western Europe and North America, while migration to Central and Eastern Europe through people such as missionaries, international investors, tourists, small entrepreneurs, work migrants, students and professionals had a significant impact on community formation. Typical of these migrations was that they included people from all over the world, from west and north and east and south. Since most of the post-communist countries did not have well-developed migration policies, Central and Eastern Europe became an intensely diverse field where people of all sorts with a variety of aspirations arrived and left. The

²⁸ Drane, 'Resisting McDonaldization', 156ff.

²⁹ Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, 'Missional Folk Church: A Discussion of Hans Raun Iversen's Understanding of the Danish Folk Church as a Missional Church', in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 100.1 (2012), 30; Mogens Mogensen, 'A Missiology of Listening for a Folk Church in a Postmodern Context', in Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar (eds), *Foundations for Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013).

³⁰ Timothy J. Keller and Stefan Paas, *Center Church Europe: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Franeker, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2014).

³¹ Timothy Keller, Stefan Paas and Zwany Kamerma-Bos, *Centrum-Kerk: Het Evangelie Midden in Je Stad* (Franeker, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2014).

³² Wilbert R. Shenk, 'New Wineskins for New Wine: Toward a Post-Christendom Ecclesiology', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 29.2 (2005); Douglas John Hall, 'Theology of the Cross: Challenge and Opportunity for the Post-Christendom Church', in Marit Trelstad (ed), *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 252-58; Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002).

“Yugoslav Wars” challenged some of the Balkan countries to experiment with asylum-seeking and refugee services.³³

The image of migrants as ‘outsiders’ reaching out to ‘insiders’ in ‘reverse mission’ and fulfilling a factor in the revitalization of European Christianity could in many respects be considered a myth. Most often, the so-called ethnic ‘migrant churches’ are serving as diaspora churches for their own people.³⁴ A remarkable new development is the Chinese churches’ interest in reaching out to the Roma of Eastern Europe. The second ‘mission’ they fulfil is among their own ethnic people. Many charismatic/Pentecostal churches from African and Brazilian background are focused on evangelizing the Germans, as they³⁵ consider the ‘unbelievers’ in Germany, sometimes even the German Protestant churches, as a mission field, while still only a very few migrant churches in Germany have German members. For many countries in the Central and Eastern part of Europe, the influx of migrants is a rather new phenomenon, causing similar distancing attitudes based on negative stereotyped images regarding the ‘others’, the Roma, with whom they have co-existed for centuries. These attitudes are often fuelled by a lack of adequate information and as well as by historical factors.

Promoting Mutual Learning

Speaking on the dynamics between the local and the ‘migrant churches’, Dawit Olinka Terfassa, of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Sweden, emphasized: ‘In our multicultural context in Europe today, we need to promote mutual learning between local and “migrant churches”, contextualizing evangelistic approaches to the needs of our communities.’³⁶

The challenge of promoting mutual learning starts with deconstructing the stereotyped images of migrants. Efforts to give them a face by creating informal safe spaces for story-telling, could serve as a first step. The role of theological education in teaching (future) pastors to develop innovative non-formal and informal training programmes and to create places for

³³ Call for papers for the Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies (CEEAMS): ‘Green pastures? Human Mobility and Christian Communities in Central and Eastern Europe’, Osijek, Croatia, 10th-13th May 2016.

³⁴ In her inaugural lecture, Dorottya Nagy critically addresses the term ‘migrant churches’: Dorottya Nagy, ‘Theologie-Missologie in Bewegung: Liefhebben En De Ander, Terug Naar Af’, in *Inaugural Lecture at the Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Free University, 2016).

³⁵ Bianca Dümling, ‘Migrationskirchen in Deutschland’, in *Die Zukunft der Kirche in Europa* (Greifswald, Germany: Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg Greifswald, 2015).

³⁶ Kyriaki Avtziki et al, ‘Report, WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe’, in *WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe, 28-31 October 2012* (Bossey, Switzerland: WCC, 2012).

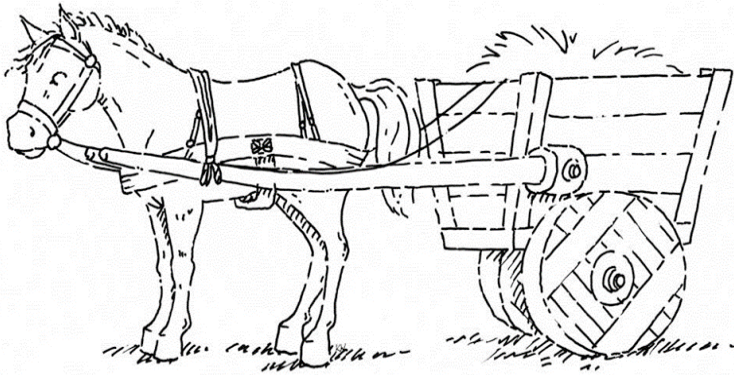
drinking 'three cups of tea'.³⁷ in their congregations in which both migrants and 'indigenous' people participate, is crucial and can help in overcoming the widespread fear of these 'unknown others' that are 'invading' us, 'threatening our level of civilization' and endangering the future of our 'Christian continent', as the majority belong to a religion, Islam, we know of only through extreme Islamic movements.

Towards Inclusive Communities and Creative Local Partnerships

Bianca Dümpling emphasized that the formation of such creative local partnerships contains many challenges, as the horse-and-cart images below show us.

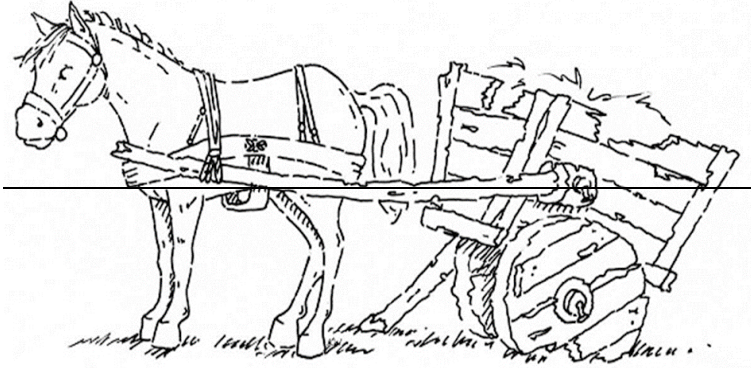
'A farmer wants to bring his hay into the barn before the rain. For this purpose, a horse and cart stand at his disposal. The horse stands for the living elements, the people, their relationships and their vitality. The cart stands for the infrastructure, organizational structures, knowledge of culture and society, the level of education and access to resources.

'Ideally, this is how it looks. The horse is healthy and the cart is intact. The farmer can bring his hay to the barn without difficulty. But the reality is often removed from this ideal case:



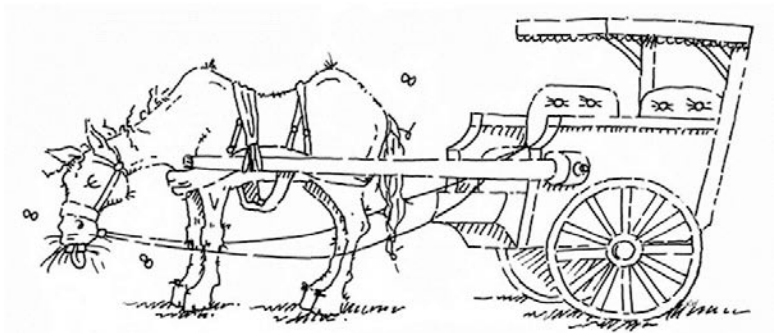
'The situation of migrant churches is similar to this picture:

³⁷ Greg Mortenson emphasized the importance of a relationship-focused approach over and against a project-focused approach. Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations – One School at a Time* (New York: Viking, 2006).



‘The horse is often strong, there are vital communities, and committed people. But the carriage has more or less broken down. Some migration churches have their own accommodation, while others rent it. Other migration churches often hold their worship services as guests in state or free churches, but even then they can barely afford the rent. Add to this the fact that few congregations can pay their pastor as migrants’ qualifications are often not recognized, as only low-paid jobs are available to them.

Now here is the image that rather describes the situation of the German Protestant churches:



Some German Protestant churches do face challenges. However, unlike the migrant churches, they have a well-functioning carriage: strong organizational structures and access to a variety of resources. Here it is rather the horse needs the support. The reality of the German Protestant churches is that there is only a small number of active members in the communities and their overall number decreases steadily.³⁸

³⁸ Bianca Dümling, *Migrationskirchen in Deutschland: Orte Der Integration* (Lembeck, Germany: 2011).

Both indigenous and migrant communities face the quest of becoming inclusive communities, reaching out to each other and joining hands in shaping the missional work of the church.³⁹ The migrant communities are often strong, vital communities, with committed people, but they face challenges related to finding affordable facilities to hold their worship services and paying their pastor as the qualifications of migrants are often not recognized, so only the low-paying jobs are available to them. Also 'indigenous' communities do face challenges. However, unlike the migrant churches they have strong organizational structures and access to a variety of resources. The reality is that there is only a small number of active members in the communities and their overall number decreases steadily.⁴⁰

How could migrant churches be strengthened in their needs and the indigenous churches be cared for? To strengthen the other does not mean to know everything better, to patronize him or her or to forget about oneself. The question is how then can a local partnership be lived out, in mutually strengthening each other, learning from each other? What theological clarification processes are important in such a local partnership? Which prejudices need to be overcome? Where are repentance and reconciliation needed?

The Roma at Europe's Periphery: An Unknown 'Revival'?

The religious landscape of Europe is changing significantly, also with a surprising growth of independent churches. Many of Europe's 'outcasts', the Roma, belong to the Charismatic-Pentecostal tradition. Only recently has the sociology of religious studies taken an interest in Gypsy Pentecostalism.⁴¹ Missiological and theological perspectives are still completely lacking. It is time to confess and to take steps to fill this gap.⁴²

Periphery Reviving the Centre?

The Hungarian theologian Ferenc Szucs stated more than a decade ago that involvement in reaching out to the Roma may have a renewal effect on the church, because it compels the church to reflect on issues of Gospel and

³⁹ Avtzki et al, 'Report, WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe'.

⁴⁰ Cf. Dümling, *Migrationskirchen in Deutschland*.

⁴¹ See e.g. David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh (eds), *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity* (Pieterlen, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2014); Miroslav A. Atanasov, 'Gypsy Pentecostals: The Growth of the Pentecostal Movement among the Roma in Bulgaria and the Revitalization of Their Communities' (PhD dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2008).

⁴² See also Anne-Marie Kool, 'Eastern European Churches Engaging Roma People: Historical and Missiological Perspectives', in Corneliu Constantineanu et al (eds), *Mission in Central and Eastern Europe: Realities, Perspectives, Trends* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 34), (Oxford: Regnum, 2016).

Culture. It requires them to reflect on how to translate the gospel in the mindset of the Roma, whose culture is so far removed from that of the Reformed Church. He anticipates that this would at least ‘stir up the dead waters of our *Volkskirche*’ (people’s church), because it is the greatest mission challenge we face. If the churches do not involve themselves, this social bomb is going to go off right in our midst, and the consequences are unforeseeable.⁴³

Relevant Research Needed

Collaborative, relevant research is needed to find key local Roma figures that have played and play a role in the growth of Roma Christianity. We need to get to know them, writing up their life story, and honour their lives. They are virtually absent from the standard scholarly reference works.

We know little about the revivals going on in France and Spain, but also in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Finland and Russia. There is little written material about the Roma Christian communities themselves, and their Roma pastors. There are no dictionaries, encyclopaedias or handbooks with descriptions of the Roma church fathers and mothers, just as till recently there was little on African church history, apart from what had been written exclusively from the perspective of missionaries and their supporting churches, which gave little or no attention to the role of the Africans themselves, in bringing the gospel to their people.

Giving Roma Christianity a face, taking steps towards getting to know Roma church history, will not only be beneficial in teaching the Roma churches, but will also help the majority society to move from image to reality. In this process, a key notion should be: Nothing about us without us.

The Role of Missiological Education in Revitalizing and Transforming European Churches and Societies

Although the academic discipline of missiology was born in the context of Europe, the paradox is that the discipline is ‘currently... in a fragile state of existence... [while] application of basic missiological principles for our own... context, is still a great need and only very partially fulfilled and realized within the European context’.⁴⁴

The churches of Europe are in great need of leaders who are willing to incarnate a Christlike, serving attitude rather than clinging to power, and who are able to articulate a Christian worldview and live accordingly. Agents of transformation and innovation are needed, well-equipped to deal

⁴⁴ Werner, ‘Evangelism in Theological Education in Europe – 12 Considerations from ETE/WCC’.

with the burning issues of their contexts, like the churches' response to otherness and exclusion, nationalism and ethnicity, while the revitalization of the churches into missional communities – which communicate the gospel in a relevant way to the de-churched (nominal) and un-churched people and radiate reconciliation in church and society – is needed no less. Jason Ferenczi's vision for theological education in the former Soviet Union is relevant to the whole of Europe, to 'develop leaders who can articulate a Christian worldview in the context of extremely pluralistic societies in a way that answers the deep spiritual questions of a highly educated population'.⁴⁵

The question is: what curriculum for missiological education is needed to play a role in the process of revitalizing and transforming European churches and societies, and why – focusing on the importance of relevant research of the context as a basis for developing a truly contextually relevant dimension of missiology that can address the issues at stake in Europe and European Christianity. Innovative, multi-tiered programmes and teaching methods could stimulate and facilitate critical, missiological reflection on mission praxis as well as missional learning and formation. The challenge is to investigate what kind of innovative structures could offer a safe space for acquiring knowledge and for facilitating learning processes to take place.

A Missiological Curriculum to Face European Realities

A missiological curriculum to face current European realities should be contextually relevant, theologically solid and spiritually sound, reflecting a multi-directional focus to prevent it from becoming either overly provincial or overly global. In addition, priority should be given to dealing with migration issues and ethnic minorities – like the Roma in Hungary and Central Europe whom many consider to be a 'time bomb' within our societies – as well as Islam in Europe.⁴⁶

The learning process should start with a 'missiology of listening', 'a missional mindset to listen to the context, to find ways to love and serve in a holistic and incarnational way'. It should be followed by a thorough contextual analysis of particular issues, e.g. issues related to the local European reality and modern culture, and the changing religious landscape or the institutional erosion of European churches. Finally, it should then move on to exploring what biblical/theological themes address this issue.

⁴⁵ Jason E. Ferenczi, 'Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union: Some Recent Developments', in *Religion in Eastern Europe*, XXI.6 (2001), 1.

⁴⁶ Cf. Kool, 'Changing Images in the Formation for Mission', 173; and Anne-Marie Kool, 'From Marginalization to Revitalization: Missiology's Contribution to the Renewal of Theological Curricula of Theological Institutions in Eastern European Contexts', in Mihai Malancea (ed), *Evangelical Mission in the Eastern Orthodox Contexts: Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine* (Chişinău: Universitatea Divitia Gratiae, 2013).

An important challenge for a missiology for Europe is developing a contextual theology of evangelism.⁴⁷ Rather than putting our trust fully in 'horses and carriages', in management principles and new strategies, the focus should be on exercising great humility in using strategic planning and looking to the future with much hope, 'trusting the ability of the gospel to be incarnated in the midst of much chaos'.⁴⁸ Priority should be given to strategic thinking, rather than strategic planning, which means first of all 'theologizing' to undergird mere activity.

The curriculum should also give attention to practising and strengthening personal and corporate spiritual disciplines like prayer and Bible reading. Furthermore, it should teach pastors and Christian leaders to empower the laity. Apart from formation for mission aimed at the local church and its leadership, it should focus on reminding the local congregation that it is part of a worldwide community.

Stimulate Relevant Research in Mission and Evangelism-Related Issues

Co-ordinated efforts to strengthen relevant research and develop joint European research projects on issues of mission and evangelism, with initiatives to assist young scholars and pastors to write up their research for publication in so-called writing weeks should be explored and implemented.⁴⁹

In Europe we need to embark on painstaking contextual approaches that are not easily measurable, or developing contextual educational programmes, while keeping a clear theological and biblical focus. Relevant research is needed to make this happen. However, the pragmatic bias and dominance of quantitative factors in church and mission do not favour the slow and often costly production of contextual textbooks on mission and evangelism-related topics and the financing of the research needed for it. Translating a book from English is often considered more efficient. That is true in the global South,⁵⁰ but also in Central and Eastern Europe. It is much easier to raise funds for short-term projects that are easily quantifiable, for emergency aid or for church-planting projects, with a more or less clear output. The result is that relatively little is known about dynamic and innovative initiatives in mission and evangelism taking place in the eastern part of Europe. Those who have the experience, skills and qualifications to

⁴⁷ Avtzki et al, 'Report, WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe'.

⁴⁸ Birger Nygaard, 'Strategic Reflections Coming out of the Present Predicament for Christian Mission', in Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen (eds), *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 44-45.

⁴⁹ Cf. Avtzki et al, 'Report, WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe'.

⁵⁰ J. Samuel Escobar, 'Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future at the Turn of the Century', in William D. Taylor (ed), *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue* (Globalization of Mission Series), (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 111.

research and write up these mission practices in order to draw out the lessons for their own context, correct the existing images of European Christianity and enrich European and global Christianity, are overloaded in their ministries, and do not have the quality time or access to the relevant e-resources, that are so easily available in the university libraries of the West.

Innovative Teaching Methodologies

Innovative teaching methodologies are important as we try to relate to the Millennial Generation or Generation Y. This teaching methodology is all about teaching students first to ask questions and to listen, leading to understanding the (world) view of someone else instead of formulating quick judgements.

This teaching methodology helps them to realize that there is more than one (often stereotyped) image to capture reality, and that there are multiple images that can each have validity. Learning is more than just gathering information; it starts with reflecting on the teaching material and being changed by it. In this way, students turn into agents of transformation for their churches and societies.

Develop International and Interdenominational Learning Communities

Developing international and interdenominational learning communities, places for missiological education and missional formation for people from different backgrounds, including migrants, where integrity in the way theology is done and lived out through spirituality, is key – and in which the art of honouring each other by asking questions is practised. It is important that different cultural and theological perspectives are brought together for both the student body and faculty. Innovative structures are needed to provide a safe space for this process of acquiring knowledge and facilitating learning processes to take place.

A recent consultation on evangelism in theological education and missional formation in Europe addressed an urgent call to church leaders and leaders of theological institutions to give missiology and the teaching of evangelism a substantial place in the curriculum.⁵¹ The paradox is that the current academic and church climate in Europe does not favour responding to this call, despite the current challenges of Europe and European Christianity. The time has come to establish innovative structures that resemble a 'starfish' rather than a 'spider':⁵² network organizations that maximize on flexibility, co-operation and the sharing of resources.

⁵¹ Avtzki et al, 'Report, WCC Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe'.

⁵² Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (London: Portfolio, 2007).

Provision should be made for the establishing of a fund that could offer stable, long-term teaching and research positions in missiology and evangelism, with the partners actively participating in the accountability structures.

Such network organizations should closely co-operate with established theological institutions as they are the place where the formation of missional leadership for the church takes or should take place, although they are often geared at achieving individual academic ‘success’. Alternatively, there should be a focus on the training of pastors, helping them to lead their church community and its members to live ‘worthily of the gospel’, to expose the idols of modern culture, to bridge differences, to reflect critically on the culture, and to be examples of the love and grace of Jesus Christ in their families and in the market place.

At the same time, it is important expose to the colourful worldwide body of Christ, the vital models of missional churches on other continents, with the persistent question in mind of how these experiences can cross-fertilize their own European context.

Conclusion

In this missiological manifesto for the decade, my aim was to contribute to the ongoing conversation on the future of the church in mission in Europe with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe. I have offered a statement of vision and values, reflecting on what I consider to be the important future perspectives and challenges in six key areas: the impact of secular values on the church, issues of otherness and reconciliation, ecclesiology and mission, the myth and reality of migrants as ‘outsiders’ reaching out to ‘insiders’, the Roma at Europe’s periphery constituting a ‘revival’, and the role of missiological education in revitalizing and transforming European churches and societies.

My hope is that a practice of drinking ‘three cups of coffee’ in one of the many coffee places round Central and Eastern Europe, whilst asking questions in relation to the themes offered in this missiological manifesto, will stir up a process that will result in ‘acquiring the posture of a missional church’⁵³ in our own European contexts, and in a true shift from western to global Christianity by taking away western philosophy-induced hindrances for the advance of the gospel. In this missiological manifesto I have dealt with a number of issues to help stimulate such critical and constructive discussion about the future of church and mission in Central and Eastern Europe that may also spill over to other parts of Europe.

⁵³ Hunsberger, ‘Acquiring the Posture of a Missionary Church’.