

**European Churches' perspectives on mission among
Roma people**

Lecture notes

**European Churches' Perspectives on Mission work
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Chapter 1: Pittsburgh I: Exploring Images and Identities: a missiological perspective

1.1. Intro

"Blatant racism continues to blight the life of Europe's Roma people, who remain far behind other communities", according to a new report published earlier this year. The 47 state, 254 page survey confirms that Roma and Travellers are still denied basic human rights. "They remain far behind others in education, employment, access to decent housing and health. Their average life span is shorter and infant mortality rates are higher compared to other groups." The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights releasing the report hopes that it encourages discussion "focusing on what must be done in order to put an end to the discrimination and marginalization they suffer and to foster their social inclusion." He also recommends that "truth commissions be created... to establish the historical facts concerning the atrocities committed against the Roma people."(Hammarberg, 2012)

Terminology

This is the first time you hear me use the term Roma. In various contexts and languages they are referred to with different names. The official term used by the EU is Roma. When quoting I will use the terminology of the different authors.

1.1.1. Walls and Doors?

On walls and doors

For many years the Berlin Wall has been a metaphor for the separation of Europe in East and West. In 1989 the Iron Curtain fell, opening the door to freedom.

I am very glad that this the invitation for this event pictures a wall and a door, a closed door! For many belonging to the Roma (Gypsy) minority many doors remain closed: to the functional systems of education, to housing and to health care and to employment.

There is a growing consensus that one of the main reasons is discrimination or anti-gypsyism. E.g. (Haupt, 2009a) They meet with a wall of exclusion.

I wonder whether the wall and the door on this picture belong to a church, to one of the European Churches. It may well be. Churches are part and parcel of society, and have in some cases played an active role in excluding the Roma.

When you take a closer look at the door you see a key. I am convinced that the European Churches do have access to the key to unlock this door, but it seems that this key is lost.

In these presentations I will draw on missiological principles established by Andrew F. Walls in a first attempt to unlock the door, to gain a new perspective, a new outlook and vision on this missionary challenge at our doorstep.

The theme we deal with is huge, the lock is very "rusty", we meet with resistance and fear, but we will make a first effort to unlock. Possible there are newer churches, with newer doors, more flexible to open.

1.1.2. PCUSA involvement with Roma in Europe

PCUSA

In 2001 a delegation of Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship of the PCUSA led by Duncan Hanson and the late Harold Kurtz to explore possibilities of holistic capacity building through Roma leadership training in Hungary and Ukraine. At that time apart from a few pioneers the "Roma problem" was hardly on the agenda of the Reformed Churches in these countries. Now, just over ten years later, through the perseverance of Burkhard Paetzhold, as the PC (USA) regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe, "Working alongside Roma in Christ's Name" (Paetzhold, 2011) supported by the prayers of many of you, especially of Presbyterian Women with their Ten days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma campaign in 2011 changes are visible.

The challenges have not changed. The situation is probably still "one of the most important political, social and humanitarian questions in today's Europe". Quoted in: (Paetzhold, 2011, 14) But through the efforts of Hungary, that hold the EU presidency the first half year of 2011, Roma integration was put high up the EU agenda. The Hungarian and European Churches played an important role in this.

1.1.3. Roma „issue” now European challenge due to EU enlargement

In preparation for the enlargement of the EU in 2004 with ten former communist countries, many in the Western part of Europe feared a massive East-West migration of poor Eastern Europeans (read Roma (Gypsy)). In 2005 a Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 was launched, the results of which hardly can be seen, according to the Roma scholar Ian Hancock (Hancock, 2010). According to some the huge financial subsidies rather had an opposite result. (e.g. (Haupt, 2009a). The "social time bomb" continues to tick (Szűcs quoted in (Kool, 2007, 149).

1.1.4. EU needs the European Churches

"Europa braucht die Kirchen"

Last month the President of the German Parliament, Norbert Lammert, emphasized that Europe needs the Churches. Referring to former EU Commissions president Jacques Delors he said that the "Soul of Europe" is vital for the European Union. According to Lammert the modern societies have the tendency to diminish the importance of religion in solving their problems." (IDEA, 2012) It is remarkable that a politician makes this statement in a context where, like in your country, church and state are strictly separated.

1.1.5. Response of European Churches?

Many local, often independent initiatives in "Gypsy mission" had been in place for a long time, with varying "results" and with the sacrificial commitment of many a lonely worker.

In the 1990ies, parallel to the developments in the European Union, with the Roma "issue" gradually shifting from a local and national level to an international, European level, the European Church bodies gained an interest in Roma inclusion. Increasingly the European Churches participated in and supported and implemented the EU strategy at local level.

In the meantime, almost invisible for many of the traditional churches, as these developments took place "at the other side of the ecclesial fence", outside of the official ecumenical circles, a revival is taking place among the Gypsy Pentecostals in France, and Spain, but also in Bulgaria, resulting in transformed communities.

1.1.5.1. Haupt thesis

The Austrian Romologist Gernot Haupt observes that the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 is not proving much results (Haupt, 2009a, 7), often due to lack of initiative and cooperation of the Roma, who have fallen in a kind of lethargy after many centuries of marginalization. However, it seems that decisive changes in the social and personal attitude are reported from those Roma, who have joined evangelical or Pentecostal groups.

Haupt therefore formulates his thesis as: „religious worldview orientations, which have till now been completely eliminated from the planning and considerations of development and charity programs do have a decisive influence on their effectiveness and success."(Haupt, 2009a, 30)

This thesis is supported by looking at EU research in the field, e.g. at the number of pages of the chapter on "religion" in a book published by the Council of Europe on Roma in Europe, by Jean-Pierre Liégeois, a highly respected Romologist of the University of Paris. This book is considered to be a "basic text" for teacher trainers, students, social workers, representatives of local and regional authorities "who need to increase their awareness of Roma/Gypsy issues or wish to be better informed" (Liégeois, 2007, 9). Four pages out of a book of 285 deal with religion! He recognizes the transformational effect of the Pentecostal movement, "offering both refuge and renewal through salvation... bringing energy and hope to certain communities." (Liégeois, 2007, 79), but still does not give more space to a religious perspective.

1.1.6. Missiological perspective as theoretical framework

In the title of my presentation I have on purpose included the concept of "mission among Roma people". The first reason is, that this concept is widely used in Hungary in the Reformed Church to which I belong.

The second and most important one is, that I would like to explore whether a missiological framework could offer new insights in "dealing" with the Roma people which are culturally so distant from the "white" European Churches. It seems that there is an **embarrassment to act**, a lack of experience in crossing cultural divides among the European Churches.

Kwame Bediako sees the missionary enterprise as part of a benevolent Western movement to elevate the condition of African peoples (Bediako in Ferdinando (2007), 122). So Christianity was spread with a Western cultural package. Conversion was not only embracing a new Christian identity, but also implied accepting the culture of the West, and thus accepting a Western identity. To become a Christian was to become in some sense European, which was different than Paul's principle of becoming the Jew a Jew and the Greek a Greek. There was no possibility of translation of the Gospel in African categories, and adopting an African Christian identity. There was no possibility for indigenization. The process of the gospel to take root in African soil is now going on as many African theologians seek to respond to issues in African culture from a Gospel perspective, turning theology into African theology, with relevance for the African mind.

Andrew F. Walls (Walls, 1996, 7-9) observes in the course of the spread of the Gospel two principles can be discerned.

The first one is the "indigenizing" principle, the other being the "pilgrims" principle, both having their roots in the Gospel itself. The essence of the indigenizing principle is "that cultural conditioning that makes us feel at home in one part of human society and less at home in another." Walls emphasizes that "no group of Christians has therefore any right to **impose** in the name of Christ upon another group of Christians a set of assumptions about life determined by another time and place." (Walls, 1996, 8) Imposing a Western brand of Christianity on Africans did not result in a "place to feel at home".

The second principle that throughout Church history is in constant tension with the indigenizing principle is the "**pilgrim**" principle. "Not only does God in Christ take people as they are: He takes them in order to transform them into what He wants them to be." In practice it means that to be faithful in Christ will put a Christian always "out of step with his society". According to Walls the indigenizing principle associates Christians with the particulars of their culture, the pilgrim principle is a universalizing factor (Walls, 1996, 9).

These two principles could help define our understanding of the concept of "mission", and help analyze, compare and evaluate the European Churches' perspectives on mission among the Roma people. They help us understand the tension between the Christian identity of the European Churches and their complex relation to the Roma identity and culture and the relationship to their own Western identity and culture.

Elsewhere I have argued that one of the main challenges of the European Churches is to redefine their participation in mission from a passive role to an active one (Kool, 2009). It is not anymore the individual missionary sharing her Christian identity, being involved in mission work in other continents supported by the churches 'at home', but now the European Church itself is called to be live out their Christian identity and call others to conversion as missionary and embark of the difficult task making a home for the Christian faith in the own Western culture, and being an facilitator of doing the same in the complex

Roma culture. Sure is, that there is a wealth of experience hidden in mission history as to how the transmission of the faith in other cultures has taken place.

1.1.7. The main objective of this paper

The main objective of these missiological lectures is to

1. to explore images and identities of the Roma and to get insight in the major challenges related to the Roma in the European context and
2. to map the responses of the European churches as well as
3. To understand the perspectives of European Churches on mission among Roma and explore what a missiological perspective could offer.

1.1.8. State of the Question

Thomas Acton, referring to a publication with conference papers on the Gypsies and the problem of identities, considers it "the most important message of this entire collection - that historical investigation, study and knowledge are not optional extras,... but vital for any group or individual seeking self-determination... if political practice, community activism, and policy planning are to change rather than reinforce the deeply embedded structures of Romani - gadjo misunderstandings they have to be grounded in a profound understanding of how Romani - gadjo relations have developed." (T. Acton, 2006, 30)

Morton Kjaerum, of the European Union Agency for Fundamental rights reminds us that "In many Member States there are a multitude of Roma inclusion strategies and policies. However, they sometimes address myths and prejudices rather than reality, because surprisingly little data has been collected on the Roma by national governments. But how can policymakers hope to develop effective policies without knowing the situation on the ground?"

What I present you today may look more like a **first draft of a European wide, collaborative, interdisciplinary research project** of three years with five universities on Church and Roma, similar to that on "Churches and European Integration" at the university of Helsinki a few years ago.

Studies have been published on the Roma (Gypsies) from an anthropological, sociological, cultural, human rights and human development perspective. However, Haupt observes there is a striking gap in dealing with the issue from a religious perspective. Only recently (2009) a ground-breaking study was published of the Pentecostal movement in Bulgaria on Bulgarian Roma, a first scholarly text written from the perspective of a Pentecostal missiologist, Miroslav Atanasov Atanasov.

In general it could probably be said that European Churches' involvement with the Roma could probably more be characterized by action than by reflection.

In this lecture I will focus on the situation after 1989.

1.1.9. One-sidedness of research?

The gaps in the research of the topic of my lectures are significant. One may say, it is still impossible to come to conclusions, because there are not enough relevant data on the

table to evaluate what the European Churches have undertaken in relation to mission work among the Roma. In a sense I fully agree.

My observation is that for a number of reasons the Roman Catholic Church has undertaken more research, so more can be said from a Catholic perspective. The same is true e.g. with regard to the situation in Germany. During the last one and a half decade the research into the field of anti-gypsy-ism started as a way to come to terms with the past of World war II Gypsy persecution in the concentration camps.

The area of research is complex, because it comprises many languages, but is also sensitive as the research of the German situation shows. Racism is still very strong also within the European churches.

Still: I have chosen to move ahead with this theme, because of the urgency of the matter: the increasing tensions in the European societies, the decrease of the standard of living of many Roma, especially in Central and Eastern Europe.

1.2. Exploring images and identities: who are the Roma

In the remainder of this lecture I will seek to explore images and identities of the Roma and to get insight in the major challenges related to the Roma in the European context.

Larger context

As we try to define who the Roma are, it is important to realize what they have gone through during the last 500 years or so. They look back on a history marked by centuries of slavery and forced nomadism, severe persecution during Worldwar II when 500.000 Roma died in the concentration camps, without any compensation for those who survived. Following the changes in 1989 many lost their jobs due to the fact that factories employing unskilled workers were closed. They are considered by many as the losers of the transition in the Central and European region.

However, it should be emphasized that the Roma are not only victims of discrimination, but also actors, harming many in the majority society, through their acts of criminal acts.

An important question is, how this situation is reflected in the media

1.2.1. Media images

Media images

"Gypsies Leave France Amid Crackdown on Illegals" was one of the many heading in August 2010. Only a month ago "France Dismantles Camps, Deports Gypsies". Helen O'Nions referred to the compulsive Roma expulsions and Discrimination as the "Elephant in Brussels". (O'Nions, 2011) What comes to mind when we hear the word "Roma"?

Morton Kjaerum of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

observes that the picture that emerges from media reports is that Roma migrate from the Eastern parts of the EU to settle in the West and North. There they tend to come into conflict with the authorities and the locals when settling in sometimes illegal settlements. It is common to read articles focusing on petty crimes committed by some Roma and of repeated violent attacks against Roma people. "Do the headlines give us the full picture of everyday life for the ten to twelve million Roma in the EU? Of course not. For a start, the vast majority do not migrate to other countries, and there are hardly any nomads left among today's Roma. Furthermore, being Roma does not inevitably mean a life of discrimination and marginalization. I have met Roma teachers, doctors, professors." (Kjaerum, 2012)

What often does not reach the front pages are headings as: Christianity Thrives among 'Gypsies', or "In France, An Evangelical Gypsy group shakes up the immigration debate" - shortly after the expulsions in August 2010.

1.2.2. The different faces of the Gypsy

The different faces of the Gypsy See also (Liégeois, 2007, 159-170)

1.2.2.1. Who are the Gypsies?

Who are the Gypsies?

For a long time Gypsy scholars have debated to define who the Gypsies are. John Sampson (1930) for example did not speak about facts, but about facets. David J. Nemeth reminds us that "discovering an 'e' in the facts of Gypsy identity is part of the maturation of Gypsy scholars, a humbling experience, and earned mainly through acquiring intimate knowledge of both Gypsies and Gypsy studies" (Nemeth, 2003, 111).

The images that first come to mind are often related to where the outsider or non-Gypsy is from.

For some it is that of the nomadic Gypsy lifestyle, of "romantic, free-living and free-loving Romanies: a dark, mysterious people living in dingy dells and following a natural, rural way of life, in communion of Nature, and unchanged over time". They are seen as a race of people separate from the local, native-born inhabitants, either settled or itinerant. It is an image where harmony and order dominate, and in which the Gypsy is seen as a "welcome anomaly and anachronism in modern society" (Mayall, 2004, 1).

For many others, especially in the Central and Eastern part of Europe the cartoon image of a Gypsy is "lying, thieving, dirty bastards", not so much the nomadic, traveling lifestyle, but one of "criminality, parasitism and deceit... a threat and danger to health, property and person" (Mayall, 2004, 1). This image is rather one as Gypsies seen the outcasts of society, who are unwilling to pay taxes or to educate their children. It is an image of a people living at the bottom end of the class hierarchy, on the margins of criminality. "The sense of threat, nuisance, danger, conflict and confrontation runs throughout each element of this portrait" (Mayall, 2004, 2).

David Mayall observes that many academic conferences the question of the Gypsy identity has been at the table, often with the purpose not to open the debate, but rather to close it. Therefore the aim of his book Gypsy identities (Mayall, 2004) is to push open the

debating door and to challenge the assumptions behind the various images. It is not to establish a right or wrong answer, but "to understand the origins and rationale for what can be seen instead as the alternative constructions of Gypsy identity, each with their own element of myth-making." His purpose is to "look at who is asking the question, and why and to consider the context and intentions of those providing the answers... [so] less concerned with the Gypsies themselves than with the way they have been defined and portrayed.... With the processes of group formation, labeling, boundary-making and stereotyping." (Mayall, 2004, 3).

In one way or another the representations or faces of the Gypsy are real, "Gypsies are who the writer or speaker thinks they are". Mayall concludes that this "apparent legitimacy" of each of the Gypsy identities is the cause of "considerable controversies... which has such an important bearing on how Gypsies are situated in the dominant, non-Gypsy society." (Mayall, 2004, 3).

1.2.2.2. Alternative faces of the Gypsy

Mayall identifies three "alternative faces of the Gypsy"(Mayall, 2004, 5-8).

1. 'Racial' face

The first of the alternative faces of the Gypsy, with a capital G!, is termed the racial. In Britain they are called the Romanies, and owe their separateness to their foreign Indian origin and ancestry. That is the basis for the picture of the group, which emphasizes "peculiar attitudes and behaviour, continuity in cultural practices, and obvious physical differences such as skin, hair and eye colour" (Mayall, 2004, 6). Added to these characteristics is the distinct language, the Romany language with Indian roots, with nomadism usually seen as an essential aspect of their culture. With reference to the Gypsy 'instinct' for traveling, their 'wanderlust' and inability to stay within four walls the impression is given that the practice of nomadism is inherited and in the blood. The idea of belonging to a 'single race' is what provides the worldwide identity and unites Gypsies across all national borders.

This image is emphasized in the film: The Gypsy caravan in which Gypsies from all over the world are on a music tour in the USA, and share with each other their different 'Gypsy' experience. (Redžepova, Taraf de Haïdouks., Fanfare Ciocărlia., Maharaja (Musical group), & Antonio el Pipa Flamenco Company., 2007)

2. 'Nomads' or gypsy face

The second image is that which combines a way of life with low socio-economic and social status, and typically is referred to with the label 'gypsy', with a small letter, rather than Gypsy, Rom or Romany with a capital. The primary criteria for defining the group is not origins, but the nomadic way of life, pursuing itinerant occupations and living in moveable or semi-permanent dwellings. Nomadism is equated with gypsyism, and being a nomad with being a gypsy. The images belonging to this group are usually portrait as the majority being a criminal underclass, as impoverished, unproductive vagrants and parasites. Mayall concludes that the images of this category are almost always negative, "creating a

sense of conflict, mistrust and antagonism" between the settled and nomadic societies. It is important to emphasize the nomadic mindset.

The reality is that by far the majority (up to 80 %) of the 10 - 12 million European Roma (Gypsies) have settled (Liégeois, 2007, 32). In the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium and France the majority is still nomadic.

3. 'Ethnic/racial' face

The Ethnic/racial classification is somewhat similar to the first one, it is referred to as the ethnocentric perspective. There is also the emphasis on the Indian origin, cultural distinctiveness and linguistic continuity. The difference with the 'racial' face is that it moves away from the fixed and permanent differences and allows for diversity and difference within the group. Another element of difference is that the historical and contemporary oppression is emphasized, with full accounts of persecution and victimization. Mayall classifies many of the contemporary Gypsologists like Ian Hancock and Thomas Acton in this category.

4. 'Ethnic/cultural' face

The difference with the previous category is that the root of ethnicity is not located in the Indian origin, but in the nomadic ancestry. So it is a combination between the racial and the nomadic classification. One of the important representatives of this group, Judith Okely, emphasizes that the criteria for definition should not come from outside, but from inside, from the Gypsies themselves. Characteristics for this group are first of all nomadic descent, but also aspects of self-employment, language, 'an ideology of travelling', habitat, dress, but also an 'ideological separation between Gypsies and non-Gypsies.'

1.2.2.3. Ambiguous and contradictory images

Mayall's is the first to admit that his fourfold classification does not result in mapping all the existing images. In reality the picture is more complicated, ambiguous and contradictory. There is not only a confusion of labels, also the categories 'race', 'racial group' and 'ethnic group' are not clearly defined. So the complications concerning the Gypsy identity are numerous. The debates circle around the issues of foreign origin and ancestry, and nomadism is a major component of the Gypsy identity.

Mayall concludes that we face a complex and multi-layered Gypsy identity, and that we cannot talk about a single identity, but of several. So there is a "complete lack of agreement concerning where the boundaries should be drawn around the group." This confused knowledge and understanding of the group is based on different and conflicting images.

Similarly, Brian Belton emphasizes that "**whatever you might conceive or believe Gypsy identity to be**, the only sure thing that can be said about it is, like everything else, it is ever-changing as ideas and people themselves adapt to, develop and incorporate their environment. The notion of a permanent and unchanging Gypsy identity is, as such, related much more to the thinking of the 'dark ages' than it is to post-enlightened thought; it is in fact regressive." (Le Bas & Acton, 2010, 42)

What is important is, that therefore it is inevitable that responses and attitudes to the group will vary with the nature of the 'face' offered, "ranging from romantic sympathy to outright hostility" (Mayall, 2004, 12). There is no dominant image, and all of these competing images continue to exist in the media, in films, in official publications, in literature etc (T. A. Acton & Mundy, 1997; Marsh, Strand, & Svenska forskningsinstitutet i Istanbul., 2006). The debates on identity and images for sure will go on.

1.2.2.4. Minority identity and group relations

The reason why the debate on images and identities is of crucial importance for our discussion on the perspectives of European Churches on mission among Roma is that because of the relationship between **identity and responses**. Mayall observation brings us at the heart of the matter:

"How we categorize, label and represent minority groups has a crucial and considerable bearing on their positioning within majority society and inter-group relations, and directly impacts on such issues as racism, discrimination, legal status and civil rights." (Mayall, 2004, 12)

Several key variables

Mayall identifies several key variables important in the process of shaping group relations, of which three are important for our study: one of them is the fixing of boundaries: racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, another is the use of labels and the meanings given to them and finally it is the nature of information and knowledge about the group, derived from stereotyping and experience.

The consequences of a **racial definition** are nowhere more apparent than in Nazi Germany. The story of Gypsy Holocaust is emerging from its neglect. There are many parallels with the treatment of the Jews. Both were subjects of detailed investigations and reports into genealogy in an attempt to trace ancestry and identify bloodlines of members of the group. Wilhelm Solms (Solms, 2006) makes clear what questionable role of the German Churches have played in the 1930ies in allowing access to the church registries, and that till today no confession has taken place. The difference with the persecution of the Jews is supposedly that the Gypsies were persecuted not for racial reasons, but because of their alleged asocial and criminal activities. So it had a socio-political basis. As a consequence they were denied reparations following Worldwar II. This is now challenged by Gypsy scholars as Ian Hancock, fighting for a definition of the Gypsy which establishes their separate ethnic identity, and thus proves the racial origins of Nazi policies towards the group. At a recent conference in Germany on the position of the German churches towards the "Sinti and Roma" in 2008, the dominant racial image towards the Sinti and Roma within the German Churches was clearly demonstrated (Engbring-Romang & Gesellschaft fÅ¼r, 2008).

Many Gypsy activists emphasize therefore the use of the label Gypsy or Roma, with a capital, signifying their status as an ethnic group in their campaign for full rights, over and against a nomadic status as gypsy - with a small letter - which is often linked with vagrancy, parasitism and criminality.

Another factor in the confusion defining the Gypsies stems from the diverse **range of**

labels and the widespread use of **stereotypes**. There is a plethora of views used in the media, in newspapers, which inform the non-Gypsy outsider. Mayall rightly emphasizes that "this issue of representation and stereotyping is critical" (Mayall, 2004, 15). More often than not knowledge is obtained from these secondary sources rather than from direct experience:

"Stereotypical images of groups affect how they are seen, how they are treated and the expectations that are held of them in terms of behaviour and abilities. Indeed, the connection between images and responses, especially in their negative and hostile forms, is a major theme and argument... "(Mayall, 2004, 15). Especially in Germany, but also elsewhere a link has been made to the hostile responses to the Jews and the anti-Semitic stereotypes. The term **Antiziganismus** is now a separate field of research in Germany ("Antiziganismus, ").

Ian Hancock notes how the criminal-anthropologist Professor Cesare Lambroso considered Gypsies "as a living example of a race of criminals and that this view served as a basis for American legal attitudes, and was relied upon by lawyers, magistrates and others, for many years (Mayall, 2004, 15, 21, fn 40). Hancock argues that the "persistent and hostile imagery created by outsiders is at the root of the problem of Gypsy and non-Gypsy relations" (Mayall, 2004, 15). Jean-Pierre Liégois' assumption is that "images, whether spontaneous or contrived, subconscious or conscious, influence attitudes and behaviour"(Mayall, 2004, 16), and elsewhere that "distorted stereotypes and negative imaginary account for the hostility and suspicion shown to the Gypsies" (Mayall, 2004, 16). Mayall concludes that "there can be little doubt that negative images reinforce negative responses and that there is some connection between racial stereotyping and discriminatory treatment." (Mayall, 2004, 17). These processes should be seen as a two-way, mutually reinforcing relationship, where an image of a group invokes a particular response, and a particular response can lead to the creation and legitimization of an image.

1.2.3. Conclusion Mayall - Németh

Németh's criticism on Mayall: relativistic, constructed

Still this division does give us some help in mapping what images are existing or have existed over time and some sense of how Roma see their own identity. One thing is sure: both the images and the self perception of the Roma of their identity are very complex and constantly changing.

1.3. European Churches' images of Roma?

After exploring the images and identities of the Roma (Gypsies) in the European societies in general, we now zoom in on the European Churches, whether there are specific images of the Roma, which flow from the Christian identity of these Churches. Is there a particular Christian way of looking at the Roma? In other words, does their Christian identity make any difference in their relating to the Gypsies and if so, what? Or, from a missiological perspective, how do European Churches view the Roma people as they participate in God's mission to the Roma.

It is only in recent years that research has been done in this field, especially in Germany. Our observations are therefore preliminary and need to be the focus of future

research in churches and countries.

European Churches' images?

Most research been done in German Churches, as far as I am aware of. Explain what you will do in this paragraph and why you focus on what you focus.

1.3.1. German Churches' image

Research on the images and identity of the Roma in the German Churches

Wilhelm Solms (Solms, 2006) and Gernot Haupt (Haupt, 2009b, 142) provide us food for thought as they offer insight into the history of researching the images and identities of Roma in the German Churches. Since 1998 an Association for Research in Antigypsyism was established, with the purpose to start a process of academically study the history of the persecution and annihilation of the Roma during National-socialism.

Haupt observes: "till now due to a lack of interest of church institutions and theological departments, only with low result." A first consultation was organised in 2004, with only twenty participants, the next conference in 2005 had to be cancelled due to lack of applications. In this period Solms requested a dozen church historians to do research in this field, but no one agreed, so he as a literary scholar took the initiative which led to a publication in 2006 with the title: "They are indeed baptized, but..." The position of the Churches to the Sinti and Roma in Germany."

Solms asks himself the pertinent question "why both German Churches have kept silent and even helped with their separation? This question cannot permanently be suppressed by the church representatives. For the German Sinti and Roma, who were sent to the extermination camps were not only German citizens, but also Christians, namely for ninety percent Catholic. Nevertheless this issue was neither in theology, nor in other sciences and publicly hardly asked, let alone answered." (Solms, 2006) There is a great gap in the research on this theme, e.g. to find out what the rate was of forced collaboration and whether there was any resistance (Haupt, 2009b, 142).

Racist images

During the Nazi regime the Gypsies in the German Churches were deemed according to the same theory as the Jews as an inferior race (Solms, 2006). The German Church considered the races as a creation of God, therefore they had to be kept pure and healthy, as a command of God. The Gypsies as an inferior race was a danger to the survival of the German people and the purity of the German 'blood'.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_Laws#cite_note-9. Not only the "half-Gypsies", but also the "fourth and the eighth" Gypsies had to be separated out. The Evangelical and Catholic churches offered help in finding this out, by making their church registries available. The persecution was probably generally known, and also celebrated in the press. Still, the Catholic Church has completely kept silent about this Genocide of probably 30.000 German

Sinti and Roma, even although the majority of the German and Austrian Roma and Sinti belonged to the Catholic Church (Haupt, 2009b, 142)

Haupt demonstrates that the attitude of the German Catholic church towards the Roma and Sinti was even during the "Catholic Pastoral Care for Roma", on purpose in inverted comma's, a mixture is of images and perceptions, at one hand judging the mass murders of the "Gypsies" and on the other hand consider the Gypsies as standing at the lowest development stage as "wild exploiters". (Haupt, 2009b, 144) He emphasizes that as far as he knows till today the Church did not distance itself from these views and that till today these opinions and basic attitude have not been completely overcome... even although rather the political correct terms like "cultural identity" are used instead of "ethnic" or "racist identity". (Haupt, 2009b, 146)

1.3.1.1. Image in the German Catholic Church

Racist images continues...

So even after World war II did racial research continue. In the view of Silvia Sobek, responsible for the pastoral care of Gypsies in the Catholic Church stealing belongs to their culture, they primitive, and only through a "development shock" is integration possible. (Danckwortt, 2008, 80) So there is the image of a "purebred Gypsy", who has another mentality. For them religion is as a piece of clothing, which they had to change regularly in order to survive. This cloth of confession is easier to change when one is not grown together with it. As a explanation for the religious different mindset Achim Muth refers to the fact that the Psychological studies clearly point to such a development which explains the different religious attitude. So Sobek and Muth agree on the presupposition of a "backwardness in development" and a "different Psyche" (Danckwortt, 2008, 83) Muth had a great influence.

1.3.1.2. Shifts in the images of the Zigeuner in Germany

Nomad Images in Germany between 1950 and 1970

In a study on the social work among the "Zigeuner" (Gypsies) in the 1960ies and 70ies Barbara Danckwortt explore the image of the Roma in the German Churches. Following World War II the Zigeuner were impoverished as their professions were not useful anymore. There was no interest to improve their living conditions, because "These 'nomads' do not want to live differently" (Danckwortt, 2008, 68). Prejudices were used as an excuse to hide the real need. Requests for moving to cheap housing in cities were handed in by the Gypsies, but were not granted. So Danckwortt concludes that they were forced into nomadism. Frequent police controls and razzia's took place on the request of the majority society, to compel them move on. This policy of expulsion in the 1950ies was followed by a policy of settling in barracks and fixed caravans in the 1960ies. Stereotypes and prejudice images like "Gypsies are nomads of another race", "criminals" and "layabouts" blocked the integration efforts of this minority.

The image of the Gypsy shifted in the 1970ies as more attention was given to

the integration of the "Zigeuner" with maintaining their cultural identity. According to Danckwortt the motivation was pragmatic: financial self-interest. The space outside the cities were needed to expand the cities and build industrial areas (Danckwortt, 2008, 70). Both EKD and Catholic church did a lot in social work, to engage the social situation of the Sinti and Roma.

1.3.1.3. Das Zigeunerbild in den Orientierung

Image of Nomad in "Orientation"

Wilhelms Solms analyzes the image of the Zigeuner (Gypsy) as used in the Vatican's Orientation for a Pastoral, the official document on Pastoral care among Roma.

According to Solms, progress is made in comparison to earlier documents, in that not only the nomad image dominates, but also the settled, since they now comprise 90% of all the Roma. Therefore there is a shift of focus from special pastoral care, to the pastoral care in the parishes! A holistic approach is defined, evangelism and social action hand in hand. (Solms, 2008a, 106)

The image of Nomad in this document shows a logical discrepancy. On the one hand it is emphasized that Nomadism is forced. The history of the Roma as a continuously being on the road is not because of the Nomad culture, but "because they were not allowed to settle and constantly had to travel on or were driven away." (Solms, 2008a, 106) Even nowadays they often are forced to travel because they are insulted by neighbors or attacked, as e.g. in Slovakia or the Czech Republic, because they have to follow the order of the mayor to move their caravans to another place or because their houses have been burned like in the Kosovo. "So exclusion has led to a situation that the history of the Roma is characterized by a constant being on the road. When the Christian majority Society in Europe shown hospitality to the Roma and taken them up, in their midst and in their heart... then this permanent flight would not have been necessary." (Haupt, 2009b, 174)

The logical discrepancy is located in the fact that on the other hand the image of the Nomad is theologically founded in the self-image of the Catholic Church as pilgrims. The Roma serve the Church as an eternal "homo viator": "They live in such a special way, what in fact the whole Church should live." (Haupt, 2009b, 174)

Solms (2008) also criticizes the speaking about the "ethnic peculiarity", since it is not a Christian, but racist perception. The use of the name Gypsy (Zigeuner) is linked to this perception. (Solms, 2008a, 107) Many Roma consider this as an insult. The question is then why the Vatican sticks to the term Gypsy.

1.3.2. CEC-CCME

CEC-CCME

Established in 1964 the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe of the Conference of European Churches (CEC-CCME) has for more than four decades worked on "issues of migration, the importance of migration for the churches and in promoting the rights of migrants" and seeks to "contribute to the Christian witness in Europe; seeking to

develop a Europe welcoming the strangers and building inclusive societies: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19)." (C. o. E. Churches, 2009, 1).

In 2001 this commission organised its first conference on the situation of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe focusing on equal opportunities and overcoming discrimination, based on the belief of the Christian Churches that "all people, every person, is created by God in His own image. Therefore, churches uphold the life of every person in human dignity and equal opportunities." (C. C. f. M. i. E. C. o. E. Churches, 2001).

In 2011 CCME participated in drafting "An ecumenical contribution of European Churches and diaconal organizations to the EU Framework for National Roma integration Strategies", in which was stated that the commitment to Roma inclusion was based on the Christian conviction "that every person is created in the image of God and shares equal rights and dignity as human beings". (Eurodiaconia, 2011).

The image of how the Roma (Gypsies) are perceived is a variation on the nomadic image, as a migrant and a stranger. It is also the image of the impoverished gypsy as there is a strong emphasis on diaconal work in combating poverty. It is emphasized that Churches and church related organizations are "among the most important providers of social and health care services, which include caring for people experiencing exclusion and poverty" (Eurodiaconia, 2011).

1.3.3. Pentecostals - Renewed Identity

Negative Ethnic Identity

Miroslav Atanasov reminds us that the most important identity of the Roma in Bulgaria is the negative label given them by the majority population. "Whenever a gaja has a positive impression as a result of interaction with Roma, this is usually lifted up as an exception." This discriminatory attitude has caused a number of Roma families, especially those who have experienced social lift and moved out of the mahala, to disown their ethnic identity.(Atanasov, 2008, 267) This is characteristic also for other situations.

The Roma believers do not deny the degree of truth about the negative stereotypes attached to their ethnos. "They deal with them, however, by placing them in their own past while openly criticizing the other Roma who behave in socially unacceptable ways."(Atanasov, 2008, 268)

Towards a renewed identity

The identification with Pentecostal Evangelical Christianity creates according to Atanasov a more positive image for the Roma. They find their religious identity in it just like ethnic Bulgarians, many of whom claimed to be atheists during Communism, presently find it in Orthodoxy, or like most ethnic Turks and Pomaks - in Islam. The Pentecostal movement has been the most powerful force in leading the Roma to the formation of a renewed identity that does not make them ashamed but proud of who they are as people.(Atanasov, 2008, 268)

New identity

Haupt (Haupt, 2009a, 154-155) speaks about building a "new identity". He speaks about the danger of "ethnicized religion", in which they "overcome the loss of the traditional, cultural connections and lift them up in the new connections in the congregation of the converted". He warns for the danger of an "ideological religious boost of the ethnic self-definition ... in a mixture with a religious/ecclesiastical special form". He rightly emphasizes that our belonging to an ethnic group is always only a facet of our identity, and that we always have a hybrid identity.

1.3.4. Hungarian government's image of what Church's image should be

1.3.5. Is there a difference in churches?

Conclusion

As we now have come to the end of our exploration what multiple images there are about the Roma in the majority society and how the Roma identify themselves, it is clear there are many alternative face of the Gypsy, and many ambiguous and contradictory images.

We have seen how stereotypes and negative labels have a great impact on intergroup relations.

The question now is whether we are able to identify similarities and dissimilarities between the way the society or churches look at the Roma. (work on this!). Does the Christian identity of the Church shape the way its members perceive the Roma?

It is almost impossible with a lack of more data on the table to draw conclusions, but it seems that in the case of the German Churches, and the CEC there does not seem to be a marked difference with the society at large....

In the case of the Pentecostal churches ...

~~3. Is there a difference in the churches? How they look at gypsies? How methodologically find an answer to this question?~~

~~How does Christian identity of church and individual shape different way in looking at Gypsies?~~

~~Conclusion lecture one: very urgent to deal with images as they shape exclusion, discrimination, they construct walls.~~

~~There are issues of employment etc, but with Haupt, behind these socio-economic problems is discrimination, exclusion, walls.~~

~~Quote Balog, who also mentions that this is key problem.~~

1.4. Major Challenges related to Roma

1.4.1. Poverty, employment, housing

The well known Roma scholar Ian Hancock reminds us with reference to an editorial in The Economist of 2005, that Romanies in Europe are "at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator: the poorest, the most unemployed, the least educated, the shortest-lived, the most welfare dependent, the most imprisoned and the most segregated." (Hancock, 2010, 14) He quotes a World Bank report of 2005 that states: "Roma are the most prominent poverty risk group in many of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They are poorer than other groups, more likely to fall into poverty, and more likely to remain poor." (Hancock, 2010, 16)

Vicious circle of poverty

Kjaerum also emphasize that discrimination perpetuates the vicious circle of poverty and social exclusion: "exclusion from education leads to exclusion from employment, which leads to increased poverty, which forces people to live in poor or segregated housing which, in turn, affects their educational and employment opportunities, as well as their health. And the circle starts again." (Kjaerum, 2012) This position is from a Catholic Church perspective also emphasized by Gernot Haupt.

Integrated approach needed

To break this cycle of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, more and more voices are heard emphasizing an integrated approach that promotes access to housing, employment, education and health care **simultaneously**. In many Member States there are a multitude of Roma inclusion strategies and policies.

Myths and prejudices informing strategies and policies

However, according to Kjaerum, these strategies sometimes address myths and prejudices rather than reality, because surprisingly little data has been collected on the Roma by national governments. But how can policymakers hope to develop effective policies without knowing the situation on the ground? (Kjaerum, 2012)

1.4.2. Lack of Education

Education and the recovery of identity

The percentage of analfabetism among the Roma is high. In Romania e.g. the problem is that many Roma do not have legal papers, and thus do not get access to the functional system of education (and health, housing, employment) at all. Hancock considers **lack of education** the greatest problem, and thus education the highest priority to deal with - **for both the Roma and non-Roma**, because he is convinced that solutions for other issues

as racism, housing, unemployment, etc will come about because of education.(Hancock, 2010, 17) Education is also an important factor in overcoming the problem of the "vagueness regarding Roma identity", therefore Roma are so easily manipulated. "If we knew who we were, and had more status allowing us to be heard, we would have a say in how we are portrayed."(Hancock, 2010, 17)

Quoting Alan Besancon he emphasizes the need for recovering the Roma identity through recovery of the past: "a man without memory is of absolute plasticity. He is created at all moments. He cannot look behind himself, nor can he feel continuity with himself, nor can he preserve his own identity." Education will help to be articulate as well. "Without education we cannot tell people who we are, and where we come from, and how we have had the strength and determination to survive centuries of persecution, slavery and genocide and still be here."(Hancock, 2010, 18)

Education and cultural distinctiveness

Hancock observes with regard to the identity debate of the Roma that the social definitions have been dominant, considering the common denominator their social situation of travelling and poverty, apart from the ethnic definition. He pleads for an emphasize of the **cultural distinctiveness of the Romani peoples**. (Hancock, 2010, 21) and that this distinctiveness be translated into educational curriculum etc, even although the Roma people are a very diverse group in terms of composition.

The important question for our theme is then what this has implied and would imply for the European Churches' responses to and involvement with the Roma people.

1.4.3. Antigypsyism

Definition antigypsyism

According to Ian Hancock and Wolfgang Wipperman antigypsyism can following Antisemitism be defined as "a hostile, discriminating attitude against the Roma and Sinti defined people. In a sociological sense it expresses itself as exclusion of various societal functional systems." (Haupt 2008, 127). Such an exclusion has massive effect on the self-image and understanding of identity of the Roma.

Paradox in European Society

O'Nions state, that there is an interesting paradox in European Society with regard to the Roma. "In theory, the Roma with their nomadic tradition should fit perfectly within the paradigm of free movement, particularly since it is de-coupling from economic status. However, their migration has elicited a particular response; one of exclusion and expulsion. In so doing, it has revealed a deep paradox at the route of European identity."

From non-discrimination paradigm to holistic, minority rights approach

O'Nions observes a **reluctance in Europe to move beyond** the non-discrimination

paradigm, discourse and strategy, which is a significant bar **to the realisation of Roma equality**, an approach "toward a more encompassing approach to equality which highlights structural challenges and engages with minority rights claims." (O'Nions, 2011, 385)

Dialogical strategy

In an attempt to overcome the complex problems Morag Goodwin offers a complementary dialogical strategy whereby "separated communities are encouraged to cooperate to **promote a common good in order to enable further integration** (rather than focusing and emphasising **difference** which she regards as central to the **non-discrimination approach**. Inherent in her strategy is the desire to avoid the incidental promotion of victim status which is disempowering for victims and disruptive to the dialogical relationship." She states that "There is of course merit in this local solution and many smallscale projects have been successful in fostering better understanding between Roma and non-Roma, suggesting that the boundaries between communities are not immutable." Quoted on (O'Nions, 2011, 386)

1.4.4. Gypsy problem and Gadjo problem

Gypsy problem and Gadjo problem

Ian Hancock reminds us that under communism Marxist ideology emphasized the social identity of the Roma, not the ethnic one. The "Gypsy problem" was considered to be caused by an unwillingness of the Gypsies to Marxist principles. They were blamed for "deliberately being antisocial, by clinging to their own distinctive identity". According to the communists there was no racial difference to the non-Roma population.(Hancock, 2010, 15)

Hancock emphasizes that there is not just a "Gypsy problem", but also a "Gadjo problem". He seeks, as a Roma with a foot in both worlds, to look at both perspectives.

The problem **from the perspective of the non-Roma world** is, that they "see us as the eternal outsiders, **not wanting to fit in** yet wanting what it has, living by deception and theft, taking everything while contributing nothing except perhaps entertainment - loud, dirty and leaving a mess behind besides." (Hancock, 2010, 15)

From the perspective of Roma "our overwhelming problem [is] **with racism**. This directly underlies and supports the problems that it holds up - those of poverty, those of employment, schooling, health care and housing, and in human and civil rights."

1.5. Restate your three main points

We have now come at the end of the first stage in understanding the European Churches' perspectives on mission among Roma.

1.5.1. Images and Identities in Society and Church

In summary, in exploring images and identities, we have seen that the existing **images of the Roma** are complex in nature, and that we rather should speak about facets than about facts. Many stereotypes exist, which are reinforced by the media. The importance of dealing with images is that they impact the responses of the society and of churches.

Roma identity is still in process of definition, because of unclarity with regard to their past, is often very flexible. Therefore the identities can be used for whatever policy and strategy.

So an important question in dealing with the Roma: who are they!

In our investigation into the existing images we have discovered that there is in essence no difference between the images in **society and the church**. Moreover, in the case of Germany it was shown that till today racist images do exist also in the church. Since one and a half decade research is initiated to better understand these attitudes of antigypsism in the past.

In general, in the European Churches' dealing with the Roma, we have discovered that they mostly adapt to the images existing in the EU, and that their Christian identity does not really make a difference in the way they perceive the Roma. In the case of the Pentecostal Churches we have observed that in some cases a "replacement of identity" seems to take place, in which the ethnic and cultural identity is replaced by a new, religious-Christian identity.

1.5.2. Return to first main idea

We have referred several times to the changes of 1989, due to the fall of the Berlin wall. With regard to the Roma it should be stated that due to these changes NEW walls were erected, walls of exclusion.

In my next presentation I will continue my search for a key to unlock the door. The next stage of this search will focus on mapping the European Churches' response as a result of prevailing images.

Chapter 2: Pittsburgh II: Mapping European Churches' responses and perspectives

2.1. Introduction

Járóka Livia on importance of Historic Churches

In her welcome speech on a conference on "The Role of Churches in the Social Inclusion of Roma" Livia Járóka, the first member of the European parliament of Roma (Gypsy) origin background, appreciated the unique community building activities the churches pursue:

"First and foremost the poorest people suffer of precarious living conditions, and they are the ones that mostly need the message of love, and the respect of human dignity against the phenomenon of social inclusion. However, the poverty affecting the majority of Roma is a serious barrier in community building. Many respectable examples demonstrate that traditional churches are able to cope with this dual challenge: they can simultaneously provide social support and spiritual care, they can help the poorest people in their earthly life and meanwhile proclaim the universal commandment of love and work with all their strength in the broadest layers of society to diminish the prejudices" - said Livia Járóka." (Járóka, 2009)

2.1.1. The main objective of this paper

The main objective of these missiological lectures is to

1. to explore images and identities of the Roma and to get insight in the major challenges related to the Roma in the European context and
2. to map the responses of the European churches as well as
3. To understand the perspectives of European Churches on mission among Roma and explore what a missiological perspective could offer.

The wall and the door on the invitation probably belong one of the European Churches, that have in some cases played an active role in excluding the Roma.

When you take a closer look at the door you see a key. I am convinced that the European Churches do have access to the key to unlock this door, but it seems that this key is lost.

In these presentations I will draw on missiological principles established by Andrew F. Walls in a first attempt to unlock the door, to gain a new perspective, a new outlook and vision on this missionary challenge at our doorstep.

2.1.2. Return to first main idea

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of the Berlin wall. With regard to the Roma it should be stated that due to these changes NEW walls were erected, walls of exclusion.

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Roma identity is still in process of definition, because of unclarity with regard to their past, is often very flexible. Therefore the identities can be used for whatever policy and strategy.

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In general, in the European Churches' dealing with the Roma, we have discovered that they mostly adapt to the images existing in the EU, and that their Christian identity does not really make a difference in the way they perceive the Roma. In the case of the Pentecostal Churches we have observed that in some cases a "replacement of identity" seems to take place, in which the ethnic and cultural identity is replaced by a new, religious-Christian identity.

2.1.4. Major Challenges related to Roma

2.1.4.1. Poverty, employment, housing

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2.1.4.4. Gypsy problem and Gadjo problem

Gypsy problem and Gadjo problem

Ian Hancock reminds us that under communism Marxist ideology emphasized the social identity of the Roma, not the ethnic one. The "Gypsy problem" was considered to be caused by an unwillingness of the Gypsies to Marxist principles. They were blamed for "deliberately being antisocial, by clinging to their own distinctive identity". According to the communists there was no racial difference to the non-Roma population. (Hancock, 2010, 15)

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From the perspective of Roma "our overwhelming problem [is] **with racism**. This directly underlies and supports the problems that it holds up - those of poverty, those of employment, schooling, health care and housing, and in human and civil rights."

2.2. Analysis and comparison of responses of various European Church traditions

2.2.1. General observation Roma - Christians

The Bulgarian missiologist Miroslav Atanasov who in 2008 defended a groundbreaking doctoral study titled Gypsy Pentecostals: The Growth of the Pentecostal Movement Among the Roma in Bulgaria and its Revitalization of Their Communities reminds us that the historical relation between the Roma and Christianity is remarkable. Although the Roma have lived among Christians for centuries, the Roma have always been marginalized and overlooked by them. (Atanasov, 2008, 98) Among the European Roma we find Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Muslims because in general they join the religion of the majority in a region.

2.2.2. Roman Catholic

2.2.2.1. Pontifical Council

2.2.2.1.1. Gypsies meet Pope Paul VI

Gypsies meet Pope Paul VI

In 1965 a group of about 2000 Gypsies arrived from all over Europe on a pilgrimage to Rome. Their goal was to ask the Pope for official protection of their nomadic way of life.

Gernot Haupt reminds us (Haupt, 2011, 8-9) that there is one sentence that is quoted in every document since:

"You are not at the margins of the church, you are – in a certain sense – in the center, you are at the heart of the church." Is a quotation taken out of context. The full greeting reads: "Best greetings to you, eternal pilgrims, to you, voluntary fugitives, to you, who are always on the run... Best greetings to you, who have chosen your little tribe, your caravan as your separated and secret world, to you, who look at the world with distrust and are looked at with distrust from all, to you who wanted to be foreigners everywhere and forever... " According to Haupt this is original Italian text.

2.2.2.1.2. Pastoral Care for Nomadic people

Pastoral Care for Nomadic people

A few years later Pope Paul VI established the Pontificia Comissio de Spiritualibus Migratorum atque Itinerantium Cura (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People).

The purpose of the Council was to study "people on the move," evangelize them, and provide them with appropriate spiritual shepherding. Under the auspices of this Council was the department of Pastoral Care for Gypsies, which organized several World Congresses.

A first Pastoral letter for Nomadic people in 1999 warns for the dangers of sects:

„Many gypsies, because they lack sufficient religious instruction, are often exposed to pressure by religious sects which push them to abandon the Catholic Church and abjure their faith. Hence the need for solid religious formation, education, and above all 'these brothers and sisters of ours must be helped to realize their dignity and their responsibilities.'"(Chirayath, 1999, 4-5)

The document calls our attention for the positive characteristics of the Gypsy world: „such as fraternal and generous hospitality, a deep sense of solidarity, strong attachment to the faith and the religious traditions of their ancestors".

It also emphasizes that the participation of the Gypsies in society should be strengthened: „It will be necessary to set up structures to guarantee the continuity of the process of furthering gypsies' participation in society, and of their acceptance characterized by encounter, understanding and respect for their identity, **by friendly dialog and reciprocal help, also material.**"(Chirayath, 1999, 4-5)

2.2.2.1.3. Pastoral Care of Gypsies

Pastoral Care of Gypsies

The Fifth World congress of the Pastoral Care of Gypsies took place in Budapest in 2003. It is noteworthy that for the first time a considerable group of Gypsies took place: priests, nuns and laypeople. Clear theological principles are stated how true communion among people is realized:

"i.) when every human creature is respected as child and image of God,
ii.) if differences between persons are accepted as gifts for all
iii.) when the life of relationships is lived, humbly, along with others, in recognition of the fact that we are all strangers and pilgrims on this Earth
iv.) and if we can offer authentic hospitality to each and every one."(People, 2003)

Practical advice is shared as to the shape of the Pastorate:

- a. the Church needs to devote greater human and material resources to this particular pastorate;
- b. the music, ritual and the festive dimension of the Liturgy should bear a decisive "mark" of gypsy culture
- c. pilgrimages – something rooted in the gypsy way of life – should constitute a major feature of their pastoral care
- d. genuinely gypsy vocations to the priesthood and the religious life should be promoted; and
- e. The media should be used, and bible translations be prepared in Gypsy languages. (People, 2003)

The Congress recommends that "ecumenical and inter-religious dialog be extended to the gypsy world as well, but "deplored the sectarian approach harking back to Pentecostalism" adopted by certain groups, "professing to be Christian", and "exhorts Catholic pastoral Operators to be aware of this danger." (People, 2003)

2.2.2.1.4. Mea Culpa?

Mea Culpa?

A few years later, an important document is issued, after many years of preparation. The "Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies" deals among others with the issue of how to overcome suspicion, referring to what happened in the past:

„History matters, and as a consequence of all the wrongs they have suffered, the Gypsy population has remained suspicious of any initiative that tries to penetrate its world. Overcoming this initial attitude may come about only through concrete manifestations of solidarity also by sharing its life."(People, 2005)

This document was announced in the German press under the headline of "Pope asks Sinti and Roma for forgiveness". Jan Opiela expresses his disappointment as finally "Guidelines" were published offering a pastoral theological foundation for the pastoral care of the Gypsies.

With regard to dealing with the past Opiela considers it of much more importance, that at the Day of Forgiveness the Public Intercession prayer was ministered in 2000 in the presence of Pope John Paul II, by Stephen Fumino Karinal Hamao from Japan, President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People:

"Let the Christians look up to Jesus, who is our Lord and our peace.
Give, that they can regret, what they have done wrong in word and deed.
Often they have let themselves be led
by pride and hatred,
by the will to dominate others,
by the hostility to the adherents of other religions and

to those groups in society, that are weaker than they,
like the migrants and the gypsies."

The Pope responded in his prayer of forgiveness:

"They have violated the rights of tribes and people, and scorned their cultures and religious traditions:

Extend us your patience and your mercy!

Forgive us!

Therefore we pray you, through Christ, our Lord."

According to Opiela is remarkable, that such a prayer is prayed for the sisters and brothers in the faith, since a large percentage of the Roma and Sinti do have affinity with Christianity or who are baptized in the Catholic Church. It took the Church almost 500 years to express such a confession of guilt, but what is 500 years in view of a history of 2000 years? (Opiela, 2008, 91-92) Solms expresses his hope that the German Catholic Church will one day join this confession of guilt. (Solms, 2008a, 105)

2.2.2.1.5. Ecumenical and inter-religious dialog

Ecumenical and inter-religious dialog

In the "Guidelines" the concepts of "Christian denomination", "sects" and "new religious movements" and "new ecclesial movement" accurately differentiated. The sects may possibly attract the Gypsies, but they do not constitute a genuinely ecclesial entity. "Therefore, everything possible should be done to prevent Gypsies from falling into such sectarian traps." (People, 2005, 17)

Because of the frequent migrations pastoral care of Gypsies, should be done with the "right ecumenical and inter-religious perspective, both in the way the evangelical message is presented and in relationships with believers of other denominations and religions."

The main criticism of Wilhelm Solms in which he follows the argument of Haupt is the main idea of the priority of a "special pastoral care" for the Gypsies. Through categorical pastoral care the exclusion of the Roma not be removed, only used and strengthened, as Haupt illustrates with the example of the pentecostal movement. According to Haupt the main problem of the Roma is that they are not integrated, but excluded and ghettoized. "Therefore pastoral care should be focused on removing the exclusion and on inclusion in the local Christian community." (Solms, 2008b, 25)

In June 2011 the Pope Benedict XVI again received 1400 Gypsies in audience and emphasized: "The Church walks with you." (Altieri, 2011)

2.2.3. CEC-CCME

2.2.3.1. CEC-CCME conference in Bratislava 2001

CEC-CCME conference in Bratislava 2001

As we try to get an insight in how various European Churches have responded to and acted upon the images dominating in their midst we will first take a closer look at the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe of the Conference of European Churches, one of the major church bodies in Europe, which organised a major conference on Roma in 2001. We observed that in cooperation with Eurodiaconia, an organisation active in social work on behalf of many European churches, their image of the Roma was especially as an impoverished people.

The recommendations focus on **Living in community, equal opportunities and overcoming discrimination**. With regard to making Living in Community possible, Churches are called upon recognising that they have been part of the history of the Roma, as the Roma have had to face neglect, harassment, persecution and murder. For true dialogue to be possible European peoples including the churches and councils of churches "need to recognise what they/we did to wrong the Roma in the past... and express their repentance for wrongs in the past." (C. C. f. M. i. E. C. o. E. Churches, 2001, 1-2) This has happened in a few countries, like Norway. In many countries churches have excluded Roma from church services, refused them sacraments and marriages. It is also recommended that the churches become actively involved in the "empowerment of disadvantaged Roma individuals and communities."

For this reason they are encouraged to call upon **governments and authorities** who have the political obligation to protect their national minorities. Churches are especially called upon involvement in diaconal work, to improve the social conditions. These activities "should not replace national and local governments' obligations", churches, however, should be "pro-active in developing pilot projects and lobbying authorities to provide resources."

Also elsewhere in the final document it is emphasized that the European Churches' role is seen as one of asking the government to implement the EU anti-discrimination legislation, and to actively monitor the situation, in cooperation with the official authorities. It seems that the CEC – in 2001 - conceived involvement with the Roma not directly as a European Churches responsibility, as one of the recommendations is also that "the European Commission will be requested to do more work on the issue of anti-Roma prejudice among the majority population in European societies, developing models of education for the majority to overcome prejudices." The Christian Churches do express a general commitment to building a human community "based on justice, equal human rights and equal opportunities... [and] envisage a community which is free from fear and from eruptions of xenophobia, racism and violence." (C. C. f. M. i. E. C. o. E. Churches, 2001, 5), but a whether there is a specific contribution of the Churches, apart from lobbying with the EU, that they take their responsibility is not clear. More research is needed what the European Churches actually have done at national and local level. That falls out of the scope of this presentation.

2.2.3.2. A ecumenical contribution to the EU framework

A ecumenical contribution to the EU framework

"An ecumenical contribution of European Churches ...to the EU Framework for

National Roma integration strategies" (Eurodiaconia, 2011)

One decade later a significant change has taken place. The European Churches draft a proposal for a "ecumenical contribution of European Churches" to the EU framework of National Roma integration. The official document of the EU summarizing the EU strategy till 2020 states that "Member States are responsible that Roma are not discriminated against, but treated like any other EU citizens, with equal access to all fundamental rights as enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights." (Commission, 2011). The reason seems to be mainly economically, as "integrating the Roma people will not only bring social benefits, but will also economically benefit both Roma people as well as the communities they are part of." It is interesting that a final version of the document published one year later, in 2012, the incentive is worded slightly different: "Better integration of Roma is therefore both a moral and an economic imperative, which moreover will require a change of mindsets of the majority of the people as well as of members of the Roma communities." (Commission, 2012, 1)

The European Churches and the diaconal organisations commit themselves to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU framework – to the earlier version -, and to be both at a national and European level, to act as „relevant actors in advocacy and grassroots work with Roma communities." (Eurodiaconia, 2011, 1), based on the „Christian conviction that every person is created in the image of God and shares equal rights and dignity as human beings."

The Churches and diaconia recommend among others that the „participation of Roma and Roma experts is vital", also that „Roma integration needs a comprehensive and integrated approach from all stakeholders which considers people's needs in a holistic manner." It is not clearly defined what this „holistic manner" entails, and what the particular input of the churches is.

A focus on cultural diversity is emphasized as Majority and minority communities living together. It is stated in general that „Church-related organisations and local congregations can play an important role in bridging communities and providing for such discussions and community dialogue."

In general it seems that the EU is considered as the major responsible agency for implementing Roma integration strategies. In the end of the document, the need is stressed to involve churches and other grassroots organisations to cooperate with the local and national authorities. It is not clear what the contribution of the churches could be apart from contributing to the EU strategy. At a special dialogue meeting on the role of the churches in Roma inclusion, it is more clearly stated as a „a need, a challenge and a duty". (CEC, 2011)

2.2.3.3. Hungarian strategy as part of EU framework

Hungarian strategy as part of EU framework

The Hungarian strategy for the social inclusion 2011-2020, issued by the Hungarian authorities is much more specific on the role of the churches than the Ecumenical document. (*NEMZETI TÁRSADALMI FELZÁRKÓZÁSI STRATÉGIA – MÉLYSZEGÉNYSÉG, GYERMEKSZEGÉNYSÉG, ROMÁK – (2011–2020)*, 2011). It clearly shows the input of the

Hungarian Secretary of State for Roma issues, Mr. Zoltán Balog, a Reformed pastor by training. The special contribution of pastoral and missionary activities is stated in particular. The „intensive motivation" of the members of the Christian communities, which has a unique impact on the members of the Roma communities. (*NATIONAL SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY – EXTREME POVERTY, CHILD POVERTY, THE ROMA – (2011–2020)*, 2011) Also that „Churches and other communities reach the members of Roma communities in the course of their missionary activities by revealing the possibility of change, providing spiritual care and guidance and motivating them to take steps towards a better life... Pastoral activities, including Roma pastoral activities, are the integral continuation of the missionary activities of churches." Also the close cooperation with the Roma community and the Churches is emphasized, which offers the possibility that the attitude and mindset of the majority society be changed and their social sensitivity be extended.

The Churches could in particular play a mediatory role, which results in increased inclusion on the part of the majority society. Apart from the unique „religious motivation" of the Christian communities, the church projects could also help at grassroots level in social, educational and employment initiatives.

A number of projects already successfully implemented by the churches are mentioned. Churches are also active in the field of aid work, but also to provide student housing and related community living to Roma high school and university students.

Summary

In summary we could conclude that the Hungarian government uses the space offered by the EU framework for the social inclusion of Roma in a special way by explicitly emphasizing the unique role of the pastoral care and mission work of the Churches, thus recognizing and emphasizing that the Churches have a unique contribution deriving from their religious, church-related and Christian identity.

It seems they almost overstep the primary economic objective of the framework.

This also seems to be a great step forward compared to the "Ecumenical contribution of European Churches" document.

The question now is, how the churches will use this unique opportunity, to contribute with their own Christian identity to the issue of the social inclusion of Roma. How will this happen in practice? It is for sure a great challenge to think through theologically what a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, holistic perspective looks like, and how this e.g. translates in the curriculum for the training of pastors.

The Roma strategy of the Hungarian government for sure could serve as a model for many other churches in the region.

2.2.4. Evangelical Churches

Pentecostal Churches

2.2.4.1. France: Clément Le Cossec

France: Clément Le Cossec

A significant revival started in 1950ies in France through the ministry of Clément Le Cossec. In September 2010, the Christian Science Monitor had a headline: „In France, and Evangelical Gypsy group shakes up the immigration debate". At the same time of the collective expulsions of Roma out of France back to Romania in August, 26.000 Evangelical Gypsies gathered in the heart of France to sing, give testimonies and read the Bible. "The Gypsy stereotypes are not valid anymore."

According to recent statistics out of the 425.000 French Gypsies 145.000 joined the evangelical movement. (Marquand, 2010). Other sources mention 200.000 out of the 500.000. (Persaud, 2010).

The most important organization is Vie et Lumiere, to which about 200 Evangelical Roma Churches belong, another the Centre Missionnaire Evangelique de Rom International (CMERI), both established by Clément Le Cossec. See also: (Dawson, 2002) and (Atanasov, 2008). Marie Bidet characterizes these Gypsies in her doctoral thesis as: „They are serious, respectable: they vote, they don't want to burn cars, they want everyone living in peace. That's opposite from the traditional imate... it can be underlined that they succeed in their approach." (Marquand, 2010, 2)

After Le Cossec, a fisherman, himself not a Gypsy was in 1952 instrumental in the healing of a Gypsy women, the Gypsies asked him to establish a bible school for them. He literally joined them on the road, as in France the majority of the Gypsies are nomads.

In an interview in 1996, shortly before his death, he characterizes his ministry as: „Not for a minute was it a question of lecturing them with morals, telling them they should not drink, lie, steal, or soothsay anymore. I knew that by receiving the message of Christ, everything would change in their lives." (Djilani-Sergy, 1996)

In the middle of the 1990ies Le Cossec counted 6000 Gypsy preachers all over Europe. The Evangelical Gypsy movement spread out of France over the whole world. Currently more than 2 million believers belong to this movement, in 44 countries. Marc Bordigone, an anthropologist of Provence University characterizes the work of Le Cossec: „Le Cossec's approach paradoxically enabled Gypsies to keep their identity through a faith, Christianity, that asserts what he calls a universal character."(Djilani-Sergy, 1996), See also: (Bordigoni, 2010)

More than 1000 Gypsy congregations were established in Spain. They consider as their mission task also to evangelize among the non-Roma. Thomas Acton, professor of Romology at Greenwich university said to be „deeply impressed by Roma Christians' ability to find joy in their faith while living on a continent that has rejected their people for centuries... I think the Romani witness that is emerging – as it gets written down (and) people understand what is going on (will be seen as) a moment in world religion". (Persaud, 2010)

Elsewhere Acton states: "The Gypsy Evangelical Church differs from previous missions in that it is, in the best sense, profoundly nativistic. It does not teach its converts to be ashamed of being Romani; on the contrary, it tells them that they can be better Gypsies for being Christian - and better Christians for being Gypsies - for unlike the poor non-Gypsies who are tied down to one place by their houses, the Gypsy can carry his witness for Christ wherever he wanders (Acton 1979:291)

Le Cossec is clear about the role of evangelical mission organization is not only to bring material help as humanitarian organizations do, but that it can bring a plus: Christ:

„I guess you have to limited yourself only to the announce of Jesus Christ. What about followup work? We first have to preach Christ, according to the apostles formula. It has always been a priority for me. What we do int he framework of the gypsy evangelical mission is not only bringing a material help, what a lot of humanitarian organization's do each in their sector and with competence. We bring a plus: Christ himself. We do not lose the sight that our first goal is to speak of Christ, the living bread come down from heaven. We have to understand that there is no possible salvation for man out of Jesus Christ. He has come to earth, he has lived as a poor, he has brought the good new of salvation by grace. .. If we do not make by ourselves the experience of conversion how could we communicate to others the spiritual realities the gospel supports and the testimony which goes with it? It is essential to assure the doctrinal bases to a true life of faith."(Djilani-Sergy, 1996)

Le Cossec established a separate organization to deal with the social dimension.

A pentecostal organisation, CMERI joint twenty years a the Fédération protestante de France, a remarkable step in view of the European ecumenical relations. (Pfister, 2001).

The organisation helps Gypsies in India. In 1996 they supported 900 children in 18 student hostels.

2.2.4.2. Bulgarian Pentecostal response

Bulgarian Pentecostal response

The Roma Pentecostal movement in Bulgaria is an indigenous movement. According to Atanasov the Roma's conversion to the faith does not change their ethnic identity, but affirms it and makes them better Roma. Initially the movement was started under the guidance and support of ethnic Bulgarian evangelical leaders, but the main responsibility for it has now largely been transferred to the Roma.(Atanasov, 2008, 220)

Atanasov observes that the dynamics for the growth of the pentecostal movement among the Roma in Bulgaria is complex and that factors are multiple. (Atanasov, 2008, 228-230) First of all there is the spiritual factor, that God loves the poor, but in additional there is a supernatural focus, the belief in miracles and spiritual gifts. The psychological factor demonstrates God's love for the outcasts. Their situation of poverty puts them in a place of dependency and need, which adds a social factor. The growth is also strengthened by a focus on various levels of interaction necessary for the retention of converts and the grounding them deeper in the faith. This is the discipleship factor. A last factor for the growth is that more and more the church is led by Roma, so more an more indigenous. Atanasov summarizes that "This is how the Pentecostal Church has become the Church of the Roma."(Atanasov, 2008, 230)

2.2.4.2.1. Community revitalization caused by Pentecostal Roma Faith

Community revitalization caused by Pentecostal Roma Faith

Extensive field research was done to get insight into "building the case for Roma revitalization as a result of the Christian faith." (Atanasov, 2008, 232) using also multiple eyewitness reports of both insiders and outsiders. A Swiss Rom expert of the Council of

Europe states: "Traditionally we have been many, but divided, and now God is uniting us as a people with the common goal of serving Him. Also, the authorities cannot but acknowledge that the Christian Gypsies do not fit the stereotype of Gypsies being fighters, thieves, and drunkards. The more Christian Gypsies, the stronger our position in our political battle for recognition as a nation in our own right (Dixon 2002) quoted in (Atanasov, 2008, 232).

Alberto Baba, a leader in the French Gypsy movement, said: "Before people used to drink and fight, but the Lord has changed our lives. Our children are raised as Christians and do not know the worldly customs. Our youth is different now - they attend school, sing, and grow in spiritual matters. The Word of God brought many things to our youth, and helped the drug addicts find deliverance. The old human traditions are removed and broken (Baba 2006)." (Atanasov, 2008, 232)

Atanasov mentions a number of specific examples of community revitalization (Atanasov, 2008, 234-256), like the impact on Roma family life, which now functions according to biblical standards, with early marriages now as from 18 years old, respect for women, a theocentric pedagogy, youth education and a new code of ethics.

It is interesting how he mentions the Roma traditions were revitalized according to biblical standards in a process of discernment:

"Being mostly younger believers the Roma have needed and relied on that gajo guidance and leadership. As they are maturing in the faith, however, the Roma are developing their own processes of internal dialog to decide on what to do with these practices. Some practices are rejected, some accepted, and others modified. While on the handling of certain practices the Roma Christians mostly agree, there is also some variation and disagreement among them in regard to others. Fortune-telling, stealing and trickery, for example, are unanimously rejected as pagan and unacceptable." (Atanasov, 2008, 257)

2.2.4.2.2. Conclusions

Conclusions

One of the remarkable conclusions of Atanasov as to how community revitalization has taken place is that "**The leading human factor in the revitalization process is the work and vision of the Roma pastors** who feel the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring about community transformation through re-constitutive discourse." (Atanasov, 2008, 273)

2.3. Evaluation of perspectives - criteria?

2.3.1. Human Development perspective

Evaluation of perspectives

As we analyze and compare the European Churches' responses' perspectives to what is by some perceived as the "Gypsy problem" we find the following three.

The human development perspective is based on or a response to an image that combines a way of life with low socio-economic and social status. We have seen that the primary criteria for defining the group is not origins, but the nomadic way of life, as we have seen often a forced nomadic way of life. The images belonging to this group are usually portrait as the majority being a criminal underclass, as impoverished, unproductive vagrants and parasites. We have observed that images of this category are almost always negative, "creating a sense of conflict, mistrust and antagonism" between the settled and nomadic societies.

In 2001 a first "comprehensive quantitative survey" of the Roma minorities in Central and Eastern Europe was undertaken by the United Nations Development Program and the International Labour Organisation. The survey looked at Roma realities from a "human development" perspective. The application of a human development paradigm to marginalized minorities is conceived as a "new framework for Roma issues". (UNDP (2002). Although the main focus is on human development, it is stated that this does include a human rights perspective as well.

The CEC-CCME consultation in the same year expressed its full support for this strategy offering their help in lobbying in favour of this perspective.

This perspective also reminds us of Kwame Bediako' description of the missionary enterprise in Africa as being part of a benevolent Western movement to elevate the condition of African peoples (Bediako in Ferdinando (2007), 122), according to which Christianity was spread with a Western cultural package.

It is no surprise that the European Churches take over this approach as it is closely related to their developmental work in e.g. Africa.

The Roma scholar Thomas Acton severely criticizes this approach as he is of the opinion that it is based on a incorrect image of the Roma, exclusively focusing on the social image of poverty and does not address the key issue of exclusion.

After a decade of human development approach a general consensus seems to occur as to the fact that money is not a solution to this "problem". As the projects are aimed at the Roma community it creates rather new wall of division (and jealousy) with the majority society, rather than serving the purpose of bringing the Roma at an economic standard of living to prevent them to en mass move to the Western part of Europe.

So this approach is **reductionist** in that it focuses on alleviating one aspect of the "problem", poverty, but not dealing with the root of the problem: the walls of exclusion. It does not address the majority societies attitude of antigypsyism.

2.3.2. Human Rights perspective

Since the EU - and following the EU, the European Churches - realized the single focus on a human rights approach does not suffice, a new strategy was emphasized based on another image of the Roma, that of an ethnic - cultural minority.

The European Churches rightly emphasize the importance of equal opportunities,

everyone is allowed to enter the door...., but they do not realize that the door is still locked.

The new EU framework for Roma inclusion includes this approach, but it does still not use the full potential of the Christian identity of the European Churches, although in the case of Hungary, it seems that more space is given to the Churches contributing with their own emphasis.

Probably the strongest argument against the European Churches strong focus on a human rights perspective is that it operates from a different framework of thought, a legal framework, and not from a theological framework.

It is interesting that the responsibility to deal with the Roma issue seems to be still put on the shoulders of the EU, with the EU responsible for funding all the projects, even the ones which are executed by the Churches. In this way the what is called Gypsy industry is continued, and thus the dynamics of competition and struggle for getting money is at the forefront, instead of true compassion and love. Also the great danger of short-term projects instead of sustainable long term approaches is there.

Also should be emphasized that the missionary calling of the Churches does included caring for the poor and struggling against injustice, but it can never be the only focus. Again, we thus deal with a reductionist approach and should look for a more integrative, comprehensive, holistic way of mission to the Roma, which focuses both on the Roma and on dealing with changing the mindset of the majority society.

2.3.3 Antigysyism perspective

In a number of churches we have observed that the dominating image on the basis of which they respond is still that of racism. It will hardly ever be named that way, but hidden behind other images. Still I think it is important to dare to face this very sensitive issue, otherwise we cannot start to change the approaches. There is almost unanimous agreement on the fact that discriminating attitudes prevent the Roma to have access to education, employment, housing etc. It is a huge theological and missiological challenge to deal THEOLOGICALLY with this "apartheid system"!

2.3.4. Missiological perspective

4. Missiological perspective

A fourth perspective being used by the European Churches in their mission work with the Roma is, - it may not be a surprise - is a missiological perspective. As we analyze how Andrew Walls' two principles of indigenization and the pilgrims principle function, we observe that the Roman Catholic documents do refer to the principle of indigenization. Attempts are made in the Roman Catholic church to this end.

These principles are the strongest represented among the pentecostal gypsy churches as they seek to translate the Gospel to the Roma culture. More research is needed

whether they are able to apply the pilgrims principle.

Haupts' criticism towards the pentecostal churches that they create a new wall of separation with regard to the majority society and churches maybe true, when the "universalizing" pilgrims principle is not emphasized enough. In other words, when the common denominator of the Gospel is not strongly enough represented or emphasized in both the Roma churches and the non-Roma churches, and the Western or Roma culture elements are the strongest, the sense of belonging to a worldwide Christian church is missing.

2.4. Summary

We have observed that the European Churches have responded differently to the Roma, based on the different images they have. These different images lead to various responses and perspectives. We have seen they are all in itself important, but taken solely are also reductionist and are therefore not able to unlock the door of exclusion.

We continue our search for a appropriate key to unlock the door in our next presentation as we try to draw contours of a future perspective of mission among the Roma.

Chapter 3: Pittsburgh III: Future Perspectives on Mission among Roma People: a case study approach

3.1. Introduction

We have observed that the European Churches have responded differently to the Roma, based on the different images they have. These different images lead to various responses and perspectives. We have seen they are all in itself important, but taken solely are also reductionist and are therefore not able to unlock the door of exclusion.

We continue our search for a appropriate key to unlock the door in our this presentation as we try to draw contours of a future perspective of mission among the Roma.

After a very special dinner I would like to take you on an exposure trip to Slovakia as part of our course in Gypsy mission.

From your broad experience in world mission you are requested as as missionary in Slovakia working with the Roma to sit down with a Roma pastor discussing the future of his church.

Listen carefully to his story!

3.2. Case Study I Zoltán Lakatos: To become a Gazsi

Case Study - Making someone a Gadzsi (Non-Romani)

Recently Zoltán Lakatos, a pastor of a Slovakian Roma (Gypsy) Congregation, who is very interested in the complex question of how the Gospel can be best translated into the Gypsy culture shared the following story.

Slowakia became part of the EU in 2004, and a few years ago the EURO was introduced. He observes that in his country there are many different ways in which the the Churches relate to the Gypsy culture. One example is what he calls: making the Roma into a Gadzsó, a non-Roma. It is about westernizing the Gospel, in which the indigenization to the Roma culture is neglected. The other approach he sees is the a Romanization of the Gospel, in which the pilgrims principle is missing. He illustrated it with the following conversation he recently had.

He spoke with a young Slovakian Pentecostal pastor, soon the conversation turned to the topic of mission work among the Roma (Gypsies). The young minister soon shared his complaints and disappointment, because the lack of result of the many years of mission work he had done in a Gypsy village in the south of the country. He shared, that he and his colleagues had done their utmost to help a local, large - very archaic - Roma community to

come out of what they considered their underdeveloped culture and replace it with it with genuine, biblical norms, behaviours, and culture in them and among them. and them.

All these efforts turned out unsuccessful, and the young pastor felt his mission work had turned into a total failure. He said that: "We have tried everything, we have taught the children and the adults by the Word of God, how to live, how you are supposed to behave yourself, but it turned out into a complete failure. We have tried to teach such fundamental things like that breastfeeding should not be done "publicly", to shake hands when we meet someone, accuracy etc. But they did not really listen, it went into one of their ears, came out on the other side. Till today I do not understand why. We have worked hard and have not succeeded."

He was convinced about the honesty of the young pastor and that he had no doubt that his young colleague had tried to do his best. He was convinced that - with many social scientists of the 18th century - that the main problem of the "Roma problem" is of their specific traditional Roma culture. Till the extend to help them come out of their culture, to leave their culture behind, and instead replaced it by an altogether new, sacred culture (Christianity), then these Gypsies count give a good testimony of the Kingdom of God, of Jesus Christ, and in addition turn into useful members of the Slovakian and the prevailing mainstream society.

It seems that this orientation/direction/view of promoting "positive change" build on cultural exchange is represented by a recent invitation to the Gospel, which could be read on a website on Mission among Roma people, with the question: "Actually can the Gypsies be changed?" The plural used in the title suggests, first, that the Gypsies collectively have to change, as if we deal with a people group of which the lifestyle, and culture is in all things negative and sinful. On the other hand, behind the expression "can they be changed" lies clearly the idea (which also showed from the contents of the call) that the Gospel does bring about radical changes, literally: changes of the root of things. From here, the assumption lies not far, that the gypsy will only then turn into a a "good Christian" (into a good testimony), when apart from the color of his skin he is no different from the Western European and American (or even Slovakian) - Christians.

The website of the same organization for Roma mission presents a new research project entitled "Research into Christian Roma communities". The description of the nature of the research shows that they consider it necessary to fit the Roma into the expectations of the majority society through Christianity. So in the eyes of the Gázsó missionaries who represent this direction of "making roma into gadzsó" successful ministry is when they manage to transfer as efficient as possible, the way of life and culture that they represent, and the results of this assimilation which follows out of it, can be measured.

Insofar this kind of "cultural" success does not appear externally firmly, then the ministry is felt to be unsuccessful. Consequently, according to the representatives of this point of view - the effectiveness of the ministry of the Gospel is almost exclusively measured as integration into a Western-style social system and way of life, in fitting to outside appearances or in assimilation that is called integration.

It is important to note that this approach is identical to the essential elements of the charismatic view that is also referred to as prosperity theology, in which the fruit of the Christian life can be measured - according to the standard of the world - in success and results. Accordingly, the success built on great social progress is considered as a big fruit, and the result based little social progress measured as small fruit.

In addition, in the mission work among the Roma the question is frequently asked whether Roma congregations should be established separately or should be integrated in non-Roma congregations. The supporters of this model usually chose for the view of integration. In exceptional cases, when there are e.g. too many tensions due to cultural differences, then a separate church for Roma will be created, separate from the mother church congregation, for converted Roma. Meanwhile, often in the newly formed Roma church a "Gazsó" or strongly "made Gazsó Romani" pastor will be appointed, and often "Gadszó" members of the mother church community or Gazsi assimilated Romani members will join the congregation. All this happens so that the Romani community is not able to create a kind of theology that would fit and harmonize with their Christianity and their view of society. In this way the mother church is freed from the permanent tensions related to an integrated church, often leading to a situation that the gazsó leave the mother church - and in a relatively short time the Roma community can be successfully turned into a Gadszó.

Please discuss with your neighbour how you would react to Zoltán's story.

3.3. A future perspectives on European Churches' contribution to mission among Roma people

In dealing with the various perspectives of the European Churches we have come to the conclusion that a number of perspectives have been used by the churches:

1. Human development perspective - reductionist, focuses only on Roma
2. Human rights perspective - other framework of thought, focuses on equal rights for all
3. Antigypsy perspective - theological response needed to racism, creates new walls of exclusion
4. Missiological perspective: either indigenization - Romanization of the Gospel - with unclear functioning of pilgrims' perspective

A future perspective of mission among the Roma should focus both on the Roma and the majority society, and have an integrated, comprehensive and holistic character.

We will explore some proposals and see how they fit these criteria, whether they are sufficiently able to provide a key to the door of exclusion.

3.3.1. Majority Society

3.3.1.1. Pfister's proposal: a theology of Reconciliation for Europe

Raymond Pfister in an article on the future of Pentecostalism in Europe observes that "Over the past years, reconciliation has become the emerging new paradigm that defines the mission of the Christian Church in today's Global Village. Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal voices from all over the world are increasingly speaking the same language." He calls for a "spirituality of reconciliation" to face the challenges brought about by what he calls the "damaging effects of cultural and religious clashes". In particular the 2005 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) which brought together participants ranging from Roman Catholics to Pentecostal and evangelical churches.

The resulting report contains a statement on mission as reconciliation 'in the power of the Spirit' in the context of a broken world. "Truth, memory, justice and forgiveness are understood as four essential aspects, needed both within the Church and in society at large, in the dynamics of the reconciliation and healing process."

He emphasizes with reference to Kirsteen Kim, that "Just as the Spirit is the distinctive characteristic of the Christian community, the reconciling Spirit enables a reconciling community, thus defining the ministry of the Spirit as a ministry of reconciliation."

Pfister observes that "maybe too little attention has been paid to evidence that would show that God's reconciling initiative in Christ has not been limited to individual reconciliation, but that serious attention has indeed been given to the social meaning of reconciliation?"

"The Church needs to create a safe space for an intercultural experience which is truly transformative. For this reason it needs to develop a concept of interculturality that allows for an active engagement among the various European cultures. If we want to live a more sustainable shared life, we need to explore possibilities "to broaden our perspectives and change our own particular ways of thinking and living".

So Pfister's remarks with regard to the future of pentecostalism in Europe may offer a relevant new perspective to the European Churches in changing the mindset of the majority society through the emphasis on social reconciliation. His emphasis with the Athens report on reconciliation "in the power of the Spirit" is important to take into consideration.

This also poses a challenge to the European Churches to close cooperate in a new kind of ecumenical cooperation and learning as was proposed a few years ago in the Global Christian Forum.

3.3.2. Roma Communities

A second future perspective for mission among the Roma is derived from the study Miroslav Atanasov.

3.3.2.1. Recommendations of Atanasov

Miroslav Atanasov in his study into Bulgarian Gypsy Pentecostalism emphasizes a number of important issues important for a future perspective of mission among the Roma. We mention the two most important ones:

1. The importance of discipleship

Atanasov states that "While Roma churches have been strong on evangelism, my research showed that their discipleship has been less effective." (300-304) It is effective discipleship that will strengthen the faith of the Roma, but it will also inevitably move them towards social transformation. (303)

2. Toward a contextualized Roma indigenous theology

Atanasov sets out to identify the elements of a contextualized Roma indigenous theology. He concludes that Roma theology is a deep and complex subject. He only has begun to uncover its rich content. The marginal status of the Roma gives them the unique opportunity to impact their communities and also to speak prophetically to the majority culture. We can see that in many ways their understanding of Christianity is closer to the biblical paradigm than that of Post-Christian Europe. The further development of Roma contextual theology will be very healthy for the movement.

Several things would be necessary for this process to advance:

1. Roma Pentecostal leaders and laypeople need to study theology and write on the subject. They need to explain the Christian faith within their context and apply it there. Roma theologians are just in the process of emerging out of the mahala churches.

2. The Roma churches need to develop hermeneutic communities, which are committed to developing local theologies from, by, and for the mahala. They need to develop a specific process, which would result in constructing a contextual theological product that effectively engages their culture. Some Roma churches have already taken steps in developing such communities."

3.3.2.1.1. Towards a theology of Roma

3.3.2.1.2. Discipleship

3.3.3. Majority Society and Roma

3.3.3.1. Haupt's proposal for a Theology of Roma liberation

From a Roman Catholic perspective Haupt suggests a liberating pastoral care approach which focuses on Mission in Christ's way, following the healing Christ, and which helps people to get on their feet. Only then do they have the possibility to voluntarily start following this Saviour, and to turn themselves into healing people. Haupt therefore rejects the evangelisation method of the evangelical and pentecostal churches, because the identity of a Christian or a Convert replaces the pure ethnic Roma identity fully, even although it seems from outside that this approach is very successful.ⁱ He uses the gospel story of the healing of the leper (Mk. 1: 40-45), in which the leper is touched by Jesus, although He in doing acts contrary to the law of Leviticus 13.

A sensible pastoral concept should start with overcoming the anti-gypsy exclusion. Like the Roma in the pentecostal churches are touched by the Holy Spirit, in the same way should they feel the touch by other Christians in the Spirit of Jesus, whether these Christians are ordained or not.

Overcoming exclusion by the majority society, to be accepted as equal and beloved people offers the possibility to have freedom in dealing with one's own identity and to find himself. Haupt emphasizes that only in this way is identity not anymore an irrational reflex to a discriminating perception, but can lead to an individually self-determined expression in which ethnicity, gender, profession and also religion can play its appropriate role.

When the relation between the Roma and the majority society the central starting point is of a pastoral approach, then two directions need to be taken into consideration: the Roma themselves and the majority society, the Gadje.

Haupt emphasizes the importance of creative and a variety of strategies of inclusion, in which the empowerment a basic principle is. **Roma** should themselves be put in the position to change their fate, they should turn into subjects of change, of evangelisation, and should not be objects of pastoral care. Priority should be given to the stimulation of self organisation.

Only in this way will the Roma experience, that God has seen their distress, and that He turns himself to them. „This turning includes and communicates a spiritual energy and strength, without which whatever external help provided will remain superficial and without effect. This motivating and healing turning of God can only be experienced through people, therefore do I consider the involvement of people in Roma projects for much more important than material resources and the pouring out of money. We should as Christians „dare to come near" as bishop von Vicenza, Cesare Nosiglia emphasized.ⁱⁱ

The second target group should be the **majority society**. This element, according to Haupt, is in the Roma pastoral care document unfortunately completely left out, because the anti-gypsy element is not included as the central element of the sociological analysis, but a supposed ethnological founded nomadism.

According to Haupt those involved in Roma ministry should spend at least as much time and energy in missionizing their congregations and other church related institutions as for the Roma themselves. Not only the liberation of the Roma out of their misery and exclusion is at stake, but also our own liberation out of a position of dominance to an attitude of partnership and brotherly hood.

Haupt calls us to commit ourselves to the Roma, to analyse and demonstrate the structures of anti-gypsism, when we protest against exclusion and work for the re-inclusion of the excluded, for touching the lepers, then, because we follow the peace maker, since we like he was agents of peace and love would like to be, of a kind of love which is stronger than the death.ⁱⁱⁱ

The advantage of Haupt's proposal is that he deals with anti-gypsyism, also that he focuses on both the Roma and the majority society. The question is how in his model the missiological principles of indigenization and the pilgrims's principle are combined.

3.4. Conclusion

European Churches' perspectives on mission among the Roma, how to move forward?

For the European Churches it is important to honestly face their own crisis in identity with regard to what it means to be a missional church in a secularized Europe, apart from honestly facing the challenges related to mission among the Roma.

I would like to close with offering a few elements important of a new paradigm for mission among the Roma:

Way forward:

1. Think through the lessons of mission work in continents like Africa with regard to the principles of indigenization and the pilgrimage principle. How could they facilitate moving from "mission to the Roma" to "Roma churches" or to a "Church for all"!

2. Education

- of Roma - Cf. Hancock 2010 e.a. Framework

- of Majority society - Missionary education of Congregations to fulfill the missionary role in own context! - Towards a theology of reconciliation, confession of guilt

- Focus of education should be holistic, involving heart, head and hands!

3. Cooperation - money divides and creates competition!

- across Ecumenical and Evangelical networks to learn from each other: Global Christian Forum.

- among Roma

4. Dialogue and story telling!

- Roma - Roma

- Gadge - Gadge

- Roma - Gadge

5. Research

* past: the past role of the churches, give Roma their and confession of past sins!

* present

- e.g. what is secret of pentecostal churches?

- best practices
- 6. Nothing about us without us!

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ⁱ Ibid.198.

ⁱⁱ Ibid. 200.

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