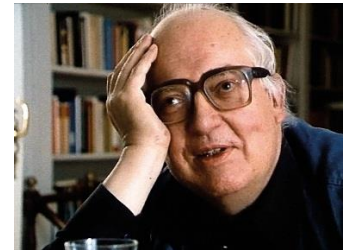


"The Virus Epidemic in South Africa"

Foreword by the President, Rev. Walter Lüssi

The President of South Africa fell ill with a feverish cold, and when he woke up in the morning, his wife sprang from their bed, sneezing and screaming. The police appeared, also stricken with a cold and feverish, asking where the President was. They laughed derisively when he declared that he was the President, and dragged him away just as he was, in his pyjamas. They threw him into a cell with a black man who protested loudly that he was the Minister of Justice and that it was against the laws of apartheid to lock him in a cell with a black man.

This is how a short story written by Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–1990) begins. The story first appeared in 1994 in the *Tages-Anzeiger*, a Swiss newspaper. Now, in the stirring year 2020, it has a new explosive power.



In Dürrenmatt's story, a new virus appears, which causes infected white people to get a black skin color. Astonishingly, in the story published more than 25 years ago, the author combines two themes that have been occupying us intensively worldwide for several months. An end is not yet in sight. And because money and business were also at stake during apartheid, the Swiss banking world does not escape Dürrenmatt's irony and critical judgment.

As I write these lines, 19 million people worldwide have been infected with Corona. More than 700,000 people have died from the virus. And an end to the pandemic is not yet foreseeable. After George Floyd was killed during his arrest in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, this drop caused the barrel to overflow once again. Beginning in the United States, there were demonstrations of solidarity and protests against racism around the world. It has not yet been determined that this will also be accompanied by sustainable change for the better.

In each of their countries, where the Members of Oikosnet Europe have their own experiences, the situation is different for the people and the actions of those responsible. And, of course, the Academies and Centres are also affected by the consequences of the lockdown, the prescribed protective measures, the insecurity and increasing impatience of the people. Concrete measures are

being taken at local and national level. But if more evidence was needed to show that we can only tackle the great challenges of our time together in Europe and around the world, then we have become very aware of this last year through the Friday for Future movement and now in the past few months.



Oikosnet Europe, as a transnational network, has a special responsibility. We are grateful that our Association has gained experience for 65 years in how we can work together and that we have learned to better understand each other beyond different cultural, social and political traditions. As part of civil society, we can once again make an important contribution to a better life and a rewarding future for the generations that will come after us.

This, and mutual concrete support, is the justification for the existence of Oikosnet Europe. The extent to which we are prepared to invest in the common task will determine not only our survival, but also the energy and strength with which we will play a helpful role in Europe in the face of the concrete challenges of our time.

The Virus Epidemic in South Africa / Die Virusepidemie in Südafrika

The mentioned short story by Friedrich Dürrenmatt is not published elsewhere. I had them translated for Oikosnet Europe. As chance would have it, it was translated by a son-in-law of a pastor of our church, a South African (!). I will make it available to you in a separate document in German and English. You can find the document among the other documents for this General Assembly.

Activities of the Management Board

Participants and issues of the board meetings (Office)

2019/12/15-17 Oikosnet Board (Bad Boll)

- Evaluation of the Annual Conference on Crete
- ...

2020/03/09 Oikosnet Board (Skype Conference)

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

2020/05/25-26 Oikosnet Board (Zoom Conferences)

- ...
- ...

2020/07/01 Oikosnet Board (Zoom Conference)

- ...

2020/06/18 Oikosnet Europe Zoom Conference

Walter Lüssi

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- ...
- ...

Activities of the President (WL)

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- ...
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- ...

Activities of the Executive secretary (RN)

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- ...
- ...
- ...

Activities of the board members

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Financial Report (Karolína / Office)

...

Activities of the secretariat

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Number and topics of the published newsletters

...

Further development of project

Arab-European Dialogue (AL)

...

Dialog for peaceful change (Jaap van der Sar)

Navigating Conflict and Change: This is the title of the revised handbook, which was published in June 2019. The title reflects the change, which occurred during the 15 years that we are active as DPC – which stands for ‘Dialogue for Peaceful Change’. Initially we were generally “dealing with conflicts”, which is also described as “conflict management”. Not completely dedicated to prevent conflicts, nor to solve them. As life shows everyone, sometimes conflicts are present, required, necessary, useful or even mandatory. We have seen and

experienced that many people in churches tend to state that conflicts are against the goals of churches. We disagree completely with that position. The mere existence of hunger, of racism, of sexism (as examples) are a strong argument to start conflicts.

As a consequence, we changed the title of our handbook into “Navigating Conflict and Change”. It adds a moral component to any conflict we face: Which direction should we go in a conflict? What are good conflicts to start? Which positions in conflicts don’t deserve the qualification ‘good’?

DPC was started in 2004 with a conference, organised by Oikos in the Netherlands in cooperation with Oikosnet Europe. We had participants from all regional Oikosnet-associations, thus gathering experience and wisdom from different partners in our ecumenical family from all over the world. In 2005 we had our first DPC-training – which lasted five days. In January 2020 we had our 100th DPC-training, still five days long. This training was the first ever realised in Australia – and the last so far in 2020. We have had several more scheduled this year, but were not able to get them done.

Just about that Australian one: initially the training was planned in January 2020 in New South Wales at the East Coast. Attractive was at least the name of the place: Mystery Bay. We have never been there due to the bush-fires, which happened from mid December 2019 to the end of January 2020. Some of the intended participants weren’t even able to communicate about their expected participation and arrival time, due to the fact that there was no food, no fuel and no electricity nor any telephone-network in the area where we should work. The place was rearranged to Canberra where we welcomed 18 participants, even those who were heavily engaged in the protection against the fires around their village during the full week before the training started. And during the training several cars of trainers and participants were destroyed due to a heavy hail-storm in exactly “our” part of Canberra (*see also the picture of the parrot, which survived the hail but was a bit dizzy*). As you can imagine, the big issue was how to deal with the climate/environmental issue since this is the emerging main conflict participants faced.



In the period for this Annual Report, there have been 7 trainings. Two of them were asked for by an international church-umbrella organisation. They have seen many opportunities to improve the quality of church leaders (this time in Latin America and in Africa) when dealing with conflicts – and we agree with that conclusion. We also continued the support of a Stockholm based organisation, which deals with youth- and gang violence. This organisation has now own DPC-trainers; we already have one DPC-coach available in Sweden. On the other end of the application: one associate trainers in the Netherlands realised a special issue of a monthly for elders in her (national) church. In November a training day for these elders is scheduled.

Scheduling trainings: that is easily done. To realise them is another question as became clear last half year. Formal trainings are not scheduled yet. Coaching takes place on a more individual level – where email, telephone. Skype and Zoom or similar techniques are helpful. We are looking at ways to replace some parts of our training by short introductory films. However, also in the last year the strong feedback on our trainings was the fact that we heavily rely on experiential learning. That is still the case. Therefore, keep also a close look at our website <https://www.dialogueforpeacefulchange.org/>

Some statistics after 15 years

Since our programme runs 15 years now with already 100 full trainings, it is good to add some statistics. Please bear in mind that statistics only reflect a part of the reality. Figures don't give a real image on the impact any training has had.

2019-2020: We have had 7 trainings (3 in Sweden, 1 in Brazil, 1 in Canada, 1 in Nigeria, 1 in Australia) with 113 participants (61 women, 52 men).

More in general we have the following information:

Total participants	1.573
<i>Among them women</i>	923
<i>Among them men</i>	650
Total trainings	100
<i>In Europe</i>	50
<i>In North America</i>	32
<i>In Latin America</i>	1
<i>In Asia (Middle East included)</i>	6
<i>In Africa</i>	10
<i>In Australia</i>	1
Total trainers (certified and associated)	45
Trainers, active in the last 5 years	24
Different countries where trainings took place (where England and No Ireland are considered to be two countries)	21
Coaches	7

Fields of application of the trainings are very different. The general feedback is that people can and will and do apply the stuff in their daily lives, no matter what other application is found. Beyond that, we have seen that people apply it in the challenges how to deal with youth and gang violence (Sweden – Fryshuset in several cities; USA – YIN in especially Antioch, CA); in the way they can support people who deal with obesity (England in a NHS-programme); in several ecumenical bodies and in churches (Council of Churches in Zimbabwe, Lutheran World Federation at different levels and places, local parishes).

Civil Society Project (RN)

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Activities of the Nomination Committee

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Membership development

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Withdrawals from members / Announcement of difficulties

Contacts to potential members

July 20/WL