
Foreword

The general aim of the NORDPLUS project “Climate Symbols in Theology and Art” (2010 – 2013) was to develop deeper understanding of the current priorities in the climate change issue in the Baltic States and Nordic countries from the humanitarian perspective. Climate change may serve as an “entry point” into better understanding of fragility of our life within the created environment. We underline that seriousness of climate change must be considered in wider context which goes beyond demanding only some changes in the life of society but rather calls into the question basic attitudes and values. Therefore the concept of sustainable development is radical one which includes also theological discourse and art historical and stylistic observations.

Our objectives were to establish and to extend the network between educational institutions in Baltic States and Nordic countries providing higher education in humanities and arts and dealing with ecological issues. We aimed also at promotion of contacts through research consortiums for long-term cooperation. Network ECTA members were Latvian Christian Academy (Latvia) which was also the coordinating institution; Faculty of Theology, University of Tartu (Estonia); Institute of Cultural and Arts Education, Vilnius Pedagogical University (Lithuania); Department of Graphic Design, Vilnius Academy of Arts (Lithuania); Institute of Design and Fine Arts, Lahti University of Applied Sciences (Finland); Ansgar College and Theological Seminary (Norway); Stockholm School of Theology (Sweden). We thank all higher education institutions mentioned above for participation in the network. Special thanks should be forwarded to all responsible coordinators from the institutions mentioned: *Dr.*, prof. Tõnu Lehtsaar from Estonia, *Dr.*, prof. Vaidas Matonis, assoc. prof. Saulius Jozuas Jarašius and assoc. prof. Giedrė Riškutė-Kariniauskienė from Lithuania, *Dr.*, assoc. prof. Bjørn Øyvind Fjeld from Norway, lecturer Johnny Jonsson from Sweden and senior lecturer Kirsti Nenyte from Finland.

The project brought together multidisciplinary approaches from various fields of knowledge investigating climate change challenges and ecotheology. The collaboration between participants in research, students and teachers has opened new opportunities for analysis and criticism. The overall purpose was reached by promoting innovative research process via new created consortium in ecology, theology and arts. Interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge, experiences and good practices by the network activities served as the background for the current Proceedings. Climate change topic served as a basic platform for analysis of social relationships, moral and ethical attitudes. The innovative approach is that project actions were based on a clear set of ecotheological objectives and artistic visions of environment.

Current Proceedings offers research platform for highlighting and promoting the dissemination of innovative theological and art study approach to the ecological problems. Articles of the Proceedings present a useful perspective to evaluate the diversity of approaches to climate change issues.

The overall situation in the Baltic sea region, importance of its ecology for both ecologists, theologians and artists is described in the article by *Mag. theol.* Guntis Dišlers “Three Whales on Whom the World Rests: God, Creation and Symbols” (Latvia). The multi-faceted topic as it is, “ecothology and art” encompasses various fields of knowledge. Development of ecotheology is shortly described by description of criticism of the Western Christianity being partially responsible for neglect towards nature. The article serves as overall background against which various directions of ecotheology may be presented for further penetrating analysis. The second part of the article deals with interface between nature and humanity activated by the use of symbols. Currently traditional symbols undergo ambiguous process of application in religion, art and daily use. Detailed analysis of ecology facts regarding the Baltic Sea and their impact on climate is presented in the article by *Dr. biol.* Anda Ikauniece (Latvia). “Ecology of the Baltic Sea and the Possible Impact of Climate Fluctuations”. Her passion in dealing with the problem was transferred excellently by her presentation which has been reasonably compressed in the current article. The article provides the basic knowledge on the non-living and living compounds of the aquatic environment of the Baltic Sea. Entomologist *Dr. biol.* Voldemārs Spuņģis (Latvia) in his essay “Insects in a Changing World: From Past to Future” presents himself as a keen Bible student. His essay makes one think about the importance of the ancient text for current climate studies in paradoxical and creative way. His contribution was very relevant as a bridge between biology, ecology, on the one hand, and theology and Biblical studies, on the other.

Since climate change is not a local phenomenon, we have been privileged to welcome *Dr. Lucas Andrianos* from Orthodox Academy of Crete (Greece) with his article “Environmental Ethics: The Fuzzy Limiting Factors for Sustainable Development” to join our Proceedings. His article serves as a bridge from pure technical knowledge about climate changes to ethical and anthropological approach. Chasing ephemeral economical progress “homo sapiens” has gradually evolved from “homo religious” to “homo economicus” – the influences of religion on daily life become marginal and human activities are no longer restricted to ethical consciousness. As a result, the conservation of life support on Earth and the viability of sustainable development become the most alarming challenge for the 21st century.

Sooner or later “ecology” hits the ground where human responsibility lies. This is why the reader will find three important articles in this volume from the following authors: *Dr. min.* Bjørn Øyvind Fjeld (Norway) “A Christian Ecological Ethics with Special Reference to Human Stewardship of God’s Creation”, *Dr. theol.* António Barbarossa da Silva (Norway) “The Biblical Foundation of Christian Ethics” and *Mag. theol.* Dace Dolace (Latvia) “Climate Change and Anthropological Change: Social Teaching of the Church on Ecology Issues”. The discussion implies a special reference to the Stewardship of God’s Creation and puts focus on the human possibility to act properly and the human responsibility for future generations. Authors emphasize that the main challenge today is to move beyond the level of analysis and substantiate how to implement practical actions on the political, personal and global level.

Christians have universally moral obligations towards God's creation which has intrinsic value. In the context of the international and local climate change policy the position and role of social teaching of the traditional Church is viewed. It should be noted that the current project has put an emphasis on Biblical anthropology as revealed by the Eastern Church Fathers, true founders of Christianity. Their heritage occupies the most important place for both the human concept and human relationships with the rest of creation.

Norwegian researchers *Mag. phil.* Hildegunn Marie Tønessen Schuff and *Mag. theol.*, Reverend Father Christofóros Schuff in their joint article "Climate Justice in an Oil-Rich Country: The Case of Norway" present contextual Bible study asking: what challenges does an eco-theology, addressing climate justice, pose in the context of Norway, a country which has built its wealth to a large degree on petroleum production? It is emphasized that the level of ethical reflection must be raised and actions, lifestyles and societal conditions must be changed accordingly. It is made obvious that climate justice is spiritual and moral challenge that needs to be contextualized and responded to.

Strong anthropological approach to the problem is complemented by pedagogical and educational prospects as presented by *Dr. habil. sc. soc.* Vaidas Matonis, *Dr. Dalia Karatajienė, Dr. sc. soc.* Jolita Kudinovienė and Jurga Sidrabienė (Lithuania) in their article "Metamorphosis of Religious and Visual Signs in the Context of Climate Change: Education Prospects". The possibility of increasing the role of artistic and religious appreciation in the education of environmental awareness is the key aspect of their approach. Last but not least the project offers an insight into creativity of Latvian sculptor Ojārs Feldbergs, his concept of nature and symbolic perception of the created world – as presented by *Dr. paed.* Valentīna Liepa (Latvia) "Semantics of Nature in Sculptor Ojārs Feldbergs' Art". The article is about sculptor who often talks not only about external space, he is also concerned with the inner spiritual and intellectual space. Participants of the project session in 2012 will remember the site visit to the open-air art museum "Pedvāle" where the dialogue between nature, God and man was made visible through and by his art.

We express our gratitude to the NORDPLUS framework Programme administration for the financial contribution to the network building between higher education institutions for the exchange through research, disseminating experiences and innovative results, for the possibility to create a long-term research consortium between Baltic and Nordic higher education institutions.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that in the way we see and describe nature, we also transform our humanity. And this is not just a private issue because our wishes and beliefs are essentially bound to the wishes of other people. Our intentional modification of nature does affect conditions of human being and conditions of human culture. Theology and art reminds about culture. We are responsible for preserving the kind of human culture that will remain in future as well. From Christian perspective we are created in the image and likeness of God which is imprinted in us, humans, by understanding ourselves as responsible beings. In the perspective of the New Testament the term *oikonomia* ("economy" or "stewardship") has the same meaning as the modern term "ecology" which denotes the management, administration and care for the things of the household with attentiveness and frugality.

The content of the project closely resembles the EUROPE 2020 strategy for smart transition towards resource-efficient economy in Europe. “Everything is a question of timing. This is true for climate change too. This presents both a problem and an opportunity,” says Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action. It is a very good saying that acting now to prevent serious climate change is like paying an insurance premium for future.

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