The Roman Catholic Church of Norway and migration challenges

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Abstract: Ever since its re-establishment in Norway in 1843, the Roman Catholic Church has grown steadily. The church has now a total membership of approximately 150,000 (1 January 2017). The reason for the latest, and certainly largest, wave of Catholic migrants to settle in Norway is labour migration resulting from the eastward expansion of the EU when Poland and Lithuania joined in 2004. About half of the Catholic population of Norway originates in these two countries. This article focuses on the following research question: How does the Roman Catholic Church in Norway, represented by religious sisters, priests and ecclesiastical employees, respond to the large influx of Catholic migrants to Norway? The study is based on a qualitative survey consisting of semi-structured interviews with 10 informants comprising religious sisters, priests and ecclesiastical employees. Although some informants admit that the strong growth resulting from migration has posed problems, such as tendencies to form 'parallel congregations' based on ethnic origin, most expressed a positive view of this influx of migrants and of the future of the Catholic Church in Norway.

Keywords: Roman Catholic Church; Norway; migration; integration; Robert D. Putnam

Introduction

Migration and transnationalism are arguably one of the main causes of the changes currently taking place in western European countries. The European refugee crisis has aroused political and public interest in international migration. Many of the migrants arriving in Western Europe in recent decades come from Christian backgrounds. The largest group of Christian migrants are Roman Catholics. This fact is often overshadowed by the media attention given to Muslim migrants. Due to migration predominantly from Poland and Lithuania, the Roman Catholic Church in Norway has grown from approximately 28,000 in 1993 to 150,000 in 2017 of a total population of approximately 5.3 million inhabitants. Today about half of the Catholic population originates in these two eastern European countries.[1] The Catholic migrants bring Catholicism, both as faith and as institutional practice, switching to global and transnational scales or receding to national or local religious practices.[2] The Roman Catholic Church is the single largest international religious organisation, and arguably the oldest globalized institution, in the world. This church acts both internationally and locally, with a defined leadership and an expressed membership policy. Under canon law, its members are deemed Catholic regardless of which country they reside in. This is an important fact to remember when researching Roman Catholics and migration. The church's policy is manifested in official authoritative documents published in compliance with the Holy See or the bishops.

At local level, however, church representatives find that church policy conflicts with practical realities. This paper discusses the situation in Norway, a country on the periphery of the Roman Catholic Church, which until recently had a Lutheran State Church, and where Catholics count as a minority religious minority.[3] The empirical inquiry is based upon qualitative interviews with "professional" Catholics, i.e. religious sisters, priests and ecclesiastical employees.

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[1] Cf. Statistics Norway, 'Den norske kirke'; Erdal, 'Religion og migrasjon', 259-260.

[2] Pasura and Erdal, 'Introduction: Migration, Transnationalism and Catholicism', 11.

[3] Statistics Norway, 'Medlemmer i kristne trussamfunn som mottek offentleg stønad og som er utanfor Den norske kyrkja. Per 1. januar 2017'.

Methodology

Based on my hermeneutical pre-understanding of the field, the research question I am answering in the paper could be expressed thus: How does the Roman Catholic Church in Norway, represented by religious sisters, priests and ecclesiastical employees, respond to the large influx of Catholic migrants to Norway?

The study is based on a qualitative survey consisting of semi-structured interviews with 10 informants comprising representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Norway, i.e. religious sisters, priests and ecclesiastical employees.[4] A strategic sample of informants was selected in order to obtain representative viewpoints, meaning viewpoints and evaluations with which many in similar positions within the church would concur. Four of the 10 informants themselves come from immigrant backgrounds. The informants have been anonymised according to standard social scientific procedures. The empirical data were collected between 2014 and 2015. In addition to conducting interviews, I attended church services and other events arranged by six different congregations. I have also read relevant guidelines and strategy documents. Most of the empirical data, including most of the interviews, originate in the Greater Oslo region, which is the administrative centre of the Roman Catholic Church in Norway. This may of course represent a bias, but since the focus has been on the church's expressed institutional identity, I considered it expedient to interview individuals who hold central positions in their organisations, geographically and otherwise.

The term pre-understanding is a central concept in the philosophical hermeneutics Hans-Georg Gadamer developed during the course of the twentieth century.[5] According to Gadamer's philosophy, no understanding of anything whatsoever comes from nothing. All understanding requires other pre-understanding, which Gadamer calls *prejudice.* Gadamer's concept of prejudice should therefore not be regarded as a negative concept, but rather as a natural and absolute prerequisite for understanding any kind of phenomenon.[6] According to Gadamer, it is possible to

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[4] Cf. Bryman, *Social Research Methods,* 265–436; Repstad, *Mellom nærhet og distanse.*

[5] Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode.*

[6] Ibid., 253–257.

distinguish between *legitimate* and *illegitimate* prejudices: we can reject whatever inhibits our understanding when we, for example, read a text, yet it is also possible for our prejudices to be corrected and re-examined during our encounters with a text or with whatever we are trying to understand. This also enables us to distinguish between prejudices that facilitate understanding and prejudices that inhibit it.

A key prerequisite for ensuring that such a hermeneutic approach is practicable is that the interpreter keep an open mind about whatever conflicts with his pre-understanding. The researcher must therefore avoid trying to gain control of the text as an object and instead engage in dialogue with it. Nonetheless, there is no getting away from the fact that we have pre-understanding and that as interpreting subjects we always have an understanding and interpretative relationship with the world around us. This implies that a correct, objective interpretation according to philosophical hermeneutics is unattainable because our understanding of a field of research will always be transitory. Because it acknowledges the shortcomings of language, hermeneutics can also have an immunising effect against research arrogance, but the downside is that gaining objective knowledge is considered impossible.

As researchers, we have to acknowledge the limitations of our methods. In my case, the empirical material is limited to Catholic Church professionals' understanding of and response to the migrants who arrived in Norway, especially after Poland and Lithuania joined the European Union in 2004, and to their understanding of the challenges, this influx of migrants has posed for the church. My interpretations and discussion of the collected empirical as a researcher is therefore an example of what Anthony Giddens has referred to as 'double hermeneutics', as I interpret the interpreters.[7]

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[7] Giddens, 'Social science as a double hermeneutic', 400-404. Religion and migration is a large field of research. For overview, cf. Kivisto, *Religion and Immigration*, Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 147-149. Studies focusing on Islam and muslim migrants dominates, far fewer studies have focused specifically on Christian migrants and Christian migrant congregations, cf. Martikainen, 'Hvorfor studere kristne migranter i Norden?', 11-12; Erdal, 'When Poland Became the Main Country of Birth Among Catholics in Norway: Polish Migrants' Everyday Narratives and Church Responses to a Demographic Re-Constitution'; Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 148. Studies on the Norwegian context includes Mæland '*Hva har vi felles?' En studie i kulturell kompleksitet og multikulturelle*

I myself am a member of the Catholic Church, and have a relatively broad pre-understanding of what is at stake when it comes to the church as a migrant church. The issue of researcher membership in the group or area being studied is relevant to all approaches of qualitative methodology because the researcher plays such a direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis. Patricia A Adler and Peter Adler identified three 'membership roles' of qualitative researchers engaged in observational methods: (a) peripheral member researchers, who do not participate in the core activities of group members, (b) active member researchers, who become involved with the central activities of the group without fully committing themselves to the members' values and goals; and (c) complete member researchers, i.e. researchers who are already members of the group or who become fully affiliated during the course of the research.[8] My position would be the first one in Adler and Adler's typology. I am not part of the group of informants, and do not participate in the core activities of group members. On the other hand, a researcher must always reflect critically on his own pre-understanding and prejudices. This is also a matter of research ethics.

Many Catholics of immigrant background are passive members; they were born and raised in Norway and rarely or never participate in church rituals. One of the religious sisters I interviewed answered the question about shared values with Norwegian society as follows: 'Some become so Norwegian that they stop going to church, you see. That is what generally happens in Norway, and we see it happening in immigrant groups all the time.' It is important to remember the complexity of large religious organisations like the Roman Catholic Church. In my case, it is reasonable to

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prosesser i katolske miljøer; Aschim et al. eds., *Kristne migranter i Norden*; Synnes, *Kristne migrantmenigheter i Oslo*; Slotsvik, *Katolikker i Norge 1905-1930.* A recent study of relevance for understanding Catholic migrants and available in English language, includes Gallagher and Trzebiatowska, 'Becoming a 'real' Catholic: Polish migrants and lived religiosity in the UK and Ireland'; Pasura and Erdal. eds., *Migration, Transnationalism and Catholicism*; Vilaça, 'How the Portuguese Catholic Church is dealing with Newcomers: The Particular Case of Eastern European Immigrants'; Trzebiatowska, 'The Advent of the 'EasyJet Pries': Dilemmas of Polish Catholic Integration in the UK'.

[8] Adler and Adler, *Membership roles in field research* quoted from Dwyer and Buckle, 'The space between: On being and insider-outsider in qualitative research', 55.

assume that my informants have had active church members in mind when they answered my question because that is who they meet and relate to in their daily work.

Theoretical perspectives on social capital

In the following, I will present some perspectives from social capital theory, especially from the research of Robert D Putnam. Our focus is on perspectives that may help explain the current situation of the Roman Catholic Church resulting from the large influx of migrants. The concept of social capital refers to features of social organisations, such as social networks, norms, and resources that facilitate working together and cooperating for a common good and to sustain moral commitment.[9] In her study from 2008, Inger Furseth discusses how religion may play a role in the formation of social capital. She differentiates between three themes in her discussion of religion as a source of social capital: (1) the nature and limits of religion as a source of social capital; (2) contextual factors under which social capital is generated; and (3) negative social capital.[10]

Putnam's influential theory is founded on social capital as a resource to which individuals in a society have access through social connections and networks.[11] In *Making Democracy Work*, he defines social capital as 'features of social organization … that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions'.[12] In *Bowling Alone*, he argues that social capital 'has both an individual and a collective aspect'.[13] For Putnam, social capital is the ability of each individual to create relationships and enter into networks, and is defined as features of social relations that enable individuals to cooperate and attain collective goals. Hence, it is not surprising

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[9] Smidt ed., *Religion as Social Capital. Producing the Common Good*, 5, quoted from Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 150.

[10] Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 155–160.

[11] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*; Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 19–20; Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us.*

[12] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, 167, quoted from Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 151.

[13] Putnam *Bowling Alone*, 20.

that he highlights religious organisations as one of the key drivers of social capital, where social capital also serves a civic function in the sense that it engenders greater trust, shared social norms and better cooperation in society.

A key element in Putnam's theory is the distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* in social capital.[14] By *bonding* is meant a form of social capital that generates reciprocity and solidarity but that can be exclusionary towards others, whereas *bridging* can help form ties between social groups that are fundamentally different, and can facilitate access to external resources and information. According to Putnam's theory, these processes will occur in parallel, but vary across many dimensions: 'many groups simultaneously bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others.'[15]

Bonding social capital networks are inward-looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups. On the one hand, bonding social capital could have beneficial aspects by undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilising solidarity, but it can simultaneously have certain negative consequences, as it can foster antagonism towards outside groups.[16] Examples of bonding networks can include ethnic groups within the Roman Catholic Church in Norway. On the other hand, bridging social capital networks are outward-looking and include people across 'diverse social cleavages'. Examples of bridging social capital in our case could include different kinds of parish groups collecting people across ethnic and social backgrounds, for example catholic youth groups connected to the organisation Norwegian Young Catholics (NUK). Another example is how religious institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, provide forums where different ethnic and national groups can meet, and where the ethnic majority can become more comfortable with diversity.

Historical background

Although the Catholic faith and some Catholic priests remained in Norway long after the Reformation in 1537, by the nineteenth century there were few signs of continuity between pre-Reformation and post-Reformation Catholicism[17]. When the Catholic

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[14] Ibid., 22–23.

[15] Ibid., 23.

[16] Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 155

[17] Cf. Garstein, 'Undergrunnskirken 1537-1814'.

Church was granted dispensation in 1843 to form a Catholic congregation with its own priest in Oslo, it did so as a migrant church. There is nonetheless good reason to believe that Catholic masses were celebrated in migrant communities prior to this, and that they were indeed tolerated so long as outsiders were excluded from attending them.[18]

By the 1840s, however, major changes in religious policies had taken place. These extended to allowing the Catholic Church to grow and become established on Norwegian territory, though in practice only a group of foreigners was initially allowed to hold church services.[19] The first congregational mass was celebrated in the makeshift St. Olav's chapel on Easter Sunday, 16 April 1843. When St Olav's Church in Akersveien in Oslo was consecrated on 24 August 1856, it marked the establishment of the first Catholic Church in Norway since the Middle Ages. At the time, Norway's catholic population numbered only one hundred or so.[20] The fact that the newly built church could seat at least three times that number said something about the assertiveness of this migrant church. According to the population census, 1,969 Catholics resided in the realm at the turn of the century. The total population of Norway was approximately 2 million.[21]

During his term as Prefect Apostolic of Norway from 1887 to 1922, Johannes Olav Fallize from Luxembourg made his mark on the Roman Catholic Church in Norway. Eight new congregations and several hospitals, schools and other institutions were founded during this term of office. By 1920, the number of registered members of the Catholic Church in Norway had risen to 2,612. Then as now, many unregistered Catholics also lived in the country for shorter or longer periods.[22] It is not difficult to discern an air of triumphalism in Karl Kjelstrup's historical account *Norvegia Catholica,* published in 1942, the year before the centenary of the founding of the first Catholic congregation. The primary objective of the Roman Catholic Church in Norway was to regain the country for Catholicism. However, despite the vigorous efforts of priests and religious sisters, who established congregations as well as hospitals, schools

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[18] Eidsvig, 'Den katolske kirke vender tilbake', 156–161; Kjelstrup, *Norvegia Catholica*, 38–48.

[19] Cf. Niemi, 'Del I. 1814-1860', 81–82; Myhre, 'Del II. 1860-1901', 305–307.

[20] Tande, 'Hvor bor katolikkene?', 471.

[21] Tande, 'Hvor bor katolikkene?', 471; cf. Kjeldstadli, *Norsk innvandringshistorie* 2, 454.

[22] Tande, 'Hvor bor katolikkene?', 471.

and other social institutions all around the country, Norwegians did not return to the "Mother Church". Despite Fallize's strong effort, the Norwegian Catholics were not capable of building social capital in the form of "bridging", nor were they making their mark on the Norwegian society in a profound way. The Catholics remained a small, alien and somewhat unnoticed minority.[23]

Roman Catholics in Norway during Second World War and after

In her article on the position of Catholic priests in Norway, Else-Britt Nilsen writes: "World War II and the occupation years proved something of an ordeal for a church with so many foreigners, including Germans, among its members in Norway".[24] In 1940, there were around 3,000 Catholics in Norway. Although one-third of the priests and almost two-thirds of religious sisters were German-born, they demonstrated full solidarity with the rest of the country's Christian leaders in resisting Nazism. In 1956, after a long parliamentary debate, the notorious clause banning Jesuits from entering Norway was finally removed from the constitution. Although its practical implications were negligible, it held symbolic importance for the status of religious freedom in Norway.

In the early 1960s, the Catholic Church was still small: in 1960, its membership totalled 6,229[25]. With no more than a dozen or so conversions annually, Catholics only accounted for around two-thousandths of the population.[26] Nonetheless, Catholicism became intellectually acceptable in academic circles during the 1950s, often in response to what was seen as the narrow-mindedness of Lutheranism.[27] This allowed the Catholic Church to gain a stronger foothold in Norway, in Putnam's terms; "bridging" to the Norwegian society it was part of. In this period, the Church had arguably a disproportionately strong influence on Norwegian culture and society, given the small

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[23] Nilsen 1993, 447–468; 2012, 92

[24] Nilsen, 'Katolske prester. Valgt ut blant menneskene', 93.

[25] Tande, 'Hvor bor katolikkene?', 471.

[26] Eidsvig 1993, 365

[27] Cf. Halvorsen, 'Den katolske kirke', 114.

number of Catholics in the population. Not least, the Dominicans have influenced Norwegian society and public life.

In 1975, the Catholic Church in Norway could be seen as predominantly Norwegian. Now, 60 per cent of the approximately 11,000 Catholics living in Norway were Norwegian born.[28] Rather than become increasingly Norwegian, the opposite has happened: the Catholic Church has become increasingly migrant-based. Many of the Catholics who arrived in Norway in the post-war years were refugees escaping from various dictatorships and repressive regimes all over the world. During the Cold War, a few hundred Catholic refugees arrived from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.[29] Despite their modest numbers, some of these migrants were resourceful political refugees who in different ways have influenced Norwegian society and the Catholic Church in Norway.

"A global Church in miniature …"

The number of Vietnamese refugees to arrive in Norway after the fall of the Saigon in 1975 was considerably higher. Between 1975 and 1981, around 3,000 Vietnamese arrived in Norway.[30] Many of them were Catholics who, like the European refugees, were escaping a communist regime. The other large group of migrant Catholics to arrive in Norway before the eastward expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007 comprised refugees escaping the military coup in Chile in 1973. In the first three years after Augusto Pinochet came to power, 330 Chilean refugees arrived in Norway, most of whom belonged to the political left wing. By 1982, 824 Chilean citizens had been

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[28] Nilsen, 'Katolske prester. Valgt ut blant menneskene', 93

[29] Up to 1960, around 600 migrants arrived from Czechoslovakia. The 1960 population census registered 400 Czechoslovakian-born individuals. Between the Soviet invasion in 1968 and the fall of the Iron Curtain, around 1,000 Czechoslovakian refugees arrived in Norway, half of which re-migrated or travelled to a third country (Tjelmeland, 'Del I. 1940-1975', 44–47, 56). The percentage of Catholics is unknown. After the Soviet intervention in 1956, around 1,500 Hungarian refugees arrived in Norway. Around 10 per cent of them had returned to Hungary by 1958, and many others followed later. In 1970, 1,255 individuals born in Hungary were living in Norway (Tjelmeland, 'Del I. 1940-1975', 49–56). The percentage of Catholics is unknown.

[30] Brochmann, 'Del II. 1975-2000', 172-173.

granted residence permits in Norway.[31] Many of the Chileans who arrived as political refugees have since either left the church or become passive members. A further 3,200 Chileans arrived between 1987 and 1991, most of them economic refugees and jobseekers.[32] In 1992, the number of Catholics registered in Norway was 28,155, but the true figure was estimated at between 45,000 and 50,000[33]. By now the situation with Catholics from practically all parts of the world living in Norway, were established.

The term "a global Church in miniature" was launched in connection with Pope John Paul II's visit to Norway in 1989. This term is more accurate today than ever before, though naturally not all Catholics in Norway share the vision it implies.[34] Since 1990, the number of registered Catholics has risen dramatically. According to Statistics Norway's overview of membership of religious communities and life stance communities receiving central government subsidies, the Roman Catholic Church had in 2017 around 150,000 registered members representing 180 nationalities.

'Neither assimilate nor segregate'

An expressed policy at national level in the Roman Catholic Church in Norway to meet the challenges posed by the influx of migrants has been to form migrant chaplaincies (nasjonalsjelesorgen) under the auspices of the Catholic Diocese of Oslo. Since as far back as the 1960s, this service has provided migrants from many different nationalities with pastoral care in the broadest sense. Not only does it entail celebrating masses in the native tongues of migrants and administering the sacraments for salvation of the soul, it provides assistance with resolving personal and social problems as far as possible. The unit is based in Akersveien in Oslo and is headed by a deputy bishop. According to the diocese records, around 80 priests serve the Catholic Diocese of Oslo. The fact that around half of these are directly involved in migrant chaplaincies gives some indication of the amount of resources allocated to this area of the church's activities in Norway.

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[31] Tjelmeland, 'Del I. 1940-1975', 56; Brochmann, 'Del II. 1975-2000', 173–174.

[32] Tande. 'Hvor bor katolikkene?', 475; cf. Knudsen, *Those that fly without wings: Music and dance in a Chilean immigrant community*, 49.

[33] Tande. 'Hvor bor katolikkene?', 471–475; cf. Halvorsen, 'Den katolske kirke', 114.

[34] Cf. Erdal, 'When Poland Became the Main Country of Birth Among Catholics in Norway: Polish Migrants', 279-282.

The organised activities aimed at Catholic migrant groups are therefore regarded not simply as supplementary to the church's ordinary activities, but rather as equally important.[35] The justification for this policy is related to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is global in nature, and not connected to specific cultural groups or ethnicities. Nevertheless, this is a controversial issue. At least two of my informants expressed a need to develop a more Norwegian Catholic identity and reduce the number of masses in immigrant languages, and thereby take a step away from what one informant referred to as a 'seamen's church' for foreigners. In Putnam's terms, the chosen strategy of the church has been one of bonding rather than bridging. The policy of the church is expressed in the guidelines for the Catholic Church of Norway as follows; under the subheading, 'Neither assimilate nor segregate':

> The Church's activities are not aimed at assimilating people from one culture into another. In addition, when it comes to healthy integration, this is a process that must follow the laws of human nature. It work both ways: pastoral care provided to national groups must neither speed up nor impede the process. Good migrant chaplaincies build bridges, and can distinguish between what best serves first-generation immigrants and what best serves subsequent generations.

Thus, the Catholic Church in Norway is – based on its self-image – a migrant church. One of the religious sisters I interviewed put it as follows:

> In modern times, the Catholic Church has been a migrant church; there was a brief period in the 1970s when its members were predominantly Norwegian-born. Then it just changed again, completely. I have witnessed this whole process, and have found it quite interesting. Now there are many Polish migrants, so the Europeans are again in the majority. Because until the 1970s that is how it was – a continental mix.

According to the guidelines for migrant chaplaincies, Catholic immigrants must nonetheless 'realise that the Norwegian group is not strong enough as a resource to provide all the assistance they seek.' This, as one of the informants put it, 'may mean

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[35] Cf. OKB, *Retningslinjer for nasjonalsjelesorgen i Oslo katolske bispedømme*.

that in practice there will be fewer opportunities to create space for the diversity we might wish for.' Both of these short quotations demonstrate the will to be a church for Catholic migrants at least as strongly as for born-and-bred Norwegians.

To make up for the lack of priests to cope with the large influx of migrants, the church has in some cases brought in priests from the same countries, who – like the people they are supposed to serve – cannot speak Norwegian and have little understanding of Norwegian culture. A majority of those I interviewed said they found this to be a problem, and that it has probably meant that some migrants did not get the help they should have been given in order to adapt to Norwegian society. As one priest I interviewed put it:

> You need to have a migrant reception system in place; you need to have people who can speak the language, who are familiar with Norwegian society. That is the problem with importing foreign priests; they do not know Norway, they do not know the conditions here, they do not know how to help people adjust. This applies to Polish, Philippine and to some extent to Vietnamese priests; even though many of them have lived in Norway for a long time, and some have even grown up here, their cultural understanding is not always the best.

This quote shows a priest that clearly is concerned about the situation and has reflected about how the Church should handle challenges due to migration. His view is in a way both realistic and practical. Integration of foreign priests requires work, but is possible.

Social arenas for both 'bonding' and 'bridging'

The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value. Based on this premise, 150,000 Catholics divided on 180 nationalities imply many social networks. Some of these are formally organised, some not. In Putnam's terms, there will be much bonding going on in these networks based perhaps specially on ethnic or national, but also on other divisions. The background for the latest and certainly largest wave of Catholic migrants to settle in Norway is for example the labour migration resulting from the eastward expansion of the EU, particularly when Poland and Lithuania joined in 2004.[36] The number of Polish migrants has been particularly noticeable in recent years,

[36] Cf. Erdal, 'When Poland Became the Main Country of Birth Among Catholics in Norway:

according to Statistics Norway.[37] Many of these migrants were workers using perhaps the only institution they trusted, the church, when they needed help, or just wanted social contact with other workers or people with same ethnic background. Shared language and culture were of importance for this contact.[38] One priest I interviewed described the need for this activity as follows:

> It is about providing them with pastoral care. Many of those who come to this country also turn to the church when they have problems, be they personal or social in nature, or related to the labour market. This is what they are used to.

The local parishes thus represent the first step in building 'bridges' between the Catholic migrants and Norwegian society, as the quote points to. Between 2010 and 2015, thirteen new clerical positions were created for Polish-speaking priests, and two for Lithuanian-speaking priests. In total, around 30 new clerical positions were created in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oslo during this period. There was also a need to expand, buy and rent new premises to accommodate the growing need for ecclesiastical services. These priests will also help migrants beyond their spiritual needs, often serving as social workers. As Nilsen explains in her article on Catholic priests as leaders, the Church's resources are used not only to provide pastoral care to newly arrived Catholics, but also in other areas where they have to adapt to Norwegian society. The priest is often the first discussion partner the newly arrived migrants meet.[39] Newly arrived Poles today make up around half the total membership of the Catholic Church in Norway. This tendency towards parallel congregations is met with is some resistance by Poles who have lived in Norway for many years and who are well integrated into Norwegian society. For example, this group – according to several of my informants – object to the prominence given to Polish masses in congregational life. They would prefer to see things organised differently.[40]

Polish Migrants', 260.

[37] Statistics Norway, 'Den norske kirke'.

[38] Halvorsen and Aschim, 'Polske innvandrarar, Den katolske kyrkja og lokalsamfunnet'; Giskeødegård and Aschim, 'Da hadde jeg et stykke Polen her'.

[39] Nilsen 'Katolske prester. Valgt ut blant menneskene', 93.

[40] Cf. Trzebiatowska, 'The Advent of the 'EasyJet Pries'; Erdal, 'When Poland Became the Main Country of Birth Among Catholics in Norway: Polish Migrants', 271-275.

On the other hand, one of the priests I interviewed pointed out that there are also Polish priests who fully realise that they need to learn Norwegian so that they can serve everyone, and local congregations arrange many Norwegian language courses. My material provides little basis to conclude, like Trzebiatowska, that Poles are resistant to religious integration on Norwegian soil, despite constituting a national group with a high level of self-awareness as Catholics. When it comes to inclusion and integration, the general mood in the Roman Catholic Church in Norway is optimistic, despite the widespread policy and practice of celebrating mass in different languages. One of the religious sisters I interviewed put it as follows: 'This will probably work itself out in time.'

Another informant spoke of how the church was undergoing a period of change characterised by dramatic growth in the space of only a few years, and of how 'the structure was lagging behind the reality' as he put it. On the other hand, as one of the religious sisters described her encounter with a group of migrants in a city in western Norway:

> It was not just that there were so many of them; they were there all the time. Some of them could go to say the rosary all day. Everything changed dramatically. However, it has worked itself out all right, I think.

Although Catholic congregations were used to having a large proportion of migrants among its members, they were unprepared for the large numbers they have had to accommodate over the past 10 years. This has proved challenging for the church's organisation throughout Norway. Previously the church had made a positive contribution to Norwegian society through its hospitals, schools and other social projects. 'Caritas is on the plus side, but how is the Catholic Church making a positive contribution today?' asked one of the informants rhetorically, adding: 'The church has an image problem!' This informant made no secret of the fact that he was putting it bluntly. The issue of reputation is of course important to ensuring support from wider society, but it says little about what the church actually contributes in terms of integration efforts.

Formatting parallel congregations

The formal organisational integration of migrants into local congregations, which is prescribed in canon law, does not preclude the development of what can be termed "parallel congregations". This could be said to pose the greatest challenge to the church in respect of migrants, not least when dealing with thousands of migrants from the same country, with the Poles as the most prominent example. "In practice, true integration of foreign Catholics with Norwegian Catholics is not feasible, given the current situation. A heterogeneous majority cannot be integrated into a minority. It *can* seem as if various groups of Catholics share the same building yet do not actually constitute one united congregation." So wrote Bernt Ivar Eidsvig, the future Catholic Bishop of Oslo, in his historical overview from 1993.[41] This tendency has escalated during the two decades that have since passed. For example, in St Olav's congregation in Oslo masses are celebrated just about every Sunday in Polish, English, Croatian and Spanish in addition to Norwegian. Masses in Vietnamese and Tagalog are also celebrated regularly.

Religious groups with communal visions of life are high-bonding.[42] The Polish "parallel parishes" could be an example of this. Whether each language group represents parallel congregations is a matter of definition. Under canon law, they do not; in practice, however, due to the large number of Polish Catholics in the largest cities, parallel congregations have emerged served by Polish priests who have minimal contact with other Catholics in Norway. To use Putnam's terms, the church could therefore be said to be better at "bonding*"* than at "bridging". This also applies to the situation inside the national groups within the church. Erdal's study concludes in a similar way.[43] At least the church policy is to give the migrants the possibility to celebrate mass in their own language as far as possible. Quite a lot of bridging also takes place across these sub communities in the form of internationally oriented groups such as the international student community. Moreover, we should not underestimate the sense of community that arises from belonging to one, worldwide Roman Catholic Church. The question of whether or not bridging occurs between the church and Norwegian wider society is a more uncertain one. Social integration is largely about the development and

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[41] Eidsvig, 'Den katolske kirke vender tilbake', 384.

[42] Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 158.

[43] Erdal, 'When Poland Became the Main Country of Birth Among Catholics in Norway: Polish Migrants', 268-271.

endorsement of shared values. The question of whether membership of and participation in the Roman Catholic Church will have an impact on integration in Norwegian society at large depends on the extent to which the shared values of the church correspond with those of the Norwegian state.

When asked about the future of the Catholic Church in Norway, one priest I interviewed responded enthusiastically: 'We must have more churches and more priests! And – not least – more Norwegian priests!' What is meant by 'Norwegian priests' can of course be a matter of definition. Most likely the informant meant priests who have grown up in Norway and who are socialised into Norwegian society. If so, this would also apply to a large number of priests with immigrant background.

Furseth has argued that not all religious communities play the same role.[44] Referring to John A Coleman, she argues that, for example, traditional Italian Catholicism has hierarchical structures that foster vertical relations of passivity and subordination. According to Coleman, only horizontal authority structures seem in general to generate social capital.[45] This seems reasonable concerning the bridging to Norwegian society, which is built on values other than those of the hierarchical Roman Catholic Church and its magisterium based in Rome, but I do not see why this should prevent Catholic ethnic groups from internal bonding. This will then be related to the organisational culture of the respective organisations formed by ethnic groups.[46]

Concluding remarks

The Roman Catholic Church has made a remarkable comeback on Norwegian soil, largely as the result of migration. The church has gradually become less "Norwegian" at the same time in the sense that the proportion of migrants has increased relative to the number of Norwegian-born Catholics. The proportion of Norwegian converts is relatively small, and there are few signs to suggest that this trend will level off in the coming years. In line with canon law, the Roman Catholic Church sees its primary

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[44] Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 156-157.

[45] Coleman, 'Religious Social Capital: Its Nature, Social Locations, and Limits', 33–36, quoted from Furseth, 'Social capital and immigrant religion', 156.

[46] Cf. Foley and Hoge, *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens*, 19, 111.

mission as serving the sacramental needs of all Catholics living in Norway at any given time. Among other things, this consideration has according to my informants led to a strong commitment to migrant chaplaincies and to the principle that migrants should be able to celebrate mass in their native language. This has presented the Roman Catholic Church with difficulties in defining a Norwegian identity, but given its institutional identity as Catholic and worldwide yet centrally governed, this is not necessarily desirable. On the other hand, my informants do not want to see parallel congregations forming along the lines of ethnic divisions. This situation poses a potentially growing challenge to the Catholic Church in Norway as a migrant church.

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