



International Symposium

**RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING,
INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE,
MIGRATIONS AND REFUGEE CRISIS**

Online, April 19, 2021

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

International Symposium
**RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING, INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE,
MIGRATIONS AND REFUGEE CRISIS**

Koper / online, April 19, 2021

Mednarodni simpozij
**RELIGIJSKA IZGRADNJA MIRU, MEDRELIGIJSKI DIALOG,
MIGRACIJE IN BEGUNSKA KRIZA**

Koper / po spletu, 19. april 2021

PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS
PROGRAM IN POVZETKI



KOPER 2021

**International Symposium RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING, INTER-RELIGIOUS
DIALOGUE, MIGRATIONS AND REFUGEE CRISIS**

Programme and Abstracts

**Mednarodni simpozij RELIGIJSKA IZGRADNJA MIRU, MEDRELIGIJSKI DIALOG,
MIGRACIJE IN BEGUNSKA KRIZA**

Program in povzetki

Editor/Urednica: Maja Bjelica

Editor-in-Chief of the Publishing House/Glavni in odgovorni urednik založbe: Tilen
Glavina

Editor for Philosophy and Religious Studies/Urednik za področji filozofije in
religiologije: Lenart Škof

Technical Editor/Tehnična urednica: Alenka Obid

Design and layout/Oblikovanje in prelom: Alenka Obid

Cover photograph/Fotografija na naslovnici: Maja Bjelica

Publisher/Izdajatelj: Science and Research Centre Koper, Annales ZRS/
Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper, Annales ZRS

For the publisher/Za izdajatelja: Rado Pišot

Online edition, available at: [https://www.zrs-kp.si/index.php/research-2/zalozba/
monografije/](https://www.zrs-kp.si/index.php/research-2/zalozba/monografije/)

This symposium has been financially supported by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS), through the project *Interreligious Dialogue – A Basis for Coexisting Diversity in the Light of Migration and the Refugee Crisis* (J6-9393)

Simpozij je finančno podprla Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARRS) v okviru temeljnega raziskovalnega projekta *Medreligijski dialog – temelj za sožitje različnosti v luči migracij in begunske krize* (J6-9393).

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Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 67813123

ISBN 978-961-7058-69-7 (PDF)

CONTENTS

- 5 ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM
- 7 O SIMPOZIJU
- 8 PROGRAMME / PROGRAM
- ABSTRACTS / POVZETKI
- 12 BUILDING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE / IZGRADNJA
MEDRELIGIJSKEGA DIALOGA
- 13 **Nedžad Grabus**
Interreligious Dialogue or Conflict among Religions?
- 15 **Bojan Žalec**
Positive Relationships and the Philosophy of Resonance: The Muslim
Context
- 16 **Vojko Strahovnik, Roman Globokar, Mateja Centa**
Utilizing Religious and Ethics Education to Fight Polarization and
Radicalization of Youth: The Example of the EDUC8 Project
- 18 MIGRATION AND INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS / MIGRACIJE IN
MEDRELIGIJSKA SREČANJA
- 19 **Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović, Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja**
Challenges and Possibilities of Interreligious Dialogue at the Local
Level: The Case of *Bayram Sofra* in Belgrade
- 21 **Lana Peternel, Filip Škiljan, Ankica Marinović**
Religious Dialogue and Socio-historical Development of Islamic
Community in Sisak, Croatia

- 23 **Gašper Mithans**
Catholic Ethnic Parishes and Immigrant Community Associations in the
USA: The Case Study of Slovenian Immigrants in California
- 25 RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING / RELIGIJSKA IZGRADNJA MIRU
- 26 **Nadja Furlan Štante**
Strengths and Weaknesses of Women's Religious Peace-Building (in
Slovenia)
- 27 **Anja Zalta**
Peacebuilding and Possibilities for Peaceful Coexistence? Specifying
Dark Strains of Collective Imagination in Bosnia and Herzegovina and
in Slovenia

ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

On one hand, interreligious dialogue in Europe is more developed and dynamic than ever before, and on the other hand, interreligious relations, with the rise of nationalisms and in the shadow of the refugee crisis, and COVID-19 pandemic are under strong pressure and are being the victims of rough politicization. Critical understanding of the dynamics and different contexts of interreligious dialogue and of the obstacles to the kind of dialogue is crucial for identifying the best opportunities for the success of dialogue and facilitating life in religious plurality.

The main focus of the symposium is the search for new paradigms, models and possibilities for the interreligious dialogue, and the search for new ethical criterion and theological responses to the refuge and pandemic crisis and the connection of these insights with a new ethics of religious peace-building in the light of mutual interdependence and cohesion, and rethinking the role of moral and intellectual virtues, communication, and the importance of inclusion of women's voices in the framework of the interreligious dialogue.

O SIMPOZIJU

Medreligijski dialog je v Evropi na eni strani bolj razvit in dinamičen kot kdaj koli prej, na drugi strani pa so medverski odnosi z vzponom nacionalizmov in v senci begunske krize ter pandemije COVID-19 pod močnim pritiskom in so žrtve grobe politizacije. Kritično razumevanje dinamike in različnih kontekstov medreligijskega dialoga ter ovir za takšen dialog je ključnega pomena za opredelitev najboljših možnosti za uspeh dialoga in omogočanje sobivanja v religijski pluralnosti.

Osrednji poudarek simpozija je iskanje novih paradigem, modelov in možnosti za medreligijski dialog ter iskanje novih etičnih meril in teoloških odzivov na begunsko in pandemično krizo. Obenem se simpozij usmerja v povezovanje teh spoznanj z novo etiko religijske izgradnje miru v luči medsebojne soodvisnosti in kohezije ter ponovnega preišljanja vloge moralnih in intelektualnih vrlin, komunikacije in pomena vključevanja ženskih glasov v okvir medreligijskega dialoga.

SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED BY / ORGANIZATOR SIMPOZIJA

Institute for Philosophical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper
(Slovenia) / Inštitut za filozofske študije Znanstveno-raziskovalnega
središča Koper (Slovenija)

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PROGRAMME

International symposium / Mednarodni simpozij
RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING, INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE,
MIGRATIONS and REFUGEE CRISIS /
RELIGIJSKA IZGRADNJA MIRU, MEDRELIGIJSKI DIALOG,
MIGRACIJE IN BEGUNSKA KRIZA

Koper, online / po spletu

MONDAY, April 19, 2021 / PONEDELJEK, 19. april 2021

9.00

Opening of the Symposium / Otvoritev simpozija

Nadja Furlan Štante, Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia
Rado Pišot, Director of the Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia

9.15–11.00

Panel I

BUILDING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE / IZGRADNJA
MEDRELIGIJSKEGA DIALOGA

Chair / Predsedujoča: **Nadja Furlan Štante**

Nedžad Grabus: *Interreligious Dialogue or Conflict among Religions?*

Bojan Žalec: *Positive Relationships and the Philosophy of Resonance: The Muslim Context*

Vojko Strahovnik: *Utilizing Religious and Ethics Education to Fight Polarization and Radicalization of Youth: The Example of the EDUC8 Project*

11.00–11.15

Break / Odmor

11.15–13.00

Panel II

**MIGRATION AND INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS / MIGRACIJE IN
MEDRELIGIJSKA SREČANJA**

Chair / Predsedujoča: **Anja Zalta**

Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović, Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja:

*Challenges and Possibilities of Interreligious Dialogue at the Local Level: The
Case of Bayram Sofra in Belgrade*

Lana Peternel: *Religious Dialogue and Socio-historical Development of
Islamic Community in Sisak, Croatia*

Gašper Mithans: *Catholic Ethnic Parishes and Immigrant Community
Associations in the USA: The Case Study of Slovenian Immigrants in California*

13.00–14.30

Break / Odmor

14.30–15.45

Panel III

RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING / RELIGIJSKA IZGRADNJA MIRU

Chair / Predsedujoči: **Vojko Strahovnik**

Nadja Furlan Štante: *Strengths and Weaknesses of Women's Religious Peace-Building (in Slovenia)*

Anja Zalta: *Peacebuilding and Possibilities for Peaceful Coexistence? Specifying Dark Strains of Collective Imagination in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Slovenia*

15.45

Concluding discussion / Sklepna diskusija

Nadja Furlan Štante, Science and Research Centre Koper, Slovenia

ABSTRACTS

Panel I

**BUILDING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE /
IZGRADNJA MEDRELIGIJSKEGA DIALOGA**

Chair / Predsedujoča: **Nadja Furlan Štante**

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INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE OR CONFLICT AMONG RELIGIONS?

Nedžad GRABUS

Mufti of Islamic community in Slovenia

Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

In the modern world full of changes and challenges every day, we are trying to find an answer to the question of how to preserve social cohesion and stability with respect for religious diversity. This question is especially related to the situation of religious minorities in areas where the other religion is in majority. In respect of legal and regulatory standards, raising awareness of the importance of every being on Earth, is necessary to develop the narrative that will enable us that the other and different are not being perceived the enemy but as a close person to us, because we believe that the diversity of human skin color, language and religion is will of God and His creation. The Almighty God says: "And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are sings for those of knowledge." (Al-Rum, 22)

Developing awareness of responsibility in the interpretation of religion has become imperative. Faith as the search for transcendent truth, the meaning of life, the development of ethical values that enrich our life is essential meaning of all religions. Simplification of religion and reduction to formal manifestation, closure in conservatism, understanding religious truths through historical reconstruction of events, which are marked by conflicts and constant misunderstandings, leads to the roughest political and ideological manipulation of religion. In modern liberal-hedonistic civilization, even religion is trying to be put into function of violence, hatred, extremism and terrorism. Could we continue the dialogue during the period of pandemic (COVID-19) or should we wait the post pandemic developments on the global scene?

Keywords: dialogue, conflict, faith, religion, violence

Dr Nedžad Grabus holds the position of Mufti of the Islamic Community in Slovenia. He is a professor of theology at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also teaches at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

He was the editor of the first interreligious program in Sarajevo that dealt with topics of general importance and covered both Islamic and Christian issues. He participated in and lectured at various religious conferences all over the world, from Vatican, Oslo, Copenhagen and Cairo to Medina, Vienna, Istanbul, and numerous others in Slovenia. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the publication *Unity and Dialogue*. He continues to publish texts of interreligious nature and dialogue in the English, German, Slovenian and Bosnian languages. He personally organized and lectured at the international scientific symposium "Gaining Mutual Respect through Dialogue". He is the author of five books. He is a vice president of Religions for Peace.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF RESONANCE: THE MUSLIM CONTEXT

Bojan ŽALEC

*University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology, Institute of Philosophy
and Social Ethics*

The paper is of philosophical nature. The speaker deals with the factors of dialogue and positive relationships. He approaches them with the help of the personalist and existential philosophy of relationship. As analytical tools, he uses concepts such as the I-Thou and I-It relationship (Martin Buber), stages of existence (Søren Kierkegaard) and resonance (Hartmut Rosa). He applies these general concepts in dealing with relationships and dialogue to the context in which Muslims (along with non-Muslims) are involved. In this regard, he highlights the importance of Islamophobia and extreme Islamism as negative factors on the one hand, and elements of Islam and Christianity that have a dialogical and positive relational character and potential on the other.

Keywords: Muslims, factors of positive relationships, Islamophobia, extreme Islamism, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Hartmut Rosa, resonance, Islam, Christianity

Prof Bojan Žalec, PhD, was born in 1966 in Ljubljana, Slovenia (then part of Yugoslavia). He received his PhD in philosophy in 1999 from the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. In 2004, he joined the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana as a researcher, where he is still employed and occupies the position of the Head of the Institute of Philosophy and Social Ethics. He is a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (residency in Salzburg). He continued his studies – one year – at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Würzburg in Germany. He was a visiting professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb (phenomenological ethics), and a visiting researcher at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. He has published around 150 scientific works.

UTILIZING RELIGIOUS AND ETHICS EDUCATION TO FIGHT POLARIZATION AND RADICALIZATION OF YOUTH: THE EXAMPLE OF THE EDUC8 PROJECT

Vojko STRAHOVNIK

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

Roman GLOBOKAR

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

Mateja CENTA

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

The talk's main aim is to demonstrate the importance of religious education and ethics education as a tool for the prevention of radicalization and polarization. UNESCO's policy brief with the title *Preventing violent extremism through education: Effective activities and impact* lists the following among the "pull factors" or individual motivations for violent extremism and radicalization: "individual backgrounds (search for identity, adolescent crisis, the attraction of violence) and identification with collective grievances and narratives of victimization." It also includes "marginalization, injustice and discrimination" among the "push factors" or conditions conducive to extremism and radicalization. For the education to address the problems of extremism, radicalization, and polarization in particular concrete educational activities, the educational experiences must be designed to actuate the mentioned factors and establish an openness for transformation. We will present the case of the Educ8 project (Educate to Build Resilience). EDUC8 is an interdisciplinary, multi-track project conceptualized to build resilience in children and young people against radicalization and polarization through religious education in secondary schools and out-of-school settings. The developed educational program consists of seven shallow modules (with a panoptic view of all included religions and ethics) and twenty-four deep modules developed for particular religious education programs and ethics education. In the talk, we will present the project's rationale, the educational program's design, and examples of educational tools.

Keywords: interreligious dialogue, (religious) education, polarization, radicalization violence, youth

Prof Vojko Strahovnik (symposium's presenter of this co-authored paper) is an Associate professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and senior research fellow researcher at the Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. In his research, he focuses on the areas of moral theory, practical ethics, and epistemology. The impact of his work ranges from new and important theoretical insights into the nature of normativity (the role of moral principles in the formation of moral judgments, the authority of the normative domain, epistemic virtuousness) to considerations related to practical dimensions of our lives (e.g., the role of guilt and moral shame in reconciliation processes, the importance of intellectual and ethical virtues, ethics education, global justice, animal ethics).

Panel II

**MIGRATION AND INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS /
MIGRACIJE IN MEDRELIGIJSKA SREČANJA**

Chair / Predsedujoča: **Anja Zalta**

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CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE CASE OF *BAYRAM SOFRA* IN BELGRADE

Aleksandra ĐURIĆ MILOVANOVIĆ
Institute for Balkan Studies SASA

Jadranka ĐORĐEVIĆ CRNOBRNJA
Institute for Ethnography SASA

The Islamic Community of Serbia and the cultural society of Muslims – Gajret, have been organizing the *Bayram sofr*a since 2009 as the celebration which symbolizes the end of Ramadan fasting. The celebration is held in the public space in front of the Bajrakli mosque in Belgrade. Since it is organized as part of the celebration of *Ramazan Bayrami*, its meaning can be observed and analyzed in a religious, but also in a broader social context. In this paper, we observe the *Bayram sofr*a in the context of learning about Islam, as the minority religious community, but also as an event which initiates interreligious dialogue at the local level. Using the theoretical concepts of interreligious dialogue, we are focusing on the role of minority religious community and its engagement with other religions in the public space. In 2015 the *Bayram sofr*a was especially dedicated for refugees coming from the Middle East. The ethnographic research of the *Bayram sofr*a started in 2020 with the main focus on the social and religious elements of *Ramazan Bayrami* and the role of this religious festival in enhancing the visibility of this religious minority in Serbia.

Keywords: interreligious dialogue, minority religious communities, Islam, Belgrade, *Bayram sofr*a

Dr Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Belgrade, Serbia). Her academic research has been primarily focused on the anthropology of religion, religion and migration, and contemporary evangelical movements in Serbia and Romania. She has published academic papers in various languages,

edited volumes, and participated in numerous programs, workshops, and international conferences worldwide. In 2017, she was awarded the position of Visiting Fellow at the University College Cork – Study of Religions (Ireland). Her book *Double Minorities in Serbia: Distinctive Aspects of the Religion and Ethnicity of the Romanians in Vojvodina* was published in 2015 by the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA (Belgrade, Serbia). She has extensive experience of working and researching in multi-ethnic, multiconfessional, and multilingual Christian communities in the Balkans. Recently, she co-edited the volume *Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Aleksandra is particularly interested in the promotion of tolerance, interreligious dialogue, minority rights and student education. From 2019 she is a project coordinator of the Network for Dialogue at the International Dialogue Centre in Vienna. Her current research focuses on religion, contemporary migration crises and refugees in the Balkans.

Dr Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja has been employed at Ethnographic Institute of SASA since 1999. She is a senior research associate. She is mostly concerned with problems related to the research of minority communities in Serbia, migration processes in the present, issues regarding childhood and the field of legal ethnology and anthropology. She is the author of three monographs – *The Kinship in The Region of Vranje* (2001), *Inheritance: In Between Customs and Law* (2011) and *We never cut ties with Gora: Ethnicity, community and transmigrations of Gorani people in Belgrade* (2020), as well as a number of academic articles published in national and international academic publications. She participated in several international conferences and domestic scientific gatherings.

RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND SOCIO-HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IN SISAK, CROATIA

Lana PETERNEL

Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatia

Filip ŠKILJAN

Institute for Migrations and Ethnic Studies, Zagreb, Croatia

Ankica MARINOVIĆ

Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatia

To tackle a phenomenon of social and historical development of Islamic communities in different political circumstances, our overarching research objective is to investigate specific patterns of inter-community dialogue that contextualise and shape different patterns of inter-religious communication. By following that aim, we will depict the development of social and religious identities of a small, but very significant, Islamic community in Sisak in Croatia.

By using ethnographic approach in the Islamic community, we focus on an inquiry in their historical archives and on interviews with community members. The aim is to show how Islamic community in Sisak developed in different historical, political and social context and how their social relations are established, deployed, developed and strengthened. We presumed that the dynamic of historical communication practices reveals hidden patterns of acculturation outcomes of Islamic community in Sisak emphasising religious peace-building strategies along with obstacles in that endeavours.

Keywords: Islamic community, religious archives, ethnography, Sisak (Croatia)

Dr Lana Peternel (symposium's presenter of this co-authored paper) is a research associate at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Croatia; currently working on a project entitled Anthropological Research of Minority Religions in Historical Archives in Croatia funded by the Croatian "Unity through Knowledge

Fund-UKF". This project is conducted in collaboration with Dr James Kapaló, the Principal Investigator of the ERC project Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: 'Hidden Galleries' in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe. Lana Peternel received her PhD in anthropology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb in 2009, focusing on ethnic identity and the acculturation process among adolescents with a migrant background in Croatia. Her research is further funded through Ministry of Science and Education's fund for bilateral research collaboration between Slovenia and Croatia. Since 2019 Lana Peternel serves as the managing editor of the journal *Sociology and Space*. Her main fields of interest include research on the dynamics of religious and ethnic identity formation. Her areas of scientific interest and expertise are qualitative and quantitative research, adolescent subjective health and identity, along with religious identity and sustainability. In addition to her research activity, she teaches the course Digital anthropology at Zagreb University of Applied Sciences.

CATHOLIC ETHNIC PARISHES AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE USA: THE CASE STUDY OF SLOVENIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA

Gašper MITHANS

Institute for Historical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper

National or ethnic parishes were in the 19th century a compromise of Catholic leaders' interest in keeping their followers and lay people's desire to preserve their cultural heritage. Ethnic parishes have functioned as cultural hubs of immigrant communities, while at the same time supporting their gradual integration into American society. Over time the organizational strategy of the Church had changed with clear preference over territorial parishes. In the 1980s, the US Catholic Church introduced personal parishes, which are today an organizational alternative: an institutional response to diversification and meeting different ethnic and non-ethnic purposes. However, several personal parishes providing service to communities of European ancestry, including Slovenian, have been forced to close or to merge, usually because of lack of clergy, dwindling Mass attendance (also due to dispersed population and increasing number of elderly parishioners), and financial reasons. This issue is the focus of the paper, presenting parishioners' resistance to the closure of Croatian-Slovenian Church of the Nativity of Our Lord in 1994 and its subsequent reopening two years later as an empowerment moment among the Catholic Slovenian and Croatian Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area. However, re-building of religious community within this "multi-cultural ethnic parish", now shared between Poles, Croats and Slovenians, prove to be challenging.

Organizational issues, mostly related to declining number of interested public with no recent larger emigration wave and highly assimilated second and third-generations of immigrants and/or struggles over "representations of the Slovenehood" between newcomers and oldtimers, young and elderly, have several other immigrant associations as well: halls, societies, and newspapers. Which opens the question: are these associations going to adapt (and how) to new circumstances that most likely demand better collaboration within and across the diaspora?

Keywords: Slovenian immigrants, ethnic parish, Catholics in the USA, California

Dr Gašper Mithans is a Senior Research Associate at Science and Research Centre Koper. He specialises in the history of religion, and transnational and political history of Slovenia and Yugoslavia in the interwar period. He managed a post-doctoral project about interreligious relations and conversions in interwar Slovenia, project funded by the Europe for citizens programme and obtained a research project about religious change in Yugoslavia (2021–2024). Mithans was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at University of California, Berkeley (2020) and a visiting researcher at the University College Cork (2018).

Panel III

**RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING /
RELIGIJSKA IZGRADNJA MIRU**

Chair / Predsedujoči: **Vojko Strahovnik**

Nadja Furlan Štante: *Strengths and Weaknesses of Women's Religious
Peace-Building (in Slovenia)*

Anja Zalta: *Peacebuilding and Possibilities for Peaceful Coexistence?
Specifying Dark Strains of Collective Imagination in Bosnia and Herzegovina
and in Slovenia*

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS PEACE-BUILDING (IN SLOVENIA)

Nadja FURLAN ŠTANTE

Institute for Philosophical Studies, Science and Research Centre Koper

The purpose of the paper is to analyse important phenomenon of women's religious peacebuilding within challenges of religious pluralism, growing religious illiteracy and monolithic understanding of religions. Although voices of women and their engagement in inter-religious dialogue and religious peace-building, at least at a visible, formal level, are often omitted or ignored (in Slovenia), it is precisely at informal levels, in terms of concrete actions, that women's efforts to restore peace are very much alive and present (but academically and in theory not analysed nor valued enough).

While women have been marginalized from peacebuilding generally, the emerging field of religious peacebuilding has been particularly challenging for women.

Keywords: women, feminist theology, religious peacebuilding, interreligious dialogue.

Prof Nadja Furlan Štante is Principal Research Associate and Professor of Religious Studies at Science and research centre Koper. Her current research interests are women's religious studies, ecofeminism and inter-religious dialogue.

PEACEBUILDING AND POSSIBILITIES FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE? SPECIFYING DARK STRAINS OF COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND IN SLOVENIA

Anja ZALTA

Faculty of Arts, Sociology Department, University of Ljubljana

The presentation will expose the issue of Islamophobic and Turkophobic (political) discourses in Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the construction of the “Other” in the specific socio-cultural and historical context(s). Islamophobia and/as Muslim hatred in the south Slavic area has deep historic roots. However, the hostility to the “Turk” or Muslim is not unknown to the rest of Europe as well. The presentation will deal with the definition of Islamophobia combined with the Eurocentric understanding of racism, which can be and must be recognized in Orientalist discourses. These kinds of discourses are creating and maintaining images of the barbarian, uncivilized and irrational Other, portraying it as a passive subject on the one hand, but aggressive and dangerous on the other. In the second part the presentation will focus on Islamophobia or “Turkophobia” in the particular historical contexts and dynamics in/of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia.

The author believes that the deconstruction of the racist notion of the “Other” as well as an in-depth understanding of the special socio-cultural, historical, political and religious characteristics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia are preconditions for consistent application of new models and methods for peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence.

Keywords: Islamophobia, Muslims, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Turkophobia, racism, interreligious dialogue

Dr Anja Zalta studied Sociology, Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. She is an Associate Professor for Sociology of Religion at the Sociology Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and author of many articles on religious traditions and identities, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, Asian religious paradigmes, and the role of monotheistic religions in the European cultural and religious history. Between 2004 and 2006 she was periodi-

cally living in Konya, Turkey, where she was conducting a research on secularism in Turkish society. In 2013, as an executive of the international project at the Istanbul University, she studied the rights of religious minorities, especially in the Tur Abdin province on the Turkish-Syrian border. She is a member of the board of the Slovenian Sociological Society, and a member of editorial boards of *Družboslovne razprave* and *Poligrafi* (both journals are in Scopus base). She is also the co-editor of the monograph *Women Against War System* (Lit Verlag, Zurich 2017).



ISBN 978-961-7058-69-7



9 789617 058697