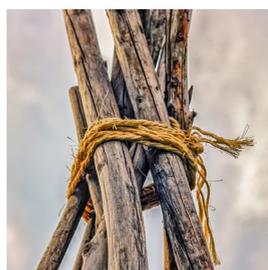




# CONVIVIALITY

LIVING TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY



## CONVIVIALITY – LIVING TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY

- How can we live together in such a diverse society?
- What does the Christian faith contribute to the practice of convivial life together?
- What practices and social commitment helps people in their diversity to lead a good life together?
- Which economic, social and cultural policies support our mutual coexistence?

Everyday life seems to face all kinds of crises. One thing intertwines with another and becomes a multifunctional crisis. This will not change in the near future, on the contrary, something new and unexpected is continually coming our way. The world is on the move. In this situation, we have to start by a dialogue about the issues we face and find the way to work for change.

In a democracy, it is important that everyone has a voice! But the voice has to be heard! But it is not enough that we have a voice that is heard, we also need ears to hear the other voices. And it is not enough to have ears because we also need a listening heart that hears the others and wants to respond to their voices.

Meeting one another means not only that you have something to say to me, but also that I want to let you reach me. Seeking conviviality is about „stopping“, but with a double meaning: stopping, and not blindly continuing to follow your chosen path, but also stopping to hear, to listen, to be reached and to speak.

## DIVERSITY

How do we treat each other? The events of the last few years, via messages in the news and in digital media reveal the problem. Talking, resolving conflicts, discussing matters face to face is becoming increasingly difficult.

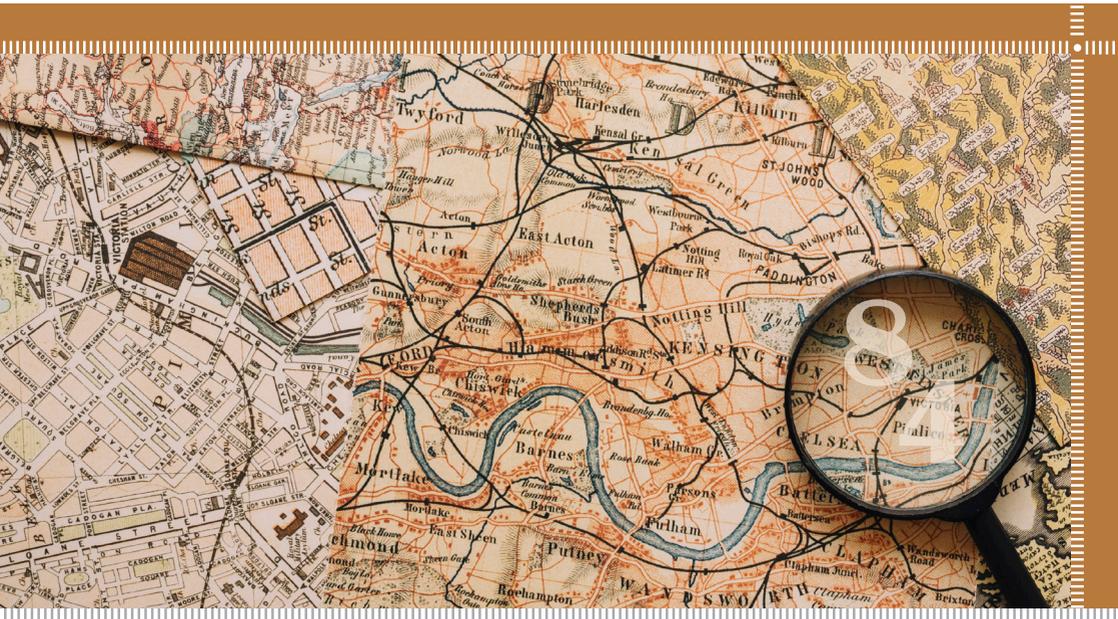
For many, it is no longer possible. The divides often run through families and close friendships. The different opinions of others become a threat, conversations fall silent, views harden. There are many lines of conflict to be seen, between individual and common interests, short and long term, national and international, ...

## EIGHT PERSPECTIVES SIGNPOSTING FOUR PATHS FOR THE FUTURE

In this paper, we advocate eight perspectives following four paths that can lead to a different way of dealing with each other and with the economy and politics.

In the current situation, we must be aware: there is no readymade handbook or recipe! We are entering new territory. How can convivial life together be achieved? There is no recipe, just a step-by-step walk with a

„flexible map“.



# CREATION

As Christians, we have the idea of solidarity in mind. It is based on the experience of the people of Israel. The Hebrew Bible also sees the person as a part of creation. The praxis of Jesus puts diverse people in the centre. A society built on solidarity and seeking conviviality includes each person in a democratic way, living as part of creation.

## 1 A SOCIETY IN SOLIDARITY

As Christians, we have solidarity as a model for society. Nobody should be left behind. This is based on the continuing experience of the people of Israel. The practice of Jesus places people, with their different identities, at the centre. Every person, with their intrinsic dignity is the highest value. That is why the development of each person in a just, solidary society must be founded by following a democratic, nature-loving path. In any case, the basic requirement is economic security and appropriate support for those who, for whatever reason, cannot take care of it themselves.

## 2 CONVIVIAL PRAXIS

Conviviality is the mark of everyday life because it implies that we meet other people as persons made in the image of God. Especially those who are in some way different to us present us with a challenge to our inclusivity. As we read the gospels, we see that they can also reveal truth to us – a truth to which we were preciously ‘blind’ and ‘deaf’: In everyday life we face borders and boundaries between people, and we have to work on that. The question of borders also affects professional work in the social field as well as the church itself! Where are our borders and how do we cross them? Divisions and borders between people can also be created and deepened by political and economic structures and viewpoints and for convivial life together we also have to work on these factors.

Just as the personal stories of the deliverance of the people of Israel supports a common narrative, now we must gather peoples' stories, and their experiences into a new narrative, recognising diversity. Today there are many lines of conflict, which call for a new practice of dialogue and of searching for a common route to transformation. People need social participation, good work, income, health care, education, information, recognition and we need a common narrative for change towards convivial life together.

### **3** STORY AND NARRATIVE

Just as the story of the liberation of the people of Israel comes together in one big story, so today we must tell and hear the many stories of the ordinary people and their experiences and gather them into one big story. People always talk about what is important to them, about their needs and desires. When a trustful space is created where people can share their stories and find the common interests it can be a powerful springboard for action. People can combine their stories in a common narrative which is further developed in action and celebrated.

### **4** LIFE IN DIGNITY

*What do people need for a self-determined life in dignity and solidarity with others and with a good relation to creation?*

The starting point in story and narrative must find expression in structures and process of social participation. In this, every single person is important and valuable and can experience recognition and their own competence. Change is needed to support good work, adequate income, health provision and appropriate care and education. Open sharing of information, diversity of cultural opportunities and democratic co-decision making are important. This should be achieved at the same time as securing a non-exploitative approach to nature and an environment fit to live in!

## JUSTICE

The fair distribution of income and wealth is only one aspect of justice. Justice requires the redistribution of power, resources and life chances. The private ownership of property has limits, and the control of the economy is critical for a just, convivial society. Public ownership and different forms of common ownership can foster convivial work and life.

### **5** INEQUALITY UNDERMINES CONVIVIALITY

Opportunities and wealth are very unfairly distributed, both within countries and around the world. The redistribution of power, resources and life chances is therefore the order of the day. The unfair distribution of income and wealth is only one dimension. The difference runs through all areas of life, from education to health and life expectancy

### **6** PROPERTY AND CONVIVIALITY

*What may be private property and what are the limits?  
In which way can the social ownership of property be expressed?*

One way is through public enterprises which are open to all, and other ways include various kinds of co-operatives and structures of common ownership. The social teaching of the churches repeatedly points out that property also has a social responsibility. Those who have plenty have an obligation to share. Non-profit goods and services such as education, research, health, care, housing, public transport, water, ... must not become the subject of speculation and competition but must remain in common ownership.

All people have creative potential that needs to be supported and built on. The nourishment for this lies in inactivity, in leisure, because this gives the space and opportunity for something new to develop. Faith recognises that economic growth has limits. A good life for all requires simple living and interpersonal trust. Because we are breaking new ground, there is no grand plan, but we go step by step, seeking convivial life together.

### **7 CREATIVITY FOR CONVIVAL LIFE TOGETHER**

People have a creative potential that needs to be unleashed for renewal to be possible. Often this is not expected in the world of work, in most contexts, people are seen operatives carrying out repetitive tasks to order. In response to this development, people are demanding a reorientation. This is aided in a situation where companies must make an effort to recruit employees. Workers expect eye level communication and not just order-taking. This is accompanied by a demand for gender equality, equal treatment for all and in the future, more economic democracy. This must be expanded to ensure that economic activity and consumer behaviour conserves resources.

### **8 TOWARDS A CONVIVAL ECONOMY**

A convivial economy implies moving away from standard measures of financial growth towards an economy which supports environmental sustainability and diversity. In political and popular discourse, economic growth is still the benchmark for policy and action. However, if we move in the direction of an economy which is not based on economic competition and financial growth, the question of distributive justice arises. The first step is to change the lifestyle in rich countries. Ivan Illich called it „joyful...austerity“. Investments are needed, but in a way which respects the environment and does not take more that is sustainable for people and the environment. The economy should be embedded in society and creation! This means turning away from quantity, measured financially in favour of quality measured in human and environmental terms.



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