This paper has three parts: First, I will sketch in broad strokes the major issues that characterize European societies. Second, I will assess recent surveys reflecting European values and worldview. It is difficult to evaluate the European worldview because of the heightened pluralism and diversity. Europe is made up of many nations and ethnic groups, with different economic development levels, religious backgrounds, and philosophic perspectives. Median or average figures will no doubt obscure certain events and the context of social, economic, or religious changes in each European country; however, certain trends can be noticed even from combined statistics across Europe. The main source of data comes from the Eurobarometer, the official European Union survey organism of public opinion. The third part of the paper will summarize a series of documents published by the European Commission, entitled Futurium, which describes the future trends and goals of European societies envisioned by specialists in different areas. Finally, I will reflect on the impact such values and contexts and how they may impact the worldview of young European urbanites. My hope is that this analysis will indicate areas where ministers and missionaries could build their strategies.

A Current European Profile

Europe 2014. News agencies and media outlets speak as one voice about economic depression and social unrest. One of the most developed areas of the world is marred by trouble. The modern dream of prosperity and a happy life in the Old World gave way to the grim reality of unemployment that left little hope for the future. The most affected by such radical changes are young Europeans, especially those living in urban centers. More and more voices whisper about the possibility of a “lost
generation." Far from being an exhaustive list, the following characteristics describe what young urban Europeans have to face.

Diversity

Europe is often described as being divided in two major blocks: Western and Eastern Europe. This is not simply a geographical divide but it is also due to different values and assumptions that make up their respective worldviews. Although generalizations are not healthy, for ease of comparison they have to be used. For example, Eastern Europeans, who for decades lived behind the Iron Curtain, were eager to adopt the political and social systems of the West. However, corruption seems to be innate to the eastern worldview, and democracy or equalitarianism has a tough time taking root in Eastern Europe. In the 25 years since communism fell in Eastern Europe, people living in the former communist countries still seem to favor a velvet dictatorship or oligarchical style.

The East-West divide is not the only distinctive characteristic in Europe. Northern countries are obviously different from the southern ones. People in Scandinavian countries, Germany, or the UK are “seeking the welfare of their cities” by contributing and volunteering for the common good, while southerners in Spain, Italy, or Greece expect the local and central government to provide for individual or familial needs at the expense of the larger community. Such expectations are based on worldview assumptions. The work ethic found in these geographic areas is reflected in the number of work hours per week and the number of public and religious holidays. Nothing in the world will convince a southern European to give up a fiesta or even cherished siesta time without a good fight. Most southern European countries have 14 to 16 public holidays while northern countries enjoy only 8 or 9 holidays per year.

Immigration

Globalization, combined with the opening of the borders between most European countries, allowed people from the east and south to look for job opportunities in the north and west. People not only moved temporarily to a different country but settled in the host culture. Once they established themselves in the new territory they brought their families and also their extended families. Southern and eastern Europeans still hold that the extended family and community as one of the main values of their worldview. The result was seen in the occupation or creation of entire suburbs of immigrants in almost all west European cities. Such clusters of families brought with them or established traditional businesses where it was not necessary to speak the language of the host culture, while allowing many
to retain their native language. Some suburbs look and sound very foreign to the mother city. Since immigrants are looking for jobs, they end up in cities, not in rural areas.

But immigration in Europe is a two-way street. Not only southern or eastern Europeans migrate to the west, but northern and western Europeans are attracted to the east and south. Big corporations and businesses are migrating to the east in search of cheap labor and lower taxes on revenues, relocating some of their human resources. Individuals are also attracted to the east, either for marriage prospects, cheaper property, or because they are enchanted by the still pristine and simple life of the non-western world and its religious environment. Even British royalty have followed this trend, with Prince Charles purchasing property in Transylvania and often spending time there.

Urbanization

It is estimated that currently almost three out of four Europeans are urbanites (68% in 2013), with the rest being dependent on the city and its systems. Eighty-five percent of the European Union’s economic activity takes place in urban areas (Special Eurobarometer 406). This migration of people from rural to urban contexts poses more than population overcrowding challenges. The factors that cause tensions and conflicts in cities are inherent to the different worldview of people inhabiting them. The urban pace of life collides with the need to spend time with family. Cities not only force people to adopt a new set of rules of conduct; they actually change people’s worldview. New values and assumptions are required in order to survive in the city.

Most people moving from rural areas are used to large indoor and outdoor spaces. However, land in a European city is a luxury and most people migrating from rural areas cannot afford it. The city provides mostly small apartments, insufficient for the size of traditional families, and the result is sooner or later the atomization of the large family. This is true not only in Western Europe but also in former communist countries in Eastern Europe where the industrial workers’ blocks of flats or apartment buildings are the living norm. Young people who study in universities move to the dormitory, and their values are seriously tested since most of them will adopt the urban worldview.

Unemployment

The economic crisis of the past seven years accentuated the unemployment rate in the European Union to the point that the region had the highest unemployment rate in the world except what is found in North Africa
and the Middle East. Young people are the largest segment hit by unemployment. In Greece alone youth unemployment soared 68% between 2010 and 2012. Half of the youth in Spain are unemployed, and for those who are fortunate to have a job it is either part-time or temporary. On the other hand, employers complain that young people are not qualified for the jobs that are available.

Statistics from 2013 show that “in Europe, more than 5.68 million young people are unemployed. The average rate of youth unemployment (23.4%) is more than double the overall unemployment rate (10.7%). Even before the crisis the youth unemployment rate was particularly high (17% compared with an average rate of 7% in 2008)” (European Social Partners 2013:1).

The harsh reality of unemployment has especially hit the young generation. The change from more than half a century of wellbeing to meager prospects for the future happened so rapidly and drastically that Europeans could not keep pace with the reality. Their worldview refused to accept that the good old days were gone. Young people took to the streets and began to destroy the signs of deceiving wellbeing and “normality.” France, Germany, Spain and other countries experienced uprisings of young people who refused to be told that “it will be ok after the crisis is gone.” They want prosperity now because they are fed up with promises.

As Mona Mourshed remarked, “For young people, employment is an important means of cultivating a sense of self-worth: when they are without jobs, social unrest becomes more likely. The consequences of wasting the potential of millions of young people can never be benign. . . . Europe faces the very real possibility of a ‘lost generation’” (Mourshed, Patel, and Suder 2014:6).

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism which seemed to have died is very much alive and strong. Although the unification of Germany in 1990, for example, was heralded as the beginning of a move toward integration of all European countries, it proved to be mostly a political and economic union. West Germans still speak in a derogatory way about former East Germans, while the latter are leaving East German cities in search for better paid jobs and better future prospects in the western part of their country.

Young Germans, dissatisfied with the lack of jobs and the weakness of their government in negotiations within the European Union chose to join neo-Nazi organizations demanding that immigrants be deported and German borders closed. They want Germany for Germans. Streets in the cities are often vandalized after repeated graffiti warnings and slogans on
public walls or squares. Young people’s patience is in short supply, and cities are the place where they express their frustration.

The dreams of a unified Europe were also shuttered by the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the de facto creation of the Kosovo state. Czechoslovakia followed shortly and two separate countries replaced it. Catalans are fighting for independence from Spain, while tensions also run high in Italy between northerners and southerners. Scotland is pushing for independence, while Northern Ireland witnessed thousands of casualties for the same aspiration. All these conflicts and tensions are fueled by the unchecked assumption that one’s people group is better than others. The expansion of the European Union to 28 states did not eliminate ethnocentrism; rather it fueled it. Only 12% of Europeans believe that the inclusion of their country as part of the European Union means a loss of cultural identity (European Commission 2014).

Secularism

The diversity of values and worldviews in Europe poses a challenge to young people in religion and spirituality as well. Choices are difficult because of the diverse offers, as well as the mounting oppositions against Christianity. Unfortunately, most Christians in Europe are nominal. When asked how many times a year they attend church, most young people who were baptized as Christians indicate two times—the major holidays of Easter and Christmas. There is very little knowledge of the Bible which is treated as a collection of myths and stories. Faith in God has been replaced by belief in humanity and its unlimited potential for improving and doing good. The European Union refused to include in their fundamental document any mention of the Christian heritage of the continent.

There is no surprise that most churches in the UK are empty, some are even closed and abandoned, while many city churches have become tourist destinations if they have a good manager priest, while some simply serve as pubs. Even in Eastern Europe, although the majority of population registers as Eastern Orthodox, there is very little indication of spiritual interest beyond practicing religious traditions.

Relativism

Under the pressure of a postmodern worldview and the dissatisfaction with traditional values, European societies have become promoters of relativism. Any lifestyle is tolerated unless it disturbs the public peace. European students no longer feel constrained by morals or rules imposed on them. Drugs have become more and more available, tolerated, or even legalized, while people may embrace any sexual practice as long as it is
practiced privately. Same sex marriages are recognized in more and more European states. There is no guilt or shame associated with such practices anymore, and mentioning sin is considered inappropriate or even an offense. As Dick Keyes noted, it becomes clear that it is not religion that is the opiate of the masses. “It is relativism that is the opiate of the masses—especially in the modern university setting, where it deadens and discourages what could be enormously stimulating intellectual and spiritual discussion. Discussions of serious differences, however, too often are seen as dangerous and liable to offend somebody” (2003:4).

Sharing the Values

Eurobarometer surveys offer a relatively accurate reflection of peoples’ values. Any pastor or missionary working in Europe should check people’s answers recorded in these periodic surveys in order to understand the needs and values expressed. Effectiveness of mission depends on how well the Christian offer meets the people’s needs.

A prolonged economic crisis resulted in confusion regarding peoples’ values. Europeans seem to have a hard time comprehending what is happening. To illustrate, I will use a recent Eurobarometer survey titled Europeans in 2014. Most people across Europe admit that their world no longer looks like it used to. For example, the Czech Republic is the only country where a significant minority of people agrees that they understand today’s world (47% versus 51% who disagree). Hungary and Spain have the next lowest levels of agreement. Four-fifths (80%) of people who finished their education at age 20 or after say that they understand well what is going on in today’s world, whereas only 52% of people who left school at age 15 or under say the same thing.

Although a majority of people in all European States agree that people in their country have a lot of things in common, the level of agreement is much higher in some countries than in others. Such agreement or disagreement on shared values affects the strength of that particular society. Agreement exceeds 80% in eight States: Sweden (93%), Ireland (89%), Greece (86%), Cyprus (85%), Slovakia (84%), Finland (84%), Denmark (84%) and Malta (84%). On the other hand, disagreement is most pronounced in Italy (39%), Luxembourg (38%), France (37%), Slovenia (37%), Hungary (36%), Belgium (31%) and Latvia (31%).

When asked whether EU Member States have things in common, or if they consider countries in the EU to be close to each other or distant from each other in terms of shared values, a majority of people (50%) think the EU Member States are distant in this respect, while just over four out of ten people (42%) consider them to be close. This is a noticeable turnaround compared with the Eurobarometer survey of spring 2012 (EB77), when a
majority of people thought the EU countries were close (49% versus 42%) in terms of their shared values. Finland is the only country where opinion is equally divided (49%). In 17 other countries, a majority of people do not think that the EU countries are close in this respect. Less than three out of ten people in Latvia (21%), France (29%), and Spain (29%) take the view that EU Member States are close in terms of shared values.

Since the survey of spring 2012 there has been a decline in most countries in terms of the percentage of respondents who feel that the EU Member States are close in terms of shared values. While there were some moderate increases of this opinion, such as in Estonia (51%, +5) and Malta (64%, +4), the overall picture was negative, with particularly large declines in Cyprus (32%, -20), Latvia (21%, -13), Luxembourg (34%, -12), Slovenia (37%, -11), Spain (29%, -11), Belgium (36%, -11), Italy (40%, -10), and Denmark (48%, -10).

These limited figures reinforce the idea of a lack of unity in terms of a shared worldview. Europeans are very diverse in the values they hold, both within their own countries as well as across the European Union. The lack of social unity is also reflected at the personal level.

**Personal Values**

When invited to identify the most important three personal values from a list of 12 possible options, Europeans most often mentioned: *Human rights* (43%, +2 percentage points compared with the Standard Eurobarometer survey of spring 2013), *Peace* (41%, +2), and *Respect for human life* (40%, +3). The “top three” in the hierarchy remains the same as in the spring of 2013. The next values chosen were *Democracy* (26%, =), *Individual freedom* (23%, -1), and *Equality* (20%, -1). Very few respondents cited the *Rule of law* (18%, =), *Solidarity/support for others* (15%, -2), *Tolerance* (14%, -2), *Self-fulfillment* (9%, =), or *Respect for other cultures* (9%, =). Religion scored the lowest among the 12 chosen values (5%, =).

The breakdown of percentage by country shows an interesting picture. Compared with the survey of spring 2012, several countries experienced a substantial increase in the proportion of people who see *Peace* as an important personal value, notably Estonia (50%, +14), Lithuania (44%, +14), Finland (57%, +12), Poland (43%, +10), and Latvia (48%, +9), perhaps as a consequence of the Ukraine crisis.

*Human rights* are seen as the most important value in eight Member States and they are one of the top-three values in all 28 EU countries. Over 50% of people mention human rights: Sweden (66%), Cyprus (59%), Croatia (52%), Romania (51%) and Finland (50%). They are mentioned the least in Hungary (34%), the United Kingdom (35%), and Austria (36%). While the proportion of respondents who identify human rights as the
most important value increased in Romania (51%, +5 percentage points since the spring 2013 survey) and Malta (43%, +5), it declined in Slovenia (43%, -7) and Bulgaria (46%, -5).

*Respect for human life* is seen as the most important personal value in seven countries, with Ireland (52%), Cyprus (48%), and France (48%) having the highest proportions of people who take this view. Respect for human life is a top-three answer in all but five countries: Germany (31%), Austria (33%), Slovenia (34%), Sweden (34%), and Denmark (40%). The number of respondents mentioning this value rose most importantly in Italy (41%, +9), Greece (47%, +7), Belgium (39%, +6), Portugal (45%, +6), Spain (45%, +5), and Denmark (40%, +5), but declined in Luxembourg (43%, -7), Finland (37%, -6), Romania (35%, -5), and Malta (42%, -5).

*Individual freedom* is regarded as the most important personal value in the Czech Republic (41%), with 50% of people in Austria, 36% in Bulgaria, and 32% in Latvia.

Over three out of ten people mention *equality* in three countries: the United Kingdom (33%), Portugal (32%), and Spain (30%).

*The rule of law* is a top-three answer in Slovenia (36%).

Over a quarter of the people mention solidarity in Greece (29%) and Portugal (28%).

*Tolerance* is cited by at least a fifth of the respondents in Belgium (24%), the Netherlands (24%), Estonia (22%), and France (20%).

*Self-fulfillment* receives the highest percentage in Romania (20%).

Respect for other cultures had the highest proportion of respondents in the United Kingdom (18%).

*Religion* is cited most often in Cyprus (21%).

Younger respondents are more inclined to mention *equality* as an important personal value; 29% of people from the Generation Y (born after 1980) cite equality, as opposed to 13-14% of people born before 1946. Those born after 1980 are also more inclined to mention *Individual freedom* (26% versus 16-18% of those born before 1946). However, people born before 1946 are far more inclined to value *peace* than those born after 1980, by a margin of 51% to 34%. Experiencing war does make a significant impact on one’s worldview.

Values That Represent the European Union

When asked which values best represent the European Union, the respondents indicated similar values to the ones most important for them personally. The only exception was that “respect for other cultures” is much higher in the list, while “respect for human life” is lower. This time, *peace* (37%, unchanged since the Standard Eurobarometer survey
of autumn 2013) tops the list, while human rights (32%, -2) is second. Democracy (30%, =) is in third place, while the rule of law (22%, +4) comes next. Over a tenth of respondents mention respect for other cultures (17%, +1), solidarity (16%, +2), individual freedom (14%, -4), respect for human life (14%, -2), and equality (11%, =). Relatively few people regard tolerance (9%, -1), or self-fulfillment (3%, -1) as values which most represent the European Union. Religion, again, comes last (3%, -1).

Democracy is the top answer in just one Member State, Denmark (45%), though a relatively high number of people also associate democracy with the EU in Sweden (46%) and the Netherlands (40%). People in Greece, Italy, and the United Kingdom (all 21%) are the least inclined to do this.

At least a fifth of respondents mention respect for other cultures in five countries: France (27%), Cyprus (24%), Denmark (21%), Finland (21%), and Germany (20%).

Young people between 15 and 24 are more likely than average to mention human rights (35%) and solidarity (20%), while Europeans aged 55 or over are more likely to mention peace (40%).

Two-thirds of Europeans (67%, same as spring 2012) agree that “the State intervenes too much in our lives.” Three out of ten people (30%, no change) do not agree with this. Over eight out of ten respondents (82%, -2 compared with spring 2012) agree with the statement: “nowadays there is too much tolerance. Criminals should be punished more severely.” Just 15% (+2) of respondents do not agree. In contrast, only a narrow majority of respondents (48%, -1 compared with November 2012) agree that immigrants contribute a lot to their country, as opposed to 45% (+2) who disagree.

25-39 year-olds (70%) are the most inclined to think that the State intervenes too much in their lives, whereas 15-24 year-olds (61%) are the least inclined to think so. Symmetrically, 66% of people from the Generation Y (born after 1980) agree that the State intervenes too much in their lives, compared with 58% of those born before 1928.

People with a lower level of education are more inclined to agree with the two statements “the State intervenes too much in our lives” and “nowadays there is too much tolerance. Criminals should be punished more severely.”

The Contribution of Immigrants to Society

The statement concerning the contribution of immigrants to society is the statement that produces by far the widest variations between the various States. A majority of people in 11 Member States agree that immigrants contribute a lot to their country. At one end of the scale, 91% of people in Sweden agree, followed by 79% in Luxembourg, and 70% in Finland.
contrast, less than a fifth of respondents agree that immigrants contribute a lot to their country in Bulgaria (15%), the Czech Republic (19%), and Slovakia (19%). Since spring 2012, the proportion of respondents who agree with this statement has increased in Ireland (64%, +10), Cyprus (29%, +8), the United Kingdom (64%, +7), and Finland (70%, +6), while declining in Bulgaria (15%, -11), Italy (34%, -10), and Malta (20%, -5).

Individuals with a higher level of education are much more inclined to think that immigrants contribute a lot to their country (59% versus 36%). On the contrary, a majority of people who left school at age 15 or lower (56%) do not agree with the idea that immigrants contribute a lot to their country.

The large variation among European perceptions on immigrants may be due to several factors, such as policies related to immigration, the way media portrays immigrants in different countries (especially during election campaigns), as well as the number of immigrants in each country. However, it will be interesting to compare the responses about immigrants with the percentage on respect for other cultures, respect for human life, or equality for each country.

The Future

The European Commission created a series of documents and projects highlighting the expected changes and trends in several areas. Below is a summary of some of these projections, called Futures. Most of these futuristic projections are envisioned for years 2030 or 2050.

Society

It is estimated that by 2050 the world population will reach 10 billion, with people living 90 years on average and many crossing the 100-year-old threshold, following the pattern of Japan. Such a super-centenarian society is supposed to provide more knowledge and wisdom due to many generations living at the same point in time. Centenarians are expected to be active and creative. In fact, a new perception of time and experience is envisioned. Virtual immortality is believed to be possible based on biotechnology that will store not only history but also emotions, allowing humans to relive experiences of people who lived decades ago.

A new type of humanism is expected to emerge, where advanced technologies will improve the human condition, eliminate ageing, and greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities. Nano-robots are supposed to detect and destroy neoplasms and eradicate cancer. Implanted bio-computers may monitor organs and tissue and trigger the repair process when necessary. In vitro regenerated organs will be
implanted while others will be created to equip handicapped people and offer them missing sensorial experiences.

Bio-medicine will be able to stop and reverse degenerative diseases (e.g., Alzheimers, Parkinson). Stem cells will be widely available for in-situ organ repairing intervention or for in vitro building of new organs. Genetics research will provide detailed information for correcting or treating diseases at the genetic level. All these developments are expected to significantly decrease social illness and psychosomatic diseases (European Commission 2013g).

Cities

Cities are expected to develop into megacities, with all the challenges and needs. Villages will be connected to the cities through an information supra-structure, having access to the same facilities. Urban areas are envisioned as intelligent connected communities. A city is expected to become a smart city, with eco-friendly and energy sustainable means of transportation. However, it is not clear yet how safety against terrorism will be insured, especially in the case of driverless trains or cars. The more the city systems become integrated, the more vulnerable they will be.

There is an ongoing discussion about the balance between individual rights and security. Current limitations of land, energy, and water in and around cities for food production also remain to be addressed. The implementation of water desalination may dramatically change demographics especially in coastal areas cities. Renewable energy projects are seen as a solution for energy needs.

Increased citizen participation in the governance of cities and civic decisions is expected to reshape the decision making process, especially on community resource allocation and priorities. Decentralization will reduce commute times to work and shopping, and enhance productivity. Biking, walking, shared transport, and mass transit will decongest roads and enhance traffic flow. Energy generation infrastructure (e.g., solar roadways) will save fuel and help integrated intelligent transportation systems.

Better nutrition and diet choices will contribute to lowering health care costs in European cities. Personalized nutrition will be encouraged based on Europe’s genetically homogeneous population, as well as gene-based health and wellness solutions. Immigrants will be welcomed and supported in the city because they create new products and services contributing to urban diversity. The “economy of common good” will be established in order to ensure a sustainable future (European Commission 2013b; European commission 2013i).
Family

Currently, half of all households in Paris are inhabited by “singletons,” and more than 60 percent of adults in Stockholm live alone. The rise of the “singleton” is a major challenge in defining family, as well as economics. This is coupled with the tendency toward couples with no children, and single parenting. McDonalds, for example, already reported a decline in the purchase of their child-menu. “In the future, access to marriage and children could become a signifier of social status and indicate economic inequalities in society.” Policies to increase paternity leave seem to be the norm in European countries, allowing women to switch from a role of breast-feeder to breadwinner. The result is a diminishing of gender-defined roles in the family.

There is already an increasing emphasis on connecting technology and family. Technology becomes more and more the means to control and supervise children—the electronic nanny. On the other hand, the tendency toward obesity in children is directly related to “screen time” and exposure to technology, while other effects include increased anxiety, emotional problems, and stress. The more technology available, the more health issues families will face.

Genetics will also impact the traditional family model by the increase of the “three-parent in-vitro fertility” as well as the possibility to customize children by choosing their sex. The tendency is to exploit young women from Eastern Europe or non-European poor countries to become customized baby factories for wealthy Westerners. These are not only ethical concerns but also issues of future identities of “designer” children (European Commission 2013c).

Education

A “blurring of boundaries” is expected by 2050 between the direction of education and industry. The goal is to provide educational programs customized for individual needs and based on a diversity of clusters of skills. Educational modalities will be combined, with technology providing and supporting virtual learning spaces and improved classrooms. Although school buildings may still exist, students will study geography, anatomy or math in the virtual classroom with holograms. A trip to the moon will be at a click distance; a virtual moon and trip, indeed.

The goal of future education is to create a “liquid” learning system that will provide flexibility of curriculum and diversity of learning methods, as well as universal access to education. It is expected that the synergy of education, work, and leisure will produce better results and make learning more enjoyable. Social networks will thus become not only entertain-
ment and connecting platforms but educational, too, including simulations and educational games. They will provide much greater and deeper insight into the interests, talents, and skills of students. This data will help streamline and personalize the educational process, but will also open new vulnerabilities, especially for children.

Open source learning will reduce the need for a high number of teachers, and cooperative learning will be expanded. The danger of eliminating the checks and balances needed to control the educational process will be countered by the fact that students will be teachers while at the same time being able to better integrate knowledge. New ways of measuring learning efficacy will be developed based on the blending between technology and new educational modalities. Learning on the move will become the mainstream educational venue, providing greater access to education and lower logistical costs. Learning resources and opportunities will be widely available and education will become lifelong. The expectation is to have better educated and more adaptive citizens. (European Commission 2013d; European Commission 2013f).

Religion

Based on the current trend of focusing on spirituality and less on organized religion, religion in Europe will be related in the future mostly to tradition and customs, especially for the dying. Any new, emergent, or alternative spirituality, together with fervent or fundamentalist traditional religions will be considered a challenge to the social cohesion of society (European Commission 2013h).

Social Cohesion

Social cohesion seems to be one of the most sensitive areas when looking into the future of European values. Ensuring that energy resources are available without increasing global warming will be a main objective. Making sure clean water and food is available to every European citizen is also of crucial importance. Any imbalance or shortage of energy, food, or water will create tensions and wreak havoc in society. *Innocamps* will be used to bring together people to find innovative solutions for potential problems. However, innovation may come from outside Europe, from emergent societies, and this trend may result in an exodus and the depletion of innovative minds within Europe. And this is not the only long term challenge. The following list may project the European sensitiveness when it comes to social cohesion:

- Polarization and regionalization
- Changing attitudes and values globally
New models of governance that go beyond the traditional model of the state
Vulnerability from global interconnectedness
An ageing population and an ineffective health care system
An increased risk of financial system failure
Non-sustainability of current models of economic growth
Migration and immigration that places a high stress on food, water, and health and welfare systems
An old education system that cannot cope with current and future demands
New health problems and diseases caused by climate change
Increasing global demands for basic resources
Unsustainable forms of energy production and consumption
Transportation systems that pollute and reach their capacity limit
In response to the list of challenges above, some of the proposed solutions could include:
Moving to and re-appropriating the countryside
Optimization of urban space and the creation of dense European eco-cities
Social innovations for aging societies
Direct democracy through e-voting
Developing effective urban infrastructures supporting a multigenerational lifestyle
Humanistic research to explore what dignity during the dying process means to contemporary Europeans (European Commission 2013e).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Eurobarometer surveys are an excellent tool for those interested in finding out the current values of people, while Futures can help churches take a pro-active step in preparing to meet the future generation’s needs. The time is long due for missionaries and ministers in Europe to listen to these sometimes unspoken assumptions, values, and choices. The results of these surveys are free and constitute a rich resource for those willing to research issues and look for important answers. The church in Europe needs to ask relevant questions, for which appropriate skills are needed.

Since religion scores the lowest, both in social and personal values, it becomes evident that Europeans are strangers to religious subjects and lingo. The mere expectation that people will embrace religion once humanism shows its inadequacy to answer fundamental questions will result in disappointment and failure. Since religious values are almost extinct in most Europeans’ worldview it is simply a wish that people will be able to easily understand religious philosophy and embrace a biblical worldview.
Most of these futuristic projections seem both desirable and impossible at the same time. The core assumption behind them is the belief in the self-regenerating and constantly improving human nature. The strong humanistic philosophy of the Old World is evident in most areas. There is no notion of God or the supernatural. Secularism runs high. There is no sin and no need for redemption. Regeneration and restoration is the attribute of humans based on purely scientific engineering. A strong current of triumphalism and belief in the innate goodness of human nature permeates the European vision of the future. The very different assumptions of a Bible-based worldview are also very evident.

Current evidence does not fully support the futures. Ethnic conflicts, war, social inequality, new viruses and diseases, pollution, unexpected natural disasters, and an impotent human nature are realities that may either alter the direction of change for the future or completely stop any development or progress. Nobody can predict human lifestyle choices. The innate goodness of human nature is a dream. We are also daily witnesses of intergenerational conflicts based on different worldviews and value systems. Social cohesion and social structures are directly impacted by such differences. The gap between rich and poor is constantly widening, the revolutions for equality being just temporary suspensions of the dividing process. Cities and urban areas are the first to be affected by these realities, and are sometimes the reason for their existence. Low budgets often hamper many well-intentioned efforts to fix societal problems.

However, missionaries and visionaries should try to imagine how the church will respond to Europeans’ needs in 2030 or 2050. Some of the projections may become reality. The questions that demand answers are: How relevant is the Adventist message and how appropriate are the delivery methods used? What would be of interest to an aging population, living as singletons, more and more isolated? What about a shrinking young generation that has to work more in order to support the social system that benefits an increasingly older population? Scenarios based on these futures need to be considered.

Inevitability of a Lost Generation in Europe?

With more than 5.68 million young people unemployed in Europe (23.4%), a situation which has been exacerbated by the recent financial and economic crisis, many analysts are asking serious questions regarding the future of the young generation on the old continent. For example, high youth unemployment rates in Spain and Greece have led to social exclusion of those aged 19-25. Because of no regular income there is a high potential for poverty, with many consequences such as a decreased
possibility of forming a family, or even dealing with health issues. The main negative impact of unemployment is the permanent frustration of qualified and educated young people and their loss of confidence in the future. This leads to low self-worth, confused identity, and high rates of depression and suicide.

Although quite a good number of young people have finished higher education degrees, they have discovered that their academic or vocational expertise has no relevance for a job market going through a prolonged crisis. There is no matching between skills supply and demand. Due to an open border job market, some countries, especially in Eastern Europe, have also experienced a brain-drain in areas like health care, engineering, or IT. Unfortunately, the European educational system offers very limited geographical and occupational mobility. Entrepreneurship involves risks and a need for financial support, and banks are not willing to credit inexperienced entrepreneurs desiring to start new businesses. Disadvantaged groups of young people, such as socially marginalized young people, those lacking basic skills, and school drop-outs are extremely vulnerable and also need special attention in guidance and information.

The church reflects society. There should be no surprise that, faced with the same unemployment prospects, ministry and theology graduates in Europe feel very discouraged. Those who are employed by the church are permanently afraid of losing their jobs. They try to work hard, to make no mistakes, and be seen as faithful to the church. Thus, their call and identity is threatened or becomes secondary. The result is often maintenance of the church system, and a lack of creativity and development. The focus of their ministry inevitably changes.

However, the situation is not hopeless. Worldview change is possible, and ministers and missionaries should use their creativity to introduce young people to a wider basis for identity than simply employment. On the other hand, the example of other religious movements, like Iglesia ni Christo in the Philippines or Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Mormons should encourage the church to look for opportunities to return to the Apostolic Church’s attempt of economic sustainability. In times of economic crisis, when banks are reluctant to offer credits, church members with financial means could offer micro-loans or even employ young people. The church could also pay a living stipend to theology graduates who are willing to prove that they have a real divine calling.

The New Testament offers many examples of practical Christianity as a motivational and attraction model for mission. These will respond to the values of Europeans, like solidarity, equality, and respect for human life. Our call is to facilitate people’s worldview change, allowing the Holy Spirit to demonstrate in and through our lives that different value
priorities bring a different perspective to life and also offer hope. In this way God’s people will follow both Jesus’ admonishment and example to mingle with people and serve their needs, to seek the welfare of the city, and to become the leaven and the salt in urban centers.

Works Cited


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