From the centre to the periphery and back again. Sustaining rural religious heritage in a time of change

30 October 2014 – FRH Conference, Halle

Dr. Kim de Wildt
Liturgical Science Seminar
Faculty of Catholic Theology
University of Bonn
Context

• Church as the centre of life: spiritual and societal needs were met and society was shaped by a weekly rhythm

• Urbanisation: the silent revolution: erosion of commercial and social institutions (shops, pubs, clubs, etc.)

• Church is pushed from the centre to the periphery
Religious context

- Church membership and church attendance do not coincide: attendance is declining.
- `Kasualfrommen`: church providing rites of passage, but here the church increasingly competes with other providers of life cycle celebrations.
Globalization & Glocalization

- Globalization: the world as a global village: one global cultural system: McDonaldization
- Glocalization: the local will remain: the global will not eliminate all differences
Escape Room: “Video games have long taken inspiration from other cultural phenomena, but now, thanks to several entrepreneurs, one is becoming a real-world trend. In a genre of play called "Real Escape Room," two or more people get locked in a decorated room and must solve puzzles to escape—before time runs out.”
A transformed but lasting spiritual need

• Religious buildings possess an intrinsic quality which does not equal other buildings, let alone virtual spaces.
• They are places of worship in which the life stories of people are intertwined with their relationship to the transcendent and become materially manifest.
• Religious buildings still function as places of awe and contemplation even if the people visiting the religious sites are tourists and no longer members of the religious community.
New concepts

• Challenge and opportunity:
  – new concepts of church functions should integrate the religious dimension
  – churches could become meeting houses for everyone, not just for one group of a specific religious denomination
New concepts

• Multifunctionality in stead of monofunctionality
• For instance liturgical / spiritual use combined with:
  - Church pedagogy
  - City church
  - Columbarium
  - Artistic expressions
  - Functioning as a meeting house
  - Diverse contemplative leisure activities
  - Museum
  - Concerts
  - Diaconal functions