Hybrid Identity. Exploring a Dutch Protestant community of faith

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ABSTRACT

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Communities of faith develop their identity in dialogue with changing social and cultural contexts. This article presents a single case of identity formation in a local congregation of the Protestants Church in the Netherlands, in a changing environment. Out of one specific congregational practice, namely the liturgical (non)-affirmation of same-sex marriages, the complexity of identity construction in a plural and diverse congregation is shown. From a qualitative empirical research perspective, the details of a congregational practice are unfolded in an ethnographic, thick description of the identity. All the different aspects and voices with regard to the congregational practice together give shape to an identity gestalt. The outcome of this detailed research into one practice of a community of faith is that identity is under construction. Unambiguous and uniform congregational identities are rare. In this particular case the identity is even diffuse. The church council and the congregation members find it difficult to state their identity in a positive way and to find agreement on that. The 'hybridisation' of identity is presented as a concept that can shed some light on the nature of identity formation. In a global world, integrated contexts and integrated cultures and identities no longer exist. Contextualisation is a never-ending process. Hybrid identities are construed out of different fragments. Identity construction results from a process of negotiation. This asks for transparant communication and a constructive dealing with differences. As a community of difference, the church as koinonia receives its identity in dialogue with all who are involved. The outcome of this dialogue should be beneficial to not only the congregation but also to its social and cultural environment.

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1   INTRODUCTION

The identity of a congregation develops in dialogue with its changing context. Congregations are not only shaped by a theological tradition, but also by the larger secular culture. The social and cultural context in which a congregation is located, defines how the congregation perceives itself, determines its program of activities, moulds its symbolic and ritual discourse, and co-constructs the artefacts that give expression to the identity. In short, the identity of a congregation originates from a conversation with the context. This identity formation process may be a deliberate, intentional adaptation by a faith community to an altering environment (Ammerman 2001:321-343). But over the years most congregations gradually flow unconsciously and unreflectively into a different constellation of identity fragments, that, for that moment, composes who they are and what they do.

In order to understand how congregations change over time and how they interact with their social and cultural environment, I, as a practical theologian, engaged in a research project from a *congregational studies* perspective (Ammerman et al 1998; Hendriks 2004; Brouwer et al 2007), titled *Koinonia and Social Capital*. The decision was made to proceed with a qualitative empirical research (Silverman 2006), restricted to one congregation within the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Because of the interest in the 'real life' of the faith community and in the way the identity of the congregation is shaped by the external influences and the internal processes, an ethnographic ('fieldwork') research method was chosen (Atkinson et al 2005). For nearly two years I was a participant observer and took part in all kinds of events in this congregation, interviewed numerous congregation members, invited them to fill out a survey, analysed all of the available documents and even documented the history of the congregation, with the intention to offer a 'thick description' of congregational identity (Geertz 1973; Browning 1991:110-135). A report on the research project is expected to be published in 2009.

To give an impression of how the abundance of research material is processed and how the data are analysed, this article presents just one single case on the identity of the congregation. Although the overall research project focusses primarily on the meaning of sociological and theological conceptions of 'community'

(koinonia, social capital), the present case is about the dimension of identity as it results from the interaction between the congregation and its context. The article intends to show that congregational identity in a globalised world is fundamentally hybridised.

The explanation of the case is preceded by a short impression of the congregation and its social context (II) and by a few remarks on the concepts 'koinonia' and 'social capital' (I). These concepts are lenses, sensitising concepts, through which the congregation is perceived. Next to that the identity case is presented (III), followed by statements on 'hybrid identity' and on hybridised congregational identity (IV).

2   KOINONIA AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The case on identity is unfolded with the notions of 'koinonia' and 'social capital' in mind. These concepts constitute the theoretical framework of the overall research project (*Koinonia and Social Capital*), of which the presentation in this article is just a small part. The concepts 'koinonia' and 'social capital' are not only sensitising, heuristic concepts, but are also regarded as normative concepts.

There is a lot of theological literature on koinonia (Hainz 1982; Kuhnke 1992; Reumann 1994; Best & Gassman 1994; Best & Robra 1997) and an even larger amount of publications on social capital (Coleman 1998; Edwards & Foley 1998; Putnam 2000; 2003; Field 2003; Smidt 2003). A thorough reflection on these concepts and on the literature in which they are discussed, criticised, refuted and revitalised, lies beyond the scope of this article. For the purpose of this article, I will confine my discussion to an illustration of the meaning of koinonia for congregational identity, and to a short reference to two of the major thinkers on social capital.

In 2005 the Faith and Order commission of the World Council of Churches proposed a text on ecclesiology, *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (WCC 2005). In this ecclesiological document the church is seen as a koinonia that reflects the community of the Triune God. God wants to gather humankind and creation into a community and the church is instrumental to that purpose. The church does not exists for itself, but is missional, a tool in the hands of God to change the world. Koinonia is not only the dynamic in salvation history, it is also the integrating concept of the relationships between God, humankind and creation.

Koinonia is a theological concept that tries to capture the meaning of Gods mission to the world. It is God's intention to reconcile all creation and human kind with diversity. An important part of this 'reconciled diversity' is the experience of people living together in differentiated networks built on trust, reciprocity and respect. In this way koinonia interfaces with the sociological, political and economical concept of social capital.

Although he was not the first to initiate the notion of social capital, the political scientist Robert Putnam made a strong argument for the merit of this concept. Putnam argumented the collapse of community and social capital. He saw the decline of social networks and of the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness. The loss of this kind of capital is bad for individuals, but it could be detrimental to the economy and to democracy. Putnam made the useful distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital (Putnam 2000: 22-24). The social capital of homogeneous and inward oriented groups he typifies as 'bonding'. The social capital that proceeds from bridging social and cultural diversity within a community he qualifies as 'bridging'.

Unlike Putnam, the sociologist James Coleman was not interested in the moral side of social capital. Social capital in itself is not good or bad, it depends on the context. Social capital is embedded in a social structure of relationships and networks, which are context-specific. Coleman propagated an ethnographical research design to research networks in context. Data of specific organisations in different contexts could be gathered and compared. How individuals relate to one another in different contexts could be observed and distinguished.

In the overall research project to be published, the concurrences and the differences between koinonia and social capital, are elaborated extensively within a practical theological interpretative framework. For the explanation of the case on identity here, it suffices to say that koinonia embraces more than just a homogeneous group of believers. Koinonia is a critical concept towards congregations who forget what their nature and mission are. And the identity of koinonia concerns its nature and its mission, the dynamics between bonding and bridging capital. Every congregation should reflect a balance between bonding and bridging capital. Faith communities should not only be succesful in providing a warm and

homely community feeling for believers who are more or less the same, but they should be able to help their members coping with social and cultural differences that are an integral part of the body of Christ in a global world.

3   RESEARCH CONGREGATION

The congregation that is the subject of the research project is located in a medium to large city in the Netherlands, consisting of about 135.000 inhabitants. The congregation assembles in a neighborhood that was developed in the late sixties, a so called 'post-war neighborhood'. In 1970 the (then Dutch Reformed, later Dutch Protestant) congregation established a new church building in a brand new neighborhood full of promises and opportunities. They called their church 'The Bridge'. The intention was to be a neighborhood congregation and to bring together different people and interests. However, since the late sixties the neighborhood has changed fundamentally, and not in every respect for the good. The cheap rented, high-rising appartment buildings and tenement houses, that were state-of-the-art when they were raised, deteriorated. In the sixties they provided new homes for young families who up till then lodged with their extended families because of housing shortage. In the eighties these houses lost their attraction for the affluent Dutch and were occupied with migrant workers from Turkey and Marocco and their families, who joined them in course of time. In 2007, about 35% of the inhabitans of the district where the church building is located were from a non-western descent. For more than twenty years since, the Dutch who can afford it financially choose to buy a house in the newer city districts or in the suburbs. One of the reasons is the bad reputation of the neighborhood. The area is now, euphemistically, characterised by the city council as a 'priority neighborhood' or as a 'neighborhood in need of attention'.

To this changing neighborhood, the Dutch Protestant congregation reacted by distantiating itself from its direct environment. The neighborhood congregation became a niche within the neighborhood, a 'mentality congregation' (Ammerman 2001:130-160). They started attracting members from other neighborhoods in the city and even from the suburbs, mainly 'evangelical oriented' believers. The ties between the congregation and the territory became weaker. By transforming into an island within the neighborhood the congregation was able to sustain a

viable faith community. At the moment, more than 60% of the congregation members do not live in the district where the church is located.

The transformation in the immediate surroundings of the church building, these last decennia, influenced the congregation and the congregation responded to this situation. That somehow effected the identity of this congregation. The congregational identity developed in dialogue with the changing context. They started off as a congregation in solidarity with the neighborhood, open and receptive to opportunities and challenges in the context, trying to be an inclusive and supportive 'church for others'. But slowly the congregation retreated from the changing context and more and more evolved into a 'congregation of difference' (Heelas & Woodhead 2005:17-23). This development was strengthened by the growing influence of evangelicals in the congregation and their interest in strengthening the 'personal relationship with Christ', irrespective of the congregational responsibility for the geographical location in which God has situated them.

The case to be presented is constructed out of a specific practice in the congregation in question. This practice is about how this congregation relates to the issue of homosexual partnerships. There are many sides to this practice and all these together say something about the identity of this congregation. The identity of a local congregation is folded in its practices. Unfolding this identity requires a deepened insight in the context and culture of a faith community. A thick description of congregational practices provides this widened knowledge. The ethnographic approach makes it possible to give a microscopic review of a congregational practice (Geertz 1973:21).

4   THE CASE

The intended practice is recorded in a textual fragment from a congregational document. The fragment consists of one sentence: 'People in the congregation will not be blessed into relationships other than a marriage between a man and a woman.'

One could say that this fragment represents rather a non-practice than a practice, because it records what is not being done. However, reality is also changed by not doing something. The amount of injustice in the world will propably increase as long as we do nothing to reverse it.

In what follows the embeddedness of his practice in the identity formation of this congregation is shown.

The following questions are posed: What is the meaning of this fragment? (3.1) How did the formulation come about? (3.2) Does everybody in the congregation agree on this statement? (3.3) What does it say about the identity of the congregation? (3.4)

4.1 Meaning

The textual fragment is a passage from a document that regulates the affairs of this congregation. Every congregation in the Protestant Church in the Netherlands abides by the church order of the denomination. But on certain issues congregations are allowed to follow their own directions. These are expressed in a local rule. Such a local rule is a regulation of procedures for how things are arranged and done. The local rule provides insight in the organisation and identity of the faith community. Who we are is revealed in the way we do things. In their local rule this congregation arranged the responsibilities of the church board, the election procedures, financial business and also worship services. The textual fragment under consideration is a part of what the local rule says on church services.

The congregation made economical use of the opportunity to make their own special arrangements. They only chose to write down two specific practices. The first practice is the possibility of dedicating children. Parents may choose to baptise their children or to dedicate them. The practice of dedicating children was introduced in the nineties by a minister who had some affinity with the evangelical movement. He introduced to the congregation church development methods from 'Willow Creek' and from Christian Schwartz. During his ministry members were drawn from other neighbourhoods in the city, who were attracted his particular evangelical spirituality. The parents who nowadays choose to dedicate their children are affiliated with this evangelical spirituality. These people are active and committed church members. They do not constitute the majority, but they do make themselves heard.

Next to the dedication of children, the other practice that this congregation formalised in the local rule was the issue of homosexual partnerships.

These past years the synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands has not been successful in taking a shared position on marriage and sexuality and on how to deal with the liturgical affirmation of same-sex partnerships and marriages. In order not to frustrate the congregations where same-sex partnerships are blessed, the synod decided in 2004 to decentralise the policy on this issue. Every congregation was left with the question what the right policy should be in their local situation. At the moment, this is a complicated issue in Dutch Protestant congregations. A lot of congregations do not dare to enter dialogue on this subject, afraid of dissension and conflict. The blessing of same-sex partnerships is an identity-sensitive issue.

What did the congregation formalise? 'People in the congregation will not be blessed into relationships other than a marriage between a man and a woman.'

Firstly, the stipulation acknowledges the existence of other partnerships than marriage. Secondly, it seems to suggest more than one legal marriage, otherwise they would have formulated 'people will not be blessed into relationships other than marriage'. They seem to suggest that next to the marriage between a man and a women there is a another kind of marriage. However, that is legally incorrect. Since 2001, civil marriage in the Netherlands is open: a marriage can be contracted by two people of different or the same sex. There is no special 'gay-marriage'. There is only one legal marriage. The stipulation thus wrongly makes a distinction within legal marriage. On the one hand they comply with the societal context, by acknowledging the existence of different partnerships, but on the other hand they make a reservation by identifying the same-sex and the opposite-sex marriage. This reservation opposes the law, that does not make a distinction within marriage. The law even disqualifies this distinction by regarding it as discriminating.

There is another aspect to the 'discriminating' point of view of this congregation. The text of the local rule does not speak of 'blessing' but of 'blessing into'. Potentially, everybody can receive a blessing, but only a man and a woman can be blessed into marriage. By using the words 'blessed into' they stress the point that a partnership, or even a marriage between same sex partners, is of a completely different order than the marriage between a man and a woman.

The local rule was 'accepted' in 2006 during a congregational gathering, without any relevant questions raised by the fifty or so churchmembers that were present. Nobody asked anything in particular about the gay relationships stipulation. However, the formalisation revealed that there are boundaries to the identity. Identity is revealed by making boundaries, by displaying the limits of a position. In this congregation gay couples will not receive a blessing in a public worship, not even those who are legally married. That is not an option. Although it is not put down in the local rule, a gay or lesbian minister is also not an option in this congregation.

4.2   Church board decision

The formulation from the local rule is the outcome of a decision made by the church board a couple of years ago. In 2001 the church board spoke twice about the subject of 'homophilia', as they called it. The immediate cause were questions by a gay couple in the congregation. The couple wondered if, firstly, they were accepted as the persons who they are; secondly, if they were allowed to provide the congregation with written information from an association of christian homosexuals; and thirdly, if they could be of help to people in the same situation.

During the first church board meeting the minister only explained what the Bible says about 'homophilia'. In the following meeting the church board spoke frankly and openly with one another. At the end they made two decisions. The first decision was that associations who support young people who just discovered that they are gay, are not allowed to distribute brochures in the church. The second decision dealt with the question regarding acceptance, but also answered a question that was not raised. The church board decided that there is a) no uniform opinion on what the Bible teaches on homosexuality; b) everybody is welcome, even when we do not agree with all manners of life; c) it does not suit us to judge, only to love. But they also decided that in the future people will not be blessed into 'such a relationship'.

In an interview, a former member of the church board responded to the question: "What is not allowed in this seemingly open and accepting congregation?" After some thinking he answered: "A homosexual couple blessed into marriage. Maybe they can receive a blessing by the minister in their private home, but not

in a public church service." The majority of the congregation, himself included, would not buy into that.

The congregation felt differently with regard to the blessing of a heterosexual partnership in public. A young man from the congregation, for instance, had married a girl from Mexico. However, the marriage service in church was not due for six months and it would take place in Mexico. In order to support them and confirm them in their decision to marry, the minister fabricated a ritual during a sunday worship, that looked somewhat like a normal wedding service. The minister said a prayer for the married couple. He also prayed for those who are single, for those who lost a spouse, and for those whose marriage failed but still hope to find a new partner. Interestingly, he did not pray for people who are gay and whose love dare not speak out.

4.3   Congregational nuances

The evaluation of the position in the local rule becomes complicated when we consider the results of the survey that was a part of the research project. Among other things, it can be deduced from this survey that the majority of the congregation seems to affirm homosexuality (fig. 1).

Member appraisal of congregational qualities (percentage)

STATEMENT	POSITIVE RESPONSE
It is a quality of this congregation that everybody is accepted regardless of the colour of their skin or their sexual preference.	57

Fig. 1 N=212

A majority of about 60 percent agrees that a quality of this congregation is that everyone is accepted regardless of sexual preference. Those congregational members with a previous background in evangelical and pentecostal churches, however, by majority do *not* view the acceptance of everyone regardless of their sexual orientation as a quality of the congregation (fig. 2).

Statement: It is a quality of this congregation that everybody is accepted regardless of the colour of their skin or their sexual preference (percentage).

CHURCH BACKGROUND	NEGATIVE RESPONSE

Evangelical	80
Dutch reformed	36

Fig. 2 N=10 (these people are members of the congregation, but used to be affiliated with pentecostal or evangelical churches)

Interestingly, the survey also showed that people who favour the 'general acceptance' of homosexuality are the same who value generalised trust, reciprocity, social compassion, neighbourhood responsibility and dialogue with other religions (fig. 3).

Appraisal of different statements by members who *do* consider acceptance as a quality of the congregations and those who *do not* (percentage)

STATEMENTS	DO	DO NOT
The congregation has an eye for the weakest in society.	40	12
My trust in humanity has increased through this congregation.	10	1
One reason of choosing this congregation is that I trust the people here.	37	10
It is a quality of this congregation that people are ready to oblige one another.	62	36
There is an openness for meetings with Muslims.	13	3
Entering into a dialogue with Muslims is a challenge for the congregation.	33	15
The congregation works together with other partners on improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood.	35	12
Strengthening a feeling of 'togetherness' in the neighborhood is a challenge for the congregation.	37	28

Fig. 3 N=212

A plausible explanation of the difference between the stipulation in the local rule and the results from the survey, is that people make a distinction between accepting one another and the formalisation of the blessing of a same-sex marriage in a church service. This seems to be in agreement with the decision the church board made: 'Everybody is welcome, but …' However, there remains a tension between community and identity, between not excluding anyone

from the congregation and delimiting the religious collectivity, which leads inevitably to exclusion; bonding, no bridging.

This tension is not reflected on by the church board, nor by any other group or committee. There might even be an interest in not inviting people to reflect on the diversity in the identity. As long as this topic is not open for discussion, the differences are not pushed to the extremes.

Apparently, not everybody knows exactly what the local rule says. During an informal meeting of the church board, to which I as researcher was invited, I participated in a friendly conversation with three female church board members. One of them wondered how people in church would react when a married gay couple would ask for a blessing on their partnership. She knew that non-marital relations could not be 'blessed into', but it might be different if couples were married, so she presumed. One of the other two women responded hesitatingly, but dismissively. I expressed my doubts, because of the local rule. The third women however, said: "Why not?" She told us that she is the mother of a gay son. It took her some time to accept that her son brought home a male friend. It is important, she says, that gays and lesbians have someone whom they can address in the congregation.

This church board member is one of the leaders in an Alpha course. Quiet naturally, she has become the person lesbian couples who participate in such a course confide in. According to her, more lesbians participated in this course, who are now members of the congregation.

In an interview with a lesbian couple from the congregation one of the women mentioned that she had a previous relationship with another woman from the congregation. Her ex is still a member and sits in the same place in church as were they used to sit together. People never asked her: "What is wrong, why are you not sitting next to each other?" Maybe people did not know that she and her ex had a relationship, although they were registered as legal partners.

The two women who were interviewed said that they do not embrace or even touch each other in church. Somebody might be offended and react in a judgmental way. That is something they do not want to risk. They do like it in the congregation and they know that it takes a long time before you feel at home in any congregation.

One of two women, the one who was divorced, started to participate in a small group. She wanted the other participants to know her as a Christian and a lesbian. She told them that she carried her divorce like a cross, but not her being gay. God made her the way she is and if she could not say that she is gay than she could not be a member of this congregation. However, an influential evangelical in the group questioned her statement. She felt rejected by him. The man compared her being gay to having Down syndrome: 'You're welcome, but that is not how God intended us to be'. Fortunately, she received support from the others in the group. 'It will never be a subject people in the congregation will discuss in an open and easy way. It isn't even publicly known who is gay in the congregation. Maybe people think that if you don't talk about it, the problem is not there', she said.

4.4 Congregational identity

What does this case say about the identity of this congregation, which is named 'The Bridge'?

The members describe the identity of the congregation as traditional, with a slight inclination towards evangelicalism. A personal relationship with God is characteristic of the faith of the congregation. Nevertheless, they find it difficult to put into words how they differ from other congregations and what their identity is. They experience more trouble describing their identity in a positive than in a negative way. It is easier to say what they are not. They are not liberal, they are not high church, they are not 100% evangelical. Their identity is predominantly defined by what it is not. Different churchgoers mentioned that they chose this congregation above others that were too orthodox, too traditional, too formal, too charismatic.

Furthermore, the positive side of the identity is associated with a degree of difference. Pluriformity is part of the inheritance of this congregation. Not anything goes, but there is a legitimate diversity. When they called upon a new minister a couple of years ago, they were looking for someone who could tie them together, someone who could not be cut down to one specific identity profile.

At the moment they unite around the heart of worship and preaching: Jesus Christ as the centre of their faith and life. Especially and uniquely, they experience their identity and

community in Sunday worship: sharing their faith, singing and praying together, gathering around the word of God.

It can be inferred from other research data, that the church board of this congregation can not glorify themselves in their ability to deal with difficult questions, to face up to conflict, and to find constructive solutions through transparant communication. They rather tend to avoid possible conflicts and evade intense situations that might lead to an incapacity to change and to improve policy. The result of this may be disappointment and demotivation. Transparant communication and a constructive dealing with differences of opinion are of the utmost importance, precisely when identity is under discussion. In this congregation identity is under discussion, or, maybe better, under construction. The identity shifted several times during the past thirty years (from 'missionary' to 'family' to 'niche'). These shifts were a reaction to the changing social and cultural context. The inability to deal with this in a constructive way brought into effect a diffuse identity, which is easier expressed in negative qualifications. However, the absence of a uniform identity is not the problem, nor is it the existence of a pluriformity that defies all attempts to find a common denominator. Rather, the problems are the lack of tools and skills to give shape to diversity in a constructive way and to celebrate differences.

5   HYBRID IDENTITY

It might be helpful to percieve the identity of this local congregation as hybridised, as a hybrid identity. Hybridisation and hybrid identities are concepts applied by Robert Schreiter (Schreiter 2004:74-78). Schreiter sees hybridity as a consequence of globalisation. Integrated contexts and integrated cultures or identities no longer exist in a global world. Hybrid identities are construed out of different fragments. Identity construction results from a process of negotiation.

Schreiter uses the concept of hybridity in a missionary context, in situations where Western cultures clash with those form Africa, Asia or Latin America. Hybridity derives from a context of contextualisation and inculturation of the gospel in a foreign context. However, it might also useful in analysing the identity formation of congregations in Europe and maybe also in the United States and South Africa. In the researched congregation the identity is diffuse, it is under construction, it is difficult for them to state their identity

in a positive way. All this has to do with the hybridisation of the identity in this congregation. Some kind of integrated identity exisited in the sixties and seventies, but that was a long time ago. The neighbourhood changed and so did the congregation. Identity needs to be negotiated and constructed out of the different parts and those fragments of culture that are still available. One of those aspects of postmodern global culture is the presence of evangelicalism. The 'next Christendom' has arrived and it looks as though it is predominantly evangelical and charismatic (Jenkins 2002). This global phenomenon can also be observed in Dutch Protestant congregations of experiential difference (Heelas & Woodhead 2005:62-64). The consequence of the evangelical presence is a shift in the overall identity of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, particularly an identity shift in some congregations, like the one in question.

What does this mean for congregations in general? Firstly, congregations should accept that their identity is hybridised. Unambiguous and uniform congregational identities are difficult to find. No one gospel exactly fits one situation. The gospel always needs to be contextualised and inculturated differently in various contexts (Bosch 2005:420-432, 447-457). But the contextualization of the gospels goes beyond that. Contextualisation is a never-ending process. Identity is always under construction. The boundaries of faith communities are dynamic by definition. Identity formation leaves room for identity negotiations.

In sum: A community of faith receives its identity in dialogue, in the process of negotiating diversity. However, this dialectical hermeneutics depends, however, on trust and the capacity to communicate transparantly. The congregation in question can not be blamed for having an identity under construction. But they should be advised to invest in their ability to deal with differences in a constructive and transparant way. When they succeed in doing that, they will be able to reach a more clear and distinct identity, an identity that will be owned by the whole of the congregation.

A second statement has to do with my normative theoretic framework. The theological concept of koinonia challenges the church to embrace an inclusive identity and to keep bonding and bridging capital together. The church is called as a body of Christ, to be a community of people who differ and who are different. As a

'community of difference' it receives its identity in dialogue with all who are involved. The outcome of this dialogue should be beneficial not only to the congregation but also to its social and cultural environment. Congregations could be of help to their environment in dealing with complicated issues like community and individualism; multiculturalism; the role of religion in the public domain; diversity and identity; social cohesion in the neighbourhood. Local communities of faith can change the world, but in order for that to happen congregations should be impregnated with the reality of koinonia and should find ways to translate this reality into bonding and bridging capital that benefits God's world.

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