



# Making a difference? Societal entrepreneurship and its significance for a practical theological ecclesiology in a local Western Cape context

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This article is concerned with the question of whether and how a local church or congregation can, as indissoluble dimension of its vocation as a Christian faith agent, make a difference by influencing the dynamics of social and economic change that are transforming the face and structures of 'traditional' social and religious life in its community. Based upon the authors' own interest in the specific context of the Dutch Reformed congregation of Simondium in the Western Cape and the case study work that they have conducted in this context, an argument about the potential role of this congregation is developed through the conceptual lens of 'societal entrepreneurship'. After exploring some recent thoughts on this concept in the literature, the authors use the results of their recently conducted case study work to show how the dynamics of a new entrepreneurial drive amongst long-established residents and newcomers in the Simondium region shape the social reality of both the region and the congregation in a forceful way. This insight leads the authors to develop a sociologically and theologically motivated argument about the way in which this changing reality offers new-found opportunities to the Simondium congregation to fulfil its Christian calling. As such, the notion of becoming an 'entrepreneurial church' is introduced and a more detailed perspective is offered on those factors that a contextually orientated practical theological ecclesiology should take into account in building the entrepreneurial model in the congregation.

## Introduction

A central premise of this article, which builds on previous case study research by the authors (Orsmond 2008a; Swart 2007, 2008a; Swart & Orsmond 2009, 2010) is that global social and economic change impacts significantly on local communities. Changes in the world economy leave deep scars on both the social identity and the economy of local communities. When the social fabric of a local community is under pressure and the economy of a region is forced to adapt its focus and business activities, the church, as a social and religious structure in that region, is also challenged and put under pressure. Challenges of this nature and magnitude call for deep reflection on a number of issues, such as: (1) the intimate relationship between the economy and social life; (2) the sensitivity of local communities to movements and changes in the world economy; and (3) the impact of social and economic activities on the identity and functioning of local churches or faith communities (cf. Middlemiss Lé Mon 2009).

The inter-relatedness of these social, economic and religious factors challenges academic researchers in the field of theology as well as practitioners in local churches or congregations to reflect on the concepts of *agency* and *ecclesiology*. The concept of 'agency' refers here to the institutional church and its membership in a particular geographical area where both social and economic transformation is taking place. The question in the title of this article refers to the issue of agency. Can the local church influence a changing social and economic environment? Put more elaborately, how can the local church, as indissoluble dimension of its vocation as Christian faith agent, make a difference by influencing the dynamics of social and economic change that are transforming the foundations of 'traditional' social and religious life in the community in which it finds itself?

As a socio-religious agent in its changing environment, the local church under the threat of being wiped out needs to reflect on the ecclesiological question regarding the character of a church that, from a faith point of view, can make a difference (be a change agent) within the changing society within which it carries out its task. This aspect of the article is reflected in the second part of the title: 'a practical theological ecclesiology'. In this article the church (congregation) is understood as a missionary [Dutch: *missionair*] body. The members of the church identify themselves in terms of being sent by God into this world. The church is not a closed circle, but



rather an inviting community. The missionary church has an outgoing orientation, both in witness and service and in word and deed. The concept 'missionary church' does not in the first place describe (extra or additional) activities, but rather a fundamental attitude (way of life) (Dijkstra-Agra 2009).

One way of being a missionary church in a changing society where economic and business models play a commanding role (Orsmond 2008a; Swart & Orsmond 2009, 2010) is to be an 'entrepreneurial church'. This idea constitutes a further element of the title of this article: 'entrepreneurship and its significance for a practical theological ecclesiology'. In this regard the concept of *societal entrepreneurship* is specifically introduced and applied to the definition of missionary church that we borrow from a recent conceptualisation of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN) (Dijkstra-Agra 2009). 'Entrepreneurial church' in this sense constitutes an additional element to the existing 30 models of being missionary church that the PCN has conceptualised. It might be discussed either as model number 31 or as an extension to the 21st model in the existing conceptualisation: 'the congregation in the market-place' [*de gemeente op de markt*].

A final element in the title describes the context of our case study and reflects our fundamental concern with place: 'a local Western Cape context'. As such, we are particularly interested in relating the aforementioned elements of our title to perspectives and results that we have already generated through case study research in the area or community known as Simondium. In the final analysis, we are particularly interested in this article to take our research to a next level and start reflecting on how the over-arching factors of economic change and new entrepreneurial development, which we have identified in this area or community, impact on and challenge church life and the faith sector at large. In terms of this aim, our choice to focus on the Simondium congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church and its potential role as change agent in this context by no means exhausts our intention to broaden our focus on faith-based activity in the region in our ongoing research and reflection. As we have already implied, this focus on a particular congregation marks only the starting point of an ongoing research agenda and is motivated by the institutional faith context that we both know best and to which we are most closely and intimately related.

## Entering the field of entrepreneurial and community development

We proposed that one way of being a missionary church in changing societies is by being entrepreneurial. We introduced the concept of 'societal entrepreneurship' and applied it to the church as an organisation. We furthermore coined the concept 'entrepreneurial church' in relation to the 30-model programme of the PCN (Dijkstra-Agra 2009), suggesting it as a further model or perhaps just an extension of an existing model: the congregation in the marketplace.

The PCN describes the focus of the 'marketplace congregation' in terms of taking part in the life and activities of the neighbourhood. This kind of congregation is driven by the needs, challenges, opportunities and activities in and/or of its immediate social context. The congregation looks at its environment, asking what can be done in the neighbourhood, the town, the city. Moreover, it is integrated with its environment and sees the marketplace 'out there' not only as the place where trade takes place, but also as a place of opportunities and possibilities. According to this recognition, the congregation does not in the first instance call people to 'come to her'. It rather moves out to the people and takes part in the activities of the neighbourhood. It does not designate a specific group with a project or programme, but allows everyone to take notice of activities in their community and motivates them to participate in these activities. Its members join existing possibilities and festivities in the community (Dijkstra-Agra 2009).

The focus of the 'marketplace congregation' is on the neighbourhood and ministry through joining community activities, which are the essential building blocks for an *entrepreneurial* ecclesiological orientation. However, we want to argue that the examples, ideas and possibilities mentioned in the PCN programme are too much in the mould of 'traditional' church programmes. Although the PCN states that the marketplace congregation in its ministry does not call people to 'come to her', the examples do just that. 'Outreaches' to shopping centres, for instance, are intended to invite people to church services and activities and make them aware of such services and activities. Accordingly, this approach falls short of an understanding that church also 'happens' in every location where church members spend their daily life and do their work.

Thus, recognising the need for sharper conceptual clarification and thinking, we propose that phrases and ideas such as those coined in the wide range of the literature we studied – 'communities first' and 'entrepreneurship in the name of society' – might bring us closer to answering questions regarding the Simondium congregation in our case study. First in this regard is a recent workbook series by a team of researchers from the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) on how to build readiness for community ministry, which presents a useful distinction that might fill some of the shortcomings in the PCN's marketplace model. The authors write within a 'community development' paradigm in which it is often said that there are three basic ways that congregations interact with their communities:

1. *in* the community
2. *to* the community
3. *with* the community.

In this threefold distinction the first two modes are still variations of an approach whereby the development agent or congregation largely determines the initiative and kind of action. The third one, however, emphasises the importance of 'working together' in communities, the willingness of the church or congregation to take part in communal life 'with



other agents' and a dynamic understanding of location for ministry and being church (Van Groningen 2005a:9–11, 2005b:3). According to Jay van Groningen (2005b), the leader of the CRWRC group:

Ministry with the community starts by gathering input and information from members of the community. This information is used to determine which programs and services the church can offer to make a long-term impact. Ongoing evaluation and input from community members participating in the programs is expected. The location can be any appropriate venue in the community, depending on purpose and input gathered from community members. The measure of success in this approach includes what happens to participants in the program, the impact on the community as a whole, and what happens in the process of working together as a community.

(Van Groningen 2005b:3)

In a very stimulating little book as part of the Knowledge Foundation Series in Sweden (Gawell, Johansson & Lundqvist 2009a) Eva Moe writes in the first chapter, 'We Need More Societal Entrepreneurs!' (Moe 2009:7–10). She defines 'societal entrepreneurship' as those initiatives that aim at improving what is lacking or non-functioning in society. These initiatives are new solutions intended at creating a sustainable society – economically, socially and ecologically – by applying 'entrepreneurial logic'. A quotation by Margaret Mead at the beginning of Moe's chapter highlights the elements of agency and change which we have incorporated into the title of our article: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has' (Moe 2009:7). Thus, what is needed is committed and thoughtful people to make a difference in society and to change our world, an idea which indeed resonates well with what members of local faith communities, the local church, local congregations, aspire themselves to be in their contexts.

Without having dealt exhaustively with the concept of 'societal entrepreneurship', we now follow Moe and her fellow writers' arguments to identify some of the main elements of their conceptual framework.

First of all, our motivation to focus on society and social innovations and our application of these innovations to a local congregation are expressed well in Moe's (2009) words that:

(s)ocietal entrepreneurs make use of entrepreneurial logic when grappling with the problems of society, demonstrating that it works perfectly to be commercial and driven by ideas – developing society while creating one's own sustenance.

(Moe 2009:7)

Accordingly, this outlook does not neglect commercial motivation and the role and benefit of individual agents; yet it is the effort or input from individuals that is at the same time exerted for the common good and development of whole societies or communities.

It follows, secondly, that the obvious purpose of initiatives taken by the societal entrepreneur is to be of benefit to society. These may involve anything and may take different

organisational forms. The Knowledge Foundation in this regard prefers the term 'societal' rather than 'social' entrepreneurship, emphasising that more is encompassed than just social issues (Moe 2009:8). The whole of a society is in focus, whilst the space where societal entrepreneurship operates more specifically is the borderland between traditional sectors or spaces, 'between non-profit and commercial, between the public sector and the private market, between academia and the world outside' (Moe 2009:8). This approach challenges conventional segmented ways of thinking about society 'by questioning concepts like market and profit and by indicating new roads that are about neither being dependent on subsidies nor on maximizing profits' (Moe 2009:8–9). As Moe states: "I create a salary for myself and a profit to society" is a typical line from a societal entrepreneur' (Moe 2009:9). Or as one of Moe's fellow writers states, someone who writes about the phenomenon from the point of view of the health sector, an exploration of the concept of societal entrepreneurs involves the question of how such persons 'manage to combine "health-driven" and "profit-driven" enterprises' (Tillmar 2009:25, 29).

Thirdly, within the Knowledge Foundation framework societal entrepreneurship is described as a mobilising force that, whilst directed to context, 'is often beyond just the local context' (Gawell, Johansson & Lundqvist 2009b:15). As such, societal entrepreneurs are particularly focused on network building. In Moe's words (Moe 2009:9), 'societal entrepreneurs are the leaders of the future', who 'make up horizontal and non-hierarchical networks which are in essence glocal' (global and local). For this reason societal entrepreneurship therefore has its necessary place 'in any discussion about growth' (Moe 2009:9), as it entails unprecedented new forms of collaboration (Gawell, Johansson & Lundqvist 2009b:16) 'across sectoral borders' (Tillmar 2009:25) from which new forms of social innovation develop. In the words of Gawell (2009b) and his co-authors, which capture the more far-reaching nature of what is at stake:

*Societal entrepreneurship is also driven by the desire to introduce innovations into society ... [I]ncreasingly what we call innovation is not just new knowledge from natural science, medicine or technology, transformed into products. Increasingly innovation is seen as social change and social creativity. The interaction between social change and concrete products and services is thus seen as increasingly essential, whether motives are more economic or more social/ecological. Succeeding commercially on the Internet or within mobile telephony services requires the ability to understand the social movements and practices of young people. Societal entrepreneurship thus helps to broaden the perspective on innovation beyond too narrow-minded technical solutions into considering more societal and social factors. Much societal entrepreneurship builds innovation in ways that are difficult to anticipate in traditional economic terms. Although most people sense the importance of championing the notion that cultural, ecological, or technical functional values are necessary for a more commercial entrepreneurship to occur, we lack systematic understanding to link the aspects together.*

(Gawell, Johansson & Lundqvist 2009b:16)

Fourthly, it becomes especially important in the light of the aforementioned to understand societal entrepreneurship



as a new form of value-creation. Being directed towards society, to the common good, to social innovation, societal entrepreneurs represent an obvious challenge to what Gawell and his co-authors call a prevailing “development and progress discourse” focussing on economic development’ (Gawell, Johanisson & Lundqvist 2009b:17). As such ‘(s)ocietal entrepreneurship might aim at creating value within such a discourse’ and is concerned with the question of ‘how society can learn to appreciate the more radical inclusion of values into the societal agenda’ (Gawell, Johanisson & Lundqvist 2009b:17).

Fifthly, whilst not necessarily involving a product that has never before existed, societal entrepreneurship seeks new ways to combine existing goods or services in other contexts. Taking the examples of societal entrepreneurs in the health sector, this feature subsequently leads Tillmar to describe the examples of such persons in this field as ‘frontier-crossing combiners’, to the extent that the goods and services that they offer combine (Tillmar 2009:28):

- a social intention to improve the world or a constructive promotion of the health and well-being of members of society *and* running an economically viable business
- professional competence *and* complementary or alternative medicine
- bridge building *and* challenging conventional models of health care
- running a private business (through which they offer their business activities) *and* being publicly employed.

## A changing socio-economic context: Being church in Simondium

In this section and the following one we shift our attention to our own case study research, mentioned in the introduction to this article. In particular, taking as point of departure the facts of our interest in developing a *contextual* approach to doing practical theology (Swart 2008b:106–112) and our concomitant interest in deepening an understanding of the area (broadly speaking) in which we both work and live, we are referring here to the rural community of Simondium located in the heartland of the Western Cape wine district. In an even more focused way, we are in the first instance referring here to our interest in developing a deepened insight into the ongoing socio-economic changes in this area and their impact on the economy and business activities of the region. In the second instance, we are also, as a logical consequence, referring to our interest in developing a deepened understanding of the social and economic actors within this context of change. Not least, as practical theologians we are in this regard especially interested in reflecting on the agency role of the faith sector in this context (Swart 2008c, 2008d, 2009), and in this article more specifically the Simondium congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church to which we are respectively affiliated as pastor (E. Orsmond) and member (I. Swart).

### Thesis from previous research

Our case study work to date has led us to formulate an important thesis about ongoing economic change in

Simondium. In essence our thesis has been directly linked to the effects of globalisation and the influence of the international fruit and wine industry on our case study area, especially since the end of the apartheid era. In particular, what has become a striking feature in our observations and analysis is the way in which exposure to these external forces has transformed the ‘world of work’ in our area.

Not disregarding the fact that job opportunities in the wine and fruit industries of this area (as elsewhere in the larger region) have always relied on a wide spectrum of applied training and skills, our analysis identified in particular a new business orientation to work that has been creating at least four categories of economic operators in the agricultural industry: entrepreneurs – individuals owning farms and business units; managers – of production units employed by the entrepreneurs identified as first category; professional people – marketers, economists and consultants contracted by the entrepreneurs identified as first category; labourers or workers – working in full-time or seasonal capacity on farms, in cellars and related activities – also employed by the entrepreneurs identified as first category (Orsmond 2008a:194–195; Swart & Orsmond 2010:904–905).

Our research demonstrated our special interest in the situation of the fourth category of economic operators in the aforementioned scheme: the farm workers. In contrast to the other three categories of economic operators, our observation has been that the farm workers represent a category of people who, in terms of job security, to a far greater extent than the other three categories of people remained ‘dependent on a stable economy and established industry’ (Orsmond 2008a:194–195; Swart & Orsmond 2010:905). Accordingly, they can be described as a category of people who have ‘some school education, but learned their skill through on-the-job training. They know what their tasks are and are relatively skilful in executing their tasks’ (Orsmond 2008a:195; Swart & Orsmond 2010:905). Yet they are at the same time the historically disadvantaged group that remains especially vulnerable in the current period of economic uncertainty and change, and for whom history repeats itself. They find themselves at the bottom-end of a South African agricultural industry that is at present engaged in a struggle for survival (Orsmond 2008a:195; Swart & Orsmond 2010:905).

Furthermore, it has been important for us also to relate in a more specific way the aforementioned situation of the farm workers to the new socio-economic reality in Simondium and the specific contribution of the new category of *entrepreneurs* towards this reality. Besides the notion of economic uncertainty and crisis, we have depicted the category of entrepreneurs as consisting of both long-established residents and newcomers to the region. The first group responded to both global market challenges and the innovations of new-style entrepreneurs moving into the area. The second group bore global ideas and tendencies together with available financial resources into the area. Together this movement and interaction have challenged the existing skills, training and expertise in a considerable way, especially those of the local



workers. In a most concrete way, we have come to associate the new entrepreneurial activities with what we today see as one of the most significant developments in the Simondium area, namely the establishment of a new flourishing hospitality and tourism industry (Orsmond 2008a:195–196; Swart & Orsmond 2010:905). Having transformed many of the farms in the region into centres of hospitality and leisure, our conclusion about the significance of the new industry for the local workers has been both critical and positive. On the one hand, for us this new industry remains a bulwark of exclusion for many if not most of the local people of the region. Yet, on the other hand, we also see it as today offering new opportunities for work, education and inclusion in a way that the agricultural industry is unable to do on its own. In a nutshell, we are arguing that:

A new leisure industry challenges our understanding of work and what kind of education is needed for working in this industry. To land a job in the leisure industry, a person needs specific knowledge and skill. This challenge can open up a whole new world. The leisure industry is built on education and training that can be applied to new forms of work, which is dictated by a new economy.

(Orsmond 2008a:196; Swart & Orsmond 2010:905–906)

### **The changing face of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Simondium**

Within this rapidly changing economic and business context of Simondium, the local Dutch Reformed congregation is challenged both to survive as faith community and play a role as agent for promoting social development and community identity. The congregation was founded in 1958 (Terblanche 1983) and celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2008 (Grové 2008). It is a traditional White Afrikaans-speaking congregation, deeply touched by the economic changes and globalising processes in the world. Historically the majority of its members have been involved in the agricultural industry representing three of the four categories of economic operators mentioned earlier, namely entrepreneurs, managers and professional people.

Earlier we mentioned the notions of economic uncertainty and crisis, as well as newcomers who have been transforming the economy of the region. The impact of these influences on the local Dutch Reformed congregation has been far-reaching, something that is well reflected by figures and statistics brought together in the publication for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the congregation. The impact was felt on both finances and numbers of members, with the result that the influence of the congregation on the broader community through its members was also significantly challenged (Grové 2008:41–51). However, the significant entrepreneurial skills and ability of these members come to light when stories of social and economic change over the years are told together with the creative ways in which these challenges were dealt with. The response of long-established residents to both global market challenges and the innovations of new-style entrepreneurs moving into the area in the present era reveal a deep-seated entrepreneurial spirit amongst these members.

This is arguably the most significant asset of the Simondium congregation in its response to present-day social and economic challenges.

Between 1993 and 2008 the number of congregants steadily declined from around 450 to 230. At present the number is in the region of 205 members. These numbers represent a more than 50% decline over the period of seventeen years. Imagine how such a decline in numbers has impacted on the finances and available financial sources of the congregation. In 1993 70% of the congregation's income came from monthly contributions by its members together with income generated from the annual bazaar; in comparison, in 2008 the same sources of income contributed only 45% of the total income of the congregation. Therefore other creative and innovative schemes had to be developed to raise funds. In the 2007/2008 financial year 22% of the income came from additional fundraising schemes, forcing the congregation to be entrepreneurial in its efforts to meet its financial needs (Steenkamp & Botha 2008:41–44).

The congregation's entrepreneurial efforts developed on two levels, exploring both the opportunities and professional capacity of the full-time pastor, on the one hand, and economic opportunities available in the immediate context of Simondium to raise income, on the other. Already in 1995 the church council reflected on the academic, technical and ministerial capacities of the full-time pastor in search of financial opportunities to meet the congregation's budget needs. At the time the pastor was allowed to teach at the University of Stellenbosch for additional income, which eventually led to a new contractual agreement with the congregation in 2010 (Grové 2008:34; Drakensteiner 2010a, 2010b). Furthermore, with regard to economic opportunities in the immediate context, the congregation also explored different opportunities and possibilities available in the developing leisure and hospitality industry in the area. The congregation, for instance, explored ways to utilise the annual cycling and golf events hosted at the different venues in the region, and experimented with moving the church's annual bazaar to venues in Paarl and the immediate region to reach larger groups of people (Grové 2008:44–46; Drakensteiner 2011).

One could state at this point that the future prospects of the congregation are well captured by the present pastor's reflection on the 50 years of the congregation's service to the Lord presented in the aforementioned publication. In this reflection he mentions the importance of the bigger picture of the history of God's involvement with the whole church in the Groot Drakenstein Valley. The DRC Simondium is accordingly challenged to revisit its relationship with other churches in the area. It is also challenged to take notice of demographic changes, to the decline in Afrikaans-speaking people in the valley, and to seriously engage with the issue of the people to whom the congregation will minister in future.

We may note in conclusion that the present pastor's view on future challenges includes the expectation of even more and



continuing changes in the coming years. More residential units will be developed with more people moving into the area from elsewhere, and not many of the new population will be members of the DRC denomination. With a growing population, the challenge to the capacity for ministry and social development will therefore certainly be stretched, a factor that will challenge the congregation to take hands with other agents in the community to fulfil a meaningful role, not the least with other churches and congregations in the region (Orsmond 2008b:46–51).

## Becoming an entrepreneurial church: Opportunities created by the new context

We may at this point return to the conceptual framework of the PCN as the changing face of the DRC Simondium and the impact of its declining membership numbers call to mind model 27 of the PCN programme focusing on the phenomenon of shrinking congregations. The reality of shrinking churches worldwide is a given, but this model interprets the declining process positively in that it sees new opportunities for small, shrinking congregations (Dijkstra-Agra 2009).

The PCN model does not equate 'small' with being weak. Instead shrinking faith communities are challenged anew to revisit basic forms of community [*koinonia*], trust, prayer, singing, listening to the Word and one another, and searching together for the good. The pain of the situation and feelings of powerlessness within the context of shrinking communities is not the final word. Sometimes unexpected new possibilities appear. New possibilities can emerge in the form of partnerships with other agents or within the capacities and talents of the remaining members of the congregation (Dijkstra-Agra 2009).

Having already identified the DRC Simondium congregation as a social and economic actor in the local community, we subsequently take a similar positive view on the innovative possibilities for shrinking congregations. Through the concept or idea of 'entrepreneurial congregation' in particular, we envision new-found opportunities appearing from the 'wrinkles' of this particular shrinking context. However, at this point we at the same time strongly believe with the PCN that this opportunity can only come to fruition when two strategies are utilised together: (1) partnering with other agents, and (2) tapping into the strengths of the remaining members of the congregation (Dijkstra-Agra 2009).

Following the PCN in this regard, our focus for the moment falls only on the second of the two strategies, namely the *strengths* of the small, remaining group of members of the DRC Simondium. As such, and in order to develop an appropriate perspective, we specifically also apply the questions that the PCN has identified to determine the nature and character of a specific church or congregation in order to develop a contextual ecclesiology. These are the questions that ask (1)

what the members of a particular congregation are already doing (where does their strength lie?), and (2) what is the nature of the immediate context of the congregation.

As already stated, we want to answer these questions by introducing the concept of the 'entrepreneurial congregation', supported by the findings of previous case study work. But it is also important to note that our motivation in opting to adopt this concept is likewise based on the fact (already pointed out earlier) that the main activity and everyday work context of a substantial number of the remaining members of the DRC Simondium is essentially *entrepreneurial*, something which our case study work has highlighted significantly.

We have already pointed out that our case study research shows that the economy of the Simondium region consists of a range of business activities and innovations that are changing the working environment and job opportunities for many people, including the traditional workers on farms. Although there are similarities between the various agricultural activities in the region, there are also huge differences between the diverse old and new industries – such as winemaking, fruit production and export, packaging facilities, hospitality and tourism – and their governing structures. The concept of 'diversity' also describes the approaches of entrepreneurs (new and existing) to their economic innovations in, and investment plans for, Simondium.

In more specific fashion our interpretation of the case study data, which were mostly generated through semi-structured interviews (Orsmond & Swart 2009), led us to identify *five* types of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial approaches dominating the changing socio-economic scene in the Simondium region. What is offered here is only a brief synthesis or summary of our previously more detailed initial outline (Swart & Orsmond 2010:904–913); our aim is firstly to show how the types of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial approaches (or models) not only give an indication of the identity of the human actors in this region more generally, but also of many of the members of the Simondium congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church. Secondly, our aim through such identification is also to start to develop a thesis on how this identification creates the platform to conceptualise the Simondium congregation as an entrepreneurial church in terms of its social context and Christian calling.

We referred to the first type of entrepreneurial activity as *large-scale social engineering* (LSSE). Perhaps the least attractive for us amongst the different types or approaches, in terms of the actual social and economic opportunities that it has up to the present offered to farm workers and ordinary people in the region, this designation (LSSE) involved the sale of 3000 hectares of historically multinational company-owned land (the farm known as Boschendal) together with its established economic activities to various consortia of business people.

For us, therefore, the designation LSSE refers to huge amounts of money which changed hands, with added promises of



social development programmes based on planned property development and the foundation of a trust (known as the Boschendal Treasury Trust) to manage this aspect of the project. Whereas the promised outcomes of the Trust have not materialised as yet, we have nevertheless become aware of two opportunities given to former employees of the previous owner of Boschendal, Anglo American. This entailed the four managers of the former fruit division being given the option of a management buy-out to lease the orchards and build their own business. The former manager of the technical workshop at Anglo also got the opportunity to initiate his own business, which meant that many entrepreneurial opportunities for different people were in actual fact created when the economic and business activities of Anglo were dissolved (Swart & Orsmond 2010:906–907).

The second type of economic innovation and entrepreneurial investment in the Simondium context is based on transformation at the Farm Bloemendal, which we referred to as *capital owner reinvestment and socio-economic diversification* (CORCED).

This designation describes the shift in economic activity on one farm by the same owner – a third-generation heir – moving from a focus on one industry (agriculture) to a broader range of activities in which the economic and business activities accommodate different industries in the same enterprise. A further element of this model entails substantial capital reinvestment by the same owner, resulting in diversification of both the social and economic conditions of all the people involved: the entrepreneur and his family, as well as the workers and their families.

The Bloemendal case study consists of an interesting set of factors and reveals different phases in the gradual transformation of business and economic activity by the present owner. Some twelve years ago our interviewee (the present owner) became aware of the changing financial situation of the farm, realising that the farm's (traditional) agricultural activities (i.e. vine and fruit) were no longer economically sustainable. His experience with selling the first portion of land subsequently led him to venture further in this direction by selling another portion of his property. After this he again contracted with the buyer to manage the agricultural activities and ensure that the workforce could stay on in their homes.

Whilst the aforementioned process entailed that the present owner still owned a substantial portion of the original farm and managed two portions of land for different owners, it did also mean, however, that the remainder of his land could not produce a proper economic return. This resulted in a further transformation whereby the owner started to invest in a different industry on his inherited land, entailing a shift towards housing, tourism and hospitality. This is a development that is still in progress and that has led to a substantial transformation of economic and business activities at Bloemendal.

However, our identification of CORCED as second entrepreneurial type also entails that one should take note of neighbouring developments and its impact on Bloemendal. The neighbouring historic wine and fruit farm, Babylonstoorn, was sold at the beginning of 2008 to a prominent businessperson in the media industry. He invested huge amounts of money in developing this farm. Regarding the social aspect of the economy and development, one should take note of the new owner's different philosophy on residency of farm workers. Whilst most landowners and farmers presently want to move workers from their land, the new owner of Babylonstoorn does the opposite, investing in their personal and social development by building new houses on the land he bought from Bloemendal (Swart & Orsmond 2010:907–908).

We base the third model of economic innovation and entrepreneurial investment in the Simondium context on initiatives at two family-owned farms, Le Bonheur and Soeteweide. We described this model as *local entrepreneurial reinvention* (innovation) (LER), based on the way in which the owners expanded on existing activities.

The present owners are second-generation heirs continuing the family business and changing it from primary agriculture to diverse economic activities by combining agriculture with tourism and hospitality. However, they already started to make these changes more than 40 years ago, thereby being early forerunners of the present movement in this region towards combining farming with tourism and hospitality.

The families created job opportunities for subsequent generations by re-inventing economic activities. In both cases, that is, at both farms, the present owners are second-generation heirs, with the third-generation of both families entering the family business at present. It is significant that the academic and professional training of the second-generation and third-generation offspring of the two families are not primarily aimed at agriculture. They are trained for entrepreneurial innovation and business expansion. However, in both cases one son in each family will continue the agricultural activities. Another important aspect is that both families expanded their activities to other geographical areas.

The one family business consists of three separate business units and the enterprise of the other one comprises at least six different business opportunities. In both cases the diverse business enterprises created numerous job opportunities for a wide range of skills and expertise. In both cases, however, only a few families of the workers remain living on the farms, whilst new families are not given houses. This latter development necessarily raises important questions about the forms of socio-economic development that are possible and presently taking place within the context of this model of economic innovation (Swart & Orsmond 2010:908–909).

The fourth type of economic innovation and entrepreneurial investment entails economic and industrial initiatives by



the owners of two fruit-packing stores, DuCap Pitted Fruits and Imibala Orchards, Pty Ltd. We described this type as *new industrial entrepreneurship* (and knowledge or market specialisation) (NIE) based on the way in which the owners built on previous experience and technical knowledge as trained professionals.

The owner of DuCap Pitted Fruits bought the farm Watervliet No. 2 in 2002 with the packing store on it. The economic activities at DuCap Pitted Fruits consist of three units, namely a commercial packing store, commercial cooling facilities, and orchards with pitted fruits in production. The owner's business philosophy is that entrepreneurial involvement in the fruit production, export and marketing value chain should be as comprehensive as possible in order to be economically viable.

Imibala Orchards Pty Ltd. was founded in 1998 when a previous business unit, Amfarms, gave four former managers the opportunity of a 'management buy-out', after the withdrawal of Anglo American described under the aforementioned first model. At present Imibala Orchards consist of two divisions: fruit orchards in production and commercial packing. The fruit orchards forming part of this enterprise are orchards owned previously by Amfarms in the Simondium region, plus some private orchards in other regions. Imibala leases all the orchards on contract from different owners. They bought the packing store in 2003 and created new job opportunities. They employ a large workforce consisting of positions for a manager, supervisors, forklift operators, packers and quality controllers.

Whereas the workers of Imibala Orchards are transported to their workstations and back home by the company, the owner of DuCap Pitted Fruits and his wife decided instead to keep the workers on the farm and become involved with their social development. The owner describes their responsibility towards the people (i.e. the workers) in religious terms as a 'calling'. In all, the packing store employs some 150 workers in a busy season, with some 100 individuals living on the farm in 20 houses owned by DuCap Pitted Fruits.

The owner of DuCap Pitted Fruits maintains that two factors should always be balanced: (1) development (education and training) of people to balance their available money with their standard of living, and (2) the demands of the market regarding the running of a business. He states that his employees have limits to their remuneration, because the specific industry determines the salary scales. The owners of both Imibala Orchards and DuCap Pitted Fruits are nevertheless committed to letting their employees share in the profits and progress of their enterprises.

However, a partner at Imibala Orchards and also one of our interviewees relates a story of disappointment in attempts to empower workers and to let them share in the profits. The directors worked hard on designing an empowerment programme, but it did not work out. For some four years after

the founding of Imibala Orchards a programme was run and a trust established, which through negotiations stipulated in the buy-out contract that the workers would receive 30% profit-sharing. This led to the situation where the workers shared handsomely in the profits in the years of economic growth. In the second year the Board of Directors encouraged the workers to invest in the estate. The Board of Directors tried to convince the workers to utilise the state subsidies to buy land and went through a long process to ensure that the workers could own land for agricultural development and production. However, the initiative broke down during the last stage of the process, mainly because of mistrust amongst the workers of the Board of Directors. Each worker is now responsible for his or her own share of the profit, with little or no long-term vision.

Socio-economic development and transformation of people is indeed a long-term endeavour. The owner of DuCap Pitted Fruits contends that the challenges on the farm Watervliet No. 2 are on the level of moral and ethical principles. He states that money is only an artificial filling in of the cracks and not a restoration of the foundation. The leadership role of the owner is very important for the development of systems on the farm and in the business. The case of Imibala Orchards confirmed that economic empowerment is not a simple matter. The politics behind empowerment are a reality, whilst the complexity of the systems and role-players involved in the processes demands high levels of knowledge (Swart & Orsmond 2010:909–911).

The fifth entrepreneurial investment type consists of socio-economic development initiatives on three different enterprises in the Simondium region. We described this model as *socially conscious* (sensitive) *entrepreneurship* (SCE), because the owners of the farms where the initiatives are undertaken intentionally invested in the socio-economic development of the workers.

We in fact think that this type is exemplary in terms of the need for socio-economic development in the region. However, we are also of the opinion that questions could be raised regarding its sustainability and whether it should be taken as a norm for the agricultural sector. Social programmes of this magnitude might be possible for entrepreneurs with very deep pockets. Yet at the same time these examples represent a strong tendency amongst contemporary entrepreneurs to believe that social consciousness should be part and parcel of economic development and growth.

The farm Fredericksburg forms part of the estate of one of the wealthiest families in South Africa. It is a family known for the humanitarian work done by its members. Part of the socio-economic development initiative managed by this family is discussed here. The specific programme is a housing development near the historic town of Franschoek, some 15 kilometres south-east of Simondium. The family bought land on which a village of hundred houses was built for the farm workers of Fredericksburg and the other two family-owned farms in the region, L'Ormarins and La Motte.





The second initiative in this model is a programme on the farm Graham Beck Wines located on the south-eastern border of Simondium. The owner of the property is a businessperson with interests in, amongst others, the mining industry. The farm has vineyards, a wine cellar with tasting and sales facilities, and a bottling department. The owner and his wife are art connoisseurs and are very enthusiastic about gardening with flowers, trees and shrubs, which has a direct influence on the living and working environment of the workers. The social programme includes a housing development on the farm.

The story of socio-economic development on this farm is of special relevance here. We focused on the building of new houses ten years ago. These houses were supplied with services such as running water and electricity in each home. The supply of electricity made it possible for families to buy electric appliances such as stoves and fridges. They could also buy television sets for their homes. As such, the way that these families developed because of their access to water, electricity and electric appliances, and the new lifestyle resulting from these new opportunities, is an example of what social and personal development entails.

The third initiative in this fifth investment type is that of Professor Mark Solms, a renowned psychoanalyst. Solms bought the historic farm, Delta, with his business partner Richard Astor. Geological excavations on the land initiated by Solms revealed a settlement from the late Stone Age where the Khoi and San people lived. Solms applied his professional knowledge to this venture, aiming at stimulating and developing the inherent potential of the local people and traditional farm workers. Within its agricultural and historic context, this whole project is imaginative and worthy of our full attention. The project combines, exploits and utilises different available sources on the farm today known as Solms Delta. The explicit ideal is to develop the human potential of people involved and to preserve the living traditions of a wonderful part of our country.

According to our interviewee, some 200 people work at Solms Delta, of whom some 150 people are living on the farm. The land constituting the farm is 76 hectares, with only some 18 hectares of vineyard. Activities include wine and fruit farming, a wine cellar, geological excavations, the erection and operation of a museum, a new restaurant and events centre, programmes to develop the musical talent of the farm workers, renovation of the existing houses for farm workers, and educational programmes to develop the children on the farm. One of the important mechanisms put in place by the Board of Trustees to further the development of the workers is the Wyn De Caap Trust. At the time of our interviews 33% of the profits of all wine sales at Delta, together with investments by Mark Solms, went into the Wyn de Caap Trust. A second trust, Delta Trust, focuses on the community outside Solms Delta. This Trust helps local schools with books and also supports initiatives for the awareness and conservation of the environment (Swart & Orsmond 2010:911–913).

We can conclude from this section and the previous section that the Dutch Reformed congregation of Simondium lives in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment and that it is shrinking in terms of numbers. However, the discussion in this section of the new entrepreneurial innovations in the region also gives evidence that new opportunities may also be arising for the congregation to find renewed purpose and identity in its immediate context as God's faithful servant, more so because a large percentage of its remaining members are making a living as entrepreneurs, or are in one way or another part of the current new entrepreneurial dynamic through which business opportunities and livelihood for many people in the area are created. Recognising the fact that substantial theological and practical questions remain about how the congregation and its members should more pertinently and in an even more profound manner answer their calling within this new dynamic, we now attempt in the final section of this article to make a small beginning towards reflecting on these questions.

## Challenging and challenged by the new entrepreneurship

Can a congregation be an entrepreneurial witness in God's kingdom? Can members of the church of Christ, not only of the DRC Simondium, be guided to understand their entrepreneurial skill and ability as God's calling on their life? What should the practical congregational ministry be in this entrepreneurial context?

From our reflections in this article challenges regarding a contextually orientated theological ecclesiology present themselves on at least two levels: (1) the social economy and societal entrepreneurship as research agenda to determine developmental challenges for the church in context; and (2) the congregation as agent of an entrepreneurial ecclesiology. From this identification we propose that there are several basic elements or factors that a contextually orientated practical theological ecclesiology should consider in building the entrepreneurial model in the DRC congregation in Simondium (and, for that matter, in other congregations also dealing with similar contextual challenges). These are briefly discussed in the remaining part of this section and article.

Based on our interest in the social economy as a research agenda (Swart & Orsmond 2010), we take as a basic premise that both social and economic aspects should be part of one discourse on development. The development agenda from the viewpoint of the DRC Simondium as agent in its context presents the role of *religion* and *faith* as a third aspect for the research agenda. Introducing the concept of 'entrepreneurial congregation' for a contextual ecclesiology adds an 'entrepreneurial logic' as a fourth aspect (cf. Moe 2009:7). In turn, this fourfold identification highlights the value of the concept of 'societal entrepreneurship'. Although a concept from secular literature, the shift in emphasis from mere profiteering to contributing to the common good and to value creation indeed creates exciting opportunities from the



perspective of faith and those congregations that seek a new opportunity and identity as entrepreneurial congregations.

A second set of factors constituting a discourse on an entrepreneurial ecclesiology is the category of *agency*. Three levels of agency need to be addressed: (1) congregational agency serving as entrepreneurial church; (2) membership agency in congregation and society – *Christian* entrepreneurs; and (3) pastoral entrepreneurial agency – a religious leader in an entrepreneurial congregation.

From our interviews in Simondium we became aware of the complexity of the developmental challenges for this region and its interaction with the global world. Without economic growth and entrepreneurial investment, little sustainable social and economic development can be expected. However, if the social dimension of economy and business is neglected, then the moral soul is taken from the economy and business life. In that case there will be little hope left for sustainable social transformation and a meaningful life. As such, it might be that the DRC Simondium can play its role precisely on the level of morals, ethics and values. Entrepreneurial members of congregations can be guided both by biblical teaching (cf. Van Groningen 2005c:73–95) and the best that is offered in the field of societal entrepreneurship to understand their business and economic activity as their calling and the vehicle God is using for developing the life of people and communities. In our opinion, at least two of the entrepreneurial types discussed earlier can help the church to understand and revisit the existing moral fibre of its entrepreneurial membership.

Approaching a practical theological ecclesiology from an entrepreneurial position, a world of opportunities and creativity opens up. It is clear, also in the agricultural sector, that business people and entrepreneurs have been compelled by economic and market factors over centuries to adapt to challenges and to change the line of production according to the needs, tastes and values of the market and consumers.

It seems as though the remaining members of the DRC Simondium are aware of changing contexts and shrinking markets as described in the PCN's model of shrinking congregations. That they could adapt to new global tendencies and challenges in the market economy reveal positive opportunities in the shrinking situation. Elements of the required 'entrepreneurial logic' are already present. But how can this ability be translated into a contextual ecclesiology and faith calling?

Our case study material gives the impression that the entrepreneurs in the Simondium region are quite creative and innovative. It is also our impression that the entrepreneurs are facing their own struggle to survive economically. The impression is that the socio-economic development of the workers is not always a priority when they work on new business plans. Many entrepreneurs work to leave a legacy for their own families and children. Can the church with its

focus on faith and religion influence this economic approach by opening up an understanding of entrepreneurial activity as a theological and social category in which all people and the whole of society are in view – akin to the notion of societal entrepreneurship and a new-found embracement of its identity as God's missionary agent?

From our case study material it is evident that lifestyle transformation and socio-economic development that go with new initiatives are directly linked to the kind of enterprise the investor is creating. This means that one should ask questions about the different social and economic development programmes that are part of specific economic innovations. Since the entrepreneur decides on the form of social and economic development that will suit a specific economic activity and the kind of community to be formed, it should be the task of the entrepreneurial congregation to focus on the influence and responsibility of its members in creating community and society.

It is also evident from our case study material that economic transformation in this region determines the lifestyle, job opportunities and living conditions of local people and farm workers. Changing economic activities transform industrial activity and technology, with the concomitant skills and knowledge. The social conditions of traditional farm workers and their families are directly linked to their ability to adapt to these transformational changes, as well as to the deliberate intention of entrepreneurs to invest in their training and equipment for the new economy and industry. Indeed, can the entrepreneurial congregation make a contribution here towards a greater societal entrepreneurial logic and orientation?

One must appreciate the fundamental role of entrepreneurs in creating wealth and sustainable growth of the economy in any local community, country and the world. Without the financial and technological input from business people and entrepreneurs, the whole discourse on socio-economic development would be different. But does the church concur with this view? How does this belief contribute to a practical ecclesiology for an entrepreneurial congregation? Or more explicitly put, how does such an ecclesiological orientation influence neo-liberal economic values to make a real contribution towards more inclusive and sustainable communities?

A so-called entrepreneurial logic also challenges our understanding of the role and focus of the pastor of an entrepreneurial congregation in a changing context. What would an 'entrepreneurial pastor' be? In our discourse on a contextually orientated practical theological ecclesiology we shall have to determine what skills and knowledge a pastor would need in such a context and congregation in order to translate the biblical message and the theological teaching of the church into practical knowledge for the congregation's entrepreneurial members. The discourse will also have to incorporate the concept of 'faith entrepreneurship' and



determine what kind of initiatives will be acceptable as entrepreneurial activities for an ordained minister. The concept 'entrepreneurial pastor' should recognise the expectations of society, faith communities and ministers regarding the role of pastors in entrepreneurial contexts.

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## Authors' contributions

I.S. and E.O. were both responsible for planning and conceptualising the structure, title and thematic focus of the article. I.S. and E.O. were equally involved in the case study and literature research that was undertaken. E.O. prepared an initial draft and I.S. refined and rewrote parts of the article, notably the section on 'Entering the field'. I.S. was responsible for the preparation for submission and revision of the article.

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