Session 07.03 - The crossing: from here to there

Lab: Mission Paradigms · Hope Lab 3 — The crossing: from here to there
Date: 8 October 2026
Facilitator: Jan Wessels
Contributors: Jiska Chin-A-Teh · Anton Ponomarev · Dr Usha Reifsnider
Approximate number of participants: 28

1. Purpose of today's session

What should today's session achieve?

- Close the series by learning how to act faithfully in the space between declining older models and emerging new ones — Horizon 2, the crossing.
- Introduce and apply a practical framework for testing whether emerging initiatives genuinely shift power, treat people as co-participants, strengthen the church's minority witness, and keep identity rooted in Christ.
- Move the group from shared conviction to concrete commitments.

2. Starting point

What question, input or previous result did the group begin with?

- The two previous sessions: HopeLab 1 (what is passing) and HopeLab 2 (the emergent theologies being born).
- The overarching question of the series: faithful, hopeful evangelical witness in a Europe where evangelicals are a minority within a minority — without becoming either a chaplaincy for cultural fear or a denial of real loss.
- Input: the four evaluative tests (power, co-participation, minority vocation, allegiance), and the "beautiful chaos" of the Horizon 2 in-between.

3. Key insights

- Horizon 2 needs faithful discernment: the in-between space where older models weaken and new forms emerge; discernment matters more than preserving existing structures.
- "Beautiful chaos" is unavoidable: rapid change is the environment we now work in, not a temporary disruption — it demands adaptive structures, not defensive maintenance.

- Listening is a core leadership discipline: listening to God, to one another, and to voices unlike our own — slow, costly, and often resisted by efficiency-driven cultures.
- Shared leadership is more credible now: devolved, shared leadership is a better fit than strong single-leader models, because complex change needs communal discernment and broader participation.
- Representation alone does not shift power: adding diverse voices to boards and structures is insufficient when budgets, gatekeeping and decision-making stay unchanged.

4. Challenges identified

- Professionalisation can narrow mission instincts — growing organisational professionalism can move power upward, distance agencies from the church, and make listening harder even as accountability improves.
- Treating "the church" as uniform — the language hides deep differences; a more polyphonic and diverse understanding is needed.
- Migrant voices reduced to assimilation — emerging movements and theologies depend on hearing migrants and marginalised communities on their own terms, not absorbing them into dominant norms.
- Efficiency-driven cultures that resist the slow, costly work of listening.
- Imported vision — mission vision brought in from outside rather than discerned together and confirmed in community.

5. Ideas and possible solutions

- Test emerging initiatives against the four questions: do they redistribute power, treat people as co-participants rather than metrics, strengthen the church's minority vocation, and keep allegiance centred on Christ rather than nation or status?
- Build resilience through leaders' inner work — self-awareness, integrity, and risk-taking with accountability.
- Practise mutuality that bears real fruit — trust, co-creation, vulnerability and consistent local ownership rather than superficial fellowship.
- Lead with vulnerability — admit you do not have the answers, leave ego behind, and invite others into forming the vision rather than selling pre-packaged solutions.
- Discern vision collectively and confirm it in community, rather than importing it.

6. Examples, projects and useful resources

- Organisation / project: The four tests (Mission Paradigms)
  - What can be learned: A practical tool for sorting genuine renewal (H2+) from the old system in new clothes (H2−): power, utility, liminality, allegiance.
  - Contact or link: "Four Tests" A5 card (EEA / Mission Paradigms)
- Organisation / project: Three Horizons framework (Bill Sharpe / International Futures Forum)
  - What can be learned: Holding decline and emergence together, and locating the contested middle where renewal is tested.
  - Contact or link: Triarchy Press, 2013 (2nd ed. 2020)
- Organisation / project: Faith2Share · EEA One People Network · Lausanne Europe
  - What can be learned: Network partners for collaboration that moves beyond token inclusion toward trust, mutuality and local ownership.
  - Contact or link: faith2share.net · EEA

7. Opportunities for European collaboration

- Partnership that produces real fruit — trust, co-creation and local ownership — across EEA and Faith2Share networks.
- Devolved, shared leadership across alliances, rather than single strong-leader models.
- Shared discernment on how agency, money and legitimacy flow between global, regional and national bodies.
- Platforming migrant and marginalised voices on their own terms across European networks.

8. Decisions and points of agreement

These are the shared convictions that emerged:

- The present moment is an in-between (Horizon 2) that requires discernment, not defensive maintenance.
- Emerging initiatives should be tested by the four questions (power, co-participation, minority vocation, allegiance).
- Representation without redistributed power is insufficient.
- Vision must be discerned collectively and confirmed in community, not imported.

9. Open questions or different perspectives

- How do we build adaptive structures without losing accountability?
- How do we resist professionalisation moving power upward and away from the?
- How do we hear migrant and marginalised voices on their own terms, rather than through assimilation?
- Which emerging initiatives in our own networks are genuinely H2+, and which are H2−?