


Are we there yet? Probing the notion of contextualising practical theology and pastoral care in a post COVID-19 glocal African context

**Author:**Alfred R. Brunsdon¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Alfred Brunsdon,
Alfred.Brunsdon@nwu.ac.za

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The article is a concise rendition of the author's inaugural lecture and tracks his academic journey with the contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care in an African context. It latches onto the inter-contextual dialogue between Western and African notions of practical theology and pastoral care, and positions it in a post coronavirus disease (COVID-19) glocal African context. It is argued that the post COVID-19 era signalled significant changes that will influence the path of future endeavours in the subject field, especially when it strives to be relevant in both the local and global contexts. A preliminary agenda for future deliberations is presented which focusses on the consequences of intensified pre-COVID-19 socio-economic realities, the implications of the disruption of traditional religious culture, and post COVID-19 challenges to higher education. The article concludes that the hallmark of contextualised practical theology and pastoral care in the African context is to be sought in being mindful of the challenges of the immediate local context as well as that of the global context.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: By engaging a post COVID-19 glocal African context from a practical theological and pastoral stance, the research engages social, economic and educational sciences to come to its findings. The resultant view that post COVID-19 practical theology and pastoral care should be mindful of both local and global contexts has implications for both academic practical theology and theological higher education.

Keywords: practical theology; pastoral care; post COVID-19 era; glocal African context; contextualisation.

Introduction

This article is offered as a revised and concise version of my inaugural lecture that was presented on the Mahikeng-campus of the North-West University on 15 October 2022. According to Chikere (2020:22), inaugural lectures provide academics the opportunity to either showcase the work of their faculty or institution, or their research on a current topic, or to provide an overview of past, present, and future imagined academic work in teaching and learning, and research. As framework for my inaugural lecture, I have chosen the last option to introduce my academic focus as it has evolved over the last decade as scholar in the field of practical theology and pastoral care.

The resultant article thus departs from a reflective stance by tracing and documenting my academic journey with the contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care in the African context, probing to what degree I have succeeded in this quest up until this point. Because of the reflective framework of inaugural lectures (cf. Chikere 2020:22), the article draws to a large extent on my own research findings and personal academic experiences until now. The overarching aim is not only to probe to what degree I succeeded in contextualising practical theology and pastoral care in an African context, but to frame it in a post coronavirus disease (COVID-19) glocal African context, to situate my academic work in a particular time frame. This creates an opportunity to articulate some of the challenges I envisage for the foreseeable future that will require my further academic attention.

In order to reach this aim, the first part of the article is dedicated to my personal academic narrative in search of a paradigm for doing practical theology as white male in the African context against the background of the decolonisation project. It narrates how I arrived at what is labelled as a 'selfless' approach to practical theology that provided me with an ethical framework for contributing to this field. It explains that a selfless approach to practical theology generates an own agenda in which restorative decolonisation and restorative curriculum development assume important positions.

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Against this background, the second part of the article addresses the main question of the reflection: Are we there yet? In expounding on the rhetorical nature of the question, the notion of the African context is engaged, showing that the multi-dimensional nature of what we perceive as the African context, prohibits a static practical theology and pastoral care. Hence, it is argued that we are not there yet; but that we rather remain underway in our quest for contextualisation.

The third section of the article raises the pivotal question of what the journey ahead will look like. In addressing this question, two concepts embedded in the title of the article are discussed that serve as qualifiers of the current African context, namely the constructs: post COVID-19 and 'glocal'. With regard to the notion of a post COVID-19 Africa, it is argued that COVID-19 impacted on the African context in unique ways rendering at least three agenda points for further deliberation: the consequences of intensified pre-COVID-19 socio-economic realities, the implications of the disruption of traditional religious culture, and post COVID-19 challenges to higher education. With regard to the notion of 'glocal', which is a combination of local and global contexts, it is argued that COVID-19 reminded us of our interrelated existence and the fact that we cannot flourish in isolation. This in fact calls for a practical theology and pastoral care that is not only mindful of Africa, but of the global village it forms part of.

The contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care within an African context

My journey with the contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care within an African context emerged from my teaching experiences with predominantly African students since 2012.

For most researchers, the appointment as full-time academic denotes an important transition, namely, to merge the role of teacher into your identity as researcher. I soon learned that there is quite a difference between 'writing' practical theology and pastoral care and teaching it, thereby sharing theory for practice. By sharing theory for practice, we are putting it in the hands of others who will put it to the test in real contexts. It was in the classroom that I started to learn more about current contexts from a host of inquiring African minds. I soon realised that while I may be teaching sound academic practical theology, it might not be contextually relevant. Put in simple terms, the theory presented did not fit the context(s) in which students were going to apply this knowledge, because, as white South African male, I was firmly rooted in a western practical theological paradigm, which I was trying to uncritically apply in the South African context.

In this regard, I was reminded of the findings of Prof. Hennie Pieterse, who in 1990 empirically inquired into whether a unique South African practical theological discourse was discernible at the time. In analysing South African publications in the field, he found that nearly 90% of works quoted by South

African practical theologians were from its European and American counterparts (Pieterse 1990:253). The significance of this finding two decades later was that South African practical theology did not, after more than a century and on the verge of a new dispensation, have a unique South African or authentic African voice. Consequently, other scholars such as Jan De Jongh van Arkel (1995), John S. Pobee (1989) and Gordon Dames (2014) were continually advocating for a more contextually appropriate practical theology and pastoral care.

For myself, these became important clues in the development of a personal focus. Hence, my research interest started to develop in two broad directions: firstly, to reimagine academic practical theology in an African context, and secondly to develop a pastoral focus that was faithful to the context of the students I was teaching.

In a certain sense, the latter was a lesser challenge as identifying pastoral voids in the African context did not prove difficult. Issues such as ritual male circumcision (cf. Brunsdon 2016), complicated grief (cf. Brunsdon 2019a), palliative pastoral care (cf. Brunsdon 2019b), pastoral anthropology (cf. Brunsdon 2019c), and human displacement (cf. Brunsdon 2020a, 2020b; Brunsdon & Magezi 2020) in the African context all begged further scholarly consideration and became themes which I engaged with. Many other issues remain on the agenda, such as enduring poverty, issues of health, and gender-based violence.

The former, however, to reimagine practical theology in an African context, posed more nuanced difficulties. Two of the main challenges related to finding a suitable paradigm to carry such reimagining forward and the fact that I was entering the discourse at the height of the decolonisation project as European (white male) academic.

Pertaining to the first, seeking a suitable paradigm to guide the reimagining of practical theology in an African context, uncovered several possibilities. In a book chapter, entitled 'Towards a pastoral care for Africa: Some practical theological considerations for a contextual approach' Brunsdon (2017a), I critically engaged several paradigms introduced by African scholars such as Yusufu Turaki, Emmanuel Lartey, Maaki Masango and Gordon Dames. This included indigenisation, Africanisation, an intercultural approach, post-colonisation, and a so-called, contextual transformative approach.

All of these paradigms evolved as 'constructive critiques' of what Lartey (2013:25) calls 'received theologies' that were imposed upon the continent during the colonial era, hampering the development of an authentic African (practical) theology. Viewed critically, such approaches pose the danger of resulting in reductionist or exclusive expressions of practical theology and pastoral care where culture and cultural beliefs assume a normative position, excluding non-adherents to the African culture.

In light of this, the notion of ‘contextualisation’ as presented by Yusufu Turaki (1999) was to my mind a significant approach. ‘This approach is not, in the first place, concerned with culture or the eradication of some form of political-historical deficit, but with making theology itself relevant within a certain context’ (Brunsdon 2017a:115). Contextualisation is thus primarily interested in theological relevance. Hence, Turaki (1999:20) states, ‘[c]ontextualisation as a tool of doing theology in Africa focuses principally on making the essence of Christianity relevant and understood within context’.

I, therefore, chose this paradigm to forward my academic focus as contextualisation is about an approach to doing practical theology to arrive at relevant pastoral care approaches. It is not contextual theology in the traditional sense of the word, but about mindful theological interaction with a particular context.

Of course, all paradigms have both merits and limits, least of which the academics who choose to work with them. In this area, a second, more personal, challenge arose.

At the same time that my academic focus settled on the contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care, the decolonisation campaign in higher education came to the fore via the ‘#must-fall movement’ that has swept the higher education sector since 2015. At the heart of this movement was the deep-rooted frustration about the slow pace of transformation in higher education. This led to widespread violent protest action that also erupted on the campus where I teach. While there was much academic contemplation about the meaning and reasons for this movement, one of the most poignant statements was made by Savo Heleta (2016) who said: ‘The so-called “#must-fall” movement initially arose with an aim to dismantle the enduring domination by white, male, Western, capitalist, heterosexual, European worldviews in higher education’. Understandably, this caused severe inner conflict for myself as I fitted Heleta’s statement accurately. The personal subtext being: Do I have anything to contribute? Would all of my academic offerings not be tainted by my European identity to the point that it would simply not be credible in an African context?

Even though this was a very personal question, it resonated well with Thomas Groome’s (1980, 1991) notion about the dynamic interplay between subjectivity and knowledge, and the need to recognise it when we produce academic work. Especially when we share it with others, albeit through publication or by means of teaching (Beaudoin 2005:127). A process, more commonly known as reflexivity: the purposeful process through which we recognise, interrogate, and declare our bias in academic work. Because, as Tom Beaudoin (2005:130) states: ‘how and what we know is rooted in who and where we are’.

Consequently, I embarked on a personal journey of academic reflection where I interrogated my academic situatedness and positionality or habitus as a precursor to future efforts at contextualisation. During this time, I came across the work of

other contemporaries, such as Jaco Dreyer (2016) and Tom Beaudoin (2016) who also reflected about the question of habitus. It was especially Dreyer’s reflection which guided my thinking. Under the theme of ‘Conundrums in Practical theology’ (Dreyer 2016:90–106), he argues that while reflexivity offers the vehicle to articulate our academic biases, reflexivity in itself is a conundrum. ‘The conundrum of reflexivity lies in the lack of a basis on which to decide whether our reflexive efforts are biased or not, whether they are true or false’ (Dreyer 2016:105). Thus, while reflexivity sensitises the scientist to their biases, it is not to say that it will rid them of it.

One way of mitigating this is to commit to an ethical framework for doing practical theology. In this respect, Dreyer (2016:105) proposes the idea of ‘attestation’, which he borrows from Paul Ricoeur. Attestation refers to the type of certainty from which we scientifically depart. It is a ‘hermeneutics of the self that does not exalt the subject nor humiliates it’ (Dreyer 2016:105). It includes the ‘other’ without excluding the ‘self’. It is thus ‘the kind of certainty of a self that recognizes its limitations and fallibility, but that acts with conscience and integrity’ (Dreyer 2016:106).

On the back of this notion of an ethical approach to academic work, I published an article in *HTS Theological Studies* in 2019, titled ‘“Selfishly backward” or “selflessly” forward?: A white male’s insider perspective on a challenge and opportunity of decolonisation for practical theology in the South African context’. For me, this was a benchmark publication in plotting the coordinates for future contributions to the contextualisation project against the backdrop of the decolonisation discourse. On the one hand, it was within Ricoeur’s framework of attestation of an academic declaration of where I positioned myself. On the other hand, it was about proposing an ethical framework for doing practical theology as white male in an African context and in the *zeitgeist* of decolonisation.

I opted for the framework of what I termed ‘selfless’ practical theology versus a ‘selfish’ approach (Brunsdon 2019d:6). Whereas ‘selfish’ practical theology would entail remaining within the parameters of a Western practical theology, ‘selfless’ practical theology is intent on transcending the individual, historic and academic situatedness with a view to contextual appropriateness. As I, through a process of reflexivity, recognised that my habitus is by default Western.

In determining a framework for my imagined ‘selfless’ approach, I found the thinking of Portuguese social theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos helpful. Santos labels historic Western knowledge as ‘abyssal thinking’ that created abyssal lines between itself and other forms of knowledge (Santos 2007). In a post-colonial framework, and to my own understanding, ‘abyssal thinking’ is not about the intentional discreditation of another knowledge, but rather being oblivious to it. Historically, this caused academics to become oblivious to other versions of knowledge, rendering it ‘non-existent’ (cf. Santos 2007:45). By mindfully ascribing to a

'selfless' framework entails the broadening of knowledge horizons in the context of democracy and multicultural coexistence. This, according to Santos (2007), resembles 'post-abysal thinking' – or seeing knowledge as an ecology, or even, inter-knowledge.

However, for theologians, an inter-knowledge dialogue begs further deliberation as it brings to the fore the underlying issue of epistemology. The question it begs from theology is from which wells do we drink to generate new knowledge? What, ultimately, determines our answers? For practical theologians in the Reformed tradition, like myself, this concern is regarded as paramount and charges you to position yourself by articulating how the Word of God is normative in teaching and research.

This soon sensitised me to what I since referred to in my work as the innate tension of practical theology and pastoral care (cf. Brunson 2014) as both perpetually operate within the dynamic tension field created between revelation and experience or as Zoë Bennet (2013) in *Using the Bible in practical theology* says, between the 'text of the Bible' and 'the text of life'.

For this reason, I not only critically interrogated my own academic habitus, but also existing African notions of practical theology, in order to determine epistemological points of departure for inter-dialogue. Here, to mention one, the seminal work of Emmanuel Lartey, especially his 2013 book *Postcolonializing God: An African practical theology*, was significant, as it painted a vivid picture of what he construed as an authentic African practical theology imagined through the lens of decolonisation. One of the important aspects he reminded of is the interrelatedness of the African spiritual heritage and culture – and subsequent theologies.

This honest portrayal of Lartey's notion of African practical theology was helpful in many ways. For one, it affirmed that African notions of practical theology are deeply immersed in culture, and more importantly, in belief and knowledge systems that transcend traditional Christian texts in order to express itself in worship, teaching and pastoral care (cf. Brunson 2017b).

In terms of the contextualisation ideal, this is not very encouraging, because epistemologically African and Western notions of practical theology then seemingly find themselves at different ends of the theological spectrum. Does this then mean that African and Western notions of practical theology find themselves outside of hearing range (cf. Brunson 2017b), and that contextualisation is an unattainable ideal or even a conundrum in itself?

My contention is that this is not the case, as several paradigms have evolved in practical theology that encourage such inter-epistemological dialogues. Without discussing them in any depth, two examples can be mentioned.

Probably most well-known to South African practical theologians is Julian Müller's (2011:2) notion of post-foundational practical theology (or transversal rationality) which is aimed at a 'responsible and workable interface between disciplines and contexts' (Müller 2011:3). Transversal rationality transcends mere conversation in order to facilitate authentic understanding of the other.

Another example relates to Esther Acolatse's (2014) notion of a pastoral hermeneutic of primal speech which draws on Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger's (1995) notion of a 'bilingual' approach (Acolatse 2014:211). This positions pastoral theologians to engage other disciplines much like a bilingual speaker who is able to switch between two languages without confusing the two. Acolatse (2014:214) refers to this as the 'expansive nature of theology' that allows for hospitable encounters with other cultures.

From this premise, contextualisation becomes feasible and endows the practical theologian with the responsibility to look beyond his or her own discipline and culture in search of a true inter-contextual dialogue.

Placed in the ethical framework of a 'selfless' practical theology, I argue that two important opportunities arise: (1) to reframe traditional perceptions of decolonisation, and (2) to rethink theological training and curriculum development in the South African context.

Pertaining to decolonisation, it is evident that it historically stalled in either a retributive or a romantic approach (cf. Brunson 2019d: 7). In a retributive approach, decolonisation became focussed on erasing the past. In a romantic approach, it focussed on romantic ideals of Africa, on what could have been without the Western world and globalisation.

A 'selfless' approach creates room for what can be termed as 'restorative decolonisation' – to restore what has been suppressed in the past and to communally reincarnate it to the benefit of a radically changed context. In such an approach, knowledge is embraced as an ecology. This implies (Brunson 2019d):

[R]eaching out to one another as contemporary partners, recognising African beliefs and practices as forms of knowledge that transcend scientific boundaries and respect the intersection between knowledge and ignorance, by not unlearning what I know, but learning from others what I am yet to know. (p. 7)

Inevitably, 'selfless' practical theology also speaks to theological education, specifically curriculum development in the field of practical theology and theology as a whole. Such curriculum development has to be critically sensitive about the ways that Western epistemologies are resilient, and even, remain exclusive in education (cf. Nyamnjoh 2012). Rather, curriculum development from the stance of a 'selfless' practical theology should strive to reflect local knowledge to address current contextual realities within a global context.

To a large extent, then, a 'selfless' practical theology generates an own agenda in which restorative decolonisation and restorative curriculum development assume pivotal positions.

Are we there yet?

With this in mind, one can now attempt to answer the somewhat, anecdotally formulated question this article is posing: Are we there yet? Can practical theology in South Africa claim that it is suitably contextualised within a post COVID-19 glocal African context? More aptly formulated in a personal context: Am I there yet? Is my academic practical theology suitably contextualised within a post COVID-19 glocal African context?

This question is, at best, a rhetorical one. Its rhetorical nature partially resides in the fact that the very nature of all contexts is fluid, complex and ever-changing, rendering contextualisation, in principle, a journey without an end. As I have discovered over the last decade, the so-called African context is arguably one of the best examples of the complexity of contexts. However hard we try to tie Africa down to a particular definition, we remain challenged by the notion.

Focussing on the geographic space of what we call the African continent, we are challenged by many variables. Ethnically, the continent is home to a number of different groups. Spiritually, it is home to as many variants of spirituality and religions. Culturally, it is very complex. Through the ever-growing dilemma of human displacement all of these variables become more eminent.

Therefore, academics have reverted to more flexible descriptors of the concept. Daniël Louw (2008), for example, suggests that the African context should rather be regarded as a philosophical concept. From this vantage point, the African context denotes the 'unique contribution of the rich diversity of modes of being in Africa to a global world' (Louw 2008:147).

Louw also suggests that the African context can be seen as a spiritual category, denoting 'a unique approach to life that differs from the analytical approach emanating from Western thinking and Hellenism' (Louw 2008:147).

In my own, more *pragmatic* view, an African context can also refer to any context that is democratically constituted by the Africans living there (cf. Brunson 2017a), transcending the idea that only the African continent can represent the African context. In modern diaspora then, Africa contexts can be found in London in the United Kingdom, New York in the United States of America, or Johannesburg in South Africa.

This multi-dimensional nature of a context and, in particular, what we today perceive as the African context, renders a simple definition impossible, and consequently all attempts to arrive at a static practical theology and pastoral care for Africa, not feasible. Hence, to answer the question posed here: we are not there yet, we remain underway – and so do I.

This is however not to say that an African context is non-descript, that there are no communal characteristics and features that are typically African. Africa is, for example, characterised by enduring challenges like political instability, the search for identity, poverty, corruption, human displacement, pandemics of different nature, a lack of safety and a host of others that call for better understanding and, above all, effective ways of making the gospel relevant. This compels us to forward the journey of contextualising practical theology and pastoral care in this shifting context.

A future agenda for the contextualisation of practical theology and pastoral care

This raises the pivotal question of what the journey ahead will look like. Put differently: What will be important on the infinite journey ahead? Pertaining to myself and the contemplation of a future academic agenda, it seems that at least two factors are of critical importance. Subsequently, two concepts are embedded in the title of this article that allude to foci in my future academic journey. They also serve as qualifiers of the current African context, the constructs: post COVID-19 era and 'glocal'.

To say something meaningful about the post COVID-19 reality in a few paragraphs, is not possible. The question at hand, however, is what this reality begs from academic practical theology in an African context going forward? Specifically thinking from an African perspective, it seems important to acknowledge that there will at least be qualitative differences in terms of both our assessments of what post COVID-19 realities mean and what it puts on the agenda in terms of further research. In other words, in the African context, COVID-19 and the subsequent post COVID-19 era gained unique meanings of which we should be mindful.

To illustrate this, it is for this very reason I opt for the specific denomination of a 'post COVID-19 Africa' rather than the more generic 'post-pandemic Africa'. As prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa was battered by an array of epidemics and pandemics. Hence when COVID-19 struck, it was yet another pandemic. In our assessments of its meaning, we consequently need to be specific of the unique challenges it added to an existing agenda in a context that was already plagued with diseases such as HIV, AIDS, cholera, Ebola, tuberculosis, malaria, yellow fever, and measles, to name a few (cf. Dirk 2021; Echenberg 2011; Mubiala 2022).

In light of this, one can most probably identify many challenges that demand the attention of practical theology and pastoral care post COVID-19. Following my existing focus, I however propose that at least three agenda points beg the attention of a post COVID-19 Africa focus:

- The consequences of intensified pre-COVID-19 socio-economic realities.
- Implications of the disruption of traditional religious culture.
- Post COVID-19 challenges to higher education.

In terms of the consequences of intensified pre-COVID-19 socio-economic realities, it must be remembered that poverty is a historic feature of Africa – Africa often being perceived as the global benchmark for the meaning of poverty. Therefore, most conceptualisations of poverty in Africa are qualified in terms of its persistent nature (cf. Barret, Carter & Little 2013). In the years preceding COVID-19, however, there were optimistic notions of anticipated long-term downward trends in poverty. In fact, in March 2019, the Brookings Institute¹ headlined an article by Hamel, Tong and Hofer (2019) claiming that ‘Poverty in Africa is now falling’.

However, COVID-19 put a halt to these projections as the Institute for Security Studies reported in July of 2022 that the pandemic caused at least 30 million more Africans to fall prey to extreme poverty, making the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1, to eradicate poverty for 97% of the African population by 2030, not attainable.

The implications for practical theology and seeking appropriate pastoral responses are obvious and do not need further elaboration, except to say that COVID-19 rendered it an even more critical matter than before (cf. Dirk 2021:4).

The COVID-19 pandemic did not only plunge Africa into deeper material poverty, but also disrupted its rich religious culture. One of the universal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was the abrupt banning of all social gatherings, including gatherings of a religious nature, such as public worship and funerals. Viewed through a pastoral lens, these disruptions not only had a severe spiritual impact at the time (cf. Brunsdon 2021a), but also inflicted spiritual and psychological wounds that are yet to surface during the post COVID-19 era. In African contexts, funeral rituals, for example, are of communal and individual significance, and pivotal in the healing of grief as these rituals unfold over the span of time addressing important milestones in the grieving process (Choabi 2016:25). The sudden loss of meaning-making rituals such as these most certainly produced pastoral voids, working towards what Leonard Sweet (2021:1) describes as a ‘pandemic-pandemonium’ state, rather than simply a post-pandemic era, creating a further practical theological and pastoral niche in our onward journey.

In terms of academic practical theology in post COVID-19 Africa, theological higher education also finds a place on this agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted on higher education in multiple ways. Academics can all bear testimony to the challenges that emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL) brought us up against. In the post COVID-19 era, there seems to be consensus that the higher education sector must be urgently making sense of the impact of the pandemic and the most meaningful way forward (cf. Du Plessis et al. 2022; Habib, Phakeng & Kupe 2020).

¹The Brookings Institution is a non-profit public policy organisation based in Washington, DC. ‘Our mission is to conduct in-depth research that leads to new ideas for solving problems facing society at the local, national and global level.’ (see <https://www.brookings.edu/about-us/>)

However, a post COVID-19 African engagement with theological higher education is complex. Much like the first agenda point that identified that pre-COVID-19 socio-economic realities were intensified by the pandemic, the same is true about historical deficits in African higher education as pointed out by scholars such as Teferra (2021) and Moodley (2022), but now also with a post COVID-19 patina.

What is more, is that theological higher education in Africa and around the globe, was facing a loss of interest in theology as a career path pre-COVID-19. Traditional mainstream churches are shrinking – and together with it their ability to sustain pastors financially. In the majority world, where the cost of higher education is not accessible to most individuals, all these factors will post COVID-19 further conflate into diminishing student numbers. Inevitably, theological higher education will post COVID-19 not be afforded the luxury of only focussing on academic content, but face challenges such as accessibility, affordability, sustainability, and how to reach the growing numbers of lay ministers serving the growing church of the global South without formal education (cf. Brunsdon 2021b).

This brings me to the concluding remark of this article, which pertains to the particular lens I propose for attending to these agenda points in a post COVID-19 African context.

In a certain sense, this lens is also indicative of a slight change in my own thinking on the matter thus far. For, when I started the contextualisation journey, I tended to think about Africa in isolation. This is evident in the pastoral challenges I investigated in research articles which were mostly tilted towards unique issues facing the immediate African context.

If COVID-19, however, reminded us of something, it is that we are sharing the same global village. Collective efforts at finding solutions and generating innovative knowledge are of greater value when they work towards the greater and common good.

In light of this, I intend to further my contributions to practical theology and pastoral care with a ‘glocal’ view on the post COVID-19 African context, in search of the nexus between the local and the global. For this is the intention of a glocal view: ‘to bring together both local and global viewpoints’ (Mampane, Omidire & Aluko 2018:2) to the benefit of both.

As such it offers a way out of isolated thinking that imagines an Africa for the sake of itself and it resonates more positively with my proposed framework of a ‘selfless’ practical theology as well as the notion of restorative decolonisation unpacked in this lecture.

It furthermore accentuates the reciprocal ideal of authentic African practical theology in the framework of a universal *ubuntu*: that we ought to exist through one another – that

what we say 'here', must also resonate 'there', where the 'others' are. In institutional terms, a glocal lens aims to embrace internationalisation and partnerships to the benefit of the contextualisation ideal.

To this end, I would like to conclude with a cue from the legacy of the late Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose theological work emphasised three principles, and which, to my mind, encapsulates the ideal of contextualising practical theology and pastoral care in a post COVID-19 glocal African context as follows²:

- *being there with and for others*
- *being mindful of the challenges of the immediate (local), complex context (as well as that of) – the world (global) (authors own insertions)*
- *and the need for good theology which translates into a well informed and responsible response to public discourses and life.*

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A.R.B. is the sole author of this research article.

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Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author, and the publisher.

²See Botha's (2007) discussion on the theology of Bonhoeffer in honour of the work of Dirkie Smit.

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