Deacon as model of ministry within urban locations

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Abstract

This article will investigate the deacon as minister with liturgical and social service responsibilities as interlocuter of more effective urbanisation. We will draw from the Early Church's diaconal ministry descriptions. This elicits the question, what can the interactionist ministry of the deacon contribute to effective ministry in times of crisis? On the assumption that the deacon is both involved in the sacramental ministry of the liturgy of the Last Supper and provider of social services, what kind of diaconal ministry is suited for urbanisation and the subsequent crisis such as the displacement of people and redefining of spaces? While we used the ecumenical church as the conception of church, the Anglican church will be used as a springboard to embed the ministry of the deacon in a concrete and particular context. After a conceptual analysis of the main terminologies and its effects on the development of notions of the deaconate, we will contend that the deacon as interlocuter contributes to a broader model of urbanization. The intersection between spiritual (liturgy) and social responsibility (material). The different communities will be used to indicate markers from the ministry of the diaconate for a more effective ministry in urban contexts.

Introduction

The Anglican Church of Southern Africa has in recent times revived the ministry of the deacon. More prominent space has been given to diaconal ministry within the three-fold ministry of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. Since the Lambeth Conference resolution of 1968, the deacon has become more than "an inferior office" (Lambeth Conference 1968). This article will investigate the deacon as minister with liturgical and social service responsibilities as interlocuter of more effective urbanisation. We will draw from the Early Church's diaconal ministry approaches. The Early Church combined liturgical ministry with social responsibilities without neglecting either of the ministries. This elicits the question, what can the interactionist ministry of the deacon contribute to effective ministry in times of crisis? On the assumption that the deacon is involved in both the sacramental ministry of the liturgy of the Last Supper and provision of social services, what kind of diaconal ministry is suited for urbanisation and the subsequent crisis such as the displacement of people and redefining of spaces? To understand the main arguments and perspectives of the two modes of diaconal ministry – liturgy and service – we will conduct a literature review, paying special attention to the ecumenical church. The Anglican Church will be used as a springboard to embed the ministry of the deacon in a concrete and particular context. We will also do a conceptual analysis of the main terminologies and its effects on the development of notions of the deaconate. Finally, we will suggest the deacon as interlocuter within two interactionist phenomena. The intersection between spiritual (liturgy) and social responsibility (material) and the different communities will be used to indicate markers from the ministry of the diaconate for a more effective ministry in urban contexts.

A community-oriented approach to urbanization with the deacon as interlocutor will have the following characteristics. The community assumes that tradition as a fluid and not static phenomenon takes seriously the history of the community. The particularity of the community includes the context and how current environment impacts of the wellbeing of the community. This emphasis on the p[articular and not the universal ensures that regeneration is critically engaged with. The persons within the community are relational and urbanization needs to reflect on the impact of so-called development for the residents and the environment.

Conceptualising urbanisation, urban ministry, and diaconate

"Urbanisation" is a contested concept with different descriptions, usages, and meanings. Business or financial institutions view urbanisation as an attempt to revitalise economies, modernise trade centres, and advance architecture. For the residents of urban areas, urbanisation might result in the rise of cost of living and possible displacement. Terms such as "urban renewal", "urban development", "urban revitalisation", "urban reconstruction", or even "urban renaissance" are used to describe a similar meaning to the upgrading of urban areas that have undergone some form of decay or degrading. Closely associated to these terms is the concept of "gentrification" which is a process of the development of urban areas through capitalist or neo-capitalist means at the expense of the poor. "The most well-known examples in South Africa are in Cape Town in neighbourhoods such as Woodstock, Salt River and the Bo-Kaap" (De Beer 2018:1-2). Areas such as Walmer Estate and Zonnebloem are fast becoming areas of gentrification with the houses of residents who have resided there for generations increasing at an alarming rate. These areas are attracting national and international investors because of their proximity to the city centre and the breath-taking scenery of the surrounding mountains and beaches of Cape Town. Despite the economic and environmental potential, South African cities like Cape Town have two kinds of communities. The one community is made up of wealthy people and institutions and the other consists of the marginalised and peripheral small business. The former community seeks to improve their own livelihoods by upscaling and modernising and the latter struggles for survival against an ever-increasing bureaucratic and technocratic system. Headley (2018:1) refers to these two opposing communities as "two faces to the city of Cape Town". Most know of "the face of the fun, beautiful 'world class' city with Table Mountain, great restaurants, and beautiful beaches". However, the "unseen face of the city" houses a large proportion of the city's population, especially the "marginalised communities, overcrowded townships and underserviced informal settlements".

By "urban ministry" we refer to the response of the churches to the growing urbanisation of South African cities. The National Planning Commission predicted an unprecedented growth in the urban areas of South Africa. The towns and cities of the country "are now home to more than 60% of the

national population and account for 80 percent of economic activity … with these percentages to increase". With the rising unemployment of youth, growing poverty levels, and the lack of adequate growth of infrastructure, the Commission predicts that by 2025 the urban spaces would have increased and become overpopulated, poverty will soar, and the environment will be more polluted and socially vulnerable (National Planning Commission, n.d., in Swart and de Beer 2014:1).

Urban ministry is concerned with the renewal or development of the urban areas. Urban ministry is about the presence of the church in various forms in the lives of the residents as well as the different economic or social processes, activities, and policies. It is particularly concerned with the approaches to renewal and development and the consequences for the people affected by urbanisation. Ministry can take various forms. Ribbens & De Beer (2017) identified three rituals of African urban Christianity in their research on urbanisation in the City of Tshwane. In terms of *prayer*, they conclude,

> The churches we encountered in the city of Tshwane are praying churches. Prayer is an everyday performance action. During the focus group and World Café conversations, when we asked how the church is responding to the happening in the city and how the church is innovating, prayer was repeatedly mentioned (Ribbens & De Beer 2017:8).

In the City of Cape Town, the Anglican Cathedral bells at specific times and the other mainline churches' daily worship services are similar occasions of prayer for the city and its people.

The *Bible* or *the Word of God* is another means of change, conversion, or transformation within the context of urban spaces. The reciting of Scripture does not only provide knowledge about the importance of the ritual of reading Scripture for the first Christian communities, but it provides the narratives of God's salvific work, Jesus' redemptive acts, and the Holy Spirit's sanctification of the marginalised, the weak, outcasts and lowly. According to Ribbens and De Beer (2017:9), the churches that participated in their research attest to the role of the Bible in "personal morality", "interpersonal and familial relationships", and "advocacy work". James (2015:49) rightly propounds that

reflection on the biblical texts through the lens of urbanisation and reading the urban contexts through biblical reflection draws a deeper level of consciousness about themes such as justice, restoration, reconciliation, lamentation, and hope. Bible reading in relation to the particular urban contexts draws the readers into the world of the first century Christians who had to overcome displacements, identity reformulations, and marginalisation.

Churches in the city and surrounding urban areas are spaces of renewal, sustenance, restoration, and reconciliation. Church buildings are symbols of hope and those who withdraw to it during worship services connect the healing and restoration of the Christian tradition with the ever-increasing changes of the urban places and processes. Worship is the connection of the world of the secular and the encounter with the sacred through adoration and awareness of God. Saliers (2014) asserts that,

> Worship is a revelatory activity. Broadly conceived, worship is the human response to the mystery of God's being and self-communication. Whether communal (liturgical) or individual (devotional), worship is not a theory about God and the world, but a set of practices, experiences, and fundamental dispositions toward what is deemed most sacred.

Ribbens and De Beer (2017) observed that during their World Café and focus groups, *worship* was the third experience that the co-researchers affirmed along with prayer and the Bible. Singing as empowerment amongst the youth was particularly relevant against the social and economic deprivation of the young people. Youth choirs and other creative liturgical acts are innovations that the church uses to involve young people in their own resistance against social ills such drug abuse, unemployment, generational gaps, and cultural shifts. Worship, and in particular music, both in terms of types and application, is a determining factor for their choice of church. The youth

> [S]ifted through a self-directed approval system on song selection, local choruses, hymn book, instrumentation or some amalgamation … Not only does the practiced ritual of song influence decisions about why, where and how a person joins a church, it also developed what churches perceived as negative

and positive forms of competition with other churches (Ribbens & De Beer 2017:9-10).

Worship develops from the experiences of the contexts. The procession of the gospel from the congregation to the preacher symbolises that the Word finds meaning in the experiences of the congregation to the preacher who then communicates the meaning of the particular experiences of the congregation through the interpretation and application of the Scripture. This is a bottom-up approach from which the experiences of the people become the lens for understanding Scripture in light of the urban experiences. Saliers (2014:297) contends that worship will progress to the interconnection between service and worship, liturgy and action, Saliers asserts that;

> 'love of God and love of neighbour' justice and prayer, scripture and worship. Worship is the connection between the gathering in adoration of God and sending into the world to serve.

The conclusion prayer at the end of the Anglican liturgy of the Eucharist demonstrates this unbroken connection of worship and service,

> Father almighty we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ out Lord. Send us out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory (Anglican Prayer Book 1989:129).

This threefold urban ministry of prayer, Scripture and worship reflects the broad contribution that the church makes to urban spaces and the regeneration of these spaces. Prayer, Scripture, and worship provides spiritual capital to those who reside and those who work within the confines of urban spaces. Persons within urban surroundings are able to reflect on the challenges resulting from urbanisation. The displacement of people and alienation of small-scale businesses from the technocratic and competitive environment of regenerated urban settings gives rise to serious questions about the meaning of life in fluctuating (fluxuating) circumstances and fluid identities. The spiritual capital of the church is an important resource for development.

A fourth element of ministry is one that we refer to as the lived spiritual experience of the displaced. Spiritual lived experience is not just interpreted

situations or actions of people, but is the meaning that is given to the actual experiences of people. It is not experience that is interpreted by a third party, but its authenticity is measured by the meaning that a person gives to their own experiences. This is possible through the telling of narratives. Lived spiritual experience is the meaning that people give to their experiences through the narratives of their lives and how their narratives are aligned with the narrative of Jesus Christ. Lived spiritual experience is the particular experience of a group of people who finds meaning in their urban experience or the experience of urbanisation through their own narratives and that of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.

Spiritual experiences are the context embedded in urbanisation and the results of the regeneration of urban areas or cities. The context of the urban spaces and displacements are the fourth element within the interconnected ministry in urban settings. The experience of loss of community, familial relationships, identity, sense of self-development and friendships are the circumstances and realities of the people who reside within the regenerative or urban spaces. These lived experiences are not only secular but within a country such as South Africa with an overwhelming Christian population, the sacred and secular intertwine so that experiences take on a spiritual dimension. Or at the very least, the secular is closely connected with the spiritual so that meaning-making includes a spiritual hermeneutic.

> The boundary dissolves between so-called church activity and everyday life and ordinary practices. Smith's social imagery and Gornik's observation identify the essentiality of bodily expression and everydayness (Ribbens and De Beer 2017:8).

Our contribution to urban ministry lies in the deacon as the invisible bridge or faded boundary that fuses the secular and the spiritual. The deacon plays a role that causes the continuum of the lived experience as spiritual lived experiences.

Our contention is that ministry in the form of prayer, Scripture, and worship does not adequately address the neo-liberal and materialistic emphasis of urbanisation. What is needed is an urban ministry that contributes to a more wholistic approach to urbanisation. We contend that the ministry of the

diaconate is more effective for a more inclusive approach to urbanisation. The diaconate addresses the shortcomings of the broad ministry of prayer, Scripture, and worship, and keeps in tension the liturgical and social responsibility ministries. The ministry of the diaconate engages with the narrow approach to urbanisation and the top-down approach of the church's ministry towards urban regeneration.

Diaconia, diaconal ecclesiology and deacon

The terms "diaconia", "diaconal church" and "deacon" are interrelated, and a clearer conceptualisation of deacon is subject to an analysis of the other two terms. Diaconia as the overarching term for all social responsibility ministry of the church is itself a contested one with varied and multiple meanings. The varied meanings and use of the term diaconia do not lend itself to a precise definition. Even when the term is taken from the Greek it is not confined to a narrow, specific definition (Nordstokke 2009:6). The term is also highly contested. The overemphasis of aid from the North to the South or from Northern Europe to other parts of the world came under severe criticism from the South. From the 1980s the shift was towards the ecclesial nature and the works of justice, inequality, and poverty (Nordstokke 2012:188).

The term diaconia can be traced back to the New Testament usage which refers to service or ministry and a particular reference to the ministry of the deacon. The word also refers specifically to acts and functions of "intermediary agents and messengers". In the Pauline letters Paul refers to himself as a "servant" or "messenger bearer" or "ambassador" which carries the same connotation as the deacon (Christensen 2019:42-43). The ministry or acts of diaconia are providing for the needy and homeless, looking after the widows, tending to the sick, and serving the poor (Christensen 2019:43). The Early Church served the poor, practiced hospitality, and visited the sick, which is sometimes viewed as one of the reasons for the rapid and vast expansion of the church in its early inception (World Council of Churches 2017:18).

> Under the leadership of St Lawrence, known as 'the defender of the poor', the deacons in Rome had developed an extensive charitable outreach by the middle of the 3rd century. During the time of Emperor Constantine, who granted the Church public

recognition, the first church hospitals were established. St Basil (+379) built a famous hospital in Caesarea in Cappadocia; it 'had the dimensions of a city; St Fabiola (+399) founded a hospital in Rome (World Council of Churches 2017).

This period of the first few centuries is the most significant period of the deacons and later also the deaconesses. Texts such as the *Didache* chapter 15, the *First Letter of Clement* around the year 100, *The Shepherd of Hermas,* and *Apostolic Constitutions* from the 4th century all attest to the prominence of the deacon. The ministry of the deacon is both liturgical (*Didache* and *1 Clement*) and includes social responsibility, such as visiting the sick and widowers (*The Shepherd of Hermas* and *Apostolic Constitutions*) (in Christensen 2019:44).

These two notions dominated the ministry of the deacon even into the period of the Reformation. Reformers such as Luther and Calvin supported the order of the deacon, and Calvin even used the Early Church's model of widows working for the church as a structure for deaconesses. We find a good example in the work of Katharina Zell of Strasbourg who organised the care of refugees arriving in the city.

> 'we ought to exercise and practice toward one another our office (commended to us by God), the ministry and office of care and love'. Regarding the role of women in the wider reformation movement, it is worth mentioning that the Mennonites were one of the first to include both deacons and deaconesses in their communities (Christensen 2019:48-49).

In the mainline churches such as The Anglican Church in Southern Africa, the diaconate has reclaimed its position within the three-fold ministry of Bishop, Priest and Deacon. In many dioceses the deacon has become a permanent order which signifies the break from the transition status of the diaconate. A similar shift has taken place within the Roman Catholic Church with the association of caritas with diaconia (Klaasen 2020:123). There is also an emergence of contemporary concepts such as *ubuntu* (Dietrich 2019), *empowerment* and (Nordstokke 2012), that gives meaning to diaconia. Knoetze (2019:158-159) has also formulated a relational diaconal ecclesiology

which emphasises the function of the church according to a Trinitarian perspective. These contributions indicate the contributions to the ministry and office of deacon.

The diaconal ministry has many aspects, and throughout the history of the Christian church the ministry has been shaped by the different contexts and circumstances of the spaces and places where the churches responded to urbanisation. The deacon has developed into a specialised ministry and in many denominations social work, chaplaincy, medical workers, and community leaders form part of the group of qualified occupations that are involved in diaconal ministry.

There is a clear connection of the issues that are involved in urbanisation and diaconal ministry. Social responsibility, human capital, reconfiguration of spaces, destabilising of fixed identities and the material value or devalue of residency are some of the overlapping issues of urbanisation and the ministry of the diaconate. Our interest lies with the contribution that diaconal ministry and the diaconate in particular can make to a more wholistic approach to the renewing of urban places and persons. How can the diaconate foster a dialogue between urbanisation and the affected people that become marginalised and alienated in their own spaces which they have occupied for generations? The interconnectedness of the three terms – diaconal, deacon, and diaconal ecclesiology – will form the broad understanding of the ministry of the deacon. In this sense, the deacon becomes an interlocutor between the sacred (spiritual) and the secular (material). It connects both into a whole and not a dichotomy.

Diaconate – interlocuter of wholistic urbanisation

Urban ministry is becoming more relevant as the urban areas are experiencing regeneration. We will use the term "regeneration of the urban" as it reflects the kind of urbanisation that should take place in South Africa. De Beer (2018) describes *regeneration* as the attempt to upgrade and restore hurtful communities in ways that are self-determining, personally responsible, and generationally sensitive. Regeneration differs from gentrification which is economic and prosperity driven. Gentrification is based on the agendas of the middle class and those with materialist wealth at the expense of the poor and

marginalised who generally make up the residents of the urban areas. Regeneration takes the agency and experiences of the poor as the starting point for any kind of renewal or development. De Beer finds the definition of Roberts (2000) a more inclusive one than the classical narrow economic. Roberts defines urban regeneration as

> … comprehensive and integrated vision and action which seek to resolve urban problems and bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area, that has been subject to change or offers opportunities for improvement.

De Beer revised Roberts' broad definition making it more practical and specific,

> Comprehensive and integrated vision and action which seek to address urban challenges in changing or deteriorating urban neighbourhoods, bringing about lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area, through broad-based collaborative approaches, building on local assets and resources, focusing on improvement and integration without displacement, optimizing benefits for local people and institutions, and facilitating radical social inclusion (De Beer 2018:2-3).

Firstly, the definition espoused by De Beer takes into consideration the traditional space allocation and the occupation of the urban spaces. Secondly, De Beer also considers the African worldview and how the land relates to personhood and identity within the cosmology of material and spirit interlinks. Thirdly, De Beer takes seriously the human capital of the residents and how agency of the marginalised becomes the centre. Fourthly, the definition includes the interconnectedness of persons, institutions, and the environment, and how these relate to the common good. It is within this more inclusive approach of urbanisation that we seek to contribute. The deacon as interlocutor might be a theological contribution to the debate about urbanisation.

"Interlocutor" is defined as "as one who takes part in dialogue or conversation" and "a man in the middle of the line in a minstrel show who questions the end

men and acts as leader" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.). The interlocutor is a powerful symbol who engages and encourages dialogue between different parties. In the second definition, the interlocutor occupies a powerful position that connects different parties while engaging in the goal of the dialogue. The interlocutor keeps differences together by securing the involvement of different persons or groups for the end.

Liturgy and social responsibility

The deaconate has a history of primary involvement in the social responsibility of the church and the liturgy of the church. The Early Church did not make a distinction between the liturgical ministry and the social engagement of the deacon. Deacons were involved in the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist and along with the bishops they were responsible for the preparation and distribution of the bread and wine. The Holy Eucharist, the centre of the life of the congregation, was the ministerial function of the deacon. In the *Didache,* the Holy Eucharist is listed immediately after the instruction to appoint deacons "worthy of the Lord". First Clement also mentions the liturgical role of bishops and deacons for the functioning of the church. Coupled with the liturgical role is the mentioning of the social role of the deacons. The rich are encouraged to provide for the poor and the poor are reminded that God provides for their needs. Just like 1 Clement and the Didache, Bishop Ignatius also emphasised the role of the deacon within the Early Church. He refers to the deacons as "fellow servants", implying that deacons follow the example of Jesus and bishops who serve the communities without prejudice. The Shephard of Hermas affirms the tradition as passing down ministry. Like the apostles, bishops, and teachers, deacons also take care of the orphans and widows, and their agency is consecrated by the church. The Apostolic Fathers sum up the dual ministry of deacons as follows:

> [To] assist the bishop in many different ways: to carry messages, to travel about, to serve, in doing home visits, minister to the sick, in celebrating Eucharist, helping at baptism and saying prayers. For instance, after the Eucharist the deacon must pray for the whole Church and the peace of the universe (Christensen 2019:44-45).

This prayer is done publicly by the deacon at the end of the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" and the people respond "In the name of Christ. Amen" (Anglian Prayer Book 1989:129).

Within the Early Church's ministry of the deacon is the intersection of the liturgy and social responsibilities. This intersection is kept in tension by the deacon who plays a leading role in the preparation and leading of the liturgy. The deacon leads the synaxis, the prayers, reads the gospel, assists at the Lord's table, and commissions the people to exercise agency in the world in the name of Christ. The deacon also comes to the liturgy with the needs of the world and the needs are embedded in the liturgical movement from suffering to healing. This movement from outside to inside and then to the outside is kept in creative tension by the deacon who is actively involved in the lived experiences of the people and the holiness of the saving grace of God.

It is this movement from urbanisation and its effects on communities to the hope of healing and restoring that is led by the deacon. The distinctive role of the deacon is connecting the social work and responsibility with the spiritual. The regeneration or urbanisation of urban spaces is not only a social, political, or economic process. It is a spiritual process with a spiritual dimension. The deacon brings to housing projects, expansion of business infrastructure, technology and buildings, the spiritual needs and spiritual capital that economic and materialistic approaches to urbanisation neglects. As interlocutor, the deacon adds to the technical and human skills the ritual and symbolic meanings of the spaces that undergird the social cohesion and cultural dimensions of the people. For example, land is a sacred entity that forms a part of the identity of people. The deacon as servant of the church plays an important role in the sacrilege of the land and can play an important role in an approach to land development that recognised the sanctity of the land.

Whereas urbanisation or gentrification divides, forcibly removes, splits into centre and margins, spirituality unites and shares responsibility for the common good. Spirituality that is rooted in the Trinitarian God of Christians acknowledges differences but does not divide for the sake of prosperity of one group over the other or one person over another person. Dietrich (2014)

quotes Tsele's (2002: 53-55) notion of charitable acts as a united act by both the wealthy and the poor:

> God is charitable to his entire creation. Society as whole needs to be made more charitable. We must resist turning charity into a word, an undertaking viewed with suspicion. However, the ultimate objective of diakonia is restorative: it aims to restore the dignity of the poor. In doing so diakonia unites the giver and the receiver, and leaves neither of them unchanged. Thus, it is liberating and transforming.

When regeneration of urban spaces includes the spiritual dimension of personhood, then the process of renewal and development does not only become more wholistic than materialistic profit-driven methods, but the value of the material and human capital is seen for what it really is. The interconnectedness of the persons who reside in urban spaces and the buildings, environment, and non-living beings become more than the exchange of commodities. The deacon's dual role in the liturgy and the community becomes one of a deeper sense of regeneration. It is not just about visiting the sick, providing for those in need and assisting the bishop at the liturgy, it involves the affirmation and blessing of the agency of all the persons affected by urbanisation. There is a strong resistance against treating those at the margins as insignificant for diaconal ministry. Those at the margins are not to be viewed as recipients of aid or good deeds from those in the centre. The margins are spaces of holiness, places of sanctuary, and persons of agency.

> The world may tend to see the margins as places of disgrace and powerlessness; however, the biblical witness points towards God who is always present in the struggles of those unjustly pushed to the margins of society. It gives several accounts of God's attention and caring love to people in situations of oppression and consequent deprivation. God hears the cry of the oppressed and responds by sustaining and accompanying them in their journey towards liberation (Exodus 3:7-8). This is the *diakonia* of God: a *diakonia* of liberation as well as of restoring dignity, and ensuring justice and peace (World Council of Churches 2013:106-107).

When the persons affected by regeneration are viewed from a transcended space as created in the *imago Dei,* then personhood is much more than the biological and psychological make-up of people. The *imago Dei* is both being and doing. The agency of the residence is as substantial as the biological development. Persons have gifts and talents that are part of their identity and if their gifts and talents are suppressed by professional skills and superior technical abilities, the part of their identity is ignored in processes that have detrimental effects for them. The deacon who usually is from the community, or who has strong ties with the community, symbolised the identity of the community, and by exercising the calling as "servant" or "messenger" holds within the liturgy the identity of the community as the image of God.

Community-oriented ministry

Whilst the diaconate is not desirable to do effective urbanisation on its own, the deacon is in a position to contribute to a more inclusive socially cohesive approach to regeneration. The deacon connects different communities. De Beer (2018) propounds that regeneration processes are completely monopolised from above by policymakers, the wealthy, the powerful, and those with self-interests. He further asserts that within the South African contexts of urbanisation, there are no alternative examples. His "from above and outside" approach is an attempt to counter the top-down approach (2018:2).

After a critical discussion about market- or entrepreneur-led regeneration and university-led regeneration, and pointing out their serious limitations, De Beer (2018) proffers a faith-based urban regeneration that considers a broad collaboration that takes a variety of resources and agents in a all-encompassing collaborative approach. He identifies three resources for consideration, namely:

> [A]n urban spirituality; a theoretical understanding of (urban) regeneration as integral liberation and transformation; and the employment and mobilisation of socio-spiritual capital (De Beer 2018:2-9).

This approach, as proposed by De Beer, takes the agency of the residents seriously, and like the diaconate, criticises the neglect of the skills and talents of the residents. The approach also adds the neglected socio-spiritual skills of the people. De Beer includes moral authority, property ownership, human resources and gifts, inherent networks and relationships, and vocation as spiritual capital. These are significant and valuable skills. We would like to add the specific gift of the deacon as interlocuter or messenger or servant. This skill or gift keeps the different contributions of the variety of agents in a creative tension that leads to a common good. The approach also takes into consideration the tradition or history of the community that becomes a fostering force in the direction and shape of the vision of project and process.

Our own developing model of regeneration or urbanisation is a community-driven approach in which the deacon plays the role of interlocuter. The community becomes the centre of power and invites others into its circle. It is only through a community of lived experiences that real bottom-up, or wholistic or inclusive urbanisation can take place. The deacon, having deep roots in the community, with specialised skills facilitates the broadening of the community. Such a community can be modelled on the Eucharistic community as an open-ended narrative. The Eucharist is a narrative of a particular community who is welcoming, engaging, mutually enriching, and reciprocal. The deacon's role in the liturgy of the Eucharist is to prepare and distribute the transformed elements of bread and wine into symbols of the saving body of Jesus Christ. The deacon welcomes all to participate and receive this transformed material elements as consecrated sacraments. The Anglican Catechism describes the ministry of the deacon as

> [T]o represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments (Anglican Prayer Book 1989:434).

A community as open-ended narrative has three dimensions. The tradition of such a community is important for the present and future development. The tradition is not fixed but it engages with the past and the present. By tradition we refer to the

[T]he furniture of the mind that is shared by the community and which makes their conversation possible. That is to say, tradition is the shared language that makes communication possible, or more accurately. It is the shared understanding of language that makes communication possible. Because words take their meaning from context and from the way they are used historically, a particular tradition can be understood then as the shared cultural understanding that binds a community together (Lucie-Smith 2007:4).

In other words, tradition is not absolute and fixed, but through constructive dialogue, the past finds meaning in the present through dialogue and a deeper sense of understanding. Dialogue between the Early Church community and the urban community takes on the life-giving nature of an organism and not fixed structures.

The community is also particular and concrete. The community has meaning in the urban contexts with unique situations, lifestyles, relationships, values and skills. These characteristics become assets that can be beneficial for effective urbanisation and development of urban areas. These assets can be regarded as soft skills that take on the nature of social and spiritual rather than technical skills. This does not mean that the community is closed to other persons or communities. The community is open for interaction with different kinds of communities as long as the basis of interaction and dialogue is reciprocal, mutually enriching, and a moral power relation. It is worthwhile highlighting the limitations of national initiatives such as The National Development Plan and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2013). Notwithstanding the good intensions and efforts of these two initiatives to develop an extensive consultative process for development, there are serious limitations. Swart and De Beer (2014) identify the extent to which the use of technocrats and bureaucrats were used at the expense of the residents and communities affected by such efforts of development. Despite their efforts to consult with communities, the details of such consultations were lacking or simply out of the reach of ordinary citizens, especially the communities of urban and city spaces. The vision and strategy of the initiatives is typically a top-down or "from above" approach (2014:3).

The particularity of the community affirms the value of the community for its substance and its function that it plays in regeneration. The context of the community identifies the skills and talents that can be beneficial for the upliftment and progress of the particular community and the other which is generally regarded as the stranger or outsider by big business conglomerates and those at the top of the pyramid. With regard to the particularity of the community of this developing model, the community is open ended and welcomes differences as intersections of growth and progress.

The deacon as servant and messenger connects different communities by proclamation of the Word and dismissing of the gathered community into the urban community. The deacon as reader and preacher of the gospel proclaims the Word of God from the context of the community. The symbolic procession from the middle of the church to the pulpit is a confirmation of different communities that come together and draw capital from each other. The deacon also connects the different communities by pointing all people to the ultimate end of salvation for all. Both the Eucharist and the dismissal are commands to exercise agency of justice and peace.

The community is made up of relational persons. To be created in the *imago Dei* means that the relational nature of God is inherently the essence of what it means to be a person in community. Many urbanisation processes are either liberal or neo-liberal, individualistic, and materialistic. In these processes the dignity and value of personhood is lost for progress sake. The end goal of such processes is maximum profit for the most competitive individuals and technological and industrial agents. My notion of a community urbanisation process is that the relationships of persons with each other, other living beings, and the environment is reciprocal.

For an understanding of this we draw from the theological anthropology of the doctrines of the *imago Dei* (Catholic) and "The likeness of God" (Eastern Orthodox). With regard to the latter, what it means to be human emerges in the ontology of personhood. Zizioulus, the Eastern Orthodox patriarch, explains that personhood from the perspective of ekstasis refers to something or someone that transcended towards communion. It is a movement from the narrow wholeness of the self towards the other as whole making (Zizioulus 1975:408, cited in Micallef 2019:228). In terms of the former, Horan challenges

the absolute uniqueness of the human being and their culmination of creation that has been the sole theological anthropology of the Catholic tradition. Horan (2019:138) pushes for a theological anthropology that rejects essentialism and depersonalisation for a relationality, dignity, and value-laden personhood.

Residents of urban areas are in a kind of relationship with each other and the environment in such a way that the people do not exploit each other or the environment for their selfish progress. Their relationship is of such a nature that each are created as good, and all creation is equal before God. The environment is not created for the domination, exploitation, or stewardship of persons. In contrast, the environment is created by God as God's own and should be nurtured and cared for by persons. Persons are created and called by God. The creation of persons is not separated from their vocation as carers of God creation.

The relationship of persons, other living beings, and the environment is not of a marginalisation, alienation, or domination kind. Relationships foster mutually enriching and reciprocal growth. Persons are not absolutely unique but through relationships engage in facilitation of differences for the maturation of all creation. Different skills, resources, gifts, talents, and abilities are drawn from all creation in an effort to care for creation, especially the displaced, marginalised, and deprived persons.

The specific ministry of care for the marginalised, sick, excluded, poor and exploited combined with the liturgical ministry of sacraments and proclamation can play a major role to affirm the all-inclusive creation of God. The deacon can present both the material and spiritual capital before God and the community for the benefit of all creation. The deacon holds the vision of mutual enrichment and reciprocal growth before God in the intercessory prayers.

Conclusion

We have engaged in a critical discussion with some of the primary sources of foremost South African scholars about theological perspectives of urban ministry and urbanisation. De Beer, Swart, Ribbens, Headley, and James make

significant contributions to the discourse of urban ministry and their contributions included faith communities, theological education, the Bible, faith-based organisations and, more significantly, conceptualisations of urbanisation. These scholars represent some of the most up to date and innovative contributions in the discipline.

We have contributed by assessing the ministry of the deacon or the diaconate for effective urbanisation. The conceptualisation of the three interlinking terms of diaconal, deacon and diaconal ecclesiology points towards an intersectional movement of liturgy and social responsibility as found in the Early Church's notions of the ministry of the deacon. The Reformation and twentieth century notions of diaconia which is prominent in the ecumenical movement follows a similar line as that of the Early Church.

The final part of our contribution is to apply the ministry of the deacon as interlocuter to urbanisation and the effects it has on the community and their lived experience. The deacon as interlocuter is embedded in both the liturgy and social ministry. As interlocuter, the deacon adds a spiritual dimension to the urbanisation process. The deacon also connects different communities within a context of open-endedness. These two spaces of intersection transcend the narrow materialistic and profit orientation of liberal and neo-liberal urbanisation processes. The interlocuter challenges the displacement and marginalisation of local communities as a result of technocratic and bureaucratic development systems as exclusive and dislodging of social cohesive communities.

We also realise that our developing community-oriented model is in its infancy stage and does not engage the technical aspects of urbanisation in any detail. Our future research will analyse existing processes of urbanisation from the technical and technological and how the ministry of the deacon can constructively and critically contribute to the skills needed to engage urbanisation processes more broadly.

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