



Navigating the political economy

Richard Calland, Faculty

University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership

What do we mean by ‘political economy’?

“Who gets what, when and how” (Harold Laswell, 1936)

Relationship between Politics and Economics (World Bank)

Concerned with:

- Power
- Process

How Politics ‘gets in the way’ of good decision-making

Disasters are political

“If there can be one - rather banal - conclusion at the end of this text, it is that disasters are political. Any study of disasters that disregards their entanglement with power relations and political action misses an important dimension without which, I would claim, disaster situations cannot be fully understood. This is also an important message for efforts of disaster management and mitigation, because they, too, need to take politics into account.”

Exploring the Link between Natural Disasters and Politics: Case Studies of Pakistan and Peru Martin

Sökefeld Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Ludwig-Max

https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/22296/1/Martin_S%C3%B6kefeld_Exploring%20the%20Link.pdf imilians-University Munich.

Cape Town case study: water crisis in a world class city



Decision making under political pressure

OPINION

Blame game won't solve Cape Town's water crisis

Public leaders in all three levels of government must rise above political and personal interests to avoid a humanitarian and economic catastrophe

09 JANUARY 2018 - 06:13 DR

ROLFE EBERHARD

GLOBAL

What's Actually Behind Cape Town's Water Crisis

Blame austerity-obsessed technocrats, irresponsible development, and willful ignorance.

📶 O2-UK 📶 13:06 🔼 85% 🔋

< 🔍 guardian cape town... 🔗 +✍️

Top Latest People Photos Videos

 **Phil Carter** @Phil... · 2018/02/03 ✓

Excellent **Guardian** article on **Cape Town's water crisis**. It's bad news for the city's economy & sanitation, with risk of disease, violence & anarchic. But the city is building 3 temporary desalination plants soon to be on line.

 **The Guardian**

Cape Town faces Day Zero: what happens when the city tu...
theguardian.com

💬 ↺️ ❤️ 📤

🏠 🔍 🔔 📧

Political blame game

Parliament: The blame game becomes a water sport as dam levels stay low

<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/parliament-the-blame-game-becomes-a-water-sport-as-dam-levels-stay-low-20180308>

Cape Town – While dam levels in the Western and Eastern Cape remain low, the DA and ANC blamed each other for the water crises in Cape Town and other parts of the country.

"We are sick and tired of giving you [the DA-run Western Cape] money and you do nothing and keep blaming national government!" said Deputy Minister of Water and Sanitation Pamela Tshwete in a debate in the National Assembly on Thursday.

"We don't politicise water. You do. You politicise water!" she said while being heckled by the DA.

She said it was inaccurate that the City of Cape Town did not receive help from national government.

"We must always give money to them, as if they're the only ones experiencing the drought," she complained.

Tshwete said the drought started in KwaZulu-Natal, but they didn't complain, they knew what to do.

ANC, DA 'juvenile'

DA MP Leon Basson said national government did "sweet blue all nothing" about the drought in the Western Cape.

"Shame on the ANC government!" he said. "The system failed at the level of national government.

"We must not lose sight of national government failing to respond to the water crisis all over the country.

"It is clear national government dropped the ball."

EFF MP Sam Matias said: "The juvenile behaviour of the ANC and DA is not helpful and must stop."

He said the water shortage was in part due to the democratic government's failure to ensure rural development, meaning people flocked to cities, including Cape Town, creating a greater need for water provision without improved infrastructure.

Day Zero a 'creation' of the DA

"Capitalist greed forced us into an unsustainable mode of production," said Matias.

He said if the mode of development was not changed, the effects of climate change would worsen.

The debate was called by NFP MP Munzoor Shaik-Emam as an urgent matter of national importance.

Spurred on by the ANC backbenches, he ripped into the DA-run Cape Town and Western Cape administrations, saying the crisis was caused by "sheer negligence, recklessness and poor management".

He said Day Zero – "now DA Zero" – was used to manipulate the public in order to allow them to award a R6bn Israeli contract.

"There is plenty of water!" alleged Shaik-Emam. "They wanted to create a crisis to give a tender and get money for the 2019 elections."

'You cannot out-ANC the ANC'

FF Plus MP Corné Mulder said Shaik-Emam's "personal gripe" with the DA and other opposition parties was not a matter of urgent national importance.

"You cannot out-ANC the ANC," Mulder said, much to the DA's amusement.

Agang MP Andries Tlouamma said the DA could not be trusted and that the Western Cape government had become a "midwife of frustration".

"The premier of this province (Helen Zille) is addicted to Twitter, like Fikile Mbalula," Tlouamma said. "But she is a godmother, so she remains protected."

DA MP Geordin Hill-Lewis said Shaik-Emam's credibility had already hit Day Zero.

"If he really believes the drought doesn't exist, he must have his head read."

It was predicted

★ Cape Times, Thursday, April 26, 1990

City will run out of water 'in 17 years'

By BARRY STREEK
Political Staff

WATER supplies for the Cape Town area are expected to dry up in 17 years' time, the Water Research Commission (WRC) disclosed yesterday.

"It is estimated that known fresh water supplies for the Cape Town metropolitan area will be fully committed by the year 2007," it said in its annual report

conducted to establish a data base containing information on water intake, raw materials, products, effluent quality and the amount of industrial waste from all types of industries using more than 150 cubic metres of water a day.

On water supplies, the commission reported that a survey was launched by the University of Cape Town's Department of Community Health to establish early

coming increasingly unacceptable worldwide for discharge to sewage systems or to the environment because of their toxic content.

"In South Africa the problem is even more critical because it bleaching process effluents will be discharged by inland pulp factories after 1990."

The commission said 12 million animals were slaughtered at a most 300 abattoirs, which resulted in about 60 000 tons of kra

Messenger shot – message ignored

Suspended water researcher speaks out

<https://mg.co.za/article/2008-11-26-suspended-water-researcher-speaks-out>

The suspension of a senior researcher by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has not stopped him from speaking out.

Dr Anthony Turton's keynote presentation *A Clean South Africa* was due to be delivered at the CSIR's *Science Real and Relevant* conference in Pretoria last week, but he was instead charged with insubordination and bringing the council into disrepute.

In his presentation, Turton was to have warned that the country could be headed for a crisis in the water sector, which could fan social instability.

"For us to remain silent is bordering on the criminally negligent," Turton told Talk Radio 702 on Tuesday morning.

He said he was not an "alarmist" but simply wanted to "bring the facts to the surface" to inform decision-makers "before things get out of control", reported the *Times* on Tuesday.

On Monday, the Democratic Alliance called on the CSIR to reinstate Turton to his post.

Turton also told the *Zoopy* video website that he felt frustrated and that "internally, no one listens to us anymore".

He was forbidden from delivering his keynote address because it contained "unsubstantiated" facts, according to the executive, as well as photographs of this year's xenophobic attacks, which, the executive added: "may disturb people".

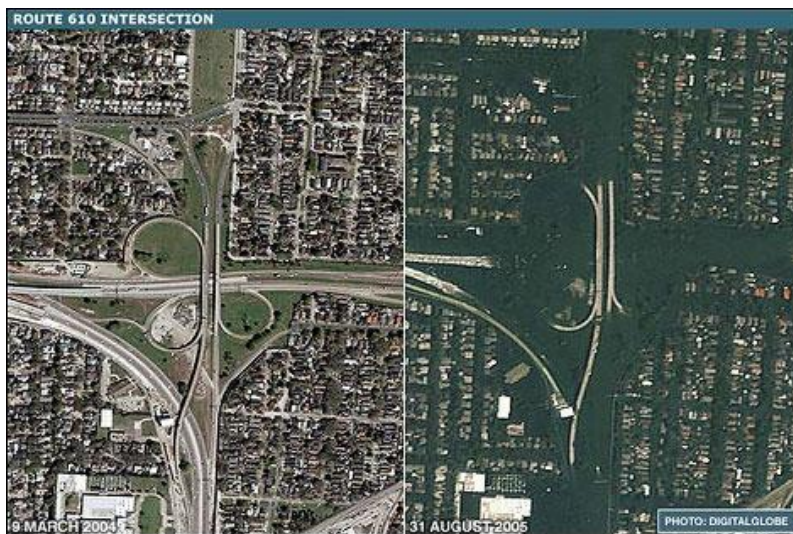
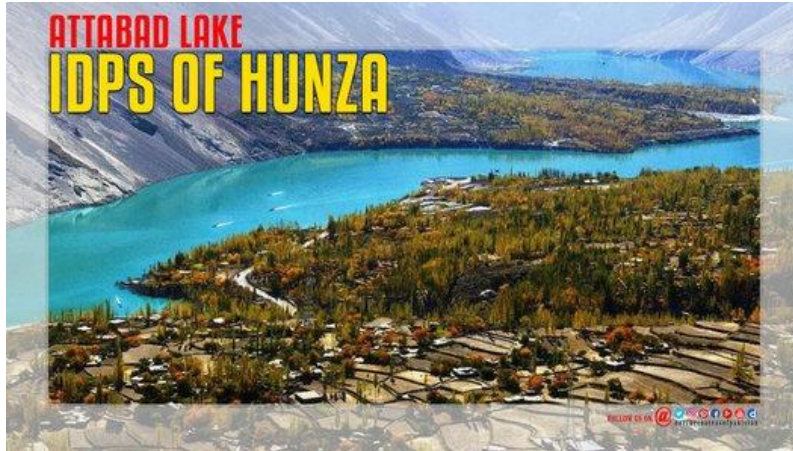
Turton was to have said that South Africa had run out of surplus water, with 98% of it already allocated.



Anatomy of the politics of Cape Town water crisis

1. Opposition Democratic Alliance in power in Cape Town and Western Cape since 2008 and their base of their political campaign.
2. African National Congress (ANC) at national level, but under pressure and riddled with corruption.
3. Political 'blame game' dominated the decision-making, alongside debate constitutional authority and responsibility.
4. Failure to heed the science and the forecasts – 'it will never happen/it will start raining again'.
5. Failure of all levels of government & of intra-govt. co-ord.
6. Failure to prepare proper plans for water relief or to make proper budgetary provision – funds had to be urgently re-allocated, with implications for other services.

Other places where politics has got in the way



Anatomy of the politics of disaster risk

1. Natural disasters are inherently political: there will be contestation about who gets what, when and how.
2. Where there are existing, historical or latent political fault-lines, they are likely to emerge and impact on decision-making.
3. Co-ordinating a strong response to a natural disaster is likely to be made more difficult and political fights will cloud effective decision-making under pressure.
4. Short-termism is likely to dominate planning – from the perspective of politicians who have to win elections and where resources are tight: unlikely to want to allocate resources today for a disaster that ‘may not happen’ in 15 years time.

So, questions to consider for public officials:

1. How to avoid 'short-termism' thinking?
2. How to flip the political factors so as to make good disaster finance planning 'sexy' and electorally crucial? How to prove the counterfactual: that not taking action will be more politically costly in the long term?
3. How to get budget and other resources for avoidance/prevention?
4. How to insulate the decision-making and the planning from 'politics'?
5. How to prepare budget and resources for a 'rainy day'.
6. What's the right messaging?
7. How best to include the public/citizens – can they help 'get the politics out of the way'?

Last word

Cities including São Paulo, Brazil and Gaborone, Botswana have faced similar crises in recent years due to a combination of severe drought and inefficient infrastructure and management. “What we are seeing is a denial of this new normal,” says Postel. “We just can’t expect the future to be like the past. Climate change is making the severity of droughts worse, so this new normal requires new thinking in terms of how we manage water.”

Postel, whose recent book [*Replenish \(2017\)*](#) details water challenges around the world, has found that excellent communication between municipalities and residents is key to keeping crises at bay. The U.S. city of Albuquerque realized in the early 1990s that it could imminently run out of water due, in part, to previous overestimations of water levels in its sole aquifer. Today, having diversified its water sources and fixed leaks in its water distribution system, Albuquerque is now on track to secure water for the [next 100 years](#)—an ambitious achievement that Postel attributes largely to community involvement in the planning process.

“We have tended to leave water to the engineers and to the utility, but it’s a societal issue,” Postel says. “Where the community is involved and engaged, I think you can get much better results.”

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/day-zero-looms-cape-town-water-crisis-may-signify-new-normal-180968128/#x4gr2Q9HDpcDasi2.99>

