

Preventing Day Zero - Securing Johannesburg's Water Future.

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Today's Focus

1. What is Political Studies
2. Political Theory and Government
3. Levels of Analysis of Water Insecurity in Johannesburg
 - 3.1 Practical Solutions
 - 3.2 Legacy of the Bifurcated State
 - 3.2 The Politics of Service Delivery
 - 3.3 The Politics of Infrastructure

1. What is Political Studies?

The study of various relationships of power within a territory. These relationships include socio-economic relationships, state-society relations and relationships between and within political institutions. Political studies uses theories and evidence to interpret power relationships and their effects on the state.

Courses include: Black Consciousness; Critical Perspectives in State, Bureaucracy and Public Administration; Comparative Politics; Democratic Theory; Feminist Theory; Political Ideologies; Social Theories of Modernity; South African Politics; States, Power and Governance; Theories of Development; Theories of Freedom, Justice and Difference and; Theories of Modernity.

2. Political Theory and Govt.

Who?

What?

When?

How?

Why?



Source: Daily Maverick. 10 October 2024. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-10-10-water-crisis-johannesburg-skirts-day-zero-for-fourth-time-in-a-year/>.



How did Johannesburg reach such high levels of water insecurity?

- Crumbling infrastructure evidenced by maintenance initiatives
- “ongoing drought worsened by climate change
- high levels of non-revenue water
- illegal connections”

“Johannesburg Water must strike a difficult balancing act to handle water consumption that is outpacing supply because of the uncertainty surrounding future trends in population expansion, water demand, infrastructure investment needs and budget constraints. This trend places immense strain on our bulk water system and jeopardises the sustainability of our water supply” – Johannesburg Mayor, Dada Morero

Sources: Madisa, K. 30 October 2024. *Joburg water problems 'severe' but no day zero yet in sight*. Sowetan Live. <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2024-10-30-joburg-water-problems-severe-but-no-day-zero-yet-in-sight/>.

Li, H. 22 March 2024. *Johannesburg struggles with a water crisis years in the making*. Semafor. <https://www.semafor.com/article/03/21/2024/johannesburgs-water-supply-is-on-the-brink-of-collapse>.

Why is this a concern for Political Studies?

Water insecurity demonstrates a breakdown in:

1. Management of a public good by governance structures
2. Levels of trust between government, citizens and residents.

What is the basis of this relationship between government and society?

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:

'Health care, food, water and social security

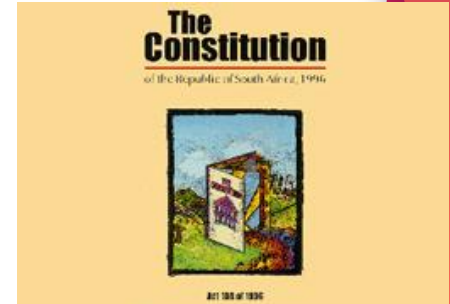
27. (1) Everyone has the right to have access to—

- (a) health care services, including reproductive health care;
- (b) sufficient food and water; and

- (c) social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance.

(2) The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights.

(3) No one may be refused emergency medical treatment.'



Who is responsible for overseeing municipal services and public goods, such as water?

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:

Schedule Functional Areas of Concurrent National and Provincial Legislative Competence

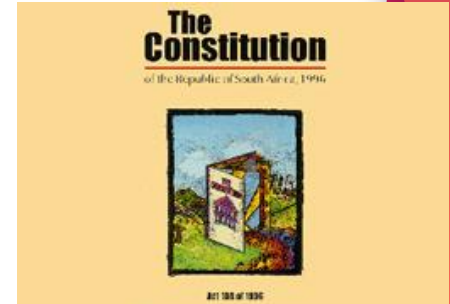
‘Water and sanitation services limited to potable water supply systems and domestic wastewater and sewage disposal systems’

Read along with:

‘Establishment of municipalities

155. (1) There are the following categories of municipality:

- (a) Category A: A municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area.
- (b) Category B: A municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a category C municipality within whose area it falls.
- (c) Category C: A municipality that has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality’





3. Levels of Analysis

1. The state is failing to provide water security, according to the Bill of Rights (ideal) and responsibilities (practical).
2. The state should find a way of resolving the causes of the water crisis, as this remains their responsibility.
3. The state has to reimagine/strategise about how to prevent this failure in future, because any current interventions are likely to be short to medium term interventions.

“ Levels of Analysis

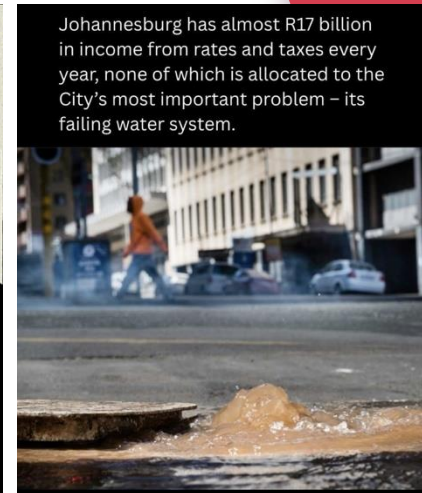
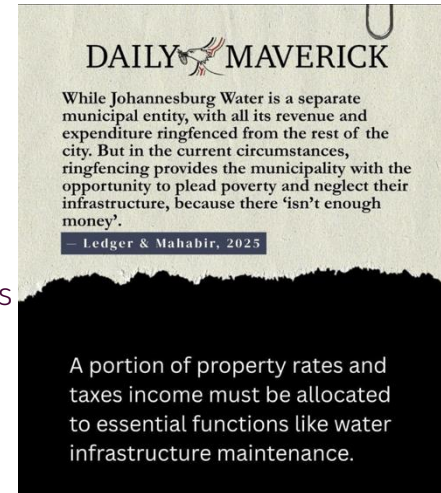
1. **Practical Solutions** relate to policy changes and how those changes will affect everyone living in Johannesburg.

Fix infrastructure

Stop illegal connections

Reduce levels of non revenue water

- Policy and Regulatory measures
- Increase sources of funding for infrastructure costs
- Provincial and Local Government authority



Johannesburg has almost R17 billion in income from rates and taxes every year, none of which is allocated to the City's most important problem – its failing water system.

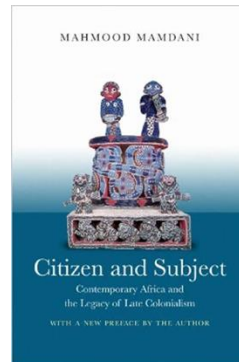
Sources: Ledger, T. and J. Mahabir. 17 March 2025. *Joburg's failing water infrastructure a result of poor prioritisation, not lack of funds*. Daily Maverick. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-03-17-joburgs-failing-water-infrastructure-a-result-of-poor-prioritisation-not-lack-of-funds/>; and, Public Affairs Research Institute.

“ Levels of Analysis

2. **Theorising the state** the state to understand its priorities, goals and the outcomes relate to the nature of the state.

2a) Legacy of the Bifurcated State

- South Africa was constituted as a state in 1910, began land dispossession in 1913, became fully segregated from 1948, and became a democracy in 1994.
- Colonialism. Apartheid. Democracy.
- Political theory of relevance: Mahmood Mamdani 1996, Citizen and Subject, Bifurcated State.



The Bifurcated State

Direct Rule

“the reintegration and domination of natives in the institutional context of semiservile and semicapitalist agrarian relations. For the vast majority of natives, that it, for those uncivilised who were excluded from citizenship, direct rule signified an unmediated – centralised despotism” (Mamdani 1996: 17)



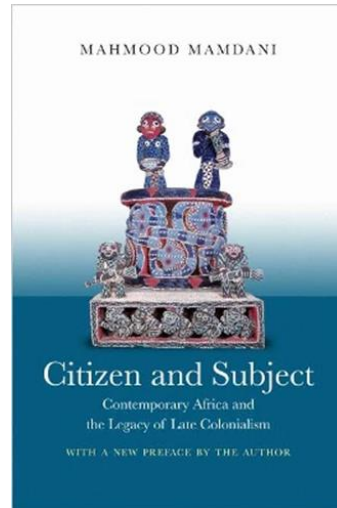
Indirect Rule

“Here, political inequality went alongside civil inequality. Both were grounded in legal dualism. Alongside received laws was implemented a customary law that regulated nonmarket relations, in land, in personal (family), and in community affairs. For the subject population of natives, indirect rule signified a mediated – **decentralised despotism**” (Mamdani 1996: 17)



Levels of Analysis

- *How do we overcome the legacy (effects) of the bifurcated state through increasing water security in Johannesburg, and in the rest of South Africa?*
- *How does the narrative of 'day zero' in metropolitans such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, demonstrate the state's priorities for water security?*



“ Levels of Analysis

2. **Theorising the state** the state to understand its priorities, goals and the outcomes relate to the nature of the state.

2b) Politics of Service Delivery

- Providing public goods and services is a form of justice and equality that redresses the effects of apartheid.
- However, this is as much a practical exercise as it is an ideal and constitutional goal.
- Therefore, service delivery – in this case creating water security – is not just a technical exercise. It is inherently political. The way that government responds to a potential day zero shows its politics or ideology; and has various socio-economic and political consequences.

The Politics of Service Delivery contd.

- **Reactive approaches:** The nature of the apartheid system was so overwhelming, that it is difficult to determine how much can be done to remove the legacy of inequality that it created.
→ Government deals with what it can, when it can.
- **Lack of innovation:** Government's attempts at service delivery have failed because existing models of service delivery do not target problems in unique ways.
→ Institutional barriers to innovation.

“ Levels of Analysis

2. **Theorising the state** the state to understand its priorities, goals and the outcomes relate to the nature of the state.

2c) Politics of Infrastructure

- Infrastructure does not only create or structure our society and economy, it demonstrates what governments think about belonging, representation and access.
- Therefore, infrastructure planning is not only about connectivity; it requires policy planning and re-planning processes that examine and reflect how government treats belonging, representation and access.
- This is a future dilemma and not a result of the colonial and apartheid states.

All the best with
your projects!

