Climate justice and water: first stage, background research

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Climate Justice and Water Management in Durban, Maputo and Nairobi

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Ansteys Beach, Durban
A Critical Geopolitics of Durban Water and Sanitation: How Hydropolitics Can Inform Climate Adaptation Debates

by Patrick Bond
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Original theorists of traditional geopolitics – especially the Germans Friedrich Ratzel and Karl Haushofer, and the Brit Halford Mackinder – were concerned with intra-imperialist interstate relations, and they generated ideas on behalf of oppressive, expansionist practices. A “critical geopolitics,” in contrast, emerged to contest imperialist ideology, guided by Yves Lacoste’s (1976) “Geography is primarily for waging war” and Geir-Ó Tuathail’s (1996) Critical Geopolitics. Attention also turned to localized geopolitics, “from below,” involving the contestation of space by social movements, in which Paul Routledge (1996, 1) sees “a critical engagement with oppositional forces to the state.” Where water is specifically concerned, the new series on Water, Geopolitics and the New World Order by Terje Tvedt, Graham Chapman and Roar Hagen (2010, 4) breaks new ground in exploring how “characteristics of geographical space affected different forms of power and power struggles,” which under conditions of climate change will be especially important:

Any change in climate will manifest itself directly or indirectly in societies as changes in the water landscape. There will either be more rain or less rain, more melting of the glaciers or less melting, more droughts or fewer droughts, more evaporation or less evaporation, or no important changes at all. The water landscape – be it disappearing or overflowing rivers and lakes, or altered or continued patterns of rainfall – will be very important metaphors and mirrors of political relations. Yet, research on the relationship between political power and water, and how the relationship between water or nature and modern society is mediated or regulated by political power, is still far from being mainstream social science. Since water is both universal and particular, and continuously flowing, and all societies have to adapt to or control the way it flows, a water-system perspective is a powerful entry point for comparative research and analyses of geopolitics and collective action (Tvedt, Chapman and Hagen 2010, 4-9).

Water-system management in Durban, South Africa, is lauded as amongst Africa’s – and the Third World’s – finest. Yet acute paradoxes are increasingly obvious, in part because spatial relations in Durban are fraught with contradictions. While introducing South Africa’s first Free Basic Water access pilot from 1996, nevertheless lowest-income Durban water customers in the black townships suffered dramatic overall price increases and lower consumption, and then with expansion of the free supply in 2008, water-rights universality was dropped as municipal policy in favour of a property-based means-test whose impact is to blunt class-desegregation processes. While rolling out water to poor people, nevertheless disconnections and flow delimitation were rife, along with hotly-contested sewerage options outside the “sanitation belt” of the city (where it is allegedly too

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Key sites for research and praxis

King Shaka International Airport

Umzinyathi, Inanda Dam

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Umphilo waManzi

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

Ansteys, The Bluff
Durban sites of climate significance

- Zimbali gated community
- King Shaka Airport
- Inanda Dam
- Thor Chemicals, Assmang manganese smelter
- Phoenix Gandhi Settlement
- Umhlanga edge city, mall
- Bisasar Road landfill/CDM
- Moses Mabhida stadium
- Durban Univ of Technology
- Intl Convention Centre
- Durban City Hall, Central Business District, US Consulate
- Canadian consulate, Musgrave
- Univ of KwaZulu-Natal CCS
- Durban Harbour
- Island View refinery
- Chatsworth electricity struggles, Bul-Bul dump
- South Durban Community Environmental Alliance
- Engen refinery, Mondi paper
- Sapref refinery
- Toyota assembly plant
Durban water courses
bad memories: equal access to water?

Durban’s ‘sanitation belt’
Figure 1: Monthly household water consumption by three levels of house value, 2003

Figure 2: Change in unit price of water by monthly consumption level, 1995-2003

Figure 3: Price impact on water consumption by household wealth level, 1997-2003

Figure 4: Price of second block of water in major South African cities, 2008

Source: Bailey and Buckley 2005.
South Durban rivers under threat: Umhlatuzana (into port) and Umlaas
where is the money?
Durban’s R3.1 bn ($390mn)
‘Alien’s Handbag’

out of sight: vast backlogs of housing, water/sanitation, electricity, clinics
WHAT WE'VE BUILT
SO QUICKLY IS TESTAMENT TO
OUR REAL COMMITMENT!

Huh! ..exactly!
White elephant protested: victory at Warwick Junction against new mall

next door to Mabhida: perfectly functional 52,000-seater Kings Park Stadium hosting Sharks rugby
Durban’s COP 17
Conference of Polluters
28 Nov-9 Dec 2011
International Convention Centre
Copenhagen Accord, COP 15, December 2009

- Jacob Zuma (SA)
- Lula da Silva (Brazil)
- Barack Obama (USA)
- Wen Jiabao (China)
- Manmohan Singh (India)

"they broke the UN!"
(Bill McKibbon, 350.org)

non-binding!
4 degree increase!
Durban’s Conference of Polluters (COP17): what will happen from 28 Nov until 9 Dec?

UNFCCC negotiations
UN & Durban officials want ‘civilised’ society and business in marquee
Civil society unity for Durban Univ of Technology alternatives summit
join us: C17
‘Amandla oMa’
alternative civil society summit
at the Durban University of Technology
'going away party - for the beach'!

July 7, 2010: World Cup ‘fanfest’ party

December 3 march route: Curries Fountain to beach
Climate Justice Now!SA opposes emissions, privatised electricity, Eskom coal and nuclear, carbon trading: demands conservation/renewables and right to water/power to avoid this danger: