The political economy of water management: Neoliberalism and social resistance in South Africa

Presented to the CCS Seminar
1 September 2014

by Patrick Bond, Senior Professor of Development Studies and director of the Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban
"Most progressive water utility in Africa" wins 2014 Stockholm Industry Water Award

Dakar and Stockholm (28 May 2014) – eThekwini Water & Sanitation, a part of Durban Municipality in South Africa, has been named the 2014 winner of the Stockholm Industry Water Award, for its transformative and inclusive approach to providing water and sanitation services.

“This recognition reflects the work of our whole team over the past 22 years and is a tremendous honour for all of us here in Durban,” says Neil Macleod, head of eThekwini Water and Sanitation.

South Africa’s constitution from 1996, praised as a model for inclusion of social rights, enshrined the human right to water. Local government was tasked with putting it into practice. Soon after, Durban, one of the country’s main urban centres, expanded its administrative boundaries to include 3.5 million people, some of them living in poorly serviced rural areas with huge water and sanitation challenges. The eThekwini municipality decided to face these challenges head-on.

In the past 14 years, 1.3 million additional people in greater Durban have been connected to piped water and 700,000 people have been provided with access to toilets. In respecting the constitutional right to water while maintaining financial sustainability, access to basic water supply and sanitation is provided at no cost to poor families, while higher levels of service and consumption are charged at full cost.

In addition to successfully providing basic services to a large and diverse population, eThekwini Water and Sanitation is at the forefront of exploring technical and social solutions... and has worked with some of the world’s major actors and knowledge hubs in water and sanitation as well as development, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Borda, Eawag, and DHI. Its methods have been replicated across the country and region, and eThekwini representatives are successfully sharing and disseminating their findings and working methods.
Durban’s water awards

• 2002 National Geographic award for sanitation,
• 2003 Dubai International Award for Best Practices (for sewage disposal education),
• 2003 South African national ‘Excellence in Innovation’ award,
• Ford Foundation’s 2003 Impumelelo Award,
• ‘best municipal delivery’ and ‘Blue Drop’ awards

Bill Gates (2010) blogged, Durban’s Neil Macleod ‘has been a leader in thinking through how to improve sanitation for the poor in Durban’
Reality: water price rises, lower consumption, sanitation protest, bulk infrastructure failure, maintenance breakdown

eThekwini is the most celebrated water department in Africa

By providing clean water and improved toilets in "township" settlements, Durban is tackling one of the remaining vestiges of apartheid

Durban’s Poor Get Water Services Long Denied
WE LOVE DURBAN

From hydroelectric turbines to 7.5MWh of electricity produced from landfill waste, Durban is right to be proud of its renewable energy achievements.

And that's just the start: other programs include energy saving Wonderbag cookers, and solar mapping, forecasting and subsidies to drive the industry.

misplaced back-slapping, March 2014 'interurban entrepreneurial competition’

OUR JOURNEY TO BETTER
Durban's greenwashing deceits

OPINION | PATRICK BOND

Working frenetically from nouveau-riche Umhlanga, the Carver Media company just made themselves a lead candidate for the fiercest anti-marketing case method example you’d ever encounter at Wits Business School, a Mad Men’s nightmare script of a brand gone bust. The firm’s Praneetha and Avissah Anoth committed the most crazed social media mistakes imaginable in the course of high-priced, last-minute sock-puppetry, all aimed at advancing Durban’s bid for an utterly banal environmental prize.

misplaced back-slapping taken to extremes
WE LOVE DURBAN

From hydroelectric turbines to 7.5MWh of electricity produced from landfill waste, Durban is right to be proud of its renewable energy achievements.

And that's just the start: other programs include energy saving Wonderbag cookers, and solar mapping, forecasting and subsidies to drive the industry.

MINIMIZE

OUR JOURNEY TO BETTER
## 20 Years of Freedom and Democracy

**We have a good story to tell**

### Population
- **1996**: 40.6 million
- **2011**: 51.8 million

### Living Standards (LSM) 5-10
- **1994**: 13.8 million
- **2010**: 23.5 million

### Size of the Economy (GDP)
- **1996**: $143.7 billion
- **2011**: $400 billion

### Registered Taxpayers
- **1994**: 1.7 million
- **2013**: 13.7 million

### Access to Services
- **Electricity**
  - **1996**: 23.5 million people
  - **2011**: 43.9 million people
- **Water**
  - **1996**: 24.6 million people
  - **2011**: 38 million people
- **Sanitation**
  - **1996**: 20.4 million people
  - **2011**: 32.4 million people

### Total Tax Collected
- **1994**: R114 billion
- **2013**: R814 billion

### HIV/AIDS: Mother to Child Transmission
- **2002**: 20.8%
- **2013**: 1.5%

### Pensions & Grants
- **1996**: 2.4 million
- **2011**: 15.3 million

### Permanently Employed
- **2002**: 9 million
- **2013**: 13.2 million

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Sources: Independent audit by Goldman Sachs (New York), Stats SA and ANC Manifesto 2014

**TOGETHER WE MOVE**

**SOUTH AFRICA FORWARD**
Figure 0.8. Public social expenditure in OECD countries and emerging economies

Total public social expenditure, latest year available\(^1,2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>OECD countries</th>
<th>Emerging economies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>28.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Finland</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>24.0</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
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<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
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<td>Norway</td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>Slovak Republic</td>
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<td>Russian Federation</td>
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<td>China</td>
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<td>India</td>
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</tbody>
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\(^1\) Data refer to 2007 for OECD member countries, 2005 for Brazil, 2006-07 for India and South Africa and 2008 for China.
\(^2\) Policy areas covered include old-age, survivors, incapacity-related benefits, family, health, active labour market policies, unemployment, housing.

Information on data for Israel: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602.

SA has a lower public debt than Malaysia, Brazil, Argentina, Thailand.

Could Nhlanha Nene spend more to reduce poverty?
‘RDP’ housing

- half as large and constructed with flimsier materials than during apartheid;
- characterised by water and electricity self-disconnecting meters and overpricing;
- with lower-grade state services including
  - rare rubbish collection,
  - inhumane sanitation,
  - dirt roads,
  - no street lights,
  - no sidewalks, and
  - inadequate storm-water drainage
- located even further from jobs and amenities than under apartheid
where has the government built new ‘RDP’ housing schemes within richest province?

as far away as possible!
Mabeskraal: Our water troubles still run deep

The state claims 95% of people have access to water, but the water affairs department admits that only 65% have flowing water.

Mabeskraal, a village of 10,000 people in the North West, has not had piped water for three years. Officially, however, it does have access to water. Its people are part of the 94.7% of the population that the minister of water affairs, Edna Molewa, says has "access to clean and safe drinking water". "Access" here means infrastructure, but not necessarily that water is flowing.
2. MEETING BASIC NEEDS
   2.1 Problem statement
   2.2 Vision and objectives
   2.3 Jobs through public works
   2.4 Land reform
   2.5 Housing and services
   2.6 Water and sanitation
   2.7 Energy and electrification
   2.8 Telecommunications
   2.9 Transport
   2.10 Environment
   2.11 Nutrition
   2.12 Health care
   2.13 Social security and social welfare
The RDP's short-term aim is to provide every person with adequate facilities for health. The RDP will achieve this by establishing a national water and sanitation programme which aims to provide all households with a clean, safe water supply of 20-30 litres per capita per day (lcd) within 200 metres, an adequate/safe sanitation facility per site, and a refuse removal system to all urban households.

In the medium term, the RDP aims to provide an on-site supply of 50 - 60lcd of clean water, improved on-site sanitation, and an appropriate household refuse collection system. Water supply to nearly 100 per cent of rural households should be achieved over the medium term, and adequate sanitation facilities should be provided to at least 75 per cent of rural households.
Water – RDP promise, 1994

To ensure that every person has an adequate water supply, the national tariff structure must include the following:

- **a lifeline tariff** to ensure that all South Africans are able to afford water services sufficient for health and hygiene requirements;

- in urban areas, **a progressive block tariff** to ensure that the long-term costs of supplying large-volume users are met and that there is a **cross-subsidy** to promote affordability for the poor, and

- in rural areas, a tariff that covers operating and maintenance costs of services, and recovers capital costs from users on the basis of a cross-subsidy from urban areas in cases of limited rural affordability.
South Africa’s right to water? (1996)

• ‘everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being... everyone has the right to have access to... sufficient water’
  

• 2003-09 lawsuit by Soweto activists (Mazibuko et al) and Coalition Against Water Privatisation (CAWP) against Johannesburg government (following Paris-based Suez): http://www.law.wits.ac.za/cals
two features of *Mazibuko v Johannesburg* (most important water-rights case to date)

- **How much water?**
  - *City of Joburg and Suez (2001): 25 litres/capita/day*
  - *Phiri activists, CAWP, CALS (2003): 50 l/d*
  - *High Court (Tsoka in April 2008): 50 l/d*
  - *Constitutional Court (Oct 2009): ‘we don’t DO policy’*

- **What delivery mechanism?**
  - *Joburg, Suez: pre-payment meters*
  - *Phiri et al: credit meters (as in white areas)*
  - *High Court: pre-payment meters are discriminatory*
  - *ConCourt: no problem with pre-payment meters*
RDP mandate became ANC ‘Free Basic Services’ electoral promise, December 2000

In the context of municipal legitimacy problems: ‘ANC-led local government will provide all residents with a free basic amount of water, electricity and other municipal services, so as to help the poor. Those who use more than the basic amounts will pay for the extra they use.’
two eco-social features of the Free Basic Water promise:

• The promise is based on a ‘universal entitlement’ - basic needs should be met (regardless of income), consistent with the Constitution’s Bill of Rights;

• The promise also means that those who consume more should pay more per unit after the free basic supply, which promotes ‘cross-subsidies’ (i.e., redistribution).
What choices do we have when pricing water?

- Curve A is ‘short-run marginal cost curve’ for a utility (‘commodification’);
- Curve B is a typical ‘cost-plus markup’ tariff which aims to ‘get the prices right’ (avoid distorting the market) so as to attract privatisation investment;
- Curve C is the ‘eco-social justice tariff’ which combines a free lifeline, redistribution from high- to low-volume users, and an incentive to conserve (i.e., the ANC promise): in short, ‘decommodification’.
**Figure 1:** Monthly household water consumption by three levels of house value, 2003

Source: Bailey and Buckley 2005.

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

Source: Bailey and Buckley 2005.

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

Source: Bailey and Buckley 2005.

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

Durban: three income groups with very different consumption patterns (2003)

Source: Reg Bailey and Chris Buckley (2004), ‘Modelling Domestic Water Tariffs’, UKZN.
Durban: change in real water tariff – Free Basic Water applied in 1998-99

Source: Reg Bailey and Chris Buckley (2004), 'Modelling Domestic Water Tariffs', UKZN.
Durban: lowest-income 1/3 cut back consumption dramatically as price doubled in real terms

Source: Reg Bailey and Chris Buckley (2004), ‘Modelling Domestic Water Tariffs’, UKZN.
2006 UN report shows Durban to have highest price for second block of water amongst sample of Third World cities.
2008 CALS/Cohre report shows Durban to extremely convex tariff curves amongst major SA cities.
2008 CALS/Cohre report shows Durban (full pressure) had second-highest 2\textsuperscript{nd} block price, after ‘Maritzburg.
2008 CALS/Cohre report shows Durban to have second-highest 12 kl/hh/month charge, after 'Maritzburg
2008 CALS/Cohre report shows Durban (semi-pressure) ties as least-generous cross-subsidisation to ‘indigent’ for 12kl: zero
2008 CALS/Cohre report shows Durban disconnects rapidly upon nonpayment:

“Only one municipality - eThekwini – provided us with figures on disconnections. According to this information, between October 2007 and March 2008, eThekwini has issued 20,669 water disconnection notices. Of these, 15,106 households have been disconnected and the remaining households have had water restricting devices installed, as opposed to being outright disconnected.”
2008 CALS/Cohre report:

“In eThekwini, when a person falls into arrears the notification is printed on the account, providing a toll-free help line and information of offices where the account can be paid. If there is no response from the customer, the water supply is restricted to a flow of 1 litre per minute. Flow restrictors are installed in the water connections of all domestic customers who have not paid for water for 60 days and who owe the Council more than R110 for water used. If people tamper with the flow restrictor, the connection is completely removed and a standpipe is installed at the closest municipal premises to allow for the provision of FBW.”
Technical fix: Gates on sanitation

New Approaches Needed on Sanitation

Julie Frederikse, 19 July 2011

No innovation in the past 200 years has done more to save lives and improve health than the sanitation revolution triggered by the invention of the toilet.

The little-known fact was stated by Sylvia Mathews Burwell, president of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Development Program, in her keynote address to the third annual AfricaSan conference in Kigali, Rwanda, on Tuesday.

But, she said, the innovation did not go far enough. "It only reached one-third of the world. What we need are new approaches. New ideas. In short, we need to reinvent the toilet," Burwell said.
“Reinventing the Toilet” is a key part of the Gates Foundation's effort to innovate in the area of sanitation. This $3 million grant goes to eight universities to develop an easily installable toilet that doesn't rely on water, a sewer connection or power, at a usage cost of no more than 5 (US) cents per day.

The sole African grantee is the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa, which is developing both a Urinary Diversion toilet and a recycling system for solid waste which both produce fertilizer for use in sustainable agriculture.
Urine Diversion (UD) toilet: water-saving ecologically appropriate, inexpensive, safe
Urine Diversion toilet: a neoliberal loo?
Durban’s ‘sanitation belt’

bad memories: equal access to water?
race segregation unchanged, 2001-11
Income self-identification in Durban in 2011

One dot = 100 people

- R0 – R4 800
- R4 801 – R19 600
- R19 601 – R76 400
- R76 401 – R307 600
- R307 601 – R1 228 800
- R1 228 800 –

extreme (colour-coded) class segregation
Durban: Shack Dwellers and Real Estate Speculation

**World Cup works**
- New Constructions
- Upgraded or enlarged constructions
- Public viewing areas for World Cup matches
- Road Under construction
- Areas with ongoing requalification works

**Social marginalization**
Adults (over 20 years old) without high school in service (matric) (%) (2001)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>100</th>
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**Urban Space Reorganization**
- City center
- Not-populated or low-populated areas
- Informal settlements (2006)
- Eviction areas (shackdwellers, homeless, street traders, irregularly occupied buildings)
- Housing-delivery projects
- Transit camps
- Forced relocations
- Forced relocations of street children
- Protests and people's resistance

Sources: C. Dardagan, It's done! It's beautiful!, The Mercury, 2009; B. Gerretsen, 2010 jobs bonanza ends, The Mercury, 2009; Durban-2010 FIFA World Cup host city ( fifaworldcup.durban.gov.za); N. Toisi, Rounded up and shipped out, Mail Guardian, 2010; StreetNet International; A. Sanpath, Are you ready?, Daily News, 2010; www.abahlali.org; M. Huchzermeyer et al., Confronting fragmentation housing and urban development in a democratising society, 2003; Google Earth; field researches and observations.
Durban’s Moses Mabhida: 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!
ubiquitous ‘service delivery protests’
SA’s social protest rate, 2005-13

3000 violent (thousands more non-violent) from 2009-12

On 19 March the Minister of Police, Mr. Nathi Mthetwa, informed parliament about the number of ‘crowd management incidents’ that occurred during the three years from 1 April 2009.\(^1\) Table 1, compares the new data with similar statistics for the preceding five years.

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<th>Peaceful</th>
<th>Unrest</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>7,382</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>8,004</td>
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<td>2005/06</td>
<td>9,809</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>10,763</td>
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<td>2006/07</td>
<td>8,703</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>9,446</td>
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<td>2007/08</td>
<td>6,431</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>7,136</td>
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<td>2008/09</td>
<td>6,125</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>6,843</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>7,897</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>8,905</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>11,681</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>12,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12(^3)</td>
<td>9,942</td>
<td>1,091</td>
<td>11,033</td>
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<td>2012/13</td>
<td>10,517</td>
<td>1,882</td>
<td>12,399</td>
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</table>

Table 1. Crowd management incidents\(^2\)
Freedom of the Shitty
# Durban water data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area Served</td>
<td>2,297 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size/population of service area</td>
<td>3.1 million people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volume of water produced</td>
<td>28,800,000,000 m³/year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water consumers served</td>
<td>977,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of connections</td>
<td>394,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water coverage (% population with a connection or within 200 m of a standpipe or other source of water)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of metered connections</td>
<td>394,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of consumers provided with waterborne sewerage, pit latrines or septic tanks</td>
<td>510,534</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit rating (for the municipality)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Short-term</td>
<td>A1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Long-term</td>
<td>AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Commercial Users</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Core policies for nonpayment** | - Users subject to disconnection if arrears surpass a set amount (deemed by the CFO) | - First notice: a warning on the monthly bill  
- Second notice: a letter noting the risk of disconnection  
- If no response, restriction of water supply, allowing for a daily consumption of 500 liters per six-hour period, but at an extremely low flow rate. Charges continue to accrue |
| **Options**             | - Pay outstanding arrears  
- Conclude a credit agreement (on approval by management) and pay relevant charges over time | - Pay outstanding arrears (plus the cost of a new connection, if disconnection has occurred)  
- Apply for a flow limiter and sign an acknowledgment of debt |
<p>| <strong>If not heeded?</strong>       | - Total disconnection, user charged for disconnection cost. Service reinstated on payment of the entire debt plus the cost of a new connection, and a revised deposit | - If tampering with the flow restrictor occurs on more than three occasions, the customer may lose the entire connection |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Unit Measure</th>
<th>Monthly Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Relations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue improvement per customer service agent</td>
<td>Currency</td>
<td>13,000 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools visited</td>
<td>Quantity/number</td>
<td>36 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of street theater events held</td>
<td>Quantity/number</td>
<td>103 (May 2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Call Centre</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>% calls dropped (does not include calls dropped within 5 seconds)</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>3.5 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% calls answered within 20 seconds</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>69 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% calls answered within 30 seconds</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>21 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total calls answered</td>
<td>Quantity/number</td>
<td>56,427 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban Customer Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>% meters read in a month</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>99 (April 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% meters billed on actual readings in a month</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>99 (April 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% connections made in less than 14 days</td>
<td>Percentage (%)</td>
<td>77 (April 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># connections with no advance on the meter for 90 days</td>
<td>Quantity/number</td>
<td>4,215 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># flow limiter connections with consumption &gt; 200 liters per day</td>
<td>Quantity/number</td>
<td>3,722 (April 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># meters that have not been read for more than 90 days</td>
<td>Quantity/number</td>
<td>1,703 (May 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of new households, Durban leads SA in declining supply of in-house water: 1996 (62%) - 2004 (50%)

Figure 3-35: Percentage of households with access to water in dwelling

Source: SA State of the Cities Report, p.3-26
Durban’s growing population without adequate sanitation:
2001 (30%) - 2004 (32%)

Figure 3-39: Percentage of households with access to VIP toilet or less
Durban was worst of SA's big cities on some sanitation and waste disposal measures

(Source: SA Cities Alliance)
Durban was worst of SA’s big cities on water and sanitation access, by far

(Source: SA Cities Alliance)