

Legitimizing Inequality

A Political Ecology of Water in the Waterberg, South Africa

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1. In South Africa, inequality in water access along racial and class lines has become normalized and naturalized (*this thesis*).
2. Water inequality is a legacy of colonialism and apartheid, which is currently being reproduced and deepened by neoliberal capitalism (*this thesis*).
3. The commodification of both water resources and water services contributes to normalize uneven patterns of access to and use of water (*this thesis*).
4. Neoliberal nature conservation is instrumental in depicting the lack of water for some citizens as a 'natural' fact (*this thesis*).
5. In the Waterberg plateau, the black poor have become surplus both to the needs of white agrarian capital and to the politics of place of white landowners, hence their water demands are dismissed both by farmers and by the state (*this thesis*).
6. In post-apartheid South Africa, poverty and inequality have persisted and at times even increased notwithstanding the introduction of an extensive social protection system.
7. In 1996, the African National Congress (ANC) replaced a transformative and mostly socialist program (Reconstruction and Development Programme) with an orthodox neoliberal economic policy (Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy).
8. The ANC has put job creation at the forefront of its development and poverty reduction strategies, and yet unemployment remains very high and a number of jobs (such as those on farms, for example) do not help people being 'lifted out' of poverty.
9. Redistribution of land and especially water resources has been very limited since the transition to democracy.
10. Private conservation means that 'nature' is out of reach not only for the local poor and working class, but also for foreign PhD students.
11. Driving skills are key to a successful fieldwork in rural South Africa.