The persisting conditions of 'Day Zero': How chronic crisis challenges media narratives about the Cape Town Water Crisis

by
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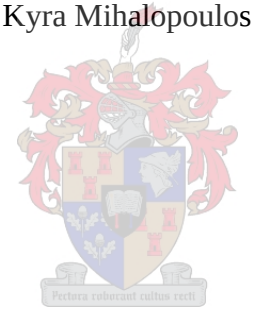

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Declaration

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Abstract

The Cape Town water crisis of 2017 to 2019 became national and international news due to the risk of a major metropole running out of water. What this portrayal neglects to include is the fact that for a significant proportion of households in the city, 'Day Zero' (the day the taps would run dry) was already a daily reality long before the onset of the drought. Traditional media, such as newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television broadcasts, framed the water crisis as the 'great equaliser'. However, when you begin to unpack this narrative and the media coverage around the crisis, the idea of it being a 'great equaliser' quickly unravels. Developments prior to and during the drought reveals infrastructural inequalities and conditions of living that Vigh (2008) refers to as 'chronic crisis'. That is, for the vast majority of the poor in Cape Town's informal settlements, the water 'crisis' is experienced not as a singular, extraordinary event, but rather as an enduring, chronic condition which is experienced on a daily basis. Regarded as 'ordinary suffering' and unspectacular 'slow violence', these communities often have to perpetually struggle to access a basic means of survival under circumstances rendered invisible to a wider middle-class public. In this light, this project aims to show that how we understand the experience of the drought is multifaceted and tied to historic injustice, the presence and absence of infrastructure, and what role media – both traditional and social – played in the crisis. It seeks to show that the narrative of a 'great equaliser' should be problematized as crisis is not experienced homogenously. This study collected data by conducting in-person formal and informal interviews, doing participant observation, and analysing media documentation to construct an ethnography to highlight the varied experiences of Cape Town's 'Day Zero'. In the context of the Kildare Road spring, I highlight how the crisis did not start, nor end, with the 'Day Zero' campaign. Rather, it started long before, and is still being experienced.

Opsomming

Die Kaapstadse waterkrisis van 2017 tot 2019 het nasionale en internasionale nuus geword vanweë die risiko dat 'n groot metropool sonder water sou wees. Wat hierdie uitbeelding versuim om in te sluit, is die feit dat 'Dag Zero' (die dag waarop die krane droog sou raak) vir 'n beduidende deel van die huishoudings in die stad al 'n daaglikse werklikheid was lank voor die aanvang van die droogte. Tradisionele media, soos koerante, radio-uitsendings en televisie-uitsendings, het die waterkrisis omskryf as die 'groot gelykmaker'. As u egter hierdie vertelling en die mediadekking rondom die krisis begin uitpak, ontrafel die idee dat dit 'n 'groot gelykmaker' is. Ontwikkelings voor en tydens die droogte onthul infrastruktuurongelykhede en lewensomstandighede waarna Vigh (2008) 'chroniese krisis' noem. Dit wil sê, vir die oorgrote meerderheid van die armes in Kaapstad se informele nedersettings, word die waterkrisis nie as 'n unieke, buitengewone gebeurtenis ervaar nie, maar eerder as 'n blywende, chroniese toestand wat daagliks ervaar word. Hierdie gemeenskappe word beskou as 'gewone lyding' en 'n onspektakulêre 'stadige geweld', en hulle moet voortdurend sukkel om toegang te verkry tot 'n basiese oorlewingsmiddel onder omstandighede wat onsigbaar is vir 'n breër middelklas-publiek. In hierdie lig het hierdie projek ten doel om aan te toon dat die manier waarop ons die ervaring van die droogte verstaan, veelsydig is en gekoppel is aan historiese ongeregtigheid, die aanwesigheid en afwesigheid van infrastruktuur, en watter rol media - sowel tradisioneel as sosiaal - in die krisis gespeel het. Dit poog om aan te toon dat die vertelling van 'n 'groot gelykmaker' geproblematiseer moet word, aangesien krisis nie homogeen ervaar word nie. Hierdie studie het data versamel deur personlike formele en informele onderhoude te voer, waarneming van deelnemers te doen en mediadokumentasie te ontleed om 'n etnografie te konstrueer om die uiteenlopende ervarings van Kaapstad se 'Day Zero' uit te lig. In die konteks van die Kildare Road-fontein beklemtoon ek hoe die krisis nie begin of eindig met die 'Day Zero'-veldtog nie. Dit het eerder lank tevore begin en word nog steeds ervaar.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge first the participants of this project- the Kildare Road Spring community, with special mention of Riyaz Rawoot. This project would not have existed without their love and activism for the spring. The spring is without a doubt in my mind a heritage site, and I hope this project honours that.

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To my friends and family, I am grateful for all the love and support. In the loneliest moments of research and writing, you have carried me through. I hope I can return the favour someday.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of acronyms

ANC: African National Congress

CoCT: City of Cape Town

CPT: Cape Town

DA: Democratic Alliance

EMG: Environmental Monitoring Agency

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

RC: Resolve Communications

RI: Request for information

SAA: South African Airlines

SU: Stellenbosch University

The City: The City of Cape Town

UCT: University of Cape Town

US: United States

WCC: Water Crisis Coalition

WMD: Water Management Devices

WPRR: Water Press Riyaz Rawoot

1. Introduction

The first time I went to the Kildare Road spring was in February of 2018. It was late morning on a Saturday and the queue to get to the makeshift pipe where you collect water is fairly long. I count approximately 50 people waiting in line. The people in line vary in many ways. There are children, teenagers, two people wearing University of Cape Town (UCT) pullovers. There are older people who scold their children who run too far or make too much noise. There are families of varied sizes and people standing on their own, trying to keep hold of several plastic bottles in one hand. Looking at the people queued here, it is easy to understand why this space is touted as being representative of the 'rainbow nation'. However, the only noticeable common thread is the plastic bottles that people are holding or are placed next to them. The motivation for being here on a sunny Saturday morning is clear. After about 40 minutes of standing off to the side of the spring, I have watched the line evolve. At one point it was short, consisting of just ten people. Shortly after that, it is substantially longer than when I arrived. The informal guards who carry water bottles back and forth to the cars are running without pause, hoping to cash in on the large crowd. In such a short amount of time, I have witnessed the space transform from being loud and busy, to quiet and calm, with only a few people waiting to collect water. It is also on this visit that I meet Riyaz Rawoot for the first time.

Riyaz comes up to me and asks which newspaper I write for. I tell him that I am not a journalist, but rather a master's student from Stellenbosch University (SU). We sit down together on a patch of grass just off to the side of the water collection point. In my mind, this would be an informal discussion about the spring, but Riyaz has had this discussion several times over the last few weeks and can now easily reduce a complex situation into a 40-minute presentation. So, I sit and listen. Riyaz's main theme in this discussion is that the city council is unwilling to work with the community to come to an agreement regarding how the spring should be run and used. For Riyaz, this is personal, as his family had lived in the area prior to being forcefully removed during Apartheid. It is clear from our discussion that Riyaz has come to be somewhat of a gatekeeper – or as he ironically calls himself, the "water master" – of the Kildare Road spring. He cares deeply about this space and it's important to him to ensure that things run smoothly. The complaints that stream in from residents who live in the area are personal for him. Not because they are directed at him, but because he understands the residents' point of views and tries to address their concerns and issues. Throughout our discussion, Riyaz is

interrupted by people saying hello from their spot in the queue, or by the informal guards letting him know what is happening on the road or informing him that they are going to take a break for a short while. So much of this space seems to centre around him, and I wonder if this is because of his character, or perhaps because of what he has done for this space. Riyaz is responsible for the makeshift infrastructure that can be found here. He built the outlet pipe which allows multiple people to collect water at the same time – a more efficient infrastructure compared to the single pipe that was previously in its place. He also put up the various laminated signs reminding people to be considerate of others ("25l for me, 25l for you"), including a petition he started to block the City of Cape Town (CoCT) from moving the collection point, firmly hanging on the nearby tree. He organizes the informal car guards, puts up tape to guide the queues, and thereafter tells me that he usually comes here twice a day – morning and evening. These are the rush hours of the spring, and he likes to keep an eye out to make sure things do not get out of hand. Part of Riyaz's presentation concern the complaints around the spring. People living in the area have several issues with it. These issues range from noise pollution, traffic congestion, safety concerns, and the site being left 'dirty'. As these complaints come up, Riyaz has tried to solve them, but he is often left feeling like the complaints are masked ways of saying something entirely different: this area is not open to the public.

After our first meeting, Riyaz and I would see each other throughout the remainder of 2018. His passion for the spring reveals itself as a proxy for many other experiences and opinions he has. If I had to try to label him, I would say he is an active citizen. But my labelling of him is not the only perception he has to entertain. On a rainy weekday, we meet up for my first official interview with him. Our meeting this time is very different in nature, and there is a noticeable change in his demeanour. He is as friendly as ever, but the way he talks about the spring, and the events around it, has changed. On the 25th of May 2018, the spring was sealed off by the CoCT. On my first visit back at the spring since it had been closed, I felt emotional. The site that I had only known as busy and vibrant was now desolate. A large cement block covered the water outlet. When Riyaz sounded disillusioned while talking about the spring, I was not surprised. If the closure of the spring that I had visited just a few times left me feeling disheartened, I could only imagine how someone who put so much time and effort into the space felt. We spent a lot of time talking that day, but I found myself skirting around bringing up the spring. When I got home and started writing up my notes from the interview, I noticed several gaps in my questions and the discussion overall. The gaps were where my questions

about the spring, and what had happened, should have been. These questions, however, seemed inappropriate.

After that interview with Riyaz, I realized that trying to capture the complexity of the spring, as well as the broader issue of the water crisis, was going to be complicated. Roitman and Mbembe write that "the physicality of the crisis reduces people to a precarious condition that affects the very way in which they define themselves" (1993: 330). The discussion with Riyaz would be my first encounter with this 'precarious condition' that played out during the water crisis. Because of this, I have come to view the water crisis as having two sides. The first is the public side, which involves the media, politics, and public engagement from civil society. The second is the private side, which exists behind closed doors and on the level of the personal. Looking at the water crisis through this lens has allowed for a better understanding of crisis, as it too has both public and private sides. The following chapters will discuss the water crisis through the lens of discourse, how media has documented this crisis, and how infrastructure – the presence and absence of it – plays a central role. The aim is to show that how we understand the experience of the drought is multifaceted, and thus needs to be considered not just as an event which passed when the winter rain came, but as one tied to historic injustice, infrastructure inaccessibility, and a campaign that tried to manage it all. What is important to take away from this is that the spring tells a story that neither started nor ended with the #DayZero campaign. It started long before and is still being told. For this reason, this project does not have a clear ending. Rather, it culminates with a reflection on how events come into and then recede from public consciousness, leaving only those who are still living with severely compromised access to water with the bill.

1.2. Context

Irish Town, now referred to as Newlands Village, was previously home to a diverse group of people. In the 1890s, a prominent settlement of Irish immigrants settled in the area around Kildare Road. The area was mostly lower working class, with The Ohlsson brewery employing many of the Irish settlers. The Irish community moved away in the twentieth century, and thereafter the area, known for its single-story cottages and close community, became a mixed-race area (McCracken, 1992: para 1). Until the 1960s, Irish Town was a middle-class, suburban neighbourhood with residents of different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The area is roughly located between Main Street and Newlands Avenue, and Governors Lane to the

Newlands Spring. In the 1960s, Irish Town underwent a transformation both in name and in residential composition. As the bulldozers of the Apartheid regime sunk their teeth into the soil of Irish Town, they ripped up its name as well as its residents classified as 'non-white', dumping them elsewhere (Law, 2007: 59). The Kildare Road spring in this area was a space where residents came to collect water, engage with neighbours, and catch up on the neighbourhood gossip. However, the space of the spring changed with the forced removals, as the National Party dictated the area to be reserved for 'whites' only. Today, 26 years after the first democratic election in South Africa, Newlands Village remains a mostly white, middle to upper-class area. The Kildare Road spring offers an interesting insight into the complex past and present of the suburb formally known as Irish Town.

This project will look at the Kildare Road spring as a space through which the water crisis unfolds, and how crisis can be seen as a chronic condition for some. At the time of conceptualizing this project, the spring was open to the public. On the 25th of May 2018, the spring was closed by council workers. Prior to its closure, there were numerous debates and engagements around various issues, most of which were focused on three questions: who should have access to the spring, to whom does the spring belong, and how does the area's history factor into all of this? My project aims to investigate several answers to these questions by considering how historical inequality, access to resources, and crisis management by government have played out through social and traditional media to tell the story of the #DayZero campaign and the Kildare Road spring.

1.3. Timeline of the drought

The Cape Town drought's starting point is disputed. For some, it began in 2015/2016 when the third winter rain season was far below average. For others, it began in 2017 when the CoCT began their "critical water shortage plan" (Robins, 2019: 6 & Visser, 2018: 1). Media coverage on the decreasing dam levels started in 2015. Level 2 water restrictions were introduced in January 2016, despite initial reassurance from the municipal council that there was "no concern" over the dam levels (Visser, 2018: 3). At this point, the agriculture sector was excluded from these restrictions, as municipalities focused on residential and business water consumption. The target at this point was to reduce water usage by 20%. The lack of rain was being discussed as a sign of 'changing times' – evidence that climate change was a tangible

and real threat to our daily lives. By November of the same year, water restrictions were escalated to level 3.

Only three months later in February 2017, it was announced that the Cape Town's largest supply dam, Theewaterskloof, was at 34% capacity. It then became the City's mandate to reduce water consumption by 30%, resulting in level 3B water restrictions coming into effect. At this level, water behaviour was not merely restricted, it was punished if consumption was in excess of the stipulated threshold. 'Bad' water users were fined for overconsumption and water restriction devices were rolled out for the most severe overconsuming households. Gardens could only be watered twice a week with buckets, and a media campaign was launched to inform (and strongly encourage) people to think differently about their water usage (Visser, 2018: 3). At this point, the construction of a desalination plant to support the City's water needs was considered, but ultimately was deemed too expensive and it would have had a large impact on water tariffs. One month later in March, the Western Cape was declared a disaster area by the provincial government (Visser, 2019, 2-3). This announcement meant that the province could implement 'water demand management' plans, where previously plans were specifically focused on strategy to prevent 'Day Zero'. The City started to actively reduce the water pressure in taps and, after a speech by then Executive Major Patricia De Lille, CoCT officials began talking about the 'new normal'. Level 4 water restrictions were soon introduced, which meant that municipal water could only be used for cooking, drinking, and essential washing (Visser, 2019: 3). The City started sending out notices about how people ought to consider allocating their water, disaggregating consumption along the lines of these categories (Robins, 2019: 2). The Western Cape collectively held its breath for the coming rainfall season, which again proved to be below average.

Now in crisis mode, the City increased water restriction levels to 4B, which entailed a rationing of 87 litres of water per day per person. This ration of water was managed through increasing tariffs on disobedient water users and suspending the free basic allocation of water (which previously was 6 kilolitres of water per month per household), unless you qualified as a "registered poor famil[y]" (Visser, 2018: 3). As September approached, dam levels were hovering around 27%, and level 5 water restrictions were implemented. The restrictions required commercial water usage to decrease by a further 20%, with domestic use being restricted to 20 kilolitres per day per household. The mayor warned people about experiencing water interruptions and encouraged people to store potable water. This communication fuelled

the already panicked public, leading to grocery stores having to ration the amount of water each person was permitted to purchase.

The CoCT was under heavy scrutiny due to its failure to address the crisis, as the emergency plans which were proposed several months earlier had not been implemented (such as drilling into aquifers and building temporary desalination plants). It was also around this time that the City announced that 200 water points would be stationed around the city for daily water collection for "when the taps run dry". It was expected that the estimated 3.7 million people living in Cape Town would collect 25 litres of water each day (Visser, 2018: 4). This plan fell under the category of level 7 water restrictions, which would be implemented as the most 'severe' category of restrictions. Level 7 also included a water cut-off to 75% of the city, only leaving taps on for "critical services" such as hospitals, schools, old age homes, and the collection points. In the wake of the panic, opportunistic business ventures emerged, with many people beginning to sell non-potable water from boreholes or springs. On the 1st of February 2018, level 6B restrictions were announced. People living in Cape Town and its surrounds were restricted to using 50 litres of water per day per person. At this stage, the water crisis had become so severe that even the property market felt the pinch. According to Visser, property values decreased on average by 5.5% (2018:4). Those who could afford it started drilling boreholes to the extent that, between December 2017 and January 2018, an increase from 1 500 to 23 000 boreholes were registered with the City council (Visser, 2018: 4). This picture painted by Visser shows the extent to which the drought affected households in Cape Town and the broader Western Cape region.

1.4. Aim of the project

The aim of my project is not to provide an objective answer, or even to seek out one answer to these questions. Rather, it seeks to show that spaces have history, and history is contested. Early on in my data collection, it became clear that people had different perspectives of the history, heritage, and use of the space of the Kildare Road spring. Rather than attempting to find a singular pattern or common narrative, I wish to showcase the various stories that people have shared. In order to find these varied narratives, I have relied on in-person encounters and media documentation of the drought and the #DayZero campaign. But in the process of showing how contested the Kildare Road spring was as a space, several more themes became apparent. The people I spoke to hardly ever solely spoke about the space. They often tied the

space to something broader, such as access to water infrastructure or the cost of water. They brought up the Democratic Alliance (DA) and how the CoCT managed the spring and the drought. Climate change and the 'new reality' of water often came up too. As such, this project shifted away from studying the history of the spring and became more about the broader reasons and events which drove contemporary people to the spring in the first place. And then once people arrived en masse, the issues that arose.

1.5. Research Design

My research design has needed to adapt since the proposal of this project as the research has shifted from studying a place to studying a phenomenon. This project was always going to be focused on the Kildare Road spring, but as I spent more time there and talked to more people, I came to realise how important it was to understand the various happenings around the spring rather than only the space itself. People have various motivations for ending up at the Kildare Road spring. There is no single factor, but if you pressed me to give the main reason why people went there, I would say free access. If I had to provide more detail, I would say the drought compounded already existing structural inequalities and failures that made access to water expensive. I was frequently asked to summarise this project into a few short sentences, and I have not yet been able to do so. Firstly because, in my mind, this does not seem possible. Secondly, because this is not a skill of mine. But mostly, it is because it does not seem possible to explain what this research is about without needing to explain the context of what was and had been happening long before people started queuing for water at the Kildare Road spring. It was for this reason that I needed to find a focus that would be able to connect these various dimensions of the study. I decided on media because, by definition, it is media's role to document everything, especially now given the prominence of social media. John E. Richardson writes:

"[j]ournalistic discourse has some very specific textual characteristics, some very specific methods of text production and consumption, and is defined by a particular set of relationships between itself and other agencies of symbolic and material power. These three sets of characteristics- that is, the language of journalism, its production and consumption and the relations of journalism to social ideas and institutions – are clearly inter-related and sometimes difficult to disentangle" (2007: 1).

It was through researching the journalistic discourse around the drought, the #DayZero campaign, and the Kildare Road spring that I could piece together the varied themes and events that are discussed throughout the coming chapters. It is not possible to understand the significance of the spring if you do not understand the significance of the Group Areas Act. It is not possible to understand why the drought was so severe without understanding how infrastructure is planned and built to provide access to specific groups of people. It is not possible to explain who or how these decisions are made without looking at who is governing and how they go about addressing historical failures and inequalities of previous governments. For the purpose of this research, social and traditional media allowed these themes to be documented and discussed in an easily accessible way. However, this project did not solely rely on media for information. The project started with an informal interview and has depended on many more formal and informal interviews and discussions. And of course, there would be no research if there was no 'field' of research, so participant observation was also a necessity to my research design. As such, this project has required both archival work and field work in order to construct an ethnography that unpacks the complex stories and events that made up the drought. This project is a qualitative study. I did not have a large sample of people that I tried to survey or ask specific questions in order to draw inferences about a broader population. Instead, I approached the interviews as discussions and allowed them to ebb and flow, only occasionally guiding the participants back to the broader theme of the drought. This approach was deeply rewarding as people spoke freely about what was on their minds at the time, rather than trying to answer my list of questions. This also meant that people often made the connections between the spring and government, or the spring and infrastructure, or the spring and climate change, on their own, without me trying to suggest that there was a connection. I also felt that this approach allowed the participants to guide me as to what was important, rather than me trying to steer them to the answers I may have consciously or unconsciously wanted.

This research is thus exploratory in nature and was conducted both in person and online. This project depended on rich descriptions and did not have a pre-determined hypothesis, but rather allowed the interviews and social media analysis to inform its core themes, as is common in ethnography (Hine, 2000: 20-22). This also allowed for people to discuss their experience freely, and I could interpret this data not in order to fit or prove a hypothesis, but rather as valuable information which informed my key questions. My interviews were randomly sampled depending on who was at the spring when I visited. I did not pre-arrange my initial interviews or discussions, and only scheduled interviews with Riyaz Rawoot once I had already

spoken to him casually at the spring. My interview process and questions were mostly "unstructured" according to Bryman's definition (2012: 213). My goal was to allow people to talk about the spring and the water crisis without providing a set of questions, and only guiding the conversation with follow-up questions in response to what had already been said. I did not introduce any concepts such as climate change, crisis management, CoCT officials, or water crisis. However, I found that in most of the conversations a combination of these concepts would come up, most frequently being the general water crisis and how the crisis was being managed.

1.6. Problem statement & research questions

Access to infrastructure is not a new topic. In particular, the lack of access to infrastructure and resources amongst certain groups in Cape Town is not a new topic (Shepard, 2019). However, the drought provided a context for us to view this inequality in a new light. Brain Larkin writes that studying infrastructure helps us decode the semiotics and "poetics of infrastructure" (2013: 3). By this, Larkin means that infrastructure is embedded with meaning, they are designed with immense amount of thought and care. For this reason, where infrastructure is built, maintained, or absent speaks to more than just their functional uses. It also speaks to how infrastructure is used to connect, disconnect, or keep separate different people, objects, and locations (Larkin, 2013: 330). The drought in Cape Town highlighted how access to working infrastructure during a crisis plays a vital role in how the crisis is experienced and managed. So when media and public narratives emerged calling the drought the 'great leveller' – a concept that has been disputed by Robins in his paper *'Day Zero', Hydraulic Citizenship and the Defence of the Commons in Cape Town: A Case Study of the Politics of Water and its Infrastructures* (2019: 2) – these narratives were challenged. It quickly became evident that the middle and upper classes had access to private sources of water such as boreholes and water storage tanks and could afford to buy trollies full of five-litre water bottles from grocery stores. But for many people living in lower income areas and informal settlements, the drought compounded difficulties of accessing already limited resources. Henrik Vigh's article *Crisis and Chronicity: Anthropological Perspectives on Continuous Conflict* makes the argument that for many people, "crisis is endemic rather than episodic and cannot be delineated as an isolated period of time, or temporary" (2008: 1). As such, for people who are marginalized due to structural violence, limited political and social autonomy, and poverty, crisis is ever present.

This increasing threat to water availability meant that free water sources became vital. People quickly began to queue for water from springs all across the Cape peninsula. My research thus begins by looking at crisis, the temporary and chronic nature of the experience thereof, and how this crisis in particular challenged the media narrative of the 'great equaliser' or 'great leveller'. As such, my key research questions are the following:

- In what ways can the Kildare Road spring serve as a space to understand temporary and chronic crisis?
- How does media (social and traditional) construct narratives around crisis?
- What role does infrastructure play in challenging the 'great equaliser' or 'great leveller' narratives?

1.7. Chapter outline

Chapter 1 above has covered a brief history of the site which has provided the background for my research questions and aims. This was then followed by a discussion on the research design and methodology used in this project. Following this outline and prior to beginning Chapter 2, I highlight the ethical considerations and personal reflections I needed to consider throughout the research and writing of this project. Chapter 2 will provide a brief theoretical framework of my project. The framework consists of contributions by leading authors in the fields of infrastructure, governance, and media which were crucial in helping frame my own research. Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the theme 'drought as an event of crisis'. This chapter will consider how droughts, and the campaigns created to manage them, rely on how crisis is constructed in people's lives in order to evoke fast and decisive behavioural changes. In order to do this, the concept of crisis is discussed, followed by a case study of how a severe drought in Greece was managed by using similar strategies as the #DayZero campaign. Chapter 4 focuses on traditional media and discusses the role of news reporting as a narrative creating and sharing tool. This chapter considers the pitfalls of media narratives as tools of shared experience by discussing how historically, traditional media highlights only certain voices and experiences and that the reporting of events is not homogenous. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of social media and how it has changed the landscape of crisis communication and management. In many ways, the #DayZero campaign was created for social media, and it could be argued that it had its biggest impact through social media platforms. However, social media also became a tool for people to get involved in crisis management and communication in a way that traditional media does not facilitate. In some respects, this made the government's

response to the crisis trickier as factors of trust and representation became the focus of the crisis. Chapter 6 will be the conclusion of the project. I will summarise my research and findings and provide some reflections on how the water crisis has played out since starting this project.

1.8. Ethical considerations

When submitting the proposal for this project for ethical consideration, the project was deemed low risk. The tick boxes I filled in were sufficient in convincing the ethics board that no harm would come from this project and that I was not researching a vulnerable group. So, in terms of the system requirements, there was little ethical concern around my project. However, this did not dismiss the concerns I personally had about this project. I worried about how people would feel having their stories told in an academic paper that they may well never read or have access to. I worried about representation, and how to go about selecting and discarding stories. This was the part of my research I found most challenging, as everyone who spoke to me about their experience of the spring, and the drought in general, had valid and important stories, but I had to decide which to focus on in this project. The next hurdle I faced was using conversations that took place on social media in this project. It is easy to take something said on social media out of context and use it where it will be most impactful to your work. I tried to avoid doing this as far as possible. Then there is the issue of bias. I often found myself disagreeing with the perspectives of participants. In the context of talking to someone in person, it may be more difficult to school your thoughts (and facial expressions) when someone says something you disagree with or know not to be the case. But this also happened while I was collecting data from social media, where I came across several instances of blatant racism and islamophobia. I have tried my best to remain objective and not let moments of disagreement reflect in this work, but at times this may not have been successful.

2. Theoretical framework

When researching infrastructure there is a quote that always seems to appear. Brian Larkin wrote that "[i]nfrastructures are material forms that allow for the possibility of exchange over space. They are the physical networks through which goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance are trafficked" (2013: 1). In this quote, Larkin summarises perfectly why research into infrastructure is so important and insightful – it allows us to understand, through material means, the various societal exchanges that occur on small and large scales. And because we are able to observe these exchanges, we are able to understand the meanings imbued into them. For this project, the exchange is primarily focused on water. However, the more you study water, or the lack thereof, the more you realise that infrastructure is a complex network of objects, attached to an even more complex network of planning and governance. In this light, this chapter will focus on prominent literature that has contributed to the discipline of anthropology's understanding of infrastructure, especially as it pertains to water. The authors mentioned in this chapter will provide the main theoretical grounding that has aided my own understanding and helped me to formulate my research questions around the 2016 – 2018 drought in Cape Town. This chapter will also consider how concepts around citizenship, crisis, and media come into play when trying to understand how inequality and historical legacies impact our approach and response to crisis, and especially how this may vary as a consequence of race and class differentiation.

Larkin goes on to describe how the anthropological study of infrastructure requires us to not only study actual infrastructure, but also to study the "politicians, technocrats, economists, engineers, and road builders, as well as the road users themselves" (2013: 2). Infrastructure, in Larkin's view, is political. It is an "apparatus of governmentality" (Foucault quoted in Larkin, 2013: 2). As such, the study of infrastructure allows us insight into government planning, efficiency, and some would argue, intention. But beyond this, infrastructure is not only functional – it is also a product of design, and it engages with questions of cultural meanings and aesthetics. Larkin writes "[f]ocusing on the issue of the form, or the poetics of infrastructure, allows us to understand how the political can be constituted through different means… it also means… understanding what sort of semiotic objects they are, and determining how they address and constitute subjects, as well as their technical operations" (2013: 3).

This broader approach to infrastructure that goes beyond its functional aspects is important to consider here, because the process of collecting water at the Kildare Road spring did not only concern water and pipes. The spring cannot be separated from its environment, and the environment cannot be separated from the attention the spring received. If this was the case, all the springs in Cape Town would have been shut down by the city – yet today there are still various sites available where people collect water. There was something about a plastic pipe with holes drilled into it, against the backdrop of a winding river, with lush green foliage all around that contributed to the experience of the spring, but also to its closure. Perhaps if the Kildare Road spring was not in a quiet, suburban road in the middle of Newlands with a retirement home next to it, it would still be around. But it is precisely the somewhat serene, close-to-nature, away-from-a-busy-main-road characteristic of the spring that made it so appealing to many. What is important to consider here is why people were relying on the spring, as opposed to more traditional water infrastructure.

Infrastructure navigates an exchange over distance that brings together different people, objects, and locations into interaction (Larkin, 2013: 330). For this project, the main interaction of interest is between the residents of Cape Town, government officials of various levels, and access to water. All these actors are connected through the City's water infrastructure, from dams, pipelines, and desalination plants to springs and water meters. These inanimate objects are imbued with meaning, which in design are homogenous but in usage and perception are varied and complicated. It is within this varied experience of infrastructure that we are able to observe the structural inequalities that have persisted for decades, and how political and social inequality manifests through infrastructure. The lens I use to document these experiences is media, which in its own right has a network of infrastructure that is subject to the same inequalities as water infrastructure. The reason that infrastructure can come to represent these inequalities is because it does not exist in isolation. Larkin writes that "an infrastructure is an amalgam of technical, administrative, and financial techniques" (2013: 330). As such, it is an accumulation of decisions made by people who represent a host of interests all trying to figure out the optimal implementation of an infrastructure.

Anita Von Schnitzler (2008) documents how these systems interact in post-apartheid South Africa, which is hugely useful for my own research. Her paper *Citizenship prepaid: water, calculability, and techno-politics in South Africa* discusses similar themes that appear in my own work; notably, that infrastructure is often used to create a 'type of citizen'. Because of

this, infrastructures cannot solely be viewed as inanimate objects that make our lives easier, because they are implemented with a desired outcome in mind. However, when a society is deeply unequal, this desired outcome may be unfairly targeted at groups who have less political and social autonomy. South Africa is no stranger to service delivery protests. So, in 2004 when hundreds of people gathered at Mary Fitzgerald Square in Johannesburg to protest the installation of water meters in informal settlements (particularly in Soweto), it was not out of the norm (2008: 900). Von Schnitzler writes about how the protestors marched to the Civic Centre, some carrying the prepaid meters with them to leave at the Civic Centre as a statement. The prepaid meter in itself is a contested object of infrastructure. The roll-out of the meter, first for electricity and later for water, was largely focused on townships. Von Schnitzler writes that "The scale of the deployment of prepaid meters in South Africa is globally unprecedented: it is estimated that of the eight million one-way prepaid meters deployed globally, six million are located in South Africa. Simultaneously, South Africa has become a leader in the development of prepayment technology, exporting meters and expertise to the rest of the continent and, increasingly, to other places in the global South" (2008: 900).

The prepaid meter, for both water and electricity, is used as a cost recovery device – a concept and institution that is embedded in neoliberal ideals of privatisation and accumulation. However, as the water meter protest shows, there are complex political and ethical questions or considerations that need to be taken into account with these infrastructures. Water, as Von Schnitzler writes, is "unlike other basic services, [water] is not substitutable, and is thus essential to survival" (2008: 901). Due to this, the conversation around water privatization is contested. Neoliberal reforms depend on an economic rationality which usually results in a socially and economically marginalised group. Because this neoliberal system depends entirely on a free, self-regulating market, it requires citizens who prescribe to the belief that cost-benefit analysis is necessary, and the means for this analysis occurs through specific devices or measurement. The water meter, then, is "central not only to making water calculable, but more fundamentally, to creating a calculative rationality" (Von Schnitzler, 2008: 902).

During the drought in Cape Town, water technology and infrastructure received significant push back and criticism from advocacy groups and residents of lower-income areas. There were concerns and accusations that the City was taking advantage of the poor and installing water management devices (WMD) to monitor and manage the amount of water that certain households used (Oukula, 2018 & Mortlock: 2018). The installation of these devices was labelled as "forceful" and "involuntary". The City argued that the WMD were part of the City's

drought intervention plan and were targeted at 'water guzzlers'(Oukula, 2018 & Mortlock: 2018). However, members of the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) argued that "the installation of WMDs in indigent households is merely a debt managing campaign as it has been taking place since 2007, before the drought" (Mortlock, 2018). Adding further fuel to the fire, residents were responsible for the installation and device bill, which cost R4 000, despite being installed without their approval. The fee for the WMD was added to resident's municipal account automatically (Mortlock, 2018). Xanthea Limberg, a DA councillor, responded to these complaints on CapeTalk radio by saying "The R4 000 which is added to your account is not just the device you are paying for. It's essentially for the contraventions of water restrictions" (Oukula, 2018). The back and forth between residents and the City meant that the roll-out plan for the WMD were massively delayed and received significant negative reporting by media (Oukula, 2018.) This attempt by the City to make water more calculable and attempts to try change water-using behaviour by making water more expensive, is not a new approach in South Africa.

Von Schnitzler's work highlights how a similar strategy was used by the City of Johannesburg. In 2002, the City of Johannesburg established Johannesburg Water Pty (Ltd) as an independent company with management contracts awarded to Suez Group, a France-based consortium. The reason given for this appointment was that the private consortium would create efficiency to optimise the water provision system. Almost instantly, the consortium began to focus on Soweto. In 2003, they launched the Gcin'amanzi project, which had the goal of curbing massive water losses in the township. The project began marketing the idea that up to 70% of water was unaccounted for in Soweto due to leakages and illegal water connections (Von Schnitzler, 2008: 904). The Gcin'amanzi project would address this loss by replacing old, broken down infrastructure and by installing prepaid water meters in all Sowetan households. Although in theory the plan was viewed positively, residents who were forced to have water meters installed took issue with the plan. The prepaid meters meant that residents were subjected to the constant measurement of their usage, a perpetual check on how much water they were consuming (Von Schnitzler, 2008: 904).

Although such awareness is not necessarily a bad thing, the residents protested against the fact that these prepaid meters were being installed in townships only. This meant that wealthy and middle-class, predominantly 'white' areas were not being targeted for their consumption and therefore did not need to account for the water they used (Von Schnitzler, 2008: 904). The protestors also called into question who was using more water, those who lived in the township,

or those who lived in these suburbs. Von Schnitzler writes "They also pointed out that prepaid meters were only being installed in the townships, rather than in the wealthy, predominantly white, northern suburbs where water usage per person was higher, given amenities such as pools and the irrigation of large gardens" (2008: 904). This argument also came up frequently during the Cape Town drought. Research done by GroundUp found that at least 64% of WMD were installed in low-income households, not in more affluent homes where, according to GroundUp, "water restrictions [were] being flouted" (Roeland, 2018:1). However, data collected from various organizations on water consumption across the CoCT shows that consumption tends to be significantly higher in wealthier suburbs relative to low-income areas. Even though the WMD were introduced as a voluntary program, many residents complained that they had not given consent to have the devices installed, however they were installed regardless (Roeland, 2018 & Bratton, 2017). Thabo Lusuthi of EMG argued that the City had not been transparent in their plans and did not properly consult residents (Roeland, 2018). These accusations were often coupled with the argument that the City was profiting from the devices and the actual objective of the devices was cost recovery as the City had observed a steep decrease in revenue due to the drought (Roeland, 2018).

Partha Chatterjee's work on governance in India is crucial for my own work in this project. Chatterjee unpacks the postcolonial reality of government, as shaped by and determined through the colonial legacy. In his lecture titled "*The Nation In Heterogeneous Time",* Chatterjee (2001) disaggregates citizenship into two categories: the formal and 'the real'. This decomposition of citizenship is interesting to consider for my own work as this project argues that 'crisis' is not always a single or temporary experience. Rather, crisis can be chronic and experienced in everyday life by some. Again, this theory supports the idea of the 'great equaliser' being problematic, not only because people have varied means to cope or adjust to crisis, but because they are also governed and respond to government differently. Chatterjee puts forward the notion that politics, similar to lived experience, can be split into two. To elaborate, he discusses Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of homogenous time (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4) and argues rather that time is heterogenous and "unevenly dense" (Chatterjee, 2001: 7). By this, Chatterjee expresses that people of a nation do not experience universalities. The factory worker or peasant farmer does not experience time the same as the neurosurgeon or attorney. Although he uses the caste system in India to explain this, the same can be said for any nation that experiences notable wealth inequalities. Chatterjee writes that it would be problematic to uphold "the universalist ideals of nationalism without simultaneously

demanding that the politics spawned by governmentality be recognized as an equally legitimate part of the real time-space of the modern political life of the nation. Without it, governmental technologies will continue to proliferate and serve, much as they did in the colonial era, as manipulable instruments of class rule in a global capitalist order" (2001: 25). The breaking down of the concept of universalities became evident during the Cape Town drought precisely because for some it started in 2016, whereas for others it had been a persistent reality for years, if not decades. Whether due to limited access, as is the case for many who live in informal settlements, or due to cost barriers for those who live in low-income areas, water restrictions and scarcity have long been the daily reality of many Cape Town residents. The narrative of the drought being a 'great equaliser' and to deploy a campaign that focuses on changing the behaviour of consumption on the premise that everyone uses and has access to water equally was a fundamental flaw in the DA's drought response.

Chatterjee (2004) provides a theoretical account of this in his *book The Politics of the Governed*. In theory, all civil society is afforded equal rights as protected by the constitution and laws of that nation. As such, the state interacts with civil society as equal individuals. However, in reality, being a rights-bearing citizen is often ambiguous and tenuous. There exists a political relationship that allows certain population groups to still be provided for or to be measured and managed by the state, but that does not always conform to the full expression of citizen rights as provided in the constitution. It is often those who have previously been politically excluded that experience an ambiguous or limited relationship with the state. Although the state may attempt to prioritize or include these voices, it is often in political structures that these voices are marginalized (Chatterjee, 2004: 39-40). There is also the matter of people who need to live illegally in a nation, despite being a citizen of that nation. This is one of the more complex relationships in 'political society'. Often, people have no choice other than to live illegally on land, to illegally secure electricity or water, or to rely on business practices that may not meet the legal requirements of the state. These groups are known to authorities, but often are not treated or managed the same as other civic groups because their livelihoods depend on these illegalities. Chatterjee writes "Yet state agencies and nongovernmental organizations cannot ignore them either, since they are among thousands of similar associations representing groups of population whose very livelihood or habitation involve violation of the law. These agencies therefore deal with these associations not as bodies of citizens but as convenient instruments for the administration of welfare to marginal and underprivileged population groups" (2004: 40). This relationship between civic groups and the

state highlights the gap between constitutionally protected rights and constitutional practices. Often amongst groups which dwell illegally, many are willing to acknowledge that they are breaking the law and are not demonstrating 'good civic behaviour', but argue that their having a home and a livelihood is a constitutional right. As such, somewhat of a power struggle exists because the state needs to prevent further manipulation of this loophole and try discouraging this behaviour whilst navigating the fact that welfare programs cannot provide what is necessary according to the constitution. The people who live illegally are aware that they are at risk of prosecution and are afforded less political and social mobility due to their circumstances. As such, groups within these relationships are classified as those who live in political society, according to Chatterjee (2004: 40-41). For residents of informal settlements, this classification is all too real. There is a constant need to navigate the line between 'illegal resident' and 'constitutionally recognized citizen'. Poor service delivery in townships or informal settlements is often blamed on the fact that residents of those areas live 'illegally'. According to the DA, the nature of these areas makes it difficult to provide services to residents due to geographical and budget restraints. This has been a persistent battle for residents of informal settlements. In 2010/2011, the 'poo protests' or 'toilet wars' gained momentum and attention as fed up residents of townships in Cape Town began protesting the sanitation conditions in their areas. This resulted in faecal matter being thrown on a national highway. This would eventually lead to a court case where the DA would be accused, and found guilty, of violating the constitutional rights of residents in Khayelitsha (Robins 2014 & Redfield & Robins, 2016). The question of service delivery is related to the water crisis is a fundamental way, because the lack thereof has caused a state of chronic crisis for a large number of residents in Cape Town.

Joseph Masco writes that "The power of crisis to shock and thus mobilize is diminishing because of narrative saturation, overuse, and a lack of well-articulated positive futurities to balance stories of end-times" (2017: 65). When addressing chronic crisis and the relevance of this to 'Day Zero', we can perhaps better understand why the endemic conditions of limited access becomes less significant in media reporting. Crisis is often framed as an existential danger, but what if crisis no longer exclusively functions this way? What if crisis is considered through the experience of those who "lack political agency"? (Masco, 2017: 65-66). If we prioritise this account of crisis, we can then begin to identify the role of media coverage – or under coverage – of crisis and create a more realistic and holistic account of the drought.

Because crisis can have such drastic and often devastating effects on entire populations, their role in our political, social and economic institutions cannot be understated. Crisis, like accidents, are events that no one is immune to and as such, can create more change in a very short time period relative to other single phenomenon. However, it also cannot be neglected that crisis can be an experience which persists and is not necessarily a temporary event. It is for this reason that the communication during and regarding crisis is becoming more and more important in research fields. Timothy L. Sellnow and Matthew W. Seeger's textbook "*Theorizing Crisis Communication"* is dedicated to understanding this. In their introduction, they use examples of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina and discuss the immediate and long-term effects of these disasters on a federal, state, and civilian level in the United States (US). At the time of writing, governments and people across the globe are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and the major disruption that it has caused. Seeger and Sellnow write that "Crises, big and small, natural and human caused, are inevitable; in fact, many scholars suggest that they are occurring with greater frequency and causing more harm than they have in the past" (2013: 2). However, crisis is a broad term and it is important to distinguish what type of crisis has occurred. An event such as a hurricane is clearly not the same as a drought. The financial crisis of 2008 is not the same as a natural disaster. As such, the response to crisis both in management and for people on the ground will also vary. This then often ties into debates around responsibility, accountability, and liability. This is important because classifying an event as a crisis means that a call to action and a response is needed, along with resources that need to be made available (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013: 10). Crisis, as a shock and as a temporary event, has been covered by scholars extensively, especially in light of the traditional or classic portrayal of communication as static, with an emphasis on the sender having passive receivers. But the way we communicate has changed. And our understanding of crisis as a slow form of violence or an endemic experience is becoming more apparent. However, how does this factor into crisis communication?

Access to communication tools is vast and more people now have access to these tools relative to the past. The best-known formula for communication was Berlo's approach from the 1960s in which the formula for communication was generally understood to be the "sender–message–channel–receiver model" (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013: 10). This model projected communication as straightforward and linear, especially in crisis or emergency situations. An example of this model is a warning system, such as emergency broadcasting and community-based weather sirens. These systems could be active and alert a large number of people of an emergency or

crisis, but the receiver could not directly respond or identify an individual behind the communication. But communication in crisis does not solely work this way anymore. Although these examples still exist, people now have a variety of tools through which they can both receive emergency alerts and respond directly or indirectly to these alerts. This means that communication is more dynamic, on-going, and transactive – participants are simultaneously receivers and senders (Seeger & Sellnow, 2013: 11). This system is also challenged by how chronic crisis is reported. The wide availability of social media now enables people to document their everyday life. As such, social media has become a tool for people to document their daily experience of crisis. Seeger and Sellnow write that digital communication technology, including social media and handheld devices, has significantly altered the ecology of crisis communication. Some researchers argue that these technologies have repositioned those who are at the centre of a crisis as active sources and senders of information, as opposed to being passive receivers (2013: 12).

In the case of the #DayZero campaign, residents of the city could immediately voice their opinions and experiences of the drought in either a supportive or opposing manner. As discussed in Chapter 4, the City had to contend with the reality that a large number of residents did neither trust the organisation nor the communication coming from the official channels. Social media was used by the DA for crisis communication and management reasons, which allowed them to engage with their stakeholders in real time. But the DA experienced significant disputes against the information being provided through their social media channels. Seeger and Sellnow write that lack of trust in institutions or organisations means that information is more likely to be disregarded or ignored (2013: 252). For the DA, the information was disregarded, ignored, and contested by some. This posed a challenge for how they could maximise the effect their social media campaign had on water consumption. Another issue that the City experienced was due to what Seeger and Sellnow refer to as “citizen journalism” (2013: 128). A good example of how citizen journalism is utilised during a crisis is the recent tragedy in Lebanon when an explosion at a factory was recorded on several cell phone devices, bringing almost instant global attention to the crisis while it was still unfolding. This not only means that government or official organisations will struggle to manage crisis communication, but also that traditional media is often late to the party.

The prevalence of social media and the ability to document ‘everyday life’ means that often social media becomes the story. If social media becomes the story, people who document

their daily realities can use social media to testify to the chronic conditions of crisis which they experience.

3. Drought as an event of crisis

In her book *Anti-Crisis*, Janet Roitman posits crisis as "a point of view" (2014: 13). This chapter will unpack this statement in relation to Cape Town's water crisis, in order to show that the crisis cannot be understood through single narratives. The water crisis is more than rain levels, dam percentages, political blame games, news coverage, 50-litre bottles, and behaviour restrictions. Water shortages influence various modes of being. As such, its complex network requires untangling and understanding. Roitman writes that "[c]risis is a historical event as much as it is an enduring condition of life" (2014: 2). This statement was integral to understanding my field site, not as a space that closed on the 25th of May 2018 when the municipal workers paved over the spring, but rather in a more open-ended sense. I had to come to terms with the idea that the water crisis did not begin with the lack of rainfall; it began with infrastructure – or rather the lack thereof. This chapter will thus unpack the concept of crisis both philosophically, but also practically, as a discussion of activism and infrastructure will be included.

How does crisis allow and enable certain narratives and questions whilst restricting others? Roitman asks this early on in her book as she attempts to argue that crisis has to be understood as more than a period of time when something is wrong. Rather, she argues that crisis is both a period of time, as well as an experience of a condition. Roitman's book *Anti-crisis* takes an in-depth look at the 2008 financial crisis in the US. She used crisis as a narrative device and unpacks how various authors have studied and contextualized crisis. Roitman's argument is that defining something as a crisis causes a reaction that allows for certain behaviour to be encouraged or discouraged. But most importantly for this project, Roitman points out that crisis can neither be only used in events of emergency nor in a temporary manner; rather, crisis also needs to be considered as a "condition of life" (2014: 2). This argument is important for my own work. The water crisis in Cape Town received a lot of attention; however, the attention created was hyper-focused around a largely middle-class experience of the crisis. For the most part, informal settlements and poor communities around Cape Town were excluded from the crisis narratives that surrounded the drought and #DayZero campaign. Many of these communities could be said to have been experiencing enduring water shortages prior to the drought, where people use communal water sources to collect a specific amount per day. As

such, it could be taken for granted that people living in communities such as Khayelitsha, Kayamandi, and other informal settlements in the Western Cape were already well accustomed to using less than 50 litres per person per day. Relatively affluent areas such as Sea Point, Constantia, and Hout Bay were not accustomed to this new way of living, involving less flushing of toilets, shorter showers, and no more automatic sprinklers in the garden. This 'new normal' was widely documented and discussed not only by the people living in these areas, but also by news outlets. In this light, Roitman posits crisis as the breakdown of the 'normal': crisis "qualifies the very nature of events" (2014: 3). The areas that were experiencing this state of shortage for the first time, or were forced by government officials to adapt their behaviour, seemed to dominate the narrative because of the 'newness' of their complaints or objections. Roitman highlights this in her own work by writing that "crisis comes to signify the marking out of a 'new time' insofar as it denotes a unique, immanent transition phase, or a specific historical epoch" (2014: 19). This would support the idea that people who live in middle to upper-class areas were experiencing a 'new time' or 'transition phase'. This resulted in the prioritisation of their voices against the voices of people who had lived this way long before the drought and will continue to live in those conditions long thereafter. However, this is not the only way crisis is experienced. Rather, there is merit to argue that droughts are not only experienced due to a lack of rain. Droughts can also be caused by lack of access. It is this lack of access that may create, what Vigh coins, 'chronic crisis' (2008: 2).

Crisis signifies change, but crisis is also a means to locate, recognize, and comprehend history. This perspective ties in with the idea that crisis is posited as a judgement of time and a judgement of significance (Roitman, 2014: 7). Roitman further writes that crisis is defined as "the negative occupation of an imminent world: *what went wrong"* (2014: 8). The process of ascribing significance and judging the extent of crisis requires a negative or a break from what is considered the usual. A severe drought certainly qualifies under these criteria, as both behaviour and mentality around water access and usage had to change drastically for most people living in the Western Cape province. However, this is not what primarily interests me. What captured my interest was the inequality that is revealed in times of crisis. How were people from different socio-economic groups experiencing the water shortage? In most of the historical literature I have read on crisis, the main conceptualization is that crisis affects everyone. Often crisis is discussed as something that is experienced uniformly at a specific moment in time. It is seen as an event rather than an ongoing and enduring form of 'chronic crisis', such as the 'slow violence' that Rob Nixon (2011) writes about. For the most part, this

was also the case for Cape Town. If 'Day Zero' was coming, it was coming for everyone and it was a specific event relating to drought. This portrayal of the drought needs to be problematised as it attempts to posit the experience of the drought as equally severe for everyone. The nuance of the experience is not captured in the public narrative of the drought – mostly documented through media accounts of the crisis. It does not look at how increased water tariffs would completely undermine the financial security of some households, whilst mildly affecting others. It neglects to include the narratives of those who have been living in a state of severely restricted access to water for decades. Crisis, in this instance, is not singular – it is enduring and chronic for many, especially the poor. I would argue that drought caused states of crisis. There were several forms of crisis that came from the drought. Some went away with the arrival of the rainy season. Some are yet to go away.

In times of crisis, there are always 'first responders.' Who these first responders are however differs depending on the type of crisis. Some scholars argue that due to social media's role in increasing the visibility of citizens, citizens are now the "true first responders" in a crisis (Ferguson, Boersma & Schmidt, 2018). This is especially true when a crisis occurs after a massive accident (such as a plane crash or large explosion) or a natural disaster (such as a hurricane or wildfire). In these scenarios, citizens may not be the rescuers, but they are often the group which sounds the alarm. This is often because they will capture an image or video of the event and post it on social media, alerting a potentially large network of people. This is a relatively new development in the dissemination and framing of representations of crisis, as well as its management. Before the prominence of social media, crisis representation and management largely fell on government agencies and emergency services. There was a top-down approach to crisis management with officials usually alerting the public of the crisis. But when you have people reporting on an event in real time, before such services can be organized, this top-down approach shifts to a bottom-up approach. Majchrzak, Jarvenpaa, and Hollingshead write, however, that such networks have "unclear and fluid boundaries; fleeting and unclear membership; unclear, fluid, and dispersed leadership; highly unstable task definitions and assignments as environmental conditions continuously change; and geographic dispersion that makes communication difficult" (2017: 2). But these understandings of crisis are often supported by examples of crisis that occur unexpectedly. In the case of a more slowly unfolding crisis, it becomes harder to identify who the first responders are and who is meant to sound the alarm. How do we think about crisis when it is slowly unfolding, and the impact it starts to have on people's lives in small increments?

The following account of the politics of water in Athens, Greece, has considerable significance for understanding what happened in Cape Town during 'Day Zero'. Athens has struggled with water scarcity for centuries, according to Maria Kaika (2006). However, in 1985, the city's main reservoir – the Moronos Reservoir – was overflowing. This marked the first time since 1834 that the city had more water than what was "needed" (Kaika, 2006: 157). The water prosperity would however not last, as Athens would experience one of the worst droughts in its history between 1989 and 1991. The surplus of water came at a period where legal and institutional changes were being made to water resources management, which gave the then socialist government a strong platform to centralize decision-making and planning. The new nationalised laws and management of water centred around the narrative that water was a 'natural gift', and every citizen had an 'undeniable right' to access potable water. The focus of water rights was placed on domestic use, over the rights linked to land or property. These policies also meant that the state was given the right to expropriate land if it was deemed necessary to access water sources. This also came with the right of the state to restrict and determine how water could be used (Kaika, 2006: 158). This new philosophy was "to move away from mechanical and technocratic approach to planning, and to introduce a socially sensitive approach to planning and resource management" (Kaika, 2006: 158).

These plans, however, were based on what the water situation looked like at the time, and not how it had looked for most of the time. As such, when the drought period began in 1989, the previous enthusiasm about the plan and access to water changed dramatically (Kaika, 2006: 158-159). Water, which had previously been a force for social cohesion and was spoken about as an abundant resource, soon turned into a source of great anxiety for the public and state. Soon enough the drought in Athens became a key focus point for media. The drought was used to criticize the government for their 'corrupt' management of water and water behaviour. Similarly, in Cape Town, the drought provided a platform for residents, political parties, and non-governmental organizations to criticize how the DA and the CoCT were managing the crisis. In Athens, the centralised water management company launched a public awareness campaign which included daily announcements and a countdown of 170 days of water. The campaign had a slogan: "save the city of thirst", which reminded people frequently that without water, life as people knew it would cease. The narrative from the state focused on communicating that nature was causing an 'indisputable' crisis, and as such, there was no time

to debate about what to do. Urgent and immediate action was the only way to overcome the crisis (Kaika, 2006: 159).

At this point, the Greek government introduced emergency measures which, despite wide scrutiny from academics and related NGOs, were signed into law under the belief that these measures were the only way to overcome the crisis. Much like Cape Town during 'Day Zero', the emergency measures firstly focused on 'demand-management strategies' which included increased prices and tariffs as well as the prohibition of certain activities such as car washing and garden irrigation. The campaign, especially considering its aforementioned slogan "save the city of thirst", had a strong emotive reaction from residents and the media. Each day the countdown was updated, constantly reminding people that the city would soon be 'thirsty' and life as they knew it would end. As the countdown continued, media organisations became increasingly suspicious and critical of the government, and there was considerable pushback on the government's "controlling" nature (Kaika, 2006: 159). This similarly happened in Cape Town as the CoCT relied heavily on the behavioural changes that were hoped to emanate from the marketing around the drought. The #DayZero campaign focused on changing the behaviour of residents. There were daily updates and reminders that the taps would run dry in a specific amount of days if drastic changes were not made. Some residents felt they were being unfairly targeted by the City. However, both the Athens and Cape Town water saving campaigns neglected to address the precarious water conditions which existed prior to the drought. As Kaika mentions, Athens was considered as a water scarce region for centuries. It was not abnormal for residents to be aware of the water limitations of the city, as they had been prevalent for most of their lives (2006: 160). Rather, the distrust of the government's management and campaign to save water stemmed from the sudden implementation of higher tariffs which were supposedly solely driven up by the drought. Many argued that these increases were not fair, considering that the Greek government relied on an abnormal rainy season and developed a water plan based on those figures, as opposed to historical data.

Kaika argues that two of the emergency measures in Athens – the price increases and the building of a new dam – served as a neoliberal socio-environmental agenda that was assisted by the 'crisis.' The increase in water prices was seen as a strategy that disproportionately affected people who were low to middle-income earners relative to high income earners. When the tariffs took effect on the 1st of March 1990, the price of a cubic meter of water for domestic use was increased by 105% to 338%. In other words, this resulted in people paying an average

of €2.59 to €6.41 for 15 600 litres of water per month. The state further incentivized water saving by imposing a tariff rebate which gave people a reduced bill of €5.08 if they saved 20% of their monthly water consumption. However, due to a complex tariff system, this resulted in a relatively regressive system. People who were using higher volumes of water – typically those in relatively affluent areas – were being offered a greater price reduction. People who were consuming more than the 15 600 litres per month but were reducing their use relative to what they usually used, saved more money than those who restricted their use according to state guidelines. The employees of the public water company (ΕΥΔΑΠ) critiqued the pricing system as being "inefficient, socially unjust, profiteering and perplexing" (Kaika, 2006: 161). The argument that the water crisis was used to drive up the price of water, which unfairly targeted the lower class and poor, also occurred during the Cape Town drought. Many felt that the DA were not trying to protect the poor, who had long been living with limited access to water and sanitation prior to the onset of the drought.

Vigh's concept of 'chronic crisis' outlines a new way of thinking of crisis as context, rather than thinking of crisis as an event. There are people who live in enduring conditions of crisis that may not be visible to a middle-class public. These conditions challenge the framing of crisis as a temporary event or change, which also challenges the framing that crisis is experienced equally by all. Rather, 'chronic crisis' focuses on the observation that there are people who face certain realities that constitute a crisis only when they occur on a wider scale. In cases of droughts, the idea of 'chronic crisis' draws attention to groups of people who are not suddenly affected by limited access to water, but rather have experienced endemic inaccessibility to water. To take this further, this means that when policies are put into place to manage the crisis, the communities that have already been struggling with restricted access tend to be disproportionately affected by these policies. In relation to the drought in Cape Town, this meant that people who lived in lower-income areas and informal settlements had to change their water consumption behaviour in line with the CoCT's policies, despite the chronic nature of drought in their communities. Moreover, Vigh's idea of crisis as context also allows for a discussion on what contributes to crisis. If we accept that drought for some can be regarded as chronic, then this allows for investigation into the factors behind chronic crisis. For many communities in Cape Town, this often comes down to access to infrastructure.

Roitman asks that if 'crisis' is used to identify what went wrong, what word do we use to identify "this has been wrong all along" (2014: 28)? This raises the question of how to approach

the crisis within the crisis, the crisis that remains after the rain season arrives again. What is left of the 'great leveller' or the 'great equaliser' when the middle class can go back to 'normal', but nothing has been done to address the structural inequalities that compounded the water crisis for many? This is Nixon's argument with slow violence when he writes of "[v]iolence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attractional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2011: 2). The responsibility of the crisis falls to the community and their ability to mobilize and get attention from media and government. The community becomes tasked with the job of trying to secure access for the area. In order to do this, an attention-grabbing stunt is often required to ensure publicity. This again is in contrast to how crisis is usually theorised. Media coverage is generally considered a given when there are events of crisis. Yet there is no constant media coverage of slow violence, of chronic crisis. Nixon writes "Our media bias toward spectacular violence exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems treated as disposable by turbo-capitalism while simultaneously exacerbating the vulnerability of those whom Kevin Bale, in another context, has called "disposable people"" (2011: 4). It is this bias and rendering of certain communities as invisible or 'disposable' that feeds the chronic nature of crisis and the enduring conditions of inequality.

The reality of the water crisis in Cape Town is that, as Roitman says, it is as much a historical event as it is an "enduring condition of life" (2014: 2). For many people, the water shortage was a short-term reality. However, that is not to say that long-term behavioural change had not occurred. But for the most part, middle class people in historically white suburbs are not living with severe restrictions anymore; life continues with little to no focus on a water shortage. Yet for a substantial group of people living in the townships and informal settlements, the crisis has endured. It is for this reason that we have to analyse the water crisis not just in terms of availability of water, but also through the lens of infrastructure and access, media and governance, and historical events to fully understand why the crisis endures for so many, while for others life moves on – empty five litre bottles discarded.

4. Reflecting on the limits and blind spots of 'traditional' media representations of 'Day Zero'

Traditional media have changed the way we talk about crisis. Traditional media as discussed in this chapter refers to news media through largely the mediums of news articles and broadcasts such as newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television broadcasts. Traditional media has a vast established network that allows information to be spread quickly. These media formats also rely on rebroadcasting and repetition in order to spread information and awareness. Traditional news cycles can last several days or weeks with the focus on introducing new information or conducting analyses from different perspectives. When crisis occurs, media acts as both an informant and watch dog. It is for these reasons that one ought to consider the important role that traditional media plays when researching crisis, as the documentation and the narratives around crisis are often the responsibility of the media. However, media narratives are not always entirely accurate or representative. As Carolyn E. Holmes argues, media – specifically print media – can and do serve different communities. In South Africa, not only does news coverage vary by language, but media consumption also varies by language, race, class, and location. Often the facts will be the same but the narrative, the story told by the media, is different. In relation to the 2016 – 2018 Cape Town drought and #DayZero campaign, this can be seen not only in the narratives about the drought, but also in terms of whose stories and experiences were covered. The narrative of the 'great equaliser' or the 'great leveller' was heavily promoted by media agencies, yet if one considers the reality of the drought, it is evident that, for some, the drought was not a temporary event, but a reality of chronic crisis which plays throughout their everyday lives.

Benedict Anderson wrote that the nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (2006: 6). Anderson states that even in small nations, there are people who will never meet or engage with one another, yet they will have an idea of a communion or belonging. Anderson's work, *Imagined Communities,* investigates print capitalism and how print media has been used in building nationalism. As such, Anderson's work provides background on how we can see communities not measured by how false or genuine they are, but rather in the way they are imagined. Communities are thus, according to Anderson, created or imagined and do not exist organically. For this reason, nations are inherently limited because they have finite boundaries. They border with other nations. It is also not believable that there can only be one nation, encompassing the globe, so they are

confined by physical and metaphorical boundaries. Anderson's work is relevant to this project as it shows how print media is used to create often singular narratives with the purpose of having a shared ideology or experience, even if one may not be directly affected by the news. This idea of shared experience is what underpins the narrative that media reported during the drought in Cape Town and throughout the #DayZero campaign. The 'great equaliser' was meant to symbolize that after long last, South Africans would be equal, all would experience the same fate when the taps ran dry. This narrative, however, is problematic in two ways. Firstly, the drought did not have the same effect on all households in Cape Town, let alone South Africa. Secondly, the media narrative was not representative of those who persistently live with water shortages or restrictions, regardless of how full the dams are.

Anderson argues that as people struggle to find meaning in the absence of religion, nations become the substitute. Nations provide a collective to belong to, and a collective to fight for. But this is not to say that nationalism is the opposite of religious states. Rather, Anderson argues that religion was a large cultural system against which the nation came into being. As such, there are similarities between how religious belonging and nationalism spread. Both of these concepts relied on written language. Where previously only a select few were able to read and write religious texts, after 1500 the prevalence of Latin decreased as more texts were written in vernacular and became more accessible to the "public" (Anderson, 2006: 15 – 19). This meant that a wider audience had access to reading material and, as access to education increased, more people were able to write as well. However, what is also key here is what reading material became more accessible. Anderson writes that the Gutenberg Bible had been printed between 150 million and 200 million times between 1500 and 1600 (2016: 33). At the time of writing, it is estimated that the Holy Bible has been printed over five billion times (Guinness World Record, 2020). This makes it the most printed book in history. However, the Holy Bible has not been the vehicle for nationalism. Although religious texts hold value for the imaging of the nation, Anderson argues that it is newspapers, not the Bible, that spread nationalism. Anderson writes:

> The birth of the imagined community of the nation can be best seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imaging which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation (2006: 24- 25).

Anderson puts forward the idea that newspapers and novels create a representation of the nation that many people read at a given time which is how a community is then fashioned. In order to understand the imagined community, there needs to be something that ties people together, something that is the vehicle for the union of a country. For Anderson, newspapers fulfil this role. Newspapers allow people, who will never meet or necessarily be aware of one another, to experience the same thing. Newspapers bring awareness to one another and the actions of others. However, this linkage is imagined. There is no physical connection or shared moment between people. Rather, they are moving through what he calls 'homogenous, empty time' at the same time (and as such, the date and time of newspaper editions are crucial to the imagined community) as they read about the same events. He writes that "each book has its own eremitic self-sufficiency" and that "the newspaper is merely an 'extreme form' of the book, a book sold on a colossal scale" (2006: 34). He goes further to say that reading a newspaper is a solo event, yet we are aware that there are thousands of people who will read the same or similar texts throughout that day. It is possible for the reader to be sure that this experience is happening but have no idea of the identities of these people. As such, they are imagined. It is through this experience that the nation is created.

Applying Anderson's theory of print media in times of crisis allows for a clearer understanding of why certain media narratives become so prominent while others only have a small or temporary impact. How we consume media has changed dramatically. There is no longer a handful of newspapers that come out once a day. Rather, media has evolved into a multi-forum medium that provides a constant supply of information. Although newspapers are still printed, people today also get news via social media on their personal devices (i.e. 'smart phones'), as well as through radio broadcasts and television programs. Social media has fundamentally changed the way we consume and engage with news, which will be discussed in chapter six. News from traditional media is still accompanied by a date, but now also includes the time down to the second. This is because news develops and changes so rapidly that a 24-hour calendar is insufficient. In fact, news has become so constant that there are dedicated television channels that screen news the entire day. The question here is, how does this affect our understanding of the nation? Of imagined belonging? It is harder to imagine that there is one shared experience when news comes from so many different media. With the rise of 'fake news' and partisan politics, news has become increasingly varied. People often rely on various news sources in order to get accurate information, and the news organizations which people are loyal to can act as a significant determinant of voting behaviour. In South Africa, this can

be even more complex as news, or at least the consumption of news, may differ according to race, class, and language. Carolyn E. Holmes (2015) makes a strong case for this by referring to how newspapers printed in English, Afrikaans, and isiZulu covered the Marikana massacre in 2012. Holmes writes that in the coverage of this tragic event, the facts were often the same, but the narrative was different. She writes, "On the whole, these facts are largely undisputed, yet at the time of initial coverage of these events, vastly different narratives emerged from different language presses" (2015: 272).

The study done by Holmes looks at six different South African newspapers that are popular in distinct 'ethno-linguistic communities'. The article shows that in South Africa there are distinct multilingual states which media operates within, and thus there is a creation of both national and sub-national imagined communities (Holmes, 2015: 272). The article further argues that the differences in coverage create varied understandings of events across communities which interrupt the 'nation'. Holmes writes that "differences in coverage among these papers create disparities in understanding across communities and interrupt the process of national identity formation through the iterative historical process of news coverage" (2015: 272). In events of severe disruptions to everyday life (such as crisis), the narrative that emerges is important. This narrative will be the general tone that people remember about the event and will also likely largely inform the opinion of the public. Thus, having various narratives emerge along race and class categories becomes a key factor in crisis response due to the difficulty of addressing various narratives and opinions of the event. The #DayZero campaign was widely reported by media; however, the context was not always the same. As my interviews and media analysis show, many people felt that the media had ignored their experience of the drought and had also not reported on the reality that many low-income and poor communities face: chronic droughts. Which begs the question: if this is the reality of media representation in South Africa, how does Anderson's conceptualization of a standardized print media which grounds the formation of the imagined nation hold up when there are sub-national communities? Holmes argues that, in South Africa, there are indeed sub-national communities because there is no single sovereign community. Because of translation and commensurability issues, the difference in print media by language poses various challenges for the formation of national identity. The emergence of several different narratives around an event prevents that of a single overarching narrative, which would disrupt Anderson's idea around a national vocabulary and sharing of an event (2015: 273).

Holmes' argument poses an interesting question when looking at the media coverage of 'Day Zero'. As discussed previously, it is clear that the water shortage was not experienced homogenously. Factors such as infrastructure, resource allocation, city services, and political and social capital all contributed to how the drought was experienced. Although regulations (whether made at the state or provincial level) are applied to all who live within a specified boundary, not everyone is affected by regulation to the same extent. Something that was clear from the start of my research, and continued to be true throughout, was that the 50 litres a day water restriction was a reality for many before the DA's announcement and remains a reality today. However, the announcement and implementation of the restriction received a lot of media attention only once people in the middle and upper classes were affected. People who live in informal settlements live with constant water restrictions, or what Vigh would refer to as 'chronic crisis' (2008). Even now that 'Day Zero' is off the radar, restrictions continue and access to water remains a crisis within these groups. However, there is no media coverage of this. There is no media-driven narrative that consistently monitors these conditions and reports on the hardship and stress of experience of having taps run dry, or no taps to run at all. The sub-nations that Holmes refers to is not only evident when looking at the influence of language in shaping narratives in news reporting, but also in other ways including the spatial geography of the city. The design of most large cities in South Africa is rooted in racialised city planning. As such, Cape Town's city centre is largely made up of middle to upper class white neighbourhoods. As you leave the city centre you find your middle class white suburban neighbourhoods, and then past that on the fringe of the city, you start finding the poor, working class, and lower-income communities of colour. Past those neighbourhoods are usually informal settlements. The largest informal settlement in the Cape Town region is Khayelitsha, built during the Apartheid regime to segregate Black residents from whites. It is no accident that the planning and building of informal settlements only provided basic infrastructure. Since Khayelitsha was established in the 1980s, the area's lack of sufficient access to water and electricity has persisted and has only worsened as more people have moved into the area. These communities are continuously under-serviced by local and national government. They have to contend with chronic realities of crisis that range beyond water shortage to poor sanitation services, high poverty levels, and lack of safe and decent housing. In this area, crisis is not experienced as a temporary or extraordinary event, but rather an enduring condition of daily life.

Political philosopher Hannah Arendt writes that "the presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (1958: 49-52). She continues:

> To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common… the world, like every in between, relates and separates men at the same time (1958: 49-52).

If we apply this quote and Arendt's work to the drought, it would be fair to say that the 'great equaliser' at best only equalized the experience of those who was neither struggling with secure access to water nor lived on the social and political margins of Cape Town. But for those who did, the drought merely aggravated an already dire and chronic condition of crisis. In moments or events of crisis, it is often what people have in common that unites the experience and the response. The 'common' here could be geography, social class, or race. When looking at who is affected by a crisis and how they respond to crisis, people try to find 'common ground' – something that will characterise the group. In instances such as school shootings, it is a 'geographical common' – people were in one area. It is again geographical in instances of devastating natural disaster. In the case of Apartheid, the common was characterised along racial classifications. When looking at 'Day Zero', on the surface the common was geographical. The focus was largely on the Western Cape, and Cape Town in particular. But when you start to look more closely and try to unravel the experience of the drought, it becomes less clear that the drought's impact had such a 'common ground'. It becomes clearer that the experience varied, depending on social class, race, and geographical location. Yet, when the crisis was addressed in the media, it was discussed as a common, a 'great equaliser'. We *all* have to change our behaviour. We *all* have to work together. Media headlines and articles often shared this message. In an op-ed written on the 25th of March 2019 in City Press, Patricia de Lille (formerly of the DA, now leader of Good) writes "[l]ower-income families also disproportionately struggled to afford the uniform fixed pipe levy and high-water costs". This quote refers to a levy implemented by the DA due to the decrease in revenue from levies the City was receiving based on reduced water consumption. The DA rejected a plan that would see 'higher-income homes' charged a levy to cover these costs and opted instead to go with the pipe levy that would be charged to all homes. Although De Lille does discuss the implications of this plan on inequality, arguing that low income homes often have more people living on

one property than your average wealthier household. However, in her solutions to "ensure that access is equitable and just", she lists these three solutions:

> To protect our catchments and remove thirsty invasive alien trees. This will increase water in our rivers and also create rural jobs;
> To maintain infrastructure and reduce leak losses. Cape Town now has the second-lowest losses of any city in the world; and
> To implement responsible debt management, so that those who can afford to pay do so, and those who legitimately need the support of our society and government receive it (De Lille quoted in City Press, 2019).

Although these solutions are not necessarily bad, they neglect the reality of a broad approach to crisis which often comes up in similar '*we all'* governance plans. How does crisis governance address the issues that existed prior to crisis? How does crisis management implement solutions that acknowledge and address the structural inequalities that make the experience of crisis more severe for some? Crisis often means there is a domino effect. In this instance, the water crisis presented a real economic threat to the DA, as their budget felt the strain of decreasing water usage. This resulted in implementation of a levy that unfairly burdened the poor. There were people in the community that felt that the DA's handling of the water crisis was not in the best interest of the public, but rather a privatisation agenda of the DA and its big business allies. A group called the Water Crisis Coalition (WCC) strongly opposed privatisation and wanted to mobilise poor and working-class communities to protest against the levies and tariff hikes. A big issue for WCC was that the City was installing water management devices (WMD) in households that were exceeding the water allowance. The WCC would refer to the water management devices as 'weapons of mass destruction'. They felt that the measures taken by the DA were to privatise water and not to prevent the taps from running dry. In fact, the WCC did not believe that 'Day Zero' was real; rather, they believed it was just an attempt to cause panic and allow the DA to commodify and privatise water (Robins, 2019: 6).

The water crisis was not only covered by local media, but several international news organizations took interest as well. Cape Town was said to be the first city that would run out of water, which drew significant media attention. Many people looked at Cape Town as an example of what would become the norm if climate change was not addressed urgently. As

such, the handling of the crisis was also measured in terms of its success and failure in case other cities experienced the same fate. In one article written in *The Times* (UK) titled "Wasteful wealth put Cape Town on brink of water crisis", the author begins by writing "The man asked to manage Cape Town's water emergency has more experience dealing with gangsters than organising a city that could be the first in the world in which the taps run dry" (Laing, 2018). The author goes on to explain and call into question how effective JP Smith, who at the time was the head of Safety and Security for the DA, would be at handling the crisis. According to the article, JP Smith said that "residents in affluent areas were responsible for the most flagrant flouting of rules intended to eke out existing supplies for as long as possible. In the coming days he intends to send vans fitted with loudhailers into the exclusive wine-growing areas of Constantia and Bishopscourt home to, among others, Lady Kitty Spencer, niece of Diana, Princess of Wales" (Laing, 2018). In this article, the coverage of the water crisis is framed as a 'class war'. Throughout it, the writer focuses on how the middle to upper classes are being targeted by water saving interventions. If read in isolation, one could assume that only the wealthy are responsible for the crisis and are being restricted by government. The article neither includes a discussion on inequality of access, nor even addresses the fact that poverty exists. At one point the article cites JP Smith: "Mr Smith said the Day Zero water collection points would be 'incredibly disruptive' but added: 'I think these crises bring you closer together. Having the very rich and the very poor queuing next to each other at water points might build some social cohesion'" (2018: 1). Despite this statement from Smith, the author does not engage with the reality of "having the very rich and very poor queuing together". This statement again evokes the idea that the drought is a 'great equaliser'. Yet, if you look at the reality of the drought and the plans to have people queue to collect water, it is evident that the rich and poor would not in fact be queuing together. The article does not engage with the challenges of needing to queue for water when you are poor. The infrastructural inequalities that already prevent poor communities from having equal access to water relative to richer communities would serve to keep those communities separate. A concern for many people who had been collecting water at the Kildare Road spring was that they could not afford to leave work to do so, or did not have the physical means to collect water every day to supply their entire household.

Not only did these concerns come up with the participants of this study, but also on social media when the DA released the 'Day Zero' contingency plan. Yet there was hardly any media coverage about this reality. Additionally, I found the mention of Lady Kitty Spencer

interesting. What is the relevance of mentioning Princess Diana in this context? Is this an attempt to appeal to the newspaper's audience (*The Times*' target market is not South African readers, but those in the United Kingdom)? Is the aim to create an image of someone close to royalty being reduced to having to stand in line, her status and wealth obsolete? The reality is that queuing for water is not only a reality during severe droughts, it is the everyday reality for many South Africans. Yet this article, and media coverage in general, neglects this reality, despite the challenges it presents to the 'great equaliser' narrative.

On the 24th of January 2018, BBC News published an article titled "Cape Town water crisis: 'My wife doesn't shower any more'". The article was written by Mohammed Allie, who works for the BBC. After writing his account of his household no longer showering, but rather using buckets to wash and then collect water for the toilet cistern, Allie turns his discussion to the water collection points in Cape Town. He writes that "Water has clearly become the new gold of Cape Town" (Allie, 2018). Further down he writes "The city has had to be firm in enforcing its limits on residents. Failure to comply could result in the installation of a water-management device, that strictly limits consumption to 350 litres per day, with the homeowner having to foot the 4 500 Rand ($378; £265) installation bill" (Ibid). Allie also mentions the anger that people feel when they see people ignoring the regulations and are "hosing down their pavements or their cars with impunity and in contravention of local regulations". Again, this article neither mentions the rampant inequality, the disproportionate allocation of infrastructure, nor how the drought has not affected everyone to the same extent. Allie mentions that "Those with more money - and who are not prepared to endure the Newlands queues - can be seen filling up trolleys in supermarkets with five litre bottles of mineral water in an effort to augment their supply as they try to remain within consumption limits". However, there is no enquiry beyond this short paragraph. There is no attempt to contextualise the stark reality of people who can afford to stock their homes with water bought from grocery stores, and those who are entirely dependent on collecting water from communal taps, often located a fair distance from their homes.

Out of the 20 international media articles I considered, only one questioned the validity of the 'rainbow nation' narrative that was frequently used during the water crisis. The majority of coverage either focused or emphasised that the water shortage was being experienced the same by all, and that it brought a measure of equality to a highly unequal society. The prevalence of these types of messages was interesting to me. What was it about these themes and images that

caught the attention of international media? This narrative is not new, however. The coverage of the #DayZero campaign had similar themes to the international coverage of the end of Apartheid in 1994. The visual representation of post-apartheid South Africa was done by means of photographs showing long lines of people of varied races queuing to vote. These images have come to symbolise the hope and the possibility of equality and democracy in the new South African Republic, where all were seen as equal under the law and state. However, this media construction obscures more than it reveals. The end of Apartheid and the advent of South Africa's democracy with the voting in of the ANC in April 1994 saw immediate political, social and economic reforms. But some of these reforms, especially regarding socio-economic rights and equality, remain elusive. An argument can be made that even now, 25 years later, several social and economic reforms are still yet to happen. To a large extent, Cape Town in particular is socially and economically segregated: the legacies of apartheid spatial planning persist. There has been no remarkable transformation in terms of land or property ownership.

The water crisis and access to water are very much intertwined with these issues. On the 12th of February 2018, News24 published an article titled "Day Zero is a myth, says protesters looking to fill up at Zille's residence". The article covers a small protest that occurred in front of Zille's residence in which protestor and activist, Shaheed Mohammed, claimed that "[t]he City is deliberately creating scarcity, scaring the people about the Day Zero" (Evans, 2018). The protestors argued that the scarcity narrative was being used to drive up tariffs so the City could profit, and argued that the 70 springs around Cape Town should be freely accessible to the public and the locked sites should be opened (Evans, 2018). Helen Zille responded to the Tweet on News24's page and said "Believe me, Day Zero is not a myth. We are going to have to work very hard not to reach level 7 water restrictions - which is when water is rationed and we have to queue for it. That transition has been called Day Zero. Ppl are now taking it seriously" (Zille, 2018). However, that was the precise issue. Many felt like they could not trust the DA or Zille. In her paper 'Narrating Apocalypse: Cape Town's "Day Zero" and the Politics of Climate Change Attribution', Eve Driver wrote that it was only once the drought became a disaster that behaviour began to change (2020: 33). According to Driver, research done by Stellenbosch University showed that despite the restrictions being imposed and ramped up several times since 2017/2018, it was only once the DA announced their Disaster Plan in which they outlined what would happen when the taps ran dry that a significant drop in consumption was observed. The reason for this sudden change? The media frenzy that followed the Disaster Plan's release (Driver, 2020: 33). The question of access, to springs and

to Zille's residence, is tied to access to housing, sanitation, safety, as well as social and political mobility. But these questions around access are crucial in understanding how chronic conditions of poverty and inaccessibility contribute to the understanding of crisis. News agencies are stakeholders in this conversation.

The question of land remains a sensitive issue. However, looking at the question of land and the water crisis is enlightening because it shows the authority that land ownership gives people. The discrepancies in narrative connects back to Hannah Arendt's theory of the 'sub-nations'. Media no longer circulates in closed communities. Rather, due to the internet and global communication infrastructure, media is accessible internationally. Morning headlines no longer only focus on national happenings, but global news as well. Most large news media groups have entire sections dedicated to global/international news and have representatives across the globe. As such, the facts of a story may be broadcasted far and wide, but the narrative is not necessarily treated the same. The 'rainbow nation' lens on the water crisis was a theme picked up locally and internationally, but it was very rarely evoked on the ground.

In all my time at the Kildare Road spring and talking to people throughout this research process, the crisis was not mentioned as a moment for the 'rainbow nation' to come together. Rather, the idea itself was criticised and rejected. At one point while I was at the spring, I brought the idea up to someone in line waiting to collect water. He was a slightly older man, with a robust body, a heavy brow, and his voice carried far. He did not want his name mentioned, so I will refer to him as Sam. Sam told me that he was from an area called Crawford, which was roughly seven or eight kilometres away. He had not been collecting water here long, he said, only for a few months. He said he heard about the spring from someone in his Mosque and decided one day to take a drive and collect water because the restrictions were hard on his family. He told me they were a household of five and that his elderly mom stayed with them. His mom had dementia and struggled to remember that there were strict water restrictions in place. She did not always understand why she could not have a bath, and when she did, why very little water was poured in. When left unattended, he said, she would fill the bath almost to the middle. He came to collect water to use for cooking and dishes mostly. However, his household felt that the water from the spring tasted better than tap water, so they had also started drinking it. His wife preferred to boil the water and then drink it "just in case". I asked him what he thought about the idea of the crisis bringing the 'rainbow nation' together. He scoffed. I am not sure if it was the sunlight, or the question, that made his eyes scrunch up. He said:

> What rainbow nation? Some people here come because it's nice. There is an atmosphere and it's 'cool' to be collecting water nowadays. But when it's busy or too hot those people can go to the shops and buy their five litre bottles of water. Some of us are here because our choices are limited. We can't afford our water bills and are trying to do what we can to keep them down. This isn't about fashion for us. It's what we need to do to get through this drought (Sam, April 2018).

I ask Sam if he thinks the drought will end or if this is the new normal. He answers bluntly and says: "This is government mismanagement". By now we are next in line and he says goodbye as he steps forward with his containers and begins filling them. I try to catch up with Sam again before he leaves, but once his bottles are filled, he tells me he has to leave. His mom is home alone and he needs to get back to her.

Sam is not the only person I spoke to that felt this way. Most of my formal and informal conversations about the drought and the spring had similar themes. As opposed to the narrative around the drought, the main diversion in views was more focused on the cause or reasons for it. Largely, people fit into three categories regarding their understanding of the reasons for the drought. The first is climate change and changing weather patterns. The second is poor rainfall for two consecutive winter seasons, and the third is some sort of government mismanagement of resources and planning. When I asked about the media portrayal of the drought, most people said they had stopped following the news. One woman posed the question: "Why must we follow the news when we are experiencing these things everyday". This posed an interesting question for my research because it brought into dispute the notion that, through news, an uncontested narrative can be created. However, at this point the water crisis had been an issue for almost two years, which contributed to the fatigue and perhaps apathy towards the news.

When asked about the coverage of the Kildare Road spring specifically, respondents felt that the coverage was welcomed, but not always accurate. They said it raised awareness about the importance of the spring but did not always cover the community element that made the spring unique. The coverage mostly focused on the free access to water. A woman I spoke to, Samika, said that she was happy about the awareness of the spring, but added that "they don't tell people that this is a place where we come to collect water and catch up with people we know". When I ask how often she sees people she knows here she said, "It depends. If I come during the

week during working hours, it's quieter, and maybe I won't see someone. But if I come on the weekend, especially Saturday mornings, I'll see more than one family member I know". When I asked how she knew about the spring, she said her father had a friend that had been collecting water here for some time. He brought them water one day to try and, since then, they had started coming themselves. She said if she could not get a lift here with her father or husband, she would get a lift from a neighbour or friend who also collected water here. She mentioned that if one of their neighbours had not been able to come that week, they would take and fill up a few of their bottles for them, even if it meant having to go back and forth to their car several times. Samika added "I don't mind because I know they would do it for me too. Anyone here would do the same if you asked. Someone is always willing to help". This account reminds me of discussions with Riyaaz Rawoot who, when talking to him about the spring, always mentioned that it was a community resource that brought people together.

In local media, the narrative is a bit more varied and touches on some of the more nuanced issues of access to water. The idea of a united nation is questioned and argued from various perspectives, allowing for a more complete picture to form. I could find just a few local news articles that mentioned or reported on the conditions in informal settlements.[1] Although there are instances where people do come together – and there appears to be a sense of common struggle or experience, the reality of climate change and access to resources differ and in themselves can create or promote division. In a moment of self-reflection, I had to admit that although this project is important to me, my daily experiences of the crisis, and the post-crisis period, are vastly different compared to most of the people I spoke to at the spring. As restrictions have eased and life has returned to some normalcy, I worry about water in terms of climate change and changing weather patterns, but not really at the level of my household's access to water. Our household water behaviour has definitely changed, and my family and myself are more aware about how we use water, but we have certainly relaxed the monitoring of our usage since 2018. The flat that we rent includes water in the rental fee, so we do not see

[1] Cheslow, C., 2018. *Every Day Seems Like 'Day Zero' To Some Cape Town Residents*. [online] Npr.org. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/03/13/592925986/water-shortages-are-nothing-new-to-some-folks-in-cape-town>
Tswanya, Y., 2018. *#Watercrisis Reality Starts To Hit Township Residents*. [online] Iol.co.za. Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/watercrisis-reality-starts-to-hit-township-residents-13031592>
Lali, V., 2017. *Taps Run Dry In Khayelitsha*. [online] GroundUp News. Available at: <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/taps-run-dry-khayelitsha/>

the water bill and can't be exactly sure how much we are using and how much it costs. So for the most part, we get to turn a blind eye to the lasting implications of the water crisis.

For many, the Kildare Road spring was a way to circumvent the increasing water tariffs to some extent. There are no entry or usage fees to collect water (although someone on a Facebook group suggested a R10 entry fee to keep "low lives" away and encourage people to "take care of the place"). However, for many, the cost of water is still an issue. People are still complaining that the City is measuring their consumption incorrectly and charging them too much. People are still struggling to adjust to the increase in tariffs. On the 19th of November 2019, Mark Rountree wrote an article for the Mail and Guardian titled "Cape Town's water tariffs are unfair and penalise the poor". In the article, he writes that "residents in lower income areas like Hanover Park and Khayelitsha pay far more per person than residents from affluent areas like Camps Bay". He further explains that the DA would exempt households that use less than 6 000 litres of water per month from the new tariff system. However, usage over 6 000 litres would mean an exponential increase in tariffs. For example, in an area such as Camps Bay, the average household consists of two people. The cost of their 6 000 litres would be roughly R51 per person per month. However, in Khayelitsha the average household consists of four people. They would be paying R61 per person. In Hanover Park a "typical five-person home" would be paying R73 per person, which is 37% more than someone living in Camps Bay. In this area, household income is estimated to be around 10% less than people who live in Camps Bay. These figures were calculated using the 2017/2018 DA budget when the drought was subsiding, yet for the 2019/2020 budget the DA voted to raise the cost of water again (Rountree, 2019). During a crisis, decisions are made quickly, as time is of the essence. This often means that it is difficult to keep track of policy changes or adaptions. A core role of media is to mediate the space between government and citizens, and ensure people are kept informed. For these reasons it is crucial that the media is representative. Although the DA made their budget publicly available, the document is dense and difficult to digest. Mark Rountree's article is an example of the role media can play in keeping people informed of decisions that are made by public officials on behalf of the people who elected them. However, at times the media becomes a vehicle for information and opposition, as they offer more bite-sized information that is more easily understood. But not everyone is reading the *Mail and Guardian*.

Access to information is not equal, and the extent of access amongst those who have it is not homogenous. As Carolyn E. Holmes points out above, often in South Africa narratives differ

depending on language, and language is often coupled with race and class. The people most likely to be negatively affected by the increasing water tariffs are not necessarily reading the news that is breaking down the budget of the city. Due to financial, location, and language constraints, news distribution can differ substantially. Moreover, as news is being distributed and consumed online more, paywalls have become more common. I was required to pay R4 to read "Cape Town's water tariffs are unfair and penalise the poor" (Rountree, 2020). How does this contribute to our ability to share nationhood through news, and how varied narratives are developing? If finance is a deterring factor to access, ultimately a large group of South Africans will be excluded. Online news paywall structures effectively make news a "luxury" commodity based on who can afford to pay for recurring subscriptions. If the media acts as a watchdog and one needs to subscribe to benefit from their services, who is the media 'watchdogging' for? In Rountree's article, he writes "Inexplicably, councillors like Booi and Kleinsmith acted to penalise the communities they were elected to protect", referring to the councillors that voted against the progressive tariff structure because the City would lose too much money from their budget, and the burden would fall on higher-income households, which was deemed "unfair" (Rountree, 2019). The issues raised in the article affect lower-income areas disproportionately, yet the article is very likely not accessible to those that reside within these areas.

In their 2013 article, Ian Glenn and Robert Mattes provide important insights into the content and structure of the media industry in South Africa. How the media industry operates and identifies a target audience is important to this study as it contributes to how representative narratives are formed, and how segregated news can be. In their article, Glenn and Mattes write the following:

> Any politically interested foreigner visiting South Africa from the developed world would see and hear much in the country's mass communications infrastructure that would appear familiar. Much of this is due to the country' s colonial legacy, which shaped both the country's media and political models. The oldest newspaper, for example, the Cape Times, as well as the state broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) overtly modelled themselves… on British Originals. (2012: 1).

The authors then go on to say that for many Black South Africans, the media landscape is limited to a few television shows or newspapers that are published in their first language. This

often means that their choice of news source is limited. However, for those whose first language is English, the media landscape has "almost unlimited choice, and a diminishing sense of national conversation or shared political destiny" (Glenn & Mattes, 2012: 2). This information is crucial for this project because it identifies a key issue about the different realities people experience through media.

Glenn and Mattes' study shows that white South Africans have largely stopped watching news on SABC, often due to a dislike or distrust of the local news. Instead, many have moved over to privatized satellite television which provides several other news broadcasts from local and international media houses. This has resulted in the SABC having predominantly Black South African audience who are more able to access this free news source relative to private television alternatives. Furthermore, their paper shows that newspaper readership is nearly double as high amongst white South Africans (87% of white responders said they read newspapers often) relative to Black South Africans (48%) (Glenn & Mattes, 2012: 9-10). However, the opposite is true when looking at the levels of physical engagement, particularly in terms of collective action. Glenn and Mattes (2012) also find that, relative to their white counterparts, Black South Africans are three times more likely to attend elections rallies, go to community meetings, and join outreach groups to raise awareness in their communities. Black South Africans are also more likely to contact leaders and follow the formal guides for engaging with political representatives (Glenn & Mattes, 2012:10). The authors use race as a proxy for social class due to the historical legacy of wealth distribution, but it is also important to note that racial classifications in the article as well as in this paper are themselves legacies of Apartheid and the National Party's (NP) agenda to categorize people by skin colour. This was a necessary tool of the NP as they needed racial classifications in order to effectively enforce racial segregation and oppression policies and agendas.

According to Glenn and Mattes, at the time of writing their article, the SABC was one of the world's largest news organizations partly due to the fact that they needed to broadcast in 11 official languages on both radio and television. At the time, the SABC had a staff total of close to 1 000. Due to limited access to news alternatives in languages other than English or Afrikaans, the SABC is credited to have played a huge role in the formation of political perceptions of four in every five South Africans. This has caused the SABC to be a source of contention around partisan and ideological clashes, which has also caused internal conflict for almost two decades. During South Africa' post-apartheid era, the SABC has undergone much

transformation, but many of these transformations - especially under President Mbeki - has made people perceive the SABC to have a pro-ANC bias. When Snuki Zikalala became the head of the SABC, suspicions grew further as they were believed to be an ANC 'propagandist'. Suspicions similarly grew when the SABC did not cover the booing of Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Mgcuka at a rally, and instead chose to blacklist journalists and political commentators who seemed to have views "contrary to the SABC preferences" (Glenn & Mattes, 2012: 13).

For many white South Africans, this signified that the SABC would not cover 'their' interests, and as such sought out more privatised and international news organizations. This idea of 'their' interests being separate from other – presumably referring to mostly Black South Africans – interests stood out to me. There is somewhat of an ingrained belief that the concerns of white and Black South Africans are not the same. The response to the 'great equaliser' narrative highlights this. For many middle- and upper-class white families, the idea of queuing for water and needing to live off 50 litres of water a day was foreign. But it allowed those who live privileged lives, often ignorant of the conditions of the marginalised, to 'see how the other side lives.' I think it's fair to say that they did not like what they saw. Having to contend with the water crisis made the reality of poor and low-income families more concrete to some, yet this was not the narrative that was prioritised. Frequently, people would complain and criticise the DA for their handling of the water crisis, but the focus remained on how the crisis was affecting everyone. Those who live privileged lives had an opportunity where they could have added their voice to those who live in constant states of slow violence – who chronically face water scarcity – and have criticised the CoCT and the DA for the persistent lack of access to resources. In moments of crisis, this form of 'media segregation' furthers the sub-national narratives, and the reporting and documenting of experience begins to take on varied portrayals.

As discussed above, my research has showed that the media coverage, or lack of coverage of the crisis often highlighted inequality, but not much has happened to address it. Now, almost two years since the crisis has 'ended', many parts of Cape Town are still living with 'Day Zero' restrictions. As a result of the restrictive water tariffs and lack of infrastructure, many poor households continue to be forced to use significantly less water than the average household, and they still have to collect water from communal taps. For others, water usage is dictated by budget, and every attempt is made to keep water consumption levels low enough to avoid being

punished by unfair tariffs. The attempts that were made to address these issues of inequality during the drought seem to have run dry. Similar to before the water crisis, people who now have to collect their water, or restrict their usage to a certain amount, continue to live with the realities of chronic crisis – a condition not improved by a good rainy season.

5. Social media and the challenges to narratives of crisis

As the drought progressed throughout 2017, the role of social media became increasingly important. This was largely due to the conversations that were happening on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp. With engagement increasing on these platforms, it became necessary for the CoCT to have a clearly formulated strategy for communication through these platforms. This resulted in the #DayZero campaign, created as a social media-focused marketing strategy that would be widely shared through several platforms, ultimately seeking to change water perceptions and behaviour.

Social media has fundamentally changed the way we take in and produce news. Access to smart phones and social media platforms have created what Seeger and Sellnow (2013) call "citizen journalism" – a development that is attributable to the prominence of individuals documenting the everyday and extraordinary events that happen around them across the globe. Social media has become so prolific that it often becomes the topic of mainstream media news itself. In a world where the frequency of crisis events is increasing, social media allows for the direct engagement around the management and communication of crisis. Moreover, social media has eroded the idea of a singular truth or experience, as people are now able to document their own experiences and post 'evidence' that may go against what is being reported by officials and traditional media. It can also undermine the legitimacy and hegemony of 'orthodox' science and expertise – for instance, through the rapid, widespread dissemination of conspiracy theories, such as those attributed to QAnon. Social media also has changed the way people mobilize around events, such as the 2016 and 2020 US elections and the 2019 marches against Gender Based Violence in South Africa. By considering social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Whatsapp, this chapter will show that during the Cape Town drought, not only did people use these social media platforms to share ideas and tips to bypass mainstream media restrictions or regulations, but also to voice their opinions and push back against certain aspects of the drought management strategies introduced by the DA. The chapter will also analyse the specific role social media plays for organisations during crisis management, and how social media messaging is directed. Etter and Vestergaard's 2015 article about an NGO's use of Facebook to address deforestation will be used as an example to understand similar issues that emerged in terms of social media responses during 'Day Zero'. Critical to this project, this chapter will also document how social media has become a tool for marginalised (as well as middle class) communities that allows them to document the reality

of chronic crisis and draw attention to the endemic nature of water shortages faced by many communities across Cape Town.

Social media has become an important tool in governance. It allows for direct communication with large groups of people at a low cost. Creating a Twitter, Facebook, or Whatsapp account is free. The requirements are that you have a phone that can support these apps and access to the internet or data. It is also for these reasons that social media is used widely in South Africa. The cost of entry is fairly low. However, issues begin to arise when you try to understand how social media profiles and information are perceived. Social media profiles, especially those of government agencies and corporations, depend on reputation. On platforms that frequently streamline so much information to the user, your communication has to be accurate, clear, and concise. The amount of people that follow you also depends on your reputation as an organisation outside of social media applications. Particularly in times of crisis, the ability to have people adhere to your message often depends on forms of engagement which occur outside of social media (Ramluckan, 2016: 2). This was an issue for the CoCT during the 'Day Zero' crisis.

The City was (and continues to be) governed by the DA. For many, that in itself was a problem as political party affiliation in South Africa is often discussed in ways that reflect the persistence of Apartheid political legacies. Understandably, there are issues around trust, belonging, and identity when it comes to political parties in South Africa. For many, the DA, particularly in the early 2000s, was largely perceived as a reincarnation of a whites-only party (Southall, 2019: para 1). The party leadership was largely white, and their following was also largely white. For some, this was comforting. For others, it was alienating. Despite these perceptions having changed over the last two decades, this narrative often surfaces on social media. Large groups of people felt that the DA was not serving or representing them (Southall, 2019: para 1-2). Other groups of people felt that the DA was doing its best, and its best was better than what any other political party could offer.

In late October 2019, the leader of the DA, Mmusi Maimane, resigned as leader and member, causing an eruption of this narrative not only on social media, but in traditional media as well. Many felt that Maimane was not given the chance to be the 'true' leader of the party and was merely the face of a party that needed to attract a more 'diverse' vote. Behind the scenes the former leader, Helen Zille and even Tony Leon were still at the helm and making the decisions

which were often in disagreement with Maimane's vision (Southall, 2019 & Suttner, 2020). The biggest point of contention seemed to concern race, and the tug of war between being a 'non-racial' party and a party that recognises that race needs to be an important factor in governance. The 'new' and 'old' leadership seemed to struggle with finding consensus on how to diversify and include more people in the party, which ultimately led to a 'messy divorce'. In the aftermath of Maimane's resignation, there were several matches of the blame game played, with no one walking away as a clear winner. A commission membered by Ryan Coetzee, Tony Leon, and Michiel le Roux found that "the notion of representivity is incompatible with the values of the DA", and likewise, the DA policy document rejects "race as a way to categorise people and to understand their experiences" (Suttner, 2020: para 2). However, race cannot be ignored when considering how the DA managed the water crisis. As mentioned previously, the chronic water shortage experienced in Cape Town was largely happening to Black and Brown communities. The DA's Water Disaster Plan specifically included target installation of Water Management Devices in low-income homes (Roeland, 2018:1). As such, the experiences of these communities became a large part of the discussion around the drought amongst social media users and often popped up in the comment section of the DA's social media posts regarding the drought. The DA's social media platforms, particularly Twitter, testifies to the lack of trust or the sense of exclusion that some people experience. In a recent tweet, someone commented "The DA is the motherbody of afriforum [sic]" (Twitter user, October 2020). Another comment reads "@SollyMsimanga, @Makashule, @mbalimcdust and other black leaders, please answer this: how do the white leaders in your party understand the challenges faced by the black majority in our country? And how do [these] white leaders articulate what they don't know?" (Twitter user, October 2020). As these comments show, the feelings of mistrust or lack of representation within the party has and continues to be an issue for the DA, especially on their social media platforms. According to Ramluckan (2016), there are seven 'dimensions' of quality social media information: "integrity, consistency, completeness, validity, timeliness, relevancy, and accuracy" (2016: 4). For the user, there is an analysis of these qualities that determine how the post is received. For some, the DA as a party missed one or more of these dimensions from the start. Many felt that the DA were not the right party to manage the crisis and called for national government, run by the African National Congress (ANC), to take over the crisis management. Others were repelled by that idea and felt that only the DA could be trusted to manage the crisis effectively. The conversation around the DA's management of the water crisis often predated the actual drought. People frequently brought up the fact that certain communities in the Cape area were chronically under-serviced by the

party. I found over 50 tweet comments between the period of 1 January 2018 – 31 May 2018 where people brought up or complained about service delivery from the DA.

One particularly salient characteristic of social media is that it is often difficult to recall or know for certain when something starts. In a time where something 'going viral' can happen so quickly and widely, it becomes difficult to determine its origins. The #DayZero campaign was created for social media. The #DayZero campaign was created to go viral. Messages were shared so often and widely by so many users that it became less about who started the campaign and more about the aims of the campaign. For many, this may appear to be a success story. The hashtag became the slogan of a national campaign to bring awareness to the drought and to behaviour around water use. Although concentrated in the Western Cape, the narrative spread and it stopped exclusively being a local issue and became a national and international matter of concern. However, the campaign's hyper-focus on Cape Town's water crisis in particular obscured the fact that other parts of the country were also experiencing a drought. In places like the Karoo and the Eastern Cape, 'Day Zero' was already a reality, but did not receive the same media or political attention.[2] The amount of coverage and attention the campaign received was a major factor in "preventing day zero from happening" (Democratic Alliance, 2018: 1). The end of the press statement released on their Twitter account on 8 June 2018 states, "Let's continue to work together and stay reminded that 50 litres has become the new normal" (Ibid). This sentence immediately stood out to me. Having limited (in this case, 50 litres) access to water was not a 'new' normal. It had been a reality for years for people living in informal settlements. This take by the DA on the water crisis focused on the reality of the middle class and their experience of the crisis, for whom it largely was a 'new normal'. However, it rendered the experiences of large groups of low-income communities invisible. In one sweeping statement, the DA implied that those who experience chronic water crisis were not targets for the #DayZero campaign, because it was already their daily lived reality.

[2] Sizani, M. and Stent, J. (2020). *Port Elizabeth'S Day Zero: A Result Of Poor Planning And A Failure To Fix Leaks | News24*. [online] News24. Available at: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/port-elizabeths-day-zero-a-result-of-poor-planning-and-a-failure-to-fix-leaks-20200922> [Accessed 15 October 2020].
The Mail & Guardian. (2018). *Day Zero Stalks Eastern Cape'S Towns*. [online] Available at: <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-02-02-00-day-zero-stalks-eastern-capes-towns/> [Accessed 15 October 2020].
Caboz, J. (2019). *Dramatic Satellite Images Show Graaff-Reinet'S Supply Dam Drying Up – And Three Other SA Dams On The Verge Of Running Empty*. [online] Businessinsider.co.za. Available at: https://www.businessinsider.co.za/dramatic-satellite-images-show-graaff-reinets-supply-dam-drying-up-and-three-other-sa-dams-on-the-verge-of-running-empty-rhenosterkop-nqweba-middel-letaba-tzaneen-2019-10 [Accessed 15 October 2020].

For decades, more than 80% of South Africans were seen as 'second-class citizens', their rights severely compromised, and their views deemed unimportant. Social media has in many ways changed this. If you can start a social media page, you can 'have a voice'. It is for this reason that makes looking at how social media was used during the water crisis so important. Social media allowed people to directly interact with the CoCT in a way that had previously been challenging. Citizens could push back on what the City was saying, doing, and portraying. There was no single narrative that could be stuck to, because everyone who had a smartphone could be a reporter, photographer, or journalist. The water crisis became a catalyst for Facebook and Whatsapp groups to form with the aim of reporting and sharing news and information about 'Day Zero'. This posed an interesting challenge to the crisis. With the emergence of a wide array of varying narratives, images, experiences, and accounts, I found it more and more difficult to find out what the 'truth' or main focus of engagement was. Given that information was spread so quickly and widely through these platforms, the origins of the information got lost so quickly and it became almost impossible to keep up with the social media coverage of the drought. Images of empty dams and dry rivers went viral but would disappear as quickly as they appeared, being replaced by the next shock value image.

Social media was used to document everyday use (or lack) of infrastructure on a scale that has not been seen before. Susan Star writes that infrastructures are usually mundane and boring when they are operating normally. People are not likely to notice infrastructures when they are functioning. It is at the point of breakdown, lack, or inefficiencies that they are brought into the spotlight (1999: 378-379). Star goes on to explain that these issues or points of breakdown are often built into the infrastructure, because infrastructure is strategically placed. They do not just appear – they are scheduled, mapped, and analysed for cost. There are time frames and construction tenders, which means that they hold important information about how cities and towns work. Star writes: "[s]tudy a city and neglect its sewers and power supplies, and you have missed essential aspects of distributional justice and planning power" (1999: 3). This became increasingly evident throughout the water crisis. Ordinary people started studying infrastructure because they had come face-to-face with a breakdown that threatened their daily reality. Photographs of plastic bottles and water tanks and empty pools were widely shared on social media. These mundane objects soon became the symbols of a crisis that would erase the inequalities that existed in Cape Town. No one could live without water; everyone was in the same boat.

Confronted by the potential reality of taps running dry, many turned to voicing their beliefs or opinions through ways that were familiar: social media. Most of the people I spoke to about this said they already had social media platforms prior to the drought, and it was an easy, accessible tool for them to use to share their views on the drought and how it was managed. It did not require much effort or planning, and often they did not plan what they were going to say prior to posting. This was interesting, although not surprising, to hear. Out of the ten people I spoke to about their social media activity, nine said they had posted something to do with the drought. Mostly they said they had shared a news article on Facebook or Whatsapp. Out of that nine, seven said they had taken a picture of collecting water at the Kildare Road spring to share with friends and family. The one person who had not shared something on social media said that they "did not see the point. Everyone knew about the drought and knew the reality" (Research participant, April 2018). The public could afford to take a more nonchalant approach to their engagement on social media because they did not face the same risks to their reputation. The CoCT, along with other government officials, however, had to have meticulously planned, strategic posts. Their language had to be carefully evaluated, spelling and grammar checks had to be done. The DA have guidelines set by the South African government in 2011 that provides a framework on how social media is to be used in official government capacities. The document states that "[as] public servants, however, government employees have some additional obligations when it comes to sustaining, building and defending the reputation of government through social media" (Social Media Policy Guidelines, 2011: 4). This got me thinking about how to study social media. In her article *Ethnography of Infrastructure*, Star poses the question "Perhaps most important of all, what values and ethical principles do we inscribe in the inner depths of the built information environment?" (1999: 3). How was I going to interpret these social media posts, and how would I assign importance or weight to them? On a forum such as Twitter, there is a built-in popularity index. If people agree with your view, you are likely to experience more 'retweets' and 'likes'. As these indicators increase, your Tweet can appear on the 'Top' page, which means your post is viewed by an algorithm as important or a standout post. Tweets do not move as quickly under the 'Top' page. Under the 'Latest' page, tweets get buried quickly as other posts with the same hashtag are filtered by time of posting. So how does this work? Understanding social media algorithms can be confusing because, by nature, they change frequently and are usually back-facing, so it can be challenging to find information that is accurate. This algorithm is the infrastructure of social media (Inouye & Kalita, 2011). It

is the networks of pipes, wires, channels, and connections that we cannot see or do not notice, until we have to. Similar to physical infrastructure, Star writes that

> People commonly envision infrastructure as a system, of substrates - railroad lines, pipes and plumbing, electrical power plants, and wires. It is by definition invisible, part of the background for other kinds of work. It is ready - to - hand. This image holds up well enough for many purposes- turn on the faucet for a drink of water and you use a vast infrastructure of plumbing and water regulation without usually thinking much about it (1999: 4).

These 'substrates of infrastructure' apply to social media as well. Usually a Tweet, Facebook post, or Whatsapp message is just that: a collection of words strung together and sent into the world with the push of a button. But what enables that message? There is an entire physical apparatus that enables that communication to occur. There are electrical lines, cell phone towers, and underground cables which supports the transmission of that message. But there is also a different network at play. A network of semantics, word choice, language barriers, and ability to communicate concisely. These networks, largely unseen, are crucial to how you end up under the 'Top' page on Twitter.

Having a strong relationship with your following or audience is key in crisis communication. The strength of this relationship plays an important role in the longevity of a brand. Reynolds and Seeger write that the "need for skilled communicators to strategically defend and explain the organisation's position in the face of crisis-induced criticism, threat, and uncertainty" is vital in crisis communication (2005: 44). In light of this and the challenges that the CoCT faced in terms of their social media reach during the water crisis, a company was brought in to assist. According to Rebecca Davis who wrote an article for the Daily Maverick titled: *#CapeWaterGate: In the end, what was Day Zero all about?,* 'Day Zero' as a campaign was introduced in November 2017, but importantly, Davis points out that the announcement of 'Day Zero' coincided with Resolve Communications (RC) being hired by the DA. According to the author, RC was hired because it "offered specific skills and vast experience in government crisis communication strategies and behaviour change" (Davis, 2018: 3). I had heard from several people that there was an 'advertising agency' hired to help the City with the campaign, but I figured it was more in the role of graphic designers and content creation. After hearing about RC, I decided to have a look at their website. I was surprised to find that

below their logo on their home page there were three statements: “Lobbying & Advocacy”, “Reputation Management”, and “Strategic Communications”. Below these statements, there is an image of a megaphone surrounded by the words “The Agitator Model”.

Figure 1: Home page of Resolve Communications

Source: (https://resolvecommunications.co.za/**)**

According to their website, under the “What we do” page, the following is stated:

> We influence government policy, at all levels, to align with your business needs. We change people’s minds about you. We take your issue to the heart of the public debate. We are at your side throughout the media storm (Resolve Communications, Accessed August 2020).

I found this quite fascinating. If you get the impression that this firm focuses on government in particular, you would not be wrong. Their executive chairman is the former leader “of the opposition” (another name for the DA) according to his RC biography. His name might be familiar: Tony Leon. When I first heard about this, I shrugged the information off because I assumed that the DA had hired an advertising agency, which would make sense in terms of having a professional agency handling the crisis communication. What I found odd was that when I looked into it, the DA did not hire an advertising agency. They hired a professional lobbyist. If you look under the ‘Lobbying and Advocacy’ section on their webpage they write that “We navigate our clients through the political landscape with tailor-made plans aimed at

changing the political opinion and winning public support". Why was it necessary for the DA to hire RC to assist in the management of the water crisis? According to Rebecca Davis, this might have something to do with a Request for Information (RFI) released on the 19th of June 2017. The RFI in question was about water augmentation schemes, which stated that the DA had the goal of having the first (desalination) plant up and running by the end of August 2017 (2018: 2).

The DA's announcement of the desalination plants was met with mixed responses. Building and maintaining desalination plants is expensive. The DA estimated that the three plants (Monwabisi, Strandfontein, and the V&A Waterfront) would cost upwards of R240 million per plant. The plants would provide much needed relief, but they would not provide the required amount of water the city needs per day. When operating at full capacity, the plants would produce only 12 million litres per day. This, according to Mark Rountree, was only 3% of the city's 500 million litre daily need (2019: 1-2). Of course, the mixed reactions to these plans played out on social media. At the time of the crisis, Mmusi Maimane was still the leader of the DA, and on the 24th of January 2018 he entered into a less-than-friendly exchange with someone on Twitter about the cost of the plants, which drew significant criticism from various stakeholders. Maimane tried to argue that the cost was too much for the city alone to cover, and that national government needed to provide assistance. A local businesswoman, Magda Wierzycka, tweeted "Apparently @MmusiMaimane indicated that desalination of sea water for #DefeatDayZero would be 30% of the city's budget. Misleading. The capital expenditure of such a venture would be spread out over time and wouldn't be hit in a single year. Why are you lying Mr. Maimane?". Maimane responded "I said that desalination is expensive. Large scale facilities cost up to R15 billion (which is 1/3 of CPT's annual budget). No city can afford such facilities on its own. Especially when their provision is outside its legal mandate. Assistance would need to come from nat. govt.". Wierzycka retorted with "I was quoted 120 million euros for a plant that would supply 100,000,000 l per day. 11 months to construct. That is R1.8bn. Double that for unexpected expenditure. SAA bail out was R10bn. Please stop lying to us.". Wierzycka then goes on to Tweet that "We need basic level solution. Funded by issuing municipal bonds. I am sure there are multiple answers and solutions. The problem is time. Drought is not going away. Neither is climate change. Or population growth." At this point in the exchange, a Twitter user with the user handle @abelmike Tweeted: "But a large scale plant to supply the city properly is 8 to 12 times that daily volume in your tweet, if you look [a]t the pre-drought usage & the size & growth of the population. So multiply your number by even 6-

8 times to have a full solution and you are closer to R12-15 bn". Following on, Phumzile Van Damme, who at the time was the DA spokesperson, retweeted @abelmike's tweet to Wierzycka adding "I see @Magda_Wierzycka has not responded to this. Facts matter."

This interaction on Twitter demonstrates the complexities of engaging on social media. In the above section, I have highlighted only four people's exchanges. In Maimane's initial response to Wierzycka, there are 75 other comments, and then there were further replies to some of those 75 comments. How do elected officials decide who to engage with? It often has a lot to do with who is on that above-mentioned 'Top' page, or at least who has significant engagement on their posts. Social media has a built-in popularity factor. The more engagement you have on your profile, the more likely people are to see it. The more followers you have, the more your Tweets get shared or engaged with.

The algorithms that make all of this possible may seem fairly harmless at first glance, but in instances where there is a crisis that is referred to as a 'great leveller', they become problematic. If you have a system that prioritises certain voices or profiles, you create an echo chamber. In politics, public perception is crucial. The margins for error are very small when your post can reach millions of followers instantly. So, in times of crisis, where perception is even more crucial because politicians need people to trust them in order to get them to act in a particular way, some assistance might be needed. And in the case of the DA, this assistance came at the cost of over half a million Rand. RC were paid R658 000 to provide 'strategic advice' with the aim of improving the CoCT's crisis communication (de Villiers, 2018). When asked about this contract by News24, the City said that it was "a vast undertaking to develop programmes that can reach each and every resident. Resolve provides guidance on how best this can be achieved" (de Villiers, 2018). The hiring of RC was apparently not only suspicious to me; in the same article referred to above, the CoCT was asked about the conflict of interest that might exist when a lobbying group headed by the former leader of the party is managing the official crisis communication. RC responded by saying "[t]his question has frankly absurd inference: that the party-political background of two principals in the company should qualify or disqualify that company from doing any work" (de Villiers, 2018). However, RC is not merely a public relations firm – they are a lobbying firm. Which means that their undertaking is to shift the public perception in favour of their clients. But the public perception they are attempting to shift here is the mismanagement of a water crisis that unfairly impacts lower-income communities, which in the context of Cape Town, are largely Black and Brown

communities. It is also fair to say that hiring this type of specialized service is not available to everyone. If we are to believe that the water crisis was the 'great leveller', then those who live with chronic crisis everyday should have benefitted from RC's public relation work for the DA. However, there is no evidence to support the idea that those communities have benefitted to date.

Nick Shepherd writes that "clean drinking water is a complex object, constructed at the point of the intersection between natural systems, cultural imaginaries, and social, political and economic forces and interests" (2019: 1). 'Day Zero' is an interesting portal into this concern because access to water is integral for human life. In 2017, water became deeply political because it brought social and economic injustice to the forefront of the conversation. Mediating who and how water would be supplied when the taps ran dry showed the fragmented nature of the city. The 2011 census found that Cape Town had 1.068 million households. Of those households, 12% (roughly 124 000) were informal structures. Of the 1.068 million households, close to 36% lived below the poverty line, which in 2011 referred to people who earned less than R501 (lower bound poverty line) or R779 (upper bound poverty line) per month. In 2019, these respective poverty lines were R801 and R1 227 per month respectively (Statistics South Africa, 2019: 3-4, Shepard, 2019: 4). Furthermore, 97% of households were dependent on municipal water provision, and 10% of households made use of 'alternative' toilets such as chemical, bucket, or 'other' structures (Shepherd, 2019: 4-5). In Cape Town, you do not have to look very hard to see the economic and social inequality. What Nick Shepard describes above is the chronic crises that poor communities face and how it is treated as unexceptional or normal. However, when the threat of a similar condition (like needing to que for a daily ration of water) becomes a concern for the middle class, a sudden shift of attention and narrative happens that prioritises the voices of those who 'have'. The DA's social media campaign was part of this narrative and largely aimed to address the behaviour and concerns of the middle class. The digital and print awareness posters often focused on how much water a dishwasher and washing machine uses, or how long your shower should be (#DefeatDayZero, n.d). What is neglected by this social media approach, however, is the fact that in poor communities across the Western Cape, many households do

not have running water or a flush toilet in their homes. Information about dish washers and washing machines and showers are not relevant to these households.[3]

The City still functions on a map where low-income households are pushed to the periphery and wealth is displayed and celebrated at the centre. It is only when you start to look at the space in between that you see how people try to claim back space. There are tents set up under bridges and in parks. Informal structures pop up overnight in crevices between roads and homes. People try to claim back a piece of land, hoping that proximity to the economic hub will allow for better opportunity. The connection between these images and the water crisis may not seem clear, but they are at the core of how we need to look at the city's infrastructure. In Cape Town (as in many other South African towns and cities), social injustice is deeply rooted. You cannot look at Cape Town's city planning or management without addressing social injustice or trying to understand how social inequality operates in the city. And you cannot address social injustice until you address the history of that injustice.

For these reasons, it is crucial to consider how the DA approached crisis management, and who was prioritised in the process of managing the water shortage. In traditional crisis management, the first step is to do triage. To evaluate what damage has been done and try predicting what further damage can be expected. The drought response needed a centralized response tool that could provide rapid information, tips, and directives with little cost or time drain on the government. Social media was an ideal tool for this. However, social media can also highlight who is not included in these narratives. What is mentioned and what is omitted in social media posts speaks directly to who is being targeted and what information is deemed necessary to reach a wide audience. In the last four years, there have been major developments in social media's role in crisis management. A few years ago, Facebook created a tool on their platform that people could use to mark themselves 'Safe' during disasters and crises. Although less practical for slow crises like a drought, the tool has proven popular in instances

[3] Social Justice Coalition. n.d. *Sanitation - Social Justice Coalition*. [online] Available at: <https://sjc.org.za/campaigns/sanitation> [Accessed 20 October 2020].
Lali, V. (2018). *Hundreds Share One Working Toilet In Khayelitsha Neighbourhood | News24*. [online] News24. Available at: <https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/hundreds-share-one-working-toilet-in-khayelitsha-neighbourhood-20180719> [Accessed 20 October 2020].
Lali, V. (2018). *Two Toilets For Dozens Of Residents In Khayelitsha*. [online] TimesLIVE. Available at: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-08-03-two-toilets-for-dozens-of-residents-in-khayelitsha/> [Accessed 20 October 2020].

such as severe hurricanes or tornadoes. It has also been used in heart-breaking instances of terrorist attacks and mass shootings.

Under 'Crisis Response' on Facebook, there is a 'Safety Check' feature which "allows people to quickly share that they're safe during a crisis with friends and family and helps them connect with people they care about" (Facebook, 2020). This feature is only activated when Facebook is alerted to the danger. The process is explained as follows:

> When an incident such as an earthquake, hurricane, mass shooting or building collapse occurs where people might be in danger, global crisis reporting agencies alert Facebook. If a lot of people in the affected area are posting about the incident, Safety Check will be activated and those people in the area may receive a notification from Facebook to mark themselves safe. People who click the Safety Check notification will also be able to see if any of their friends are in the affected area or have marked themselves safe. (Facebook, 2020).

Facebook now has an entire resource page dedicated to crisis response and how the platform handles these situations. This goes beyond creating a tool to enable people to let their family and friends know of the state of their safety. Facebook has designed a policy for addressing crisis situations based on how people use their platform in these instances. They have guidelines on what may be posted under crisis responses, how to go about helping in these situations, and what the community guidelines are. But this approach to crisis response highlights the neglect that is shown when crisis is slow and chronic, as is the context of many communities in Cape Town. There is no safety check for those who, as Nixon writes, face "[v]iolence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space" (2011: 2). The type of violence that occurs away from the middle and upper class. There is no function that allows people to immediately alert people to the chronic crises faced in their communities. In order to utilise social media in these contexts, people or groups are required to utilise their own autonomy and following to try bring attention to marginalized communities.

Roshan et al. argues that organisations can use social media to respond directly to stakeholders, which helps them understand the stakeholder's crisis needs which may enhance the organisation's reputation (2016: 350). However, this direct method of communication may

increase an organisation's vulnerability during a crisis if they are not perceived to have managed the crisis well. In their study, they found that despite the importance of social media in this age, businesses still find it difficult to navigate using social media for crisis communication. The study outlines three positive benefit categories of social media use for organisations. The first benefit is that it allows organisations to have active and engaged relationships with their stakeholders, enabling them to listen and respond directly. The second benefit is access to real time data created by their stakeholders. Organisations can also do research and receive feedback about their service in a cost-effective and timely manner. The third benefit is that social media provides a cost-efficient way to communicate with stakeholders (Roshan et al, 2016: 350 -351). With respect to the Cape Town drought, social media was an important tool for the DA, and as mentioned above played an important role in getting people to change their water consumption behaviour. However, it was also where the DA received the most backlash and negative attention from the public. This negative attention often stemmed from people who were already dissatisfied by the service delivery of the City and felt that they had not been included in the narrative around the water crisis.

An article written by Micheal Andreas Etter and Anne Vestergaard looked into how social media was used by an NGO, Greenpeace, to publicly call out Nestlé for their use of palm oil, which had contributed to severe deforestation in Australia and Asia in 2010. The social media responses used in this instance are similar to those used by the CoCT during the water crisis. Greenpeace's campaign was deemed successful in getting a wide public reaction and managing to use social media petitions to get traditional media to cover the story (2015: 163). Nestlé also used social media to respond to accusations and address the public regarding the campaign. Nestlé focused their response on the role of the industry and actors within the industry. Their responses were largely focused on remedying the situation and outlined what was and what would be done to combat the issues raised by Greenpeace. However, the study noted that "Nestlé refrained entirely from addressing the question of cause - who or what had been responsible for bringing about the problem of deforestation - just as barely any mention was made of the consequences of deforestation" (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015: 168). The strategy was to apologize, refrain from issuing blame and taking responsibility, and to avoid addressing what the cause was exactly. By refraining from issuing blame and not addressing the circumstances around deforestation, Nestlé avoided making statements that could undermine the company's credibility. In terms of SCC theory, this strategy allows stakeholders to feel validated with an apology but to still regard the company as having a good reputation. The

NGO's social media posts focused on remedial responsibility and was noticeably less concerned with analysing and discussing the exact causes of the deforestation. The NGO also focused their efforts on Nestlé and did not address other organisations who were also part of the problem.

When looking at the NGO's strategy, the authors found that Greenpeace associated responsibility with the public rather than Nestlé. The NGO used a shaming discourse to emphasize that consumers had a responsibility to not support Nestlé, rather than directly trying to change industry practices (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015: 168-167). The public largely responded by focusing on Nestlé and did not pay much attention to other factors. In the three actors' responses, all neglected to address the political actors that may be contributing to or responsible for the issues. According to the authors, "Facebook users pay little attention to causes and consequences of deforestation, while focussing almost exclusively on remedial responsibility on what – must be done to provide a solution" (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015: 169). The online public demanded that Nestlé take responsibility for the deforestation and did not view themselves as the group who could provide a solution by boycotting the industry or challenging government to implement regulations. The public response is framed as 'protest discourse' which entails demanding action without enquiring about their own role or responsibility in the crisis. This study helps contextualise the engagement that occurs between the three actors. Firstly, the organisation that is viewed as responsible for the crisis, secondly a group that acts as a watchdog to bring awareness to the actions of the organisation, and thirdly, the public and their reaction to the organisation.

In the case of Cape Town's water crisis, similar dynamics were at play. Throughout the #DayZero campaign, there were groups that countered or pressured the DA regarding their actions. Various NGOs and activist groups used social media to voice their issues with the handling of the drought. Some of these groups already existed pre-drought and had a record with government accountability work (such as the Social Justice Coalition). Other groups formed specifically to address drought specific issues (such as the Water Crisis Coalition). The focus of these groups was largely to raise awareness around inequality and how the DA's plans often seemed to neglect or further marginalise the poor. More informal groups also surfaced on social media platforms such as Facebook and Whatsapp. Social media became a key tool in drawing attention to the voices of people who were on the margins of the water crisis because

their lives did not dramatically change during the drought. For residents and activists alike, it offered a platform to problematize the 'great equaliser' narrative.

When you go onto the Water Crisis Coalition's (WCC) website, there are six blocks titled: Context, Articles, Documents, Stories, Action, and Calendar. Under the 'Context' block reads: "The City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government messed up big time. In fact, all tiers of Government is complicit through lack of foresight and mismanagement of our water resources". Once you click on the box you are taken to a page that encourages users to post information, resources, and opinions in order to describe the context of the crisis. These posts are linked to their Facebook account. When I visited their Facebook page in early 2020, they had 2 970 likes and 3 156 followers, but they had not posted on the page since the 16th of October 2018. From their Facebook page and website, it is difficult to tell for certain what the WCC's aim was. There is no 'About us' page or description. There is no manifesto or intention statement. But from their posts on Facebook, it seems that their focus is to raise awareness surrounding the water crisis and the impact it was having in low-income areas. In their posts, they frequently mention more of the chronic conditions of crisis than what the media narrative covered. They bring up "Decent housing for all" and "scrapping of all arrears and fines" – the latter relating to the Water Management Devices and the high tariffs since the water crisis 'began' (Water Crisis Coalition Facebook page, 2018). Despite the focus of the WCC on the water crisis, the group make reference to housing issues and tariffs as these are conditions that already put strain on poor and low-income communities, which existed before the drought occurred and still persists today. At the bottom of their webpage there are two contact numbers. I decided to call one of the numbers. However, after several attempts to contact both, I still had no success. The Facebook page remains dormant and it seems that the WCC has given up on their project, despite the fact that people are still experiencing the financial and social burdens of the water management devices. The consequences of an unfair levy system are still present in lower-income communities in Cape Town.

Several Facebook and Whatsapp groups pertaining to the water crisis shared information relatively quickly, and they were usually community groups. The more informal groups were not always focused on representing an underserved community and did not really get involved in policymaking or activism. Rather, they functioned as somewhat of a closed network that involved the sharing of articles, images, and do-it-yourself tips on how to go off the grid or how to install water storage tanks. Throughout 2018, I was invited to several of these groups,

mostly on Whatsapp and Facebook. The most prominent on these was a group called *Water Press Riyaz Rawoot (WPRR).* This group was (and still is today) administered by Riyaz Rawoot, who was introduced earlier in this paper. At the time I was invited, there were over 60 participants in the group. At the time of writing, 42 remained. I was added to the group soon after my first visit to the Kildare Road spring, which was also the first time I met Riyaz.

At the time, I was living in Stellenbosch and could only visit the site every other week, so the group was helpful for staying informed of the happenings around the spring. Conversation on the group was mostly intermittent, but on some days, notifications would come in rapidly and my phone would vibrate constantly for some time. This was usually spurred on by a message or event that upset the group. One such instance was when the CoCT closed the spring, and a member posted a picture of the cemented area. Understandably, the group felt strongly about this. One member wrote "Didn't expect anything less. Total obliteration. And one of many initiatives to keep out and disconnect people from where our parents and gr[an] parents came from". Another wrote "It's about absolute control. The city thinks that is the best way to govern. They no longer care about our input. They 'know' what's best for the people, and we must just trust that and keep quiet". I spoke to Riyaz about this day a few weeks later. He told me that he was not surprised by what the CoCT had done. But he also spoke about being sad and how much he valued the community of water users that came to the spring. I asked why he started the WhatsApp group, and he told me that it made sense from an activist perspective. It was the most effective forum to spread news and mobilise people.

The group from this point out began to decrease in activity. There is nothing that can be done about the spring's closure now. I went back to Kildare Road a month or so later. In stark contrast to my earlier visits, the road was deserted. There were no water porters rushing back and forth, no cars ramped up pavements, and no buzz of activity as I turned the corner and walked to the end of the cul-de-sac. I had never been here alone. I walked to the end of the road and looked at the tree where the petition to keep the spring open had once hung. It had been taken down. Where the PVC pipe used to be was now a concrete slab. I felt strange standing there. If someone was watching me, they would have seen a woman staring at concrete. But I like to think that for the people who knew what this space was just a few weeks prior, I would look like many of them. Someone who was confused and mourning a space that was once so vibrant. Where people had stood in lines and made casual conversation while waiting for their

turn to collect water. I walked away feeling dejected and I struggled to write about the experience in my field notebook.

The Whatsapp group provides an interesting lens into how social media is used in times of crisis. Since the closure of the spring, the WPRR group has been fairly inactive. Every now and then, someone will share a news article pertaining to water restrictions, gentrification, or a holiday well wish. More and more people have left and Riyaz's 'only water issues' messages have popped up less frequently when conversation goes astray. The 'profile' picture of the group is a sign posted by the spring that reads "Closed. Council is reducing the flow". While combing through the chat history looking for messages or article links, I wonder what the purpose of the group is now. I wonder about Riyaz's intentions for the group now that it is no longer an activist platform. The WPRR group is to me a symbol of the water crisis in many ways. It provided a space for a diverse group of people to come together and discuss ideas or plans around saving the spring, or to just discuss and share news and events around the drought. At its peak, the drought was extremely active as news and information was shared rapidly. But as the winter season came and the spring was closed, that activity and activism came to a halt. This trajectory was similar across other social media platforms. Posts about the drought or the #DayZero campaign decreased and then stopped all together as time went by. New crises popped up and the days of counting litres and measuring consumption, and the impending dread of running out of water washed away with the 2018 winter. On the 21st of December 2018, the following exchange happened on the group:

> **Participant A:** Is it true that the water collection point on Newlands Main Road (that replaced the others) is closed for renovations? Does anyone know how long it will be closed for?
> **Participant B:** Yes. Just now on Cape Talk. [The spring] [w]as closed [a] couple of days ago for maintenance to be reopened today. Still closed at this time.
> **Participant B:** Cape Talk: Plumbers that had to do the maintenance at Newlands springs are on strike - hence it is still closed.
> **Participant C:** Surely more lies... They just don't want people to be collecting 'free' water...

This exchange is a nutshell of the water crisis. For most, the conversation and concern was focused on access to water. For others, it was about losing the right of access to a particular

public space with a long history, the Kildare Road Spring. Members of the Islamic community felt that their rights were being trampled on. The Kildare Road spring was a significant site for this community. They believe that an Iman blessed the spring. Some of the families that had been collecting water there in 2017/2018 had been doing so for decades. It was a family tradition.

Not all responses to the crisis stressed the value of community and cooperation. In certain instances, several people on social media had accused residents of informal settlements for wasting water. On certain social media groups, people frequently blamed taxi drivers for washing their minibuses with hose pipes or using several buckets of water. On the 31st of December 2017, a user posted about a conversation where someone told them that they were filling their pool with portable water because "they pay rates and taxes". The user went on to preach about how the drought is a societal issue and everyone has a part to play in preventing 'Day Zero'. The post received considerable attention (at the time of writing there were 129 comments and 37 shares). However, what caught my attention was the following comment left on the post: "Yes [name redacted] and THAT is exactly why I get so upset when I see taxi drivers and those in informal settlements just [don't] give a damn. Why should they!??? Not their problem!! Cause we will suffer for their stupidity and pay for their arrogants!! (sic)". On a different post I come across this engagement:

> **User 1:** We were driving through a township called Langa today and two places people were washing cars. 😕 and when I mentioned to the guys in the taxi I was driving with, about the water crisis, the one guy responded the water shortage is not true. It is the government's way of wanting to get more money out of the people. I had to convince him there is a water crisis and if each one of us [don't] do our bit soon there will be no water. 😢 My concern there are [a lot] of people thinking that way and they are under the impression there is an endless supply of water. 😢 Is enough being done to create awareness and educate the masses? 😕
> **User 2 (responding to comment):** They are used to endless supply of freebies

On a different post someone commented, "Yet another waste of time & money... hope it is across the board & not just for the rate payers. Try the townships, squatter camps, taps run 24/7, taxis, cars washed with hoses, clothes washed under running water."

These are just three examples of many that I found on this public Facebook group. None of the three original posts mentioned taxis or informal settlements. I found the language use of these comments upsetting, but not entirely surprising. The Othering of the poor in South Africa is not new. The instances of blaming this Other, and the practice of shifting blame to another group, is also not surprising. The leaders in provincial government do it too. The assumptions made in the comments show the underlying racial and class prejudice that so often codes our language. The "theys", "thems", and "theirs" is a common feature of disassociation between groups. The language of Othering is found frequently on social media, as is the blame game or blame politics (Alorainy et al, 2019: 1-4, Cappellini, et al, 2019: 429-430). Reading these posts on social media made me think about the earlier engagement between Maimane and Wierzycka. On Twitter, there is little room for nuance as the character count is restricted to 280. However, both these Tweets neglected to touch on the biggest factor behind 'Day Zero' - the middle and upper classes were using too much water. The focus on desalination as a solution to the water crisis was still not getting to the root of the issue. Water consumption by ordinary people was unsustainable at the time. Another issue ignored in these conversations is the fact that a water (along with sanitation and infrastructure) crisis had been happening all along.

When it comes to understanding how social media is used by politicians, Donald Trump immediately comes to mind. Trump's use of Twitter in particular has been written about extensively as his social media behaviour has broken away from what was considered the 'etiquette' of social media use by political leaders. Trump has managed to use Twitter to spread and build his right-wing agenda (Kreis, 2017: 2). Trump's use of social media has managed to cross over to traditional media as his Tweets become the news itself, which has frequently led to news coverage focusing on the Tweet rather than the event being Tweeted about. This has also allowed for this agenda to spread to wider audiences as individuals in older generations tend to not have relatively a large online presence. A language tool that Trump often deploys is the 'rhetoric of exclusion', through which he identifies a group as the Other (Kreis, 2017: 3). Populist politics often prefer communicating on social media platforms as it allows them to have "simple and direct communication with the people in order to deliver an unmediated message. By engaging in direct communication with their followers, the populist actors circumvent the media as gatekeepers. They can thus present their message without mediation." (Casero-Ripollés, Feenstra, and Tormey, 2016 quoted in Kreis, 2017: 4). The mention of an Other in Trump's Tweets is important because his political campaign and agenda is to "Make

America Great Again", which requires a villain or the proverbial 'bad guy' that he needs to save America from. For right-wing Americans, this villain or bad guy is usually a person of colour, immigrants, refuges, Muslims, homosexuals, and other marginalised groups. In February 2017, Trump tweets "The threat from radical Islamic terrorism is very real, just look at what is happening in Europe and the Middle-East. Courts must act fast!". However, the criminalizing of these groups did not only start during his campaign for presidency. In June 2015, he Tweeted "Sadly, the overwhelming amount of violent crime in our major cities is committed by blacks and Hispanics - a tough subject - must be discussed.". This language is Othering 101.

The idea that a core, dominant group is in danger and that a marginalised group that acts or looks different is the source of the danger is often posed by Trump's rhetoric (Alorainy et al, 2019: 1-4). If we go back and look at the posts on the Facebook group, we see echoes of this language. People quickly identify an 'Other' that is to blame or is responsible for the wasting of water. Although the Facebook users can identify that there is a threat to their daily lives (water running out), they perceive this threat to be external and thus the fault of an outside group. Rather than discussing the role that middle-class households play, the blame is shifted onto people who have already limited access to water. Rather than discussing the significant amount of water consumed by large washing machines and single toilet flushes, the conversation is focused on the person who washes clothes in an outside basin with the tap running, or the mini-bus taxi driver who uses a few buckets of water to keep their vehicles clean. The shifting of blame can be observed in nearly every aspect of the water crisis. The CoCT blamed the national government for poor-planning and lack of budget. The national government blamed the DA for poor-planning and for mudslinging. Residents blamed the government or other residents. Some blamed the farmers. Some blamed climate change and ineffective governance of the 'new normal'. Social media became the main platform for these grievances.[4] People vented or accused various role-players on their platforms in ways that were unlikely to happen face-to-face. A term for this phenomena has been coined: keyboard

[4] Evans, J., 2018. *Day Zero Is A Myth, Say Protesters Looking To Fill Up At Zille's Residence | News24*. [online] News24. Available at: https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/day-zero-is-a-myth-say-protesters-looking-to-fill-up-at-zilles-residence-20180212
Kreis, R. (2017) The 'Tweet Politics' of President Trump. *Journal of Language and Politics*. [Online] 16 (4), 607–618.Masilela, B., 2019. *'Service Delivery Protests Are Part Of The ANC's Plans To Discredit The DA'*. [online] Iol.co.za. Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/service-delivery-protests-are-part-of-the-ancs-plans-to-discredit-the-da-20954535>

warriors.[5] According to Wiktionary, this term is defined as follows: (informal, derogatory) A person who behaves aggressively and/or in an inflammatory manner in online text-based discussion media, but at the same time does not behave similarly in real life, potentially due to cowardice, introversion or shyness (keyboard warrior – Wiktionary, 2020). Social media has made it easier to air grievances, but this is not always a positive trait.

People engage politicians more frequently about their dissatisfaction than praise. As people moved on with their lives following Cape Town's water crisis, the moment of outrage faded and daily life continued. As I conclude this chapter, there is outrage on Facebook and Twitter about the level four national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. No one is talking about the water crisis anymore. All the social media posts that I have discussed in this chapter are now archival. They happened at least several months ago, if not two years ago. This is something I both dislike and like about social media. It moves with us. It documents whatever we are currently facing as a society. But as quickly as we forget, it stores away. The posts about 'Day Zero' are buried under other crises that have occurred. You have to scroll further and further down in the search content to find what you are looking for. Social media may provide more agency for people to create and document their own narratives and experience, but ultimately it is vulnerable to the same transience that characterises traditional media: news moves on. Yet for those who live with chronic and enduring crisis, 'Day Zero' continues.

[5] Cappellini, B. et al. (2019) Shouting on social media? A borderscapes perspective on a contentious hashtag. *Technological forecasting & social change*. [Online] 145428–437.
Alorainy, W. et al. (2019) 'The Enemy Among Us': Detecting Cyber Hate Speech with Threats-based Othering Language Embeddings. *ACM Transactions on the Web (TWEB)*. [Online] 13 (3), 1–26.

Figure 2: The sign posted at the Kildare Road spring announcing the closure, and the profile picture of the Water Press Riyaz Rawoot Whatsapp group.

Source: Water Press Riyaz Rawoot Whatsapp Group.

6. Conclusion

On the 20th of October 2020, the City of Cape Town announced that water restrictions would be lifted for the 2020/2021 budget period starting in November 2020.[6] The following statement was made by Xanthea Limberg after the announcement was made public: "Cape Town's recent drought crisis made it clear that it's necessary for the City to build water security by investing in future water sources as outlined in our Water Strategy" (IOL, 2020). However, as this research has shown, "building water security" is not equally attainable for everyone. For those who live in conditions of chronic crisis, access to water has and still remains an issue. The DA was proud to announce that 'Day Zero' had been avoided in 2018, but for many poor and low-income communities in the city, 'Day Zero' had been an enduring daily experience long before the onset of the drought. This is the reality of the water crisis in Cape Town, as well as other

[6] Business Tech. (2020). *Cape Town Lifts Water Restrictions – Announces New Prices From November*. [online] Businesstech.co.za. Available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/property/442188/cape-town-lifts-water-restrictions-announces-new-prices-from-november/> [Accessed 23 October 2020]
IOL. (2020). *No More Water Restrictions For Cape Town, But Residents Will Face Water-Wise Tariff*. [online] Iol.co.za. Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/capeargus/news/no-more-water-restrictions-for-cape-town-but-residents-will-face-water-wise-tariff--62d5439a-f7e9-426b-86bc-51584752061b> [Accessed 23 October 2020].

areas of South Africa. Water crisis is not only determined by climate change or low rainfall seasons; rather, these events exacerbate already existing crises which marginalised communities live with on a day-to-day basis. The key difference is how this is covered by the media. There is no duration counter for how many days people in informal settlements have been collecting water in plastic containers.

Vigh's (2008) concept of chronic crisis has been crucial in theorizing how the water crisis, and the DA's management thereof, did not address the already existing crisis amongst a large proportion of the population, and how this condition continues to persist. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, this concept of chronic crisis becomes even more important to consider as it is again this group who are most vulnerable. I reflect on the fact that in late March 2020, a strict national lockdown was implemented. This lockdown restricted movement in South Africa in order to protect people from contracting and spreading the virus. However, many still needed to walk to communal sanitation points, either to access their daily water or to make use of communal toilets. The media often published stories of how the lockdown was 'broken' or 'ignored' in townships during the most stringent stages of it.[7] One article even states that "[t]here is not one face mask or bottle of hand sanitizer in sight. Nothing, in fact, that would give away that the country is entering its fourth week of a nationwide coronavirus lockdown." The article goes on: "'They [the government] tell us we have to stay at home, but we're using communal toilets and communal taps, and the shops are far from here,' says Qezo, whose organization is trying to raise awareness about infection prevention. 'We'll do our best. But the virus will spread quickly'" (Trenchard, 2020). This type of reporting, alongside the evictions that the CoCT ordered during the lockdown in April 2020, shows clearly that the reality that poor communities face is not comparable to that of middle to upper-class households.[8] Very rarely do these communities have one crisis to worry about. Due to their under-resourced nature and the presence of structural violence, these communities are forced to live with multiple

[7] Trenchard, T. (2020). *NPR Choice Page*. [online] Npr.org. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/04/21/837437715/photos-lockdown-in-the-worlds-most-unequal-country> [Accessed 23 October 2020].

[8] Nortier, C. (2020). *CORONAVIRUS DAILY DIGEST #21: Khayelitsha Residents Pushed Out Of Homes And Into Conflict With Law Enforcement*. [online] Daily Maverick. Available at: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-04-14-khayelitsha-residents-pushed-out-of-homes-and-into-conflict-with-law-enforcement/> [Accessed 23 October 2020].
Mandonyana, M. (2020). *Is The South African Lockdown Effective For Townships Like Khayelitsha? – 71Point4*. [online] 71point4.com. Available at: <https://www.71point4.com/is-the-south-african-lockdown-effective-for-townships-like-khayelitsha/> [Accessed 23 October 2020].

simultaneous crises, ranging from homelessness, food and money insecurity, lack of service delivery, and limited access to resources including water, sanitation, and electricity. The idea that the water crisis acted as the 'great equaliser' neglects to take this reality into account.

This project has shown that traditional media narratives are often created depending on the audience and are not inclusive of the reality of poor and low-income communities. These narratives neglect to include the endemic nature of crisis and instead focus on more sensational and temporary experiences of crisis. Moreover, this project has argued that social media can play a key role in highlighting narratives not included in traditional media coverage. The project has further shown that the management of the water crisis in Cape Town highlighted existing inequalities between middle- and low-income households, and how this particularly played out in the DA's use of social media. It showed how social media is often used as a way to directly engage with elected officials to voice complaints or raise awareness of the experiences and realities of people not covered by traditional media. This project has also shown that, in moments of crisis, social media is used not only to mobilize and share information in both closed and open networks, but also to engage in a behaviour of othering in order to discuss or find blame. By conducting participant observation and in-person formal and informal interviews with individuals at the Kildare Road spring, it became clear that many did not feel like their experiences were being acknowledged by the media or the government. Participants often expressed that they made use of the spring to circumvent both the water tariffs and increasing restrictions. Although this research is focused on the water crisis in Cape Town, its findings can be applied to other regions in the Western Cape and nationally, given that financial and social inequality is, in itself, a chronic condition of crisis in South Africa.

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