



**Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemarkingsdepartement**

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

25 March 2019

The Cape Town drought - lessons for other municipalities in South Africa

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) African Centre for Cities (ACC) released a new paper which warns that the Cape Town drought has powerful climate-change adaptation lessons for other South African municipalities.

Titled "Unpacking the Cape Town Drought: Lessons Learnt", the paper by Associate Professor Gina Ziervogel in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science, is aimed at ensuring that these lessons will serve to inform other municipalities addressing the issue of drought and water insecurity.

The research revealed the complexity of urban governance, illustrating how something that initially appears to be an environmental concern in fact impacts on all aspects of city life, including economic opportunities, politics and social dynamics, among others.

This means that different actors need to be involved in responding to a city-wide event, both within the city, between different spheres of government, and with citizens. But she cautioned that local government in Cape Town – and most other cities – does not have the adaptive capacity to respond flexibly and comprehensively enough.

"New ways of working are needed that build capacity to deal with these problems. Central to this is the ability to strengthen collaboration across actors and draw on robust data and expertise to inform decisions," added associate professor Ziervogel.

The geographical scientist advocates for a change in attitude from relying solely on local government to recognising that everyone needs to play a role in reducing climate risk.

"Climate change adaptation cannot be the responsibility of one actor alone. We saw Cape Town avoid 'Day Zero' due to the remarkable collective achievement of halving water consumption. This could only have been achieved through both changing citizens' and

businesses' water-use behaviour, along with the numerous water-demand management measures implemented by the city."

Commissioned by the Cities Support Programme within the National Treasury, the paper reflects data collected from interviews with senior officials and experts who were intimately involved in the drought response. The information is then distilled into 12 lessons across four areas of action: strengthening governance; improving data, knowledge and communication; taking a systemic approach; and building adaptive capacity.

While the paper uses the Cape Town drought as a case study, it also speaks to the wider issues of how a city responded to a widespread climate shock, including highlighting areas that need strengthening in the bid to build more resilient, well-adapted cities.

For example, if low-income housing developments are built on a flood plain without consideration of ventilation and how hot they might get, residents will be negatively affected.

"Many of these residents are also unlikely to have the insurance to deal with flood impacts and will battle to pay the price of health costs," associate professor Ziervogel warned.

[Read the full paper](#)

[Read a condensed version of the paper](#)

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Aamirah Sunday

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5427
Cell: (076) 947 6071

Email: aamirah.sunday@uct.ac.za

Website: www.uct.ac.za