

Poverty Governance with Special Reference to the Water Sector in South Africa

Sagie Narsiah

Research Associate/ Lecturer

**Democracy Development Programme (DDP) and Department of Geography,
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Private Bag X01
Scottsville
3209**

Tel: 033 2605343

Fax: 033 2605344

e-mail: narsiahi@ukzn.ac.za

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Abstract

South Africa is among the most unequal societies on earth. Its Gini coefficient gives substance to this claim. And, it is the 'poor' in South Africa who form the majority of the populace. It would follow therefore that policy reform ought to be directed to address their needs. Yet, inequalities which continue to expand alarmingly suggest that policy reforms have failed. Critics claim that policy choices made during the 1990s are chiefly to blame for the tenuous situation of the poor. In this paper I want to understand how the poor are governed using the water sector as a lens. I derive a conceptual framework from Marxian crisis theory and New Public Management (NPM) to understand neoliberal techniques of governance in the water sector. I then apply this lens to two empirical examples from Durban and Johannesburg. I demonstrate that neoliberal techniques of governance are discriminatory.

Keywords: neoliberalism; water services; poverty governance; citizenship; New Public Management

1. Introduction

Perhaps the greatest product of modernity is the recognition that all human beings are equal. This principle of equality may be termed modernity's finest moment. But, this moment is historically and spatially contingent. Moreover, the realization of equality quintessentially is historically and spatially uneven. This is recognised implicitly by modernization theorists, for example, who argue that socio-spatial formations are constrained by historically designated holding precincts or stages of development. So, for example, western countries, for these theorists reached the advanced stages of development early in the twentieth century while the developing world continues to aspire to this standard. South Africa is not immune to these forces, and it may be argued that the country entered into this space during the 1990s having jettisoned the baggage of apartheid. So, in South Africa the argument will hold that the equality principle realized that all people are equal regardless of racial hue.

Linked to the principle of equality is the concept of rights, without which equality would simply disintegrate into an insubstantial abstraction devoid of meaning. Simply put, human beings who are considered equal are possessed of equal rights. Furthermore, by reason of being human, people have the right to be treated or governed in a non-discriminatory way. Furthermore, citizenship cannot be disaggregated because this would violate the principle of equality.

Yet, it is this principle which is inevitably violated as citizenship is subject to disaggregation through policy decisions and the exercise of rule over populations. And, it is easy for governance authorities to disaggregate citizenship -- treating different sectors of its population differently -- even with the best of intentions. In many ways this may prove an insurmountable challenge to overcome, primarily because of the (un) necessary complication of space. Governance is exercised spatially and this is what

ultimately informs the realization of citizenship and citizenship rights. It also proves its undoing i.e. space may actually undermine citizenship. I would argue therefore, that space is central to citizenship and the manner in which rule is exercised over space, in a word, governed, is central to the realization of equality.

The exercise of rule over a population is informed by a number of factors. However, key to the exercise of rule over space are, following the poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault, discourses of power. So, key to understanding the governance of space are the discourses of power articulated through various forms -- as opinions; ideas; statements -- which then crystallize as policy positions informing practice on the ground as it were. Statements have power, being translated into policy documents, then used as instruments to control specific sectors of the population. One such sector of the population is constituted by the poor – they live in particular spaces and are governed accordingly.

South Africa has the dubious distinction of being among the most unequal societies on earth. South Africa's Gini coefficient over the last decade gives substance to this claim. This has to be of major concern given the country's position as Africa's largest economy and in light of the need to address the legacies of the past. The 'poor' in South Africa form the majority of the populace. It would follow therefore that policy reform must be directed to address their needs in the main.

Yet, inequalities which continue to expand alarmingly would suggest that policy reform has largely failed. Critics have suggested that the policy choices made by the democratic government during the 1990s are chiefly to blame for the tenuous situation that the poor find themselves at present. In 1996 the government unveiled the Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR) which to all intents and purposes was little more than a self-imposed structural adjustment policy. The implications of such an approach for services delivery and for the poor in particular cannot be understated. However, there has been little work done to demonstrate how this discursive regime has been articulated at the local level.

The GEAR policy has informed practice at the local level. Municipalities for example were forced to revise the way they delivered services. Indeed, the nature of the relationship between local state structures and citizens changed during the democratic era. Furthermore, the relationship between state structures and the poor was also configured in a particular way. The governance of the poor, I would argue, was determined in neoliberal terms. In this paper, I will examine two examples from the water sector where the poor are governed through neoliberal techniques.

In what follows I will focus on two key examples from the water sector in South Africa, to demonstrate how the poor are governed. Here the case of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal province and Phiri, in Gauteng will be examined. First, however, I will set a brief conceptual context. Here I link a particular conception of neoliberalism with Marxian crisis theory and New Public Management (NPM) to enable a framework for analysis. Thereafter, the examples of Durban and Phiri will be outlined. I will then evaluate the use of neoliberal governance techniques and its implication for the poor. I emphasize the concept of rights here.

2. Theoretical Context:

The poor are very much the product of the post World War II era. During the 1940s global institutions such as the World Bank began using economic indicators, per capita income in particular, as a yardstick to measure poverty. So, those people/countries that had a per capita income of less \$100 were classified as poor. Poverty was diagnosed in pathological terms and ‘treatment’ prescribed and administered accordingly. In the main, prescriptives consisted of strategies designed to increase per capita income through vehicles such as industrialization, which formed the core of modernization theory until the 1970s. During the 1970s state intervention strategy give way to a form of governance which is hegemonic today -- neoliberalism.

Under this regime, poverty has been identified as a condition affecting a defined group of people. A characteristic of neoliberalism is the use of the free market as an instrument to

not only address poverty but also to govern poor people. These prescriptives have been detailed in a myriad of policy documents put out by key disseminators of neoliberalism as a global discourse, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The influence of these organizations on world development is without question. The World Bank for example has attempted to address issues of poverty and underdevelopment through its structural adjustment policies. The strategies of the World Bank are outlined in its annual World Development Report. In 1990 and 2000/1 the World Development Report was dedicated to poverty.

The use of neoliberal governance instruments to address poverty has had dramatic effects on the developing world as a whole. There are a myriad of studies which show that such measures in the form of structural adjustment policies have failed. Yet, the discourse has shown a remarkable resilience even in light of the ongoing global recession. That said however, neoliberalism is very much a product of crisis, and it is this aspect which I find useful as a conceptual tool to understand the governance of the poor in South Africa, particularly when it comes to the water sector.

Crisis is an important feature of neoliberalism, primarily because the *raison d'être* of the discourse is precisely a response to the perceived failure of the post world war II Keynesian intervention. So, neoliberalism is a response to the crisis of Keynesianism. As Peck (2006:731) articulates "... neoliberalism is a creature of crisis—a political strategy fashioned (if not designed) to capitalize on crisis conditions, steering responses toward conservative ends—even if subsequent experience has led me to be rather more circumspect about forecasting neoliberalism's *own* crisis." And, linking this with Harvey's concept of the 'spatial fix' one arrives at the concept of neoliberalism as spatial fix.

Perhaps it would be appropriate at this point to explain, very briefly, Harvey's concept of the spatial fix and crisis theory. The nature of the capitalist system exposes it to crisis on a continuous basis. For Marx this is exhibited through various accumulation crises and contradictions. The geographer David Harvey (1982) has suggested that space in many

ways acts as a barrier to capital accumulation but is also used to overcome the capitalist crisis of accumulation. For Harvey, space is indispensable to this process -- he refers to this as the 'spatial fix'. Just as an addict needs a 'fix' to keep going so too does capital need the injection of space to survive. Finding new markets, for example, labour markets, to exploit is but one incidence of the way this process presents itself.

I want to apply the concept of the 'spatial fix' to understand governance in the public sector. During the neoliberal era, the boundary between the public sector and the private sector has become increasingly blurred. The New Public Management (NPM) approach is a key vehicle for the realization of the neoliberal state. There are several features of the NPM which suggests that an economic rationality is overdeterminant. According to Hood (1995), a key writer on NPM, the approach is characterized, by among others, disaggregation or corporatization of the public sector; private sector management styles; discipline and frugality in resource allocation and use; and an emphasis on outputs. I would argue therefore, that the public sector which operates along these principles is virtually indistinguishable from the private sector. Furthermore, the emphasis on economic norms and values suggest that the citizen is reincarnated as *homo economicus*, and is governed in economic terms.

In terms of state institutions therefore, at the local level, financial viability becomes a key operating principle. The optimization of profits (surplus) and the minimization of costs, in a phrase, conventional neoclassical economics, informs practice. Following Harvey, a spatial fix is needed to ensure that the process continues and the system does not fall into crisis. And, I want to suggest that just as in the private sector where value is generated off labour, in the sphere of production, in the public sector, a similar process occurs in the sphere of consumption as the poor are used to generate a surplus. I will demonstrate how this process works by considering two empirical examples.

3. The Durban Example

The legacy of apartheid left a severely disjointed administration and spatial order. To address this situation the Local Government Transition Act was enacted to form coherent administrative entities or transitional councils e.g. Durban. But, this did not mean the end of structures such as Regional Services Councils and Development Services Boards. These would be gradually phased out. The local government election of 2000 was the first time when a revised municipal structure came into effect in its present form.

In 2000, the Durban Metropolitan Area (DMA) and the Ethekewini municipality was established including the former R293 areas administered by the former KwaZulu government. This new spatial order was a response to the failed 'spatial fix' of apartheid. The creation of the new metro meant that the size of the City of Durban increased by 66 percent. The new metro formed the Ethekewini region. For Durban Water Services which had been providing water and sanitation services to the City of Durban this was a huge challenge on a number of levels.

Durban Water Services now had to contend with a huge increase in the number of households it had to service -- a substantial number in rural areas. Some of the challenges faced were no roads; reservoirs; reticulation etc.; poorly managed services. DMWS also faced a huge number of other logistical difficulties. Seasonal illnesses such as cholera posed a major public health problem. Clearly, Durban Metro Water Services found itself in a crisis situation to which they had to respond. It is important to emphasize at this point that financial viability of municipalities had become an over determining factor. The adoption of a neoliberal strategy by the central state meant that municipalities could no longer rely on the state as their sole source of funding. This placed municipalities in yet another crisis situation. Different sectors within local government needed 'spatial fixes' to help them out of the crisis they found themselves in. There was a need for a response from the metro which took into account the issue of financial viability, which in effect had become an overdetermining factor. This necessitated a change in strategy on the part of DMWS. What this meant was that a different method of delivery was needed. In terms of reticulation it was clear that not

everyone would be given a full pressure water service. The search for a solution was in effect the search for a spatial fix.

The 'spatial fix' presented itself in the following form. People living different parts of the Ethekewini region would receive a different level of service i.e. they have the choice of a full pressure service; a semi-pressure service; or ground/roof tanks. And, this is where neoliberalism, space and technology produced a dialectic which in many ways is quite startling.

A 'technological fix'¹ was needed. It was articulated in the following way. People living in rural areas and informal settlements would not be afforded a full pressure water service. Project areas were identified and divided into smaller units. A full pressure pipeline formed a trunk which then fed a number of smaller connections. Each main pipeline dispensed water between midnight and 2 in the morning via an electronic bailiff unit to 200 litre water tanks. It is important to note that water was supplied at off-peak time (peak time is between 6am and 8 am). Consequently, cheaper infrastructure could be used e.g. smaller pipes. And, as a result the provision of the service was cheaper for the municipality.

The provision of water has had benefits for the community: for example, the elderly and children responsible for fetching water from, in many cases, unsafe water-sources, now no longer had to do this. Thus, many children who had missed school as a consequence could now attend to their education. Notwithstanding these positive externalities, rural dwellers cannot access the unlimited supply of water that urban dwellers living within the former limits of the City of Durban do. Urban dwellers, in the main have an unlimited supply of water which they pay for on credit. For rural populations described here, this is not the case.

4. The Phiri Water Case

¹ Used in the Marxist sense. Capital needs new technology which facilitates accumulation in order to survive.

Johannesburg is South Africa's biggest city with approximately 3.2 million inhabitants living in approximately 1 million households. The majority of its population is classified as poor and earns an income of below R1600 monthly. In some ways it is South Africa's world city. At the turn of the century, in early 2000, Johannesburg Metro which encompassed townships such as Soweto and Alexandra decided on a corporate approach to services delivery. In particular, the water service of the metro was corporatized. This meant that water services would be the mandate of a private company which became known as Johannesburg Water. Johannesburg Water came into operation in early 2001, and one of the priorities identified by its administration was creating a financially viable business. For all intents and purposes Johannesburg Water was a private water company. For Johannesburg Water, the issue of non-revenue water i.e. water for which it received no income was of major concern. And, non-revenue water had a geographical dimension in that it was largely confined to the former township areas.

Before Johannesburg Water took over operations from the City residents of township areas such as Soweto and Alexandra received a full pressure unmetered and unlimited supply of water. In contrast the former 'white' suburbs such as Houghton and Sandton received a metered, full-pressure, unlimited supply of water. For this service they paid on credit i.e. they were billed on a monthly basis. People living the township areas paid a 'flat rate' of around R70 per month before Johannesburg Water began with its campaign. The R70 was based on the assumption that households used an average of 20 kilolitres per month. After considering the data on non-revenue water administrators at Johannesburg Water noticed that average household water use in the township areas in particular were far in excess of 20 kilolitres per month.

Under apartheid township areas were supplied with inferior infrastructure. This infrastructure remained under-maintained and over-utilized. As a consequence, in areas such as Soweto, the aging infrastructure has resulted in huge losses of water due to leaks and other faults. Furthermore, Johannesburg Water ascertained that the flat rate that the residents of Soweto were paying for their water was far lower than what they were

actually using. In effect the company was incurring huge losses as a result. As a consequence what was needed was a demand side intervention. Demand side intervention is a common characteristic of neoliberal governance strategy. It is also a common characteristic of the New Public Management.

In Soweto huge volumes of water was lost through leakages. As part of water demand management Johannesburg Water embarked on a program which entailed large scale metering. Note that residents in Soweto paid a flat-rate for water and their homes were not metered. The metering program would enable Johannesburg Water to ascertain the water usage of individual residences and bill homeowners accordingly. However, what the company decided on was technology which would act as a sort of self-disciplinary device for what are in the main poor households in Soweto. Also the technology would improve the financial efficiency of the company by ensuring that water to these areas would not be supplied on credit. In effect people would be paying for their water before using it. Additionally, administrative costs such as the issuing of bills were no longer relevant. Financially, the metering technology which the Johannesburg Water company intended using, represented a huge improvement in terms of efficiency. The new metering technology which was chosen by the company differed from the metering technology which had been installed in other areas of the City. These were prepayment meters. The prepayment meters operated along the following lines: they could be programmed i.e. computer software was used to enable the meters to dispense water; they would dispense a quantity of 6000 litres of water before the mechanism shut-off; thereafter tokens (available from various kiosks) had to be purchased and inserted into the meter to ensure that water was available again. Phiri, which is one of the townships which makes up Soweto was identified as a site to pilot the project. Johannesburg Water began installing prepaid water meters in Phiri in 2004.

Key to ensuring the financial viability of Johannesburg Water was full-cost recovery. Full-cost recovery is a conventional neoliberal demand-side management strategy based on the user pays principle. When Johannesburg Water implemented its prepayment metering strategy the cost of water for 20 kiloliters of water, which previously was

around R70 rose to around R95, an increase of around 30 percent. People living in Soweto were now paying far more for water. However, given that people here were supposedly using far in excess of 20 kilolitres, the costs would have been far higher. For poor households the implications were serious.

The right to water is guaranteed in the South African Constitution, as are various socio-economic rights. When the ANC contested the first democratic election in South Africa in 1994, it did so using the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) as its election manifesto. The RDP made various declarations, and with special reference to water set access to 20 – 30 litres of water within 200 meters of a dwelling in the short term; 50 – 70 litres in the medium term and universal supply in the long term (African National Congress, 1994). In 2001, the minister of water affairs, at the time, Mr. Ronnie Kasrils proclaimed the roll-out of a free basic water service which consisted of 25 litres of water per person per day. For a household of 8 people this meant a ‘life-line’ supply of 200 litres of water per day and 6000 litres or 6 kilolitres per month. The life-line supply is not legislated but acts as a guideline. Thus, municipalities may provide more than 25 litres per person per day if they so desire. Johannesburg Water had opted to provide 6000 litres of water to residents free of charge. But, for the residents of Phiri, whose households far exceeded 8 this quantity was woefully inadequate. In Soweto the phenomenon of backyard shacks is fairly ubiquitous, and it was not uncommon to find households consisting of 20 people or more. Coupled with the high unemployment rates, the increased cost of water was a burden that many found impossible to bear. Consequently, the community mobilised, protesting against the installation of prepayment water meters. The action of the residents caught the attention of progressive NGOs who were instrumental in bringing court action against Johannesburg Water and several other parties including the City of Johannesburg and the Minister of Water Affairs. The court application was launched by the Center for Applied Legal Studies, an NGO attached to the University of the Witwatersrand, on behalf of the residents of Phiri.

The first applicant was Lindiwe Mazibuko, and subsequently the case became known as the Mazibuko case. The applicants in the case appealed to the High Court of

Johannesburg against what they viewed as the unlawful installation of prepayment meters by Johannesburg Water. Furthermore they argued that the quantity of 25 litres of water per person per day was insufficient and needed to be set aside. The case was heard during December 2007.

It was obvious that the plaintiffs -- poor people from the community of Phiri, Soweto -- had made a compelling argument. For the people of Phiri, the geography of apartheid which had ensured that they were dumped in what was little more than a squatter settlement, and which over time had been barely upgraded into a 'township' for black people, was still very much intact. Ironically, it was this geography which was now being invoked against them. The flat-rate which they had paid under apartheid, and which ironically had afforded them a full pressure, unlimited supply of water was now being summarily rolled back using free market principles. The free market had now assumed the role of arbiter for what is the most fundamental of human rights. Somewhat bizarrely, race, space and the free market (neoliberalism) were directly implicated in the plight of the people of Phiri.

For the people of Phiri, Johannesburg Water was re-inscribing space with a racial geography -- treating them differently from people living in the neighbouring former white suburbs such as Sandton. There was no roll-out of prepayment meters in Sandton. The plaintiffs argued that Johannesburg Water treated them differently from the residents of Sandton who could buy their water on credit. Residents of Sandton did not have their water consumption technological inhibited by flow limitation technology. They were under no disciplinary regime to curtail water usage. Indeed, many homes in Sandton have the modern appliances and swimming pools which use far more water than the average household in Phiri. Indeed, the court heard that the prepaid water meter technology could actually have caused loss of life. Clearly, the equality clauses enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa were being violated by the free market strategy of Johannesburg Water.

In a progressive judgment, Judge Tsoka of the Johannesburg High Court ruled that the constitutional rights of the people of Phiri had been violated when prepayment meters were installed without their express consent. Furthermore, he ruled that the quantity of 25 litres of water per person per day was insufficient and instructed that 50 litres of water per person per day be provided to the residents of Phiri. It was a landmark ruling which made international news. Yet, the victory was short-lived as Johannesburg Water petitioned the Supreme Court to have the ruling set aside. At this point it bears mentioning that an enormous amount of financial resources is needed to petition the various courts. For poor communities, it is often a bridge too far as resources run out quickly as legal fees mount. On the other hand the state, ironically supported by taxpayers' money, uses these resources to buy the very best legal representation -- the cost of litigation is not an issue. In the Phiri case the community was fortunate to have the backing of progressive NGOs who had access to financial resources.

When the case was heard in the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein, the judgment of the Johannesburg High Court was confirmed with a relatively minor adjustment. The 50 litre quantity was reduced to 42 litres. The judgment was appealed by the plaintiffs and cross-appealed by the defendants who were arguing for the entire judgment to be set aside. The case was then heard in the Constitutional Court of South Africa, the highest court in the country. In October 2009, the Constitutional Court of South Africa ruled against the community of Phiri. In effect the Court had ruled that the free market could be used as an instrument to address not only the historical legacy of apartheid but was also a desirable arbiter of human rights.

5. Evaluation

I have claimed that the poor have been governed in a particular way using certain key instruments -- in a phrase neoliberal governance techniques. Initially, I purposed to demonstrate that neoliberalism is a product of crisis. It is evident that the apartheid state was in crisis during the 1980s and in many ways the economic crisis which engulfed the country hastened the demise of the system. The demise of apartheid did not signal the

end of the capitalist system rather for many it enabled the free market system to jettison the unwanted baggage of a pariah political system. The hegemony of that system was confirmed with the adoption of the GEAR strategy in 1996 by the democratic government which in itself could be viewed as a response to the sustained economic crisis the country still found itself in. The GEAR policy provided the template for neoliberal governance techniques to dominate all spheres of government from that period onwards. In the water sector, for example, this is apparent. Narsiah (2008) has demonstrated how neoliberal governance techniques have succeeded in the discursive capture of the water sector in South Africa. So, key statements about the nature of water -- it being conceptualized as an economic good -- has transformed what is in essence the most basic of human rights into a commodity.

In this paper I have argued that people are governed in terms of their relation to what is now being considered an economic good. It bears mentioning that the conceptualization of water as an economic good is of recent provenance. Key to this relation is space. The poor, referred to specifically in this paper, inhabit particular spaces in both rural and urban settings. And, these spaces are governed in a particular way, informed by neoliberal governance techniques.

The New Public Management (NPM) has been adopted by municipalities in South Africa, and it is apparent that the Durban and Johannesburg Metros have embraced this approach. It is also clear that the NPM is the mechanism through which neoliberalism is articulated at various scales of governance. According to Hood (1995:97) one of the key elements of NPM is: “a move towards greater stress on *discipline and parsimony* in resource use and on active search for finding alternative less costly ways to deliver public services”(emphasis in original).

In both the Durban and Johannesburg cases discussed above it is apparent that the rationale for the adoption of various strategies to water services delivery was financial ‘discipline and parsimony’. In both cases the institutional design of the water services, in the Durban case, the designation of DMWS as a ring-fenced business unit operating

along private sector lines (Narsiah, 2010) and in the case of Johannesburg the corporatization of water services, enabled neoliberal water services delivery.

That financial considerations were overdeterminant is apparent from the innovations which were effected in water services delivery. In Durban a less costly way of delivery water to rural communities was promoted through a 'technological fix'. Here cheaper infrastructure was installed which made the provision of water services to these communities financially viable. In Johannesburg, prepayment meters were installed to effect the same result. It was a technological fix used to address financial losses from non-revenue water.

One of the characteristics of neoliberal governance strategy is to identify abnormalities in a system and then address them using free market techniques. The concept of discipline which Hood (1995) refers not only to financial discipline on the side of municipalities and other public sector organizations but also to those derive benefit from these organizations. In the case discussed above it is the people who are supplied with water. The spaces which they inhabit are 'disciplinary spaces' -- people are expected to behave in a certain way. People are expected to exercise discipline in the way they use water. If they do not have the financial resources to purchase tokens to feed into a prepayment meter then they have to ensure that they use water sparingly. Similarly, in the Durban case people living in rural areas have to ensure that the 200 litres of water which fills up their roof/ground tanks lasts the entire day and half the night until it can be filled again.

Yet, it is a particular sector of the population which is targeted. And, this is the essence of neoliberal techniques of governance which directly target the poor. So in effect the poor are treated differently from other sectors of the population. Regarding water services, the rich pay for their water on credit and have an unlimited, full pressure supply. Unlike the poor in the examples discussed above who have to pay beforehand for a limited and/or semi-pressure or roof/ground tank.

In an infant democracy such as South Africa, where equality and citizenship need to be far more than contentless abstractions, it is apparent that the adoption of neoliberal techniques of governance is discriminatory. They are discriminatory in a negative way -- poor people are stigmatized and governed accordingly. The concept of citizenship itself is eroded by neoliberal governance techniques. Section 3 of the South African Constitution indicates “there is a common South African citizenship. All citizens are: equally entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship, and equally subject to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship” (South Africa, 1996, section 3). The Bill of Rights provides the content for citizenship in the equality clause: “Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms ... The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone ...” (South Africa, 1996, section 9) ... “Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water ...” (South Africa, 1996, section 27(1b)).

6. Conclusion

Poverty is variously conceptualized as an original human condition; backwardness; a social construction; a consequence of exploitation; and as stigma, among others (Sachs, 1991; Sachs, 2005; Wacquant, 2008; 2009). In consequence, the manner in which the poor are governed reflects the conceptualization espoused. The study of poverty and related aspects pervades the social sciences. And, public policy on poverty, in the main, derives from the social sciences. The same may be said of poverty governance – the means whereby the poor are governed. Much has been written on these aspects, both theoretical and empirical. And, the arguments (theoretical) and results (empirical) have been uneven – geographically uneven. So, poverty and poverty governance is spatially uneven. That said, however, it must be noted that the study of poverty is dominated by quantitative approaches. And, the poor have been reduced to statistics – the raw material for input into statistical and economic models. These geographically and contextually specific approaches have a global reach, percolating sometimes insidiously into the

furthest reaches of the developing and underdeveloped world. Furthermore, there are various techniques (prescriptives) which are applied to address poverty. These techniques applied geographically and spatially are in many ways crucial to the exercise of power and rule over the poor. After all, as Michel Foucault (1984:253) asserts “space is fundamental to any exercise of power”. So, the poor are subject to rule, spatially constituted and it this process(es), which I have investigated with special reference to the water sector in South Africa.

What is apparent is that South Africa’s macroeconomic GEAR strategy has informed the way various sectors of government operate. With particular reference to the water sector, the two examples which I have discussed to demonstrate this thesis suggest that regardless of context, whether rural or urban, the poor are governed in similar ways. And, the reason for this is the discursive influence of GEAR acting through the New Public Management strategy has created an economic space which needs to be governed according to free market principles. The poor are governed according to these principles and are in effect disciplined by the market. However, this model of governance is problematic in that it violates the key provisions of citizenship found in the Constitution of South Africa.

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