MUNICIPAL BUREAUCRATS AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN CAPE TOWN

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It sometimes appears as if it is easier to raise R2 million to save a rhinoceros than to save a human from a life of deprivation. Surely nature conservation is also about the preservation of people?

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INTRODUCTION

Since the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of anti-apartheid organizations in 1990 there has been as important opening up of political space and political discourse in South Africa. Many issues which were previously not open for discussion or which were so heavily censured under apartheid as to make open debate an impossibility, are now topics of heated controversy. Everything from homosexuality to macro-economic policy is up for discussion, and new political discourses and policy initiatives -- both progressive and otherwise - are rapidly emerging to make up for the censures of the past.

This opening up of political space is particularly true of environmental policy. Gone are the days when black[1] South Africans were forcibly removed from their land to make way for game parks and white tourists. Gone, too, are the days when private and government-run companies could dump toxic wastes with impunity next to African townships or flagrantly pollute rivers and streams. The African National Congress (ANC) recently tabled policy papers on the environment (Government of South Africa, 1996, 1997a,b)[2], and supported a lengthy background report funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC 1995). These documents make it very clear that environmental policy will never again be the same in the country.

Policy and practice are often two very different things, however, and implementing new policy initiatives has proven to be difficult on a wide range of policy fronts in South Africa. Part of the problem has been apartheid-era

bureaucrats - thousands of whom were effectively guaranteed their jobs for the duration of the post-apartheid transition due to compromises made by the ANC in negotiations with the apartheid government. These civil servants have generally been slow to adapt to the new political dispensation in the country, and in some cases, have become serious barriers to change in South Africa (Mayekiso, 1994; Cloete 1995; Cloete and Mokgoro 1995).

The purpose of this article is to illustrate, with the use of a case study of the city of Cape Town, just how much of a barrier these bureaucrats can be to the implementation of progressive environmental policy initiatives in the urban context. The article begins with a description of what is often referred to as the "brown" environmental crisis in South African cities, and briefly outlines the initiatives of the ANC to address these problems. The article then describes why municipal bureaucrats are so critical to the implementation of new urban environmental policy initiatives, followed by key findings from interviews conducted with fifty-two municipal bureaucrats in the Cape Metropolitan Area about their attitudes towards, and knowledge of, environmental problems in that city. Although these case study results cannot simply be extrapolated to South Africa as a whole, they do raise some troubling questions about the role of municipal bureaucrats in the management of the country's urban environment problems.

SOUTH AFRICA'S "BROWN" ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Apartheid, and the associated under-regulation of industrial activity, has had an enormous environmental impact in South Africa. As a result, South Africa is arguably one of the most environmentally degraded countries in the world today: vast tracts of land are lost every year to soil erosion and desertification; acid rain destroys crops and forests; oil spills damage marine life and coastal vegetation; over-fishing continues to deplete rich fishing grounds; and endemic species of flora are become extinct on a regular basis do to urban sprawl (Huntley et al. 1989; Durning 1990; Cock and Koch 1991; EMG 1992; Ramphele 1992; CCC 1993; Eberhard and Van Horen 1995; IDRC 1995).

It is, however, in the townships and squatter camps of the country that environmental problems are perhaps the most immediate and most life-threatening. Over seven million black South Africans live in "shacks" constructed of cardboard and scrap metal in densely populated urban settings

and millions more live in poorly constructed and over-crowded formal housing. Few of these areas are adequately serviced with basic municipal services like sewerage and sanitation and many have no service facilities at all (IDRC 1992, 1-4).

In total, "more than 12 million South Africans do not have access to clean drinking water and 21 million people do not have adequate sanitation" (ANC 1994, 28). Ten percent of the population does not have access to a toilet of any kind, one third of South Africans rely on pit latrines, and a full fourteen percent of the population have no form of refuse removal (Government of South Africa 1995b, 10). Not all of these people live in urban areas, but cities account for sixty percent of the country's population and this figure is expected to rise to seventy percent by the turn of the century (ANC 1994, 86).

The environmental implications of this lack of basic municipal services are enormous. Without adequate refuse collection, garbage quickly accumulates in open spaces and becomes infested with rats and disease. Without sewerage lines people are forced to use nearby bushes and streams as toilets, contaminating scarce water supplies. A lack of alternative fuels like electricity means that township residents (primarily women and children) must cook indoors with charcoal and wood contributing to high levels of localized air pollution and respiratory disease. Cholera, tuberculosis and diarrhoea - illnesses attributable directly to a lack of clean water and adequate sanitation - remain leading causes of illness and death amongst black South Africans. For those who experience this poverty on a daily basis, life is an environmental armageddon come true - a real-life example of the doomsday scenarios laid out in textbooks of ecology (EJNF [undated]; Khan 1991; Lawson 1991; Novamenda 1991; Lukey 1995; Vogel and Drummond 1995).

But these urban environmental problems do not stop here. Equally worrisome are the effects that a lack of basic municipal services can have on the environmental integrity of South African cities and towns as a whole. Backed-up sewage contaminates ground and surface water and can damage sensitive marine life and inshore fisheries. Cooking with biomass contributes to air pollution in the city as a whole and can lead to serious deforestation around the urban perimeter. Unplanned and unserviced housing settlements contribute to urban sprawl and the destruction of important biological and recreational areas.

What are increasingly referred to as "brown" environmental problems - brown being a more appropriate metaphor than "green" to describe the kinds of environmental problems associated with backed-up sewage and dusty, treeless

streets - are perhaps the single most important environmental problems in South Africa today, and the provision of basic municipal services like sewerage and sanitation are arguably the single most important environmental initiative that the new South African government can take. This is not to suggest that green and brown environmental problems are somehow separate from one another or that green environmental concerns are not important in the country - far from it. The point being made here is that the living environments of the urban poor present the most urgent and most life-threatening environmental challenges in South Africa today.

It is therefore the provision of essential municipal services to the townships and squatter camps of the country - or the lack thereof - that will determine how well South Africa deals with its brown environmental crisis. Dealing effectively with the problem requires nothing less than a dramatic restructuring of the apartheid city and the service facilities and systems that go with it.

RESTRUCTURING THE APARTHEID CITY

Historically, South African cities have been amongst the most inequitable in the world. On average, ten times as much money was spent per capita on residential infrastructure in white suburbs as was spent in the townships, and in some cases per capita expenditures on municipal services in white areas were almost twice that of cities in Europe and Australia (Ahmad 1995, 51). In the white suburbs of Cape Town, for example, water pipes, sewerage mains and electrical lines have quite literally been carved into the side of Table Mountain and reinforced with expensive soil retention barriers and on-going maintenance. Refuse is collected at least once a week, streets are kept immaculately clean, and sewage and water problems are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Meanwhile, more than one third of the city's estimated population of 3.1 million people are homeless, and a further one third are "poorly" housed (WCEDF 1995, 11). Twenty-six percent of those living in shacks in Cape Town have no access to potable water and eighty percent of the new population growth in the Cape Metropolitan Area (CMA) is in areas that are "undersupplied with basic services" like sewerage and sanitation (WCEDF 1995, 21). One in five houses has no electricity (Government of the Western Cape 1995, 20) and for many homes and shacks that do have access to basic services these facilities are overused and in a bad state of disrepair.

In the migrant worker hostels - single-sex, multi-story dwellings built during apartheid for African labourers from the rural areas - service facilities are desperately inadequate. Up to four people have to share a single bed and the ratio of persons to toilets is as high as 56:1, resulting in "frequent blockages, which residents deal with by building barriers between the floor and the lower ends of doors to prevent the flow of sewage into their bedrooms" (Ramphele 1993, 26-9). To make matters worse, the townships and squatter camps of the Cape Metropolitan Area (CMA) are situated on the Cape Flats - an area prone to floods in the winter and blasted by sand storms in the summer.

Although the federal government was ultimately responsible for apartheid legislation, local authorities physically conducted - and in many cases developed and championed (McCarthy 1991; van Tondor 1993) - a highly fragmented and differentiated approach to urban development. Far from being a friend to environmental initiatives, local governments under apartheid were responsible for enforcing racial inequalities at the municipal level and thereby exacerbating the brown environmental crisis that the country now faces.

Local governments were also extremely fragmented, with no coordination of municipal services at a metropolitan level. In Cape Town, for example, prior to the appointment of a Transitional Metropolitan Council in Cape Town in early 1995, there were a total of twenty-five municipalities and sixty-nine decision-making bodies - with no metropolitan coordinating body of any kind (see Figures 1 and 2 for an outline of the Cape Metropolitan Area and its municipal government layout prior to restructuring). There were no serious efforts to coordinate metropolitan functions in the CMA (with the exception perhaps of certain security operations which were conducted by the South African Police and the South African Defence Force), and as a result, individual municipalities and other smaller bodies made decisions in a metropolitan vacuum. Land-use planning, refuse collection, sewerage treatment, stormwater maintenance, public transportation and a host of other highly sensitive environmental tasks were carried out in each individual municipality with little or no communication between them. Independent local authorities would spend millions of Rand researching locations for dump sites or maintaining sports and recreation facilities within their own jurisdictions, oblivious to the needs and constraints of neighbouring municipal areas - be they white or black. Industrial zones were often located upstream or upwind from an adjacent municipality, and residential developments would proceed without any analysis of their impact on the larger

watershed boundaries.[3]

This kind of municipal fragmentation is not unique to South Africa of course. Most large cities in the world today have similarly complex municipal arrangements. A typical metropolitan area in the United States, for example, has about 100 different governments. However, most large cities outside of South Africa have at least had *some* form of metropolitan coordination. Formal metropolitan governments may still be the "exception to the rule", but most cities have had some kind of "cross-sectoral coalitions and collaborative partnerships" helping to coordinate municipal affairs (Sivaramakrishnan 1996, 235-8). Apartheid cities had none whatsoever.

This fragmentation of municipal authority also led to a tremendous waste of valuable municipal resources in the country - prompting the World Bank to call Cape Town in particular "one of the most inefficient cities in the world" (as quoted in WCEDF 1993, 11). Duplication of staff and equipment was rife: white municipalities right next to each other would have their own complement of urban planners, road engineers, and accountants, as well as their own refuse collection equipment, mechanical workshops and sewage treatment plants. There were no attempts to amalgamate human or capital resources and no one knew for sure exactly what resources each municipality had.

Officially, this kind of municipal planning has changed dramatically in South Africa with the introduction of the *Local Government Transition Act* in 1993 and with the completion of non-racial local government elections in June of 1996. Local governments are now required by law to ensure that *all* South Africans have access to basic amenities like sewerage, sanitation, water, and electricity (Government of South Africa 1994, 18), and Schedule Two of the Transition Act also stipulates that the planning and delivery of bulk services (eg. transport, waste disposal) should be coordinated at a metropolitan level. Provincial and national governments will monitor service standards, and will be involved in the financing and coordination of some of the major urban infrastructure initiatives, but it is at the local level that the bulk of municipal services will be planned, delivered, and maintained.

These service responsibilities make local governments an extremely important environmental player in the new South Africa. No other single body, governmental or otherwise, will be as heavily involved in service delivery to the urban poor as local governments, and hence the reason that dealing effectively with brown environmental problems will depend to such a large degree on how

well these authorities are able to deal with service deficiencies.

THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL BUREAUCRATS

This new-found importance for local governments means that municipal bureaucrats will play a critical role in the delivery of basic services to the urban poor and will effect the way that new systems of urban environmental governance can, or cannot, be developed. Sewerage engineers, water treatment specialists, labour supervisors, and accountants make important decisions on the kinds of services that are provided in South African cities, with short- and long-term implications for urban environmental sustainability.

Of particular importance here is the fact that civil servants in South African towns and cities have been effectively guaranteed their jobs for the next five to ten years. During the negotiations for a non-racial government and constitution at the federal level, the African National Congress (ANC) and others in the democratic movement agreed to give job guarantees to apartheid bureaucrats and clauses have been written in to various local government transition agreements stipulating restrictions on personnel changes (eg. CMNF 1994, 27).

The reasons for these job security agreements are varied. One factor was undoubtedly the desire on the part of the ANC to appease the white right-wing in the country - many of whom held senior positions of power in the civil service - in order that "they would become part of the transition process rather than resort to lawlessness and terrorism" and sabotage reconstruction and development efforts (Mayekiso 1994, 20).

But there were less sinister reasons as well. There is a real need for skilled technical and administrative personnel to manage and construct complex municipal infrastructure systems and it is largely the existing civil service who are going to have to fill these jobs. There are skilled black South Africans who can, and to some extent already have, taken up important bureaucratic positions in local government, but few black South Africans have had the opportunity to get the necessary engineering and managerial training to fill these positions, and those who did have either left the country or are being snapped up by the private sector for salaries that the public sector could never hope to match.

The ANC is well aware of this shortage of technically qualified black personnel in the civil service and has made repeated calls for skilled, white South Africans to stay in the country to help with reconstruction and development plans. This shortage is especially true at the level of local government where the

townships are almost entirely dependent on the managerial capacities of the ex-White Local Authorities (WLAs). In Cape Town, the Local Government Demarcation Board negotiating new municipal boundaries went so far as to say that "there is no administrative capacity in the Coloured Townships, and whatever there was in the Black Local Authorities is severely crippled and hardly in operation". The Board went on to argue that it was "necessary to rely on the combined administrative capacities of the [ex-WLAs] to form and run an efficient administration for the entire Cape Metropolitan Council" (LGDB 1995, 58).

In one sense, Cape Town is fortunate to have such a large contingent of municipal bureaucrats. Managing the construction, delivery and maintenance of complex municipal infrastructure systems for hundreds of thousands of new consumers will require an enormous amount of technical and administrative expertise. Community organizations, no matter how well organized, simply do not have the human and financial resources needed for the massive infrastructure projects being planned for the townships and squatter areas of the city, and residents will have to rely, in part, on the municipal bureaucrats who do.

But it would also appear that municipal bureaucrats are a hindrance to the development of a more democratic, more efficient, and more equitable pattern of service delivery in the city. The same bureaucrats responsible for the maintenance of the highly fragmented and inequitable systems of service delivery that existed under apartheid are now expected to play a central role in designing and implementing new, non-racial methods of service delivery and environmental management. Not *all* civil servants will be a problem of course - there are many bureaucrats who are actively working towards a more democratic form of municipal government in the CMA - but most of the civil servants responsible for the delivery of basic services to the urban poor in Cape Town have very little knowledge about the extent of service deficiencies in the townships or the need to develop new service delivery institutions.

Most importantly, the majority of these civil servants would appear to be largely unaware of, or unwilling to acknowledge, the enormous environmental problems that exist in the townships and squatter camps of the city. As we shall see below, municipal bureaucrats in the CMA have a very limited understanding of environmental problems in the metropolitan area as a whole and make little - if any - connection between poverty and environmental degradation.

INTERVIEWS WITH MUNICIPAL BUREAUCRATS IN THE CMA

The remainder of this article is a summary of interviews with local government bureaucrats in the Cape Metropolitan Area and describes their responses to questions about environmental issues in that city. The interviews were conducted in early 1994 as part of a doctoral research project on local government restructuring and environmental policy in South Africa conducted by the author. All of the interviewees were informed as to the purpose of the research and assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

Three municipalities from the CMA were selected for the study. Although they cannot claim to be entirely representative of the local authorities that existed in the CMA prior to local government restructuring in 1996, they do represent the most common forms of apartheid-era municipalities from the area. The first was a large, centrally located White Local Authority (WLA). The second was a large Black Local Authority (BLA), and the third was a small WLA located on the periphery of the city. In order to preserve the confidentiality of those with whom interviews were conducted the actual names of these municipalities will not be used.

Within each of these municipalities, the focus was on the Drainage and Sewerage, Parks and Forests, and Cleansing branches (all of which fall under the Engineering Departments). The reason for choosing these particular branches is that they perform a wide range of environmentally-related services central to the discussion of brown environmental degradation (eg. sewerage, stormwater, refuse collection, tree planting). These branches are also very large, accounting for up to seventy percent of the labour force and a third of the operating budget of each of the individual municipalities.[4]

In terms of the individuals selected, a total of fifty-four managers were interviewed. Forty-three of these people were in middle management positions (eg. supervisors, planning technicians, depot managers) and were chosen at random from computer generated lists provided by the municipalities. Eleven of the managers were in senior management positions (Branch Managers, Assistant City Engineers, and City Engineers only). It should be noted that *all* of the senior managers from the three municipalities agreed to participate in the study and were extremely helpful in facilitating interviews with other managers.

Table One provides a breakdown of the interviewees by race, managerial rank and administrative unit. White managers make up the overwhelming majority of these interviewees because municipal bureaucracies in the CMA at

the time were predominantly white (and remain so to this day). In fact, before the appointment in 1994 of a coloured City Planner at Cape Town City Council, there was not one senior black bureaucrat in any of the twenty-five municipalities in the CMA. Coloureds filled a growing number of middle-level management positions in some of the municipalities during apartheid, but there was a limit to how high these bureaucrats could go and very few moved beyond the supervisory level. Africans were practically non-existent at the managerial level and it was only as labourers and as middle-level managers in the Black Local Authorities that Africans were to be seen at all in the Cape Town municipal workforce.

Moreover, almost all of the senior and middle-level bureaucrats were men. With the exception of the community and health care departments, men completely dominate the municipal bureaucracies of the CMA. Of the Engineering Departments that were studied for this research only twelve out of a total of 272 professional staff were women (all of whom were white). Secretarial and other administrative tasks were left to women, but almost all of the policy making and financial work was the responsibility of men.

Table 1: Interview Selection by Race, Managerial Rank And Administrative Unit

MANAGERS	WHITE	COLOURED	AFRICAN	TOTAL MANAGERS	LARGE WLA	SMALL WLA	BLA
MIDDLE	23	13	7	43	30	5	8
SENIOR	11	0	0	11	7	2	2
TOTAL	34	13	7	54	37	7	10

What was asked and why?
Four sets of questions were asked of interviewees and interviews took approximately one hour. All interviews were conducted in the manager's office, during office hours, and in English (which everyone spoke fluently). Interview times had been arranged in advance but very little was said about the interview itself beyond the fact that they were going to be asked some questions about the environment.

The first question was very open-ended and simply asked the interviewee what comes to mind when they hear the words "environment", or "environmental problems". This was intended to give the interviewee an opportunity to describe their general impressions and insights on the subject without any outside prompting. Managers where then asked specific questions about conventional, green environmental issues (eg. nature conservation, ozone depletion, toxic wastes) to gauge their knowledge of these issues as they apply to the CMA and as they relate to their jobs as municipal bureaucrats.

Third, managers were prompted with questions about brown environmental problems, again to gauge their knowledge of these issues as they apply to the city of Cape Town and as they relate to their own daily routines as sewerage managers, road engineers, and the like. Managers were also asked about the link between a lack of basic services for the urban poor and environmental degradation more broadly speaking. Examples were used of how this link can exist and managers were asked to comment on the likelihood of these events occurring in Cape Town, how serious they were, and what could be done about them. And finally, basic demographic questions on age, sex, race, place of residence, and sources of information about environmental issues were also asked.

Defining the Environment
Perhaps the most significant result of the interviews came from the very first question when managers were asked to described their own impressions of "the environment" and "environmental problems". Answers were quite varied but by and large managers took a fairly narrow view of ecology. They tended to see the environment as a place that you go to on weekends or on holidays, and as something removed from daily activity. "The environment" was depicted as an abstract concept of nature, somehow detached from human beings, where wildlife conservation and the protection of wetlands and other natural areas constitute the biggest environmental problems.

There were managers who identified the built environment as an integral part of the environmental equation, and most of the managers did make some kind of reference during the interview to the "living environment", but the overwhelming concept of the environment was one of nature conservation and the preservation of pristine landscapes.

White managers were particularly prone to this narrow view of ecology with only half of those interviewed making reference to the living environment as part

of the environmental equation without any prompting from the interviewer. Coloured managers were somewhat better, with two-thirds making reference to the living environment and the need for a healthy and safe place to live. All of the African managers on the other hand made direct and immediate reference to the living environment as an environmental problem - so much so that half of the African managers interviewed did not even mention the more conventional green environmental issues that occupied the minds of their white and coloured counterparts.

Part of the reason for this narrow definition of the environment on the part of white and coloured managers would appear to stem from their sources of environmental education. Ninety-seven percent of managers said they receive their information about environmental issues from the media (television, radio, newspapers). Eighty-five percent identified television as their main source of information, with over half of all managers naming one television show in particular (a weekly environmental programme called *50/50*).

Unfortunately, mainstream media coverage of the environment in South Africa continues to be dominated by conventional, green issues. Relatively little is said or written about environmental problems in the townships so it comes as little surprise that people who get all of their environmental education from the media would develop similarly narrow perspectives.

Poor Knowledge of Green Issues

Despite the attention given by white and coloured managers to the more conventional environmental concerns noted above, their levels of knowledge and awareness of these issues was not very strong. Only fifteen percent of managers could be considered extremely knowledgeable[5] about green environmental concerns, sixty-five percent were reasonably knowledgeable, and twenty percent had very little knowledge. Remarkably, not one manager mentioned the existence of the Koeberg nuclear power station (the country's only nuclear facility) located just fifty kilometres from the city core as an environmental hazard. Nor did any of the managers comment on ozone depletion, despite the fact that Cape Town has been exposed to increasing and dangerous levels of UV_A and UV_B radiation in the summer.

One senior manager even said that "There are no significant environmental problems in Cape Town" - apparently unaware or unconcerned about the fact

that the Cape Metropolitan Area is losing one of the richest floral kingdoms in the world (Cape Fynbos) to urban sprawl; beaches are closed due to high bacteriological counts; air pollution in the winter gets trapped in a temperature inversion for days, leaving a thick yellow layer of smog over the city; and at least two serious oil spills have occurred just off the Cape Peninsula over the past three years. Civil servants were not completely unaware of these problems, but they demonstrated a fairly poor understanding of the overall range and seriousness of the green environmental problems facing the city.

When asked what they think causes environmental problems like water pollution, deforestation and the destruction of natural areas, most managers made vague references to "the pace of life", "greed", or a general "lack of environmental awareness" in the country. "Overpopulation" was also a common response, with frequent reference to the popular neo-Malthusian argument in South Africa that there are "too many blacks" using up resources and creating environmental problems.

But despite the apparent lack of insight into environmental problems in the city virtually all of the managers interviewed responded with an enthusiastic "Yes!" when asked whether these issues were important to them.

Poor Knowledge of Brown Issues
Even more disconcerting were the low levels of awareness amongst municipal bureaucrats about brown environmental issues. Although, as noted earlier, almost two-thirds of managers did make some kind of reference to the "living environment" during their interviews, less than twenty percent could be considered extremely knowledgeable on the subject of environmental degradation in the townships and squatter camps. Only forty-four percent exhibited a moderately strong knowledge of the issues while thirty-seven percent demonstrated very little knowledge or understanding - even after being prompted with numerous examples from the CMA. Seventeen percent of managers were openly antagonistic to the idea of considering living conditions in the townships as "environmental" problems, with comments like "They like to live that way" and "Trying to teach an African about the environment is like trying to teach a baboon" (eight of these managers were white, one was coloured; some were in very senior management positions).

Once again, however, there is a significant racial split in these results. Virtually all of African managers could be considered extremely knowledgeable

about brown environmental problems, while only ten percent of white and coloured managers could be put in the same category. African managers were quick to point to brown issues as environmental priorities in their area and most made reference to these issues from the very beginning of their interview. They made the link between poverty and environmental degradation and blamed the lack of basic services in the townships and squatter camps as the primary reason for this environmental decay.

Linking Green and Brown

One area, however, where there was very little difference between African, coloured and white managers was their inability to make the link between green and brown environmental problems. Forty-three percent of managers made no connection whatsoever between environmental degradation in the townships and the environmental integrity of the city as a whole - even after being prompted with several examples of how this might happen. Twenty percent of managers had what could be classified as a very weak understanding of the issues, twenty-four percent had a moderate level of understanding, and only eleven percent could be considered extremely knowledgeable. Although twenty-seven percent of the senior managers interviewed could be included in this latter category, there were also senior managers who denied any connection between poverty and environmental degradation, with one senior manager going so far as to say that "No, poverty is not a major cause of environmental degradation".

Environmental Racism

There was also a palpable level of racism evident within the ranks of the Engineering Departments in the CMA - as demonstrated by some of the quotes thus far. At times this racism was very subtle, with comments about "those people" (ie. Africans and/or coloureds) not really understanding environmental issues because of their "culture". There were however some very hard lines taken about race - particularly in reference to the question of population. One manager suggested that the proper thing to do was to "sterilize the retarded ones...[because] they can really breed, eh", while another said that "Hitler wasn't necessarily right, but he did have a point [about getting rid of certain elements of the population]". Seventeen percent of the managers interviewed said that "population control" is the only way to address poverty.

Not all managers made racist comments however, and many went out of their way to reject the racial policies of the past. This was especially true of the most prominent of the senior managers interviewed and mirrors the trend in senior civil service circles throughout the country towards a more "liberal" approach to social and economic policy (Hendler 1991, 201). It should be noted, however, that almost all of the more "progressive" managers made direct reference to the need for privatization in the delivery of municipal services and an enhanced role for a market economy for job creation, and suggested that there are "lots of opportunities if people are just willing to try". Several of the senior managers interviewed discussed what they considered to be the "inevitability" of having private companies play a bigger role in the delivery of municipal services in the future. Race was not an issue for these managers, it was a question of economics and efficiency - lending support to Mzwanele Mayekiso's (1995, 30) contention that senior civil servants in South Africa are becoming increasingly "trickle-down, free-market oriented in their socio-economic philosophy".

A Lack of Metropolitan Awareness

Another point to emphasize is the lack of awareness amongst civil servants of environmental issues on a *metropolitan* scale. To the extent that municipal bureaucrats were aware of urban environmental issues at all, their focus tended to be on their own immediate jurisdictions with very little recognition of environmental problems in the city as a whole. Even problems that were just outside their own municipal border might as well have been a thousand kilometres away as managers either did not know, or perhaps did not want to acknowledge, the existence of major environmental hazards that inevitably affected their own municipality as well.

Just outside of the boundary of the small WLA that was part of this study, for example, there are two large squatter settlements but not one of the seven managers interviewed raised the issue when asked about whether they had any major environmental problems related to poverty in their area. Even when asked directly about the squatter settlements, the Town Engineer pushed the question aside, saying that the squatter camps are not within his jurisdiction and that, in any case, his local authority did not have the human or capital resources to deal with the problem.

This hiding-the-head-in-the-sand routine was true of managers from the large WLA as well, where only a few of the most senior managers appeared to be

aware of the extent of environmental problems outside of their own jurisdiction. The majority of managers from this WLA had nothing to say about the fragmented nature of local government services or how this might affect urban environmental management overall.

Given the history of local government in the CMA and the highly isolationist nature of individual municipalities these results were not unexpected. Municipal bureaucrats from different jurisdictions in the region have had very little contact with one another in the past, and even during the local government restructuring process it has been only a few key individuals who have been actively engaged in negotiations. The majority of managers continue to operate within the same, pre-negotiation municipal structures and mind-sets.

It was really only in the Black Local Authority that managers were well aware of their environmental position in the metropolitan structure as a whole and the need to restructure services on a metropolitan basis. Both white and African managers from the BLA expressed a keen interest in amalgamating with neighbouring municipalities in order to get help with the enormous service backlogs in their jurisdiction. African managers in particular made repeated reference to the unfair distribution of municipal resources in the CMA and the enormous differences in "the environments" of the townships and the white suburbs. African managers know very well how whites are living in the wealthy parts of the city - far more than white managers from the WLAs know about the townships or the squatter camps which they seldom, if ever, visit.

Attitudes Towards the Working Environment

One final point of interest is the attitudes - or, more appropriately, the lack thereof - of municipal bureaucrats towards the "working environment" of municipal labourers. The delivery of municipal services requires manual labour and the physical act of cleaning sewers and collecting refuse can be a dangerous and unpleasant job, exposing labourers to a working environment with a wide range of health and safety risks. In the same way that the *living* environment needs to be seen as part of the overall environmental equation, so too does the space in which people often spend the longest part of their day - at work. And yet only six percent of the managers interviewed made any reference to the environment in which they or their labourers work, and none of the managers demonstrated any real insight into the issue.

By contrast, in separate interviews that were conducted with municipal

labourers in the CMA as part of the larger study on municipal restructuring, seventy-five percent of these labourers made direct reference to the working environment when asked about environmental problems.[6] In most cases, workplace health and safety was the number one "environmental" concern of municipal labourers, with problems ranging from the use of insecticides to the handling of raw sewage. Virtually all of the labourers interviewed were exposed in one way or another to dangerous or unhealthy conditions and there were very clear health and safety risks involved.

Take for example the collection of "night soil" (a euphemism for faeces and urine that is collected in plastic buckets placed in some squatter camps to be used as toilets). There are several teams of labourers in the CMA whose job it is to collect these buckets (two hundred or more at a time), load them onto a truck, unload them at the sewage plant transfer station, dump them into a holding tank, and clean the buckets by hand. These workers are provided with the most minimal of safety gear (rubber boots and a plastic apron) and there is raw sewage constantly splashing on them and/or sitting in pools on the transfer station floor. All of the workers complained of constant headaches, skin rashes and frequent illnesses, and all of them made some kind of reference (unprompted) to the need to drink alcohol or smoke marijuana as a way to try and combat the smells.

Similar stories could be told of workers who complained about having to spray insecticides with no protective gear; having to collect dead animals on the streets and beaches with little more than a face mask and a pair of gloves; or having to clean sewers without proper ventilation systems and finding everything from colonies of rats to human fetuses in the pipelines. Even at the best of times these can be dangerous and unpleasant jobs, but in South Africa, with its abysmal record of labour relations and worker rights under apartheid, municipal labourers have been forced to do some of the most unpleasant jobs imaginable.

Although I will not pursue this discussion of an "environmental division of labour" any further in this article, it is abundantly clear that municipal labourers in South Africa not only play a critical role in the environmental systems of a city, they also bear the brunt of the environmental hazards. No urban environmental policy can possibly be complete, therefore, if it does not also take into account the working environment of municipal labourers (this would include any "self-help" community groups doing similar work as well). If working conditions for those doing the actual labour are unacceptable, then so too is the environmental planning behind it.

It should also be noted that managers did not take account of their own

unhealthy working environment during the interviews either. Although infinitely better than the conditions just described for labourers, almost all of the managers interviewed worked in stuffy offices with poor ventilation, very little natural light, and potentially carcinogenic fibres in the building and decorating materials (asbestos was, until recently, widely used in South African construction). Only one manager made any mention of these working environment hazards, and she said that her colleagues "think [she is] crazy to worry about it".

CONCLUSION

The results of these interviews are a portrait of a civil service in the Cape Metropolitan Area which knows very little about environmental problems in general, even less about environmental problems in the townships, and almost nothing about the link between urban poverty and environmental degradation in the metropolitan area as a whole. There are some significant differences between white, coloured and African managers, but it is white managers who continue to hold the most senior bureaucratic positions.

This is not to suggest that a more balanced demographic representation in the ranks of the civil service in the CMA would somehow solve the problems of brown environmental degradation overnight. Even if there were enough skilled black personnel on hand to balance the bureaucracy on race and gender terms it would take years to make the transition. A new team of municipal engineers and managers cannot simply walk in and replace the existing personnel. It takes time to learn the intricacies of complex infrastructure systems (particularly in a city like Cape Town where services are so fragmented) and there is an inertia to bureaucratic procedure that also takes a long time to change.

What is clear is that Cape Town's stock of apartheid-era civil servants will remain an integral part of municipal decision making well into the foreseeable future. These bureaucrats will have to conform to certain standards and expectations for the delivery of basic services to the urban poor, but it will be an on-going struggle to bring a more environmentally just and sustainable pattern of service provision to the townships and squatter camps of the CMA.

Recognizing these barriers to change, and developing strategies for a more democratic and more equitable approach to urban development at the municipal level, pose some of the greatest challenges for South Africa's relatively small, but rapidly expanding, environmental justice movement.

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ENDNOTES

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1. I have chosen to use "African", "coloured", "Asian" and "white" to describe the four major apartheid racial categories, and have adopted the most common use of upper and lower case letters. The term "black" is used to refer to Africans, coloureds and Asians as a whole, in recognition of their common oppression under apartheid.

2. Current South African parliamentary procedure is for a Green Paper to be written by a team of government appointed "experts" and then distributed to the public and other government departments for comments/suggestions. The document is then rewritten as a (draft) White Paper and eventually tabled in Parliament as new legislation. In the case of the Environmental Green and White Papers there was considerable public participation. All Government of South Africa Green and White Papers are available in the Internet at the following address: http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/

3. In interviews with managers from these municipalities there would often be a map on the office wall that had blank space outside of the municipal boundaries for which they were responsible - as if nothing existed beyond the solid lines.

4. Statistics taken from annual reports and conversations with managerial staff at the various municipalities.

5. The four rankings used to quantify the levels of knowledge and understanding that bureaucrats have of environmental issues were based on the following criteria. At the bottom end of the scale was "no knowledge" - ie. managers displayed no understanding of an environmental issue even after being prompted with several examples or explanations. The next level was "very little knowledge" - ie. managers displayed some understanding of the issues and gave one or two examples but they usually had to be prompted with illustrations and had a poor sense of what causes the problems or what could be done about them. The third level was "moderately knowledgeable" - ie. managers would raise an issue on their own without any prompting, could provided several examples of what was being discussed, and could describe causes and effects with some insight. The final category was "extremely knowledgeable" - ie. managers could describe a wide range of relevant issues without being prompted by the interviewer and had in depth knowledge of the social and physical causes and consequences of the topic being discussed.

6. A total of seventy-two labourers, from the same municipalities as the managers, were interviewed. For a more detailed account of these interviews see McDonald (1994). On

the role of labour in the environmental justice movement in South Africa in general, see Lukey (1995), or any issue of the *Environmental Justice Networker* - a quarterly newsletter published by the Environmental Justice Networking Forum.