
SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS AWARD

The Social Responsiveness Award provides an institutional signal to members of the University that social responsiveness is an important priority.

Associate Professor Gina Ziervogel

Gina Ziervogel, an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science, has worked to shed light on the importance of urban governance for reducing climate risk and addressing broader social development challenges. She believes that building environmental sustainability requires understanding social and governance issues as much as environmental and technical issues. This is particularly important in contexts of inequality where the voice of the marginalised is often insufficiently heard yet critical for ensuring sustainability.

In 2017 she was appointed to the City of Cape Town's Water Resilience Advisory Committee to provide expert input on the City's drought plans. She was also asked to lead a climate change project for National Treasury's City Support Programme. Drawing on interviews with City officials and observation from engagement in many drought-related processes, she produced a report on lessons learned from the drought that was shared with other municipalities in South Africa. It was presented at the National Budget Forum that supports decision making of the country's metros. This work, which is often seen as the responsibility of environment departments, was now being recognised as a city-wide priority. Drawing on the interview material, she worked with a journalist to produce a book, *Day Zero: One city's response to a record-breaking drought*. Her aim was to ensure that the citizens of Cape Town and interested parties globally could understand more about what happened within the City during the drought. She feels that citizens need to better understand urban governance in order to understand their role in building water resilience and holding government accountable.

One of the gaps in managing water at the City level is the limited public engagement on water issues and exclusion of different social perspectives. To address this, Gina Ziervogel has been working with a local NGO, the Environmental Monitoring Group, and a social movement, the Western Cape Water Caucus on an action learning project. As part of this project, the activists wanted to develop their research skills and document evidence about challenges with water access in the low-income communities where they lived. Along with some other academics, the team developed a transdisciplinary research process using the SenseMaker methodology to collect over 311 stories and associated data about water access across Cape Town. Through this work, relationships between City of Cape Town officials and the Caucus have been strengthened, leading to plans for water dialogues that were unfortunately postponed due to COVID-19.

The new City Water Strategy has identified the need for community-generated data and working in a more collaborative way with different stakeholders. The SenseMaker work talks directly to this as it captures the lived realities of poorer households' struggle with water access and seeks to provide a voice for those often not heard. Ongoing work at both the neighbourhood level and City level is continuing on how to take these issues forward.

Gina Ziervogel has integrated this work in her undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and has had a number of students undertake theses on related topics. There have also been a number of academic and popular publications from this work.

The election by Senate of a member of the faculty to be a fellow recognises sustained and original contributions through research or creative endeavour.