

# Taps will run dry five days a week in parched Sao Paulo

James Hider Sao Paulo  
Raiani Sibien

Sao Paulo, the largest city in the southern hemisphere and home to 20 million people, is on the verge of running out of water with residents being warned that their taps are about to run dry for five days of the week.

The crisis is a result of mismanagement, a population boom, climate change and politics combined with an unexpected weather system that has tipped the vast city over the edge.

The city authorities said that after a wet season with lower than expected rain, Sao Paulo faces severe supply restrictions when the dry season hits next



Freak climate conditions have brought drought to reservoirs at Cantareira

month. The warning has raised the spectre of civil unrest and an economic slump in Brazil's business capital.

Restaurants and homes are buying water tanks to withstand the enforced drought, while the council is considering fines of almost £300 for those caught washing their car.

Brazil's normally fertile southeast is suffering one of the worst dry spells on record, which has sent global coffee prices soaring. Amazon deforestation has drastically cut the amount of water

vapour released by billions of trees and is partly to blame, analysts say.

Sao Paulo is particularly hard hit: a vast concrete sprawl with almost no surviving tree cover, it has created a "heat island" that triggers torrential rainfall, causing devastating floods, but diverts the rain from the surrounding countryside where its reservoirs lie.

Worse, a high-pressure system over the South Atlantic has meant little cloud cover, driving up temperatures and increasing evaporation as well as human water consumption.

"Sao Paulo used to be known as the City of Drizzle," said Augusto José Pereira Filho, a professor of atmospheric science at Sao Paulo University. "Not any more. Now it's a kind of desert."

There is an old joke in Brazil that it is "the country of the future, and always will be," referring to its constant failure to fulfil its potential. Yet in one respect, Sao Paulo is already road-testing the future: while temperatures have risen globally by half a degree since 1950, here they have gone up by two degrees, an increase seen by many environmentalists as a dangerous tipping point.

The Cantareira reservoir system, which provides half the city's drinking water, is at 5 per cent of capacity. Sao Paulo is trying to build pipes to lakes further afield but they are not connected to treatment plants large enough to deal with the needs of the seventh-largest conurbation in the world.

In some outlying areas, the taps are running only every three weeks and furious slum-dwellers rely on water trucks. With the situation worsening by the day, hospitals, schools and businesses are scrambling to secure supplies. "As a doctor, I have seen hospitals having to buy water from water trucks in order to deal with the shortage," said Dr Marcela Cibien Baratella. "We try to save water as much as we can by doing laundry just once a week, avoiding cleaning the floors with water and so on, but we are facing one of the worst droughts in at least 80 years."

Marie-France Henry, owner of the prestigious restaurant *La Casserole*,

fears that the crisis could last up to two years and is building a rainwater harvesting system. Her diners, paying top dollar, will have to start eating their magret de canard off plastic plates and drink their French wine in plastic glasses to save on washing-up.

Experts say the current problems have been compounded by the failure of city authorities to introduce more measured rationing during last year's closely fought election race.



A mural on the side of a building in Sao Paulo, where homes may be left without running water for five days a week when the dry season begins next month

## Congressman's guilty secret: his Downton Abbey office

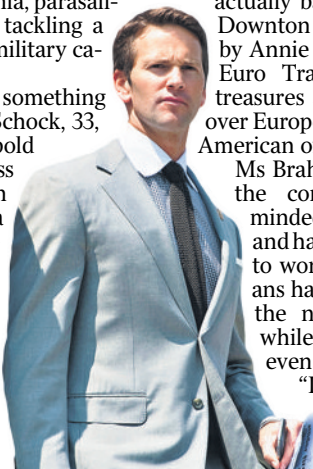
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In representing the hard-working families of Illinois, Aaron Schock has sought to repeal Obamacare and loudly protested at the president's "war on coal", which brought job losses in his district.

He has cultivated a macho image, with his Instagram page showing him ice climbing in Patagonia, parasailing in Argentina and tackling a survival test taken by military cadets at West Point.

So it may come as a something of a surprise that Mr Schock, 33, has been making his bold stands for working-class Americans from an office that resembles a drawing room in the TV series *Downton Abbey*. Deep in the beige and blandly carpeted complex that houses congressmen, the walls



Aaron Schock's red office has candles and a chandelier

of his office have been painted an aristocratic shade of red. Black candles are mounted on the walls in a gilded sconce, a chandelier drips royally from the ceiling and a table in his inner office bears a bust of Abraham Lincoln and an arrangement of pheasant feathers.

Mr Schock's secret was unearthed by a journalist from *The Washington Post*. The reporter was informed, by a lady at the front desk, that the decor was "actually based off the red room in Downton Abbey". It was designed by Annie Brahler, whose company, Euro Trash, unearths "forgotten treasures and objects of beauty all over Europe" and uses them to adorn American offices and homes.

Ms Brahler told the reporter that the congressman was "fresh-minded and forward thinking" and had thus given her free reign to work her magic. Art historians have spoken of the shock of the new. Mr Schock, meanwhile, claimed he had never even seen *Downton Abbey*.

"I think the fact that it's red makes people go: 'Wow, that's different,'" he told ABC News.

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