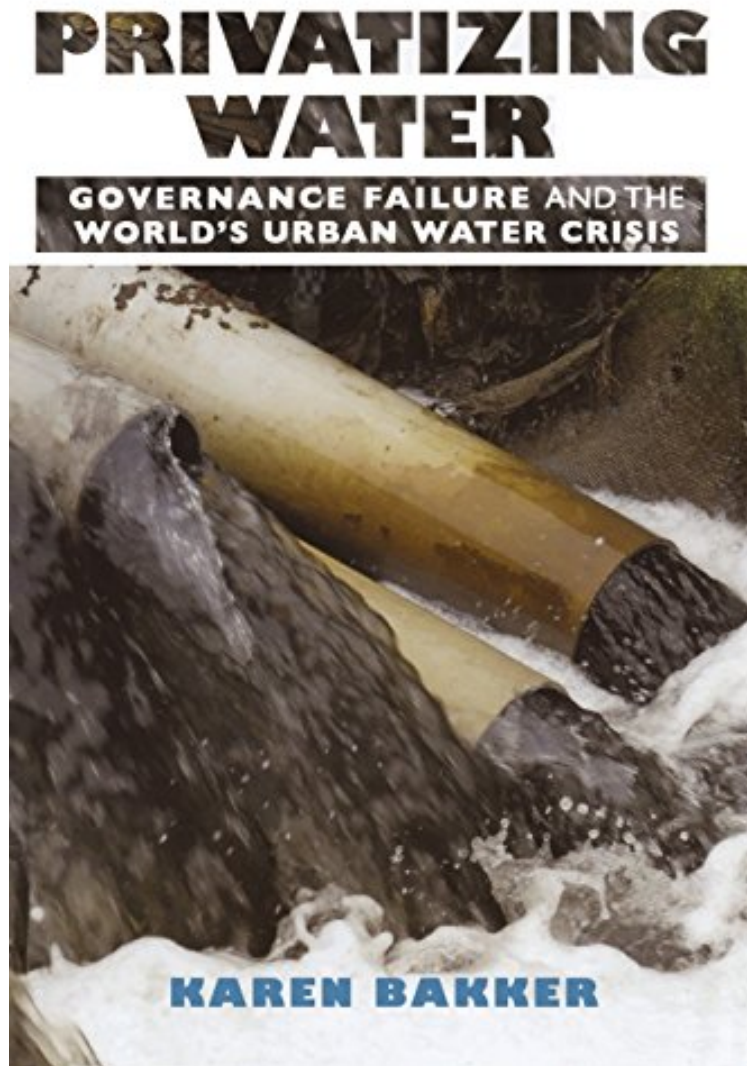


# Privatizing Water: Governance Failure and the World's Urban Water Crisis

*Karen Bakker*

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**Karen Bakker : Privatizing Water: Governance Failure and the World's Urban Water Crisis** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Privatizing Water: Governance Failure and the World's Urban Water Crisis:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. TextbookBy ChaleA different approach to looking at the current (at

the time of the writing) issues surrounding the issue of water access and privatization.

Water supply privatization was emblematic of the neoliberal turn in development policy in the 1990s. Proponents argued that the private sector could provide better services at lower costs than governments; opponents questioned the risks involved in delegating control over a life-sustaining resource to for-profit companies. Private-sector activity was most concentrated and contested in large cities in developing countries, where the widespread lack of access to networked water supplies was characterized as a global crisis. In *Privatizing Water*, Karen Bakker focuses on three questions: Why did privatization emerge as a preferred alternative for managing urban water supply? Can privatization fulfill its proponents' expectations, particularly with respect to water supply to the urban poor? And, given the apparent shortcomings of both privatization and conventional approaches to government provision, what are the alternatives? In answering these questions, Bakker engages with broader debates over the role of the private sector in development, the role of urban communities in the provision of "public" services, and the governance of public goods. She introduces the concept of "governance failure" as a means of exploring the limitations facing both private companies and governments. Critically examining a range of issues including the transnational struggle over the human right to water, the "commons" as a water-supply-management strategy, and the environmental dimensions of water privatization *Privatizing Water* is a balanced exploration of a critical issue that affects billions of people around the world.

"Is water, arguably the most basic of human needs, the final frontier for capitalism? Is market governance of water nothing more than green imperialism? Karen Bakker's *Privatizing Water* bravely and provocatively takes on the state and private models for governing urban water and proposes a radical and deeply illuminating rethinking of keywords such as public, community, and the market. Water, she argues, is not well served by the 'modern social imaginary,' and she proposes alternatives grounded in deliberative democracy and in a profound understanding of water as a biophysical, cultural, aesthetic and public good. A tour de force." Michael Watts, Class of 1963 Professor of Geography and Development Studies at the University of California, Berkeley

Written by one of the world's leading specialists in water governance issues, *Privatizing Water* deepens, challenges, and combines the debates on urban water supply, sustainable development and equitable access to water and public services. Dynamically combining interdisciplinary theory and empirical evidence, the book gives powerful insight into the water privatization debate. It is rich in challenging conceptualizations that range from elite-based hydrosocial networks to the social production of thirst. By focusing on actual practices at diverse scales of water control, the author is able to show the real-life worlds of the many who are 'unconnected' to the formal networks and rather make their own hybrid water projects." Rutgerd Boelens, Wageningen University

"*Privatizing Water* is a much-needed volume that revisits the water privatization debate and takes us beyond conventional notions of public, private, and community management to critically explore their respective ideological underpinnings, shortcomings, and socio-ecological linkages, as well as possible alternatives." François Molle, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement

"In this wise and humane book, Karen Bakker seeks to reshape the debate about water management worldwide. By challenging the idea that privatization and public ownership are opposed and indeed the only alternatives, she shines light on an issue of fundamental importance to all citizens and countless policy-makers. Karen Bakker makes the case for moving beyond existing policy approaches and shows why a new paradigm committed to flexibility and pragmatism is by far the best option." Noel Castree, University of Manchester

"Karen Bakker's book brings together a culmination of many years' painstaking work on the governance of water in an impressive array of geographical contexts. She provides a superb tour through the landscape, depicting with simultaneous nuance and clarity the possible trajectories through rights, community and ecology that could lead productively beyond the stalemates of a polarized debate over privatization." Bronwen Morgan, University of Bristol

About the Author Karen Bakker is Professor, Canada Research Chair, and Founding Director of the Program on Water Governance at the University of British Columbia. She is the author of *Eau Canada: The Future of Water Governance in Canada* and *An Uncooperative Commodity: Privatizing Water in England and Wales*.