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Community water system privatization and the water access crisis

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Description / Abstract

One of the most pressing challenges faced by the global community in the 21st century is the need to extend potable water access to more than 2 billion people across the planet. Debates concerning how such a project should be undertaken have centered on whether or not water utility systems would be more effectively managed and extended under private ownership than they might be under public ownership models. In this article I explore this issue, providing an overview of recent research concerning the ways in which community water system ownership regimes succeed, and fail, in their attempts to provide access to readily available potable water for as much of the population as is possible. In the course of doing so I provide a discussion of the form that debates over privatization of water resources have taken, as well as how the act of privatization has been found to impact access to water systems and the quality of the service they provide. Ultimately, I explain that, while creative solutions to the water access crisis are clearly necessary, privatization appears to be an inadequate and often counterproductive means of addressing the issue.

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