

Water Struggles in the Web of Life: Social Reproduction, Ecology and Capitalist Accumulation



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I. Introduction:

Why is water a successful terrain for resistance to intensified capitalist exploitation?



II. Claims and reality of water privatisation:

Why should water services be privatised in the first place?

Three positive effects as a result of privatisation and related free market competition:

- 1) more efficient;
- 2) higher quality; and
- 3) reduction in costs for consumers;

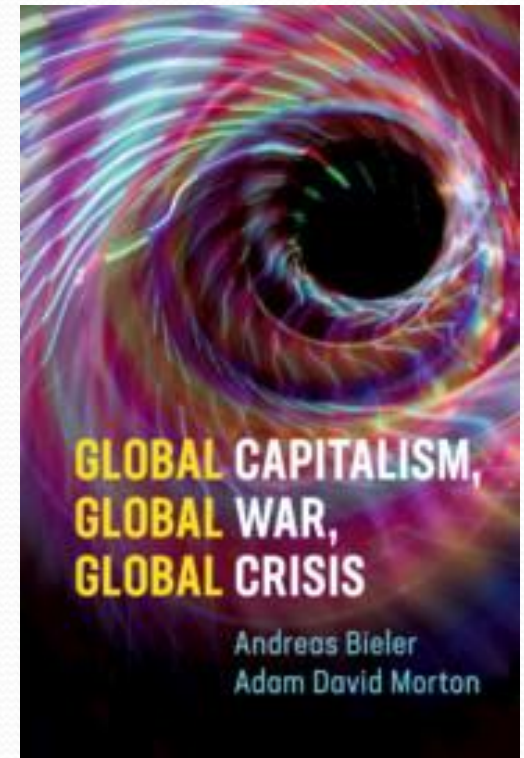
Reality is different: (1) no competition; (2) soaring tariffs; (3) lack of investment in infrastructure; (4) poor quality; (5) large profits;

Privatisation is not about how to provide best water, it is an attempt to secure private profits!

III. A necessary historical materialist moment:

- structuring conditions push capital towards constant outward expansion;
- agency across the social factory of capitalism: access to water affects everyone outside the workplace;
- agency across the world-ecology of capitalism: water as 'cheap nature';

Struggle by citizens' movements and environmental groups are also instances of class struggle!



IV. Mobilising against privatisation:

Three key aspects of successful mobilisation:

1. Long history of water struggles across different scales;



Mobilising against privatisation:

2. The unique quality of water: e.g. water as a fundamental source of life;



Mobilising against privatisation:

3. Broad alliance of actors across the social factory:

- trade unions;



- social movements, citizens' committees;

- developmental NGOs;

- environmental NGOs;



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V. Conclusion: moving towards transformation?

Transformative potential

- Water as a commons.

- emphasis on the commons; combined with
- new forms of democracy;

Transformational potential towards a new economy, with commons being expanded to include further areas?

Structuring conditions: capitalist pressure and fragmentation of resistance.

