



Topic: Water as common good: public or private management?

Perceived as unlimited, often taken for granted in industrialized countries, water remains an inaccessible commodity for millions of people. The current rapid rates of economic and demographic growth have exposed its scarcity and increased competition for its control. The awareness of it being a common good is spreading, but which way of managing water services should be preferred? Private or public?

**Argument PRO:** "Private management of water services is preferable to public management".

**Argument AGAIST:** "Public management of the water services is preferable to the private management".

### Current situation, scenario, and context.

Throughout history, the "water" resource may not always have received the same attention and protection, and even the laws enacted to regulate its use, as well as to protect its quantity and quality, have sometimes proved inadequate. In 2010, the United Nations Assembly, through a resolution, declared water to be a common good, belonging to humanity and essential for the full enjoyment of life and human rights. However, this interpretation is at odds with the legislations whereby water continues to be qualified as a patrimonial asset, endowed with monetary value.

Nowadays it is imperative to face the scarcity of water, mainly due to pollution, climate change, and bad management, by addressing in its different components. It is necessary to implement an effective use of technologies and management skills. The intertwining of water with social and economic development, climate change, peaceful coexistence and social justice, makes its correct management essential. But what is the optimal type of management? The public one, through companies controlled by politicians elected by citizens, or the private one, with companies in the hands of private capital, a format as widespread as the public one? Economic and political reasons intersect and ignite the debate. Many are opposed to any form of "water privatization", others stress that "public water" is certainly not a good example of efficient management of the common good.

### Arguments pro:

- Political instability faced by some central and local governments limits the efficient management of water services. Only private resources, adequately remunerated, can ensure the maintenance of services.
- Municipalized companies, controlled by public capital, that manage water services are often examples of waste and inefficiency.

### Arguments against:

- It falls upon the community, through its representatives, the subsidiaries, or community cooperative, to manage public utility services such as water services (pumping, distribution, treatment).
- Entrusting private companies with the water management may contribute to increased water sales tariffs. Only through public management is it possible to implement policies designed to protect and save water resources by reducing waste and enabling all people to access the asset.

### FURTHER INSIGHTS:

- [United Nations General Assembly Resolution, the human right to water and basic sanitation](#)
- [OECD: Managing water sustainably is key to the future of food and agriculture](#)