

Remunicipalisation of Water Service – Berlin, Germany

In 1994 Berlin Waterworks was moved from a municipally owned water service, to a cooperation model, (Water Remunicipalisation Tracker 2014) and in 1999, despite widespread opposition, 49.9 percent of the company was sold to a consortium of the German RWE group and the French firm Vivendi (today Veolia). This contract, which was secret, was opposed by many social justice groups on the basis that water is a human right, and that there was no transparency.

In February of 2011, after years of mobilization and alternative proposals, a citizen referendum passed and the city bought back the shares of RWE. After ongoing lobbying the city bought back the shares of Veolia in 2013. The impacts of privatization which were listed were potential surface water pollution, decreasing water quality, groundwater pollution of depletion, increase of water prices, and decrease of service.
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Berlin bought back its shares despite a high level of debt. This has happened in eight other Germany cities as well, including Stuttgart. France's Suez and Veolia are interested in privatizing Greece's utilities, despite the fact that 49 cities in France have bought back their water since 2000.

A 2014 report by the Transnational Institute's Satoko Kishimoto named 180 cities worldwide who have remunicipalised their water supplies. "A public water company is much more tightly regulated and obliged to provide water services for all," said Kishimoto.

Beveridge, R., & Naumann, M. (2013). Global norms, local contestation: Privatisation and de/politicisation in Berlin.

Ross Beveridge, Frank Huesker, Matthias Naumann, From post-politics to a politics of possibility? Unravelling the privatization of the Berlin Water Company, Geoforum, Volume 51, January 2014, Pages 66-74

<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/aug/14/germanys-hypocrisy-over-greece-water-privatisation>

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