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Articles

When the tap stays dry: water networks in eastern Germany

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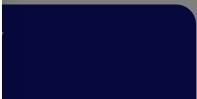
The most important reasons for the decrease of private water demand are the introduction of a new tariff system after 1990, the instalment of water-saving household appurtenances and the rehabilitation of leaky pipes. Furthermore, many water consuming industries introduced their own water supply system and water recycling.

The term “privatisation” has to be applied with care. Full marketisation of water is rare and the usual cases have always been forms of partnership between the public and the private sector. Therefore, we use the term “privatisation” not in a narrow sense which would only include a complete transfer of formerly public assets to the market, but rather as any form where control over water networks is shifted from the public to the private sector. Examples for this shift then include concessions, the sale of shares of public companies, the introduction of market mechanisms in decision-making, etc.

As a matter of fact, the privatisation of water supply and wastewater disposal in small rural municipalities has been limited. In many cases, the privatisation attempts of private water companies have failed. In some cases, the privatisation of public enterprises has been successful.



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