



# International Seminar ‘Water, social movements and struggles against privatization’

“Liberalizing the economy and treating water and water delivery services as economic goods has been a recurring recipe in numerous countries. The wave of privatizations of water utilities and takeovers by multinational corporations around the globe often increased inequalities, caused problems of affordability and deterioration of services, as companies tend to put their corporate interests over the public interest of achieving “water for all”. The water war in Cochabamba was an icon of how disastrous privatization of water turned out for the local population and became a turning point in water services privatizations. Communities around the world stood up and claimed that “water is life, not for profit” and “water is a common good, not a commodity”. A global network of civil society organizations arose around the idea of “reclaiming public water”... Solidarity is the key element for social movements to arise, to maintain grounded and keep democratic legitimacy in combating societal injustices following from neoliberal water governance.”

These words from the PhD dissertation by Jerry van den Berge [entitled “Water is a public good, not a commodity!” Social movements’ struggles and strategies against privatization of water services in Europe, to be defended at WUR-Omnia, 13.00, same day] form the backbone of a short seminar with public lectures and debate by two world scholars on the political ecology of water.

**Prof. Dr Leila Harris** is Professor with the Institute for Resources, Environment, and Sustainability and with the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia. She analyzes governance and political considerations from feminist, equity, and sustainability perspectives. Her work has focused on water politics, governance, and justice from Turkey, to Ghana, South Africa, and Indigenous contexts in Canada and elsewhere. Major themes are the uneven implementation of the human right to water and injustices related to water access, quality and infrastructures. Publications include focus on issues trustworthiness around drinking water, rethinking gender and water research, and engagement with storytelling and narrative inquiry for political ecology research.

**Prof. Dr Erik Swyngedouw** is Professor of Geography at The University of Manchester, United Kingdom and Senior Research Associate of the University of Johannesburg Centre for Social Change, South Africa. He is author of numerous articles and books, among others, Promises of the Political: Insurgent Cities in a Post-Democratic Environment (MIT Press), Liquid Power: Contested Hydro-Modernities in 20th Century Spain (MIT Press) and Social Power and the Urbanization of Nature (Oxford University Press).

## Program

**Building Lumen, room Lumen 1, 18 September**

15.30-15.45	Welcome and opening – Prof. Rutgerd Boelens (Wageningen University)
15.45-16.15	“Infrastructural inequities and democratic (counter) currents” – Prof. Leila Harris (UBC Canada)
16.15- 16.45	“Water struggles as a symptom: from identitarian social movements and human rights to collective emancipation – Prof. Erik Swyngedouw (University of Manchester)
16.45-17.00	Public debate
17.00	Drinks

The seminar is one of the ongoing activities of the Riverhood and River Commons projects, which focus on governance alternatives based on water commoning struggles and co-governance initiatives.

