The Discourses of Water: Intellectual Property, Language, and Innovation.

**Introduction:**

Water is an indisputably innate element required for human survival. Physically, the human body can (on average) sustain itself without water for 7 days.[[1]](#footnote-1) This assessment of the ‘7-day rule’ is misleading due to the semantics of what is understood as ‘human survival.’ Meaning, the human body can most likely continue the beating of the heart (i.e. pumping of blood) and functioning of the lungs (i.e. breathing) for 7 days without water. While these functions are at the core of ‘human survival,’ they are without doubt the bear minimum. The absence of water for even a day can be detrimental to the mental, physical and emotional health of a human being. Hallucinations, delirium, organ malfunction, and many other physical and psychological complications can occur when the body is deprived of water well before the 7th day benchmark. These precursors to the shutting down of the human body are nature’s way of stressing the importance of sufficient water intake on a daily basis. Being that humans are innately tied to water the political significance of water as a basic right is a hotly debated issue.

This paper is a critical analysis of the political discourses surrounding the human right to water. As stated above, the human requirement for water is undeniable, but this paper suggests that it is often depoliticized in a manner that allows for the overlooking of this

innateness as a compelling reason to guarantee access to clean drinking water for “all members of the human family.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Global Climate Change (GCC) is a principal threat to our planet as a whole. While I am aware of outliers who do not prescribe to the warning signs of GCC, those debates are outside the scope of this research. As a beginning place, one must accept GCC as the impending threat described in the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis* report.[[3]](#footnote-3) The 2013 IPCC report has outlined details of how different regions of our planet will struggle in the face of GCC. Instead of a one-size-fits-all mantra, the impacts of GCC will be much more regionally specific, feeding off the weaknesses of the landscape. The IPCC has stated that this regional disparity “is driven by the uneven distribution of solar heating, individual responses of the atmosphere, oceans and land surface, the interactions between these, and the physical characteristics of the regions.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The realization that a global phenomenon will affect the planet in drastically different ways at the local level has led researchers, in the area of GCC, to focus on regional case studies. A popular case study in the United States is the Southwest region, where “mean annual warming has already surpassed that of most of the rest of the country.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Being that this region is experiencing measurable effects, from GCC, earlier than other regions, it has been a petri dish for scientists and research groups alike to make claims about our species’ ability to mitigate these effects. As it stands today, there is little to celebrate in the way of human mitigation strategies, in fact, the mantra for researchers looking at the U.S. Southwest region goes something like this: “the end points of the extremes of precipitation are likely changing (e.g. the frequency of drought and flood are increasing, and droughts are likely becoming more severe), and human systems have limited resilience in their capacities to manage this change.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Although the U.S. Southwest is a single example, it is chosen to illustrate a few of the less visible assumptions being researched by individuals, governments, corporations and social organizations. The first assumption about GCC that can be systematically rejected by looking at the example of the Southwestern region of the U.S. is that of elitist-avoidance. Meaning, CC does not play favorites among its victims and there is no way of negotiating or maneuvering out of its way. As much time and consideration has been poured over the ideas of Most Developed Countries (MDC) and Least Developed Countries (LDC), CC does not differentiate between these categories. This does not mean to imply financial advantages and disadvantages do not exist in the ways we deal with the changes of CC, especially at these early stages. This example is useful because it allows for a brief neutralizing of the nation-state strong-hold on the natural threats to societies. The second assumption being the changing of our planet’s climate is a global problem and needs a global solution. This is the position of MDC’s governments and the majority of corporations have taken on the issue of CC and the global water crisis. This is also the underlying and meant to be reassuring chant vocalized by individuals living in places which are not noticeably affected by CC. The advantages of this view is that it allows for a small concentration of decision makers to construct a framework for which the changing of our global climate subsists and then utilize that framework to influence those who will listen. For those individuals living in areas not currently affected by CC (these individuals are steadily decreasing, but for the sake of this position let us pretend they exist), this view provides enough of an assurance that the issue of GCC is being addressed. The disadvantages of this view are evident in the position of those who have already started to feel the effects of CC, especially when direct effects can be seen in the water supplies of individual populations. The governing entities, social groups and especially the individuals whom experience a water crisis, or other effect of our changing climate, can no longer rely on this assurance that GCC can and is being resolved through global solutions, alone. That being said, the second portion of this global issue of CC are the varying local disruptions being felt by inhabitants across the planet. To address this mounting conflict over the stresses of GCC, researchers of the global/local ideology have coined two terms which have helped evolve the discussion of GCC beyond the acceptance of its likely repercussions and towards a discourse of solutions. These two terms are described in more detail below, but simply put, are the techniques involved in mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation efforts include anything that attempts/succeeds at reducing the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHG), whether by reducing human generation or increasing human or natural absorption. Adaptation efforts are those which alter natural or human systems to minimize damage or to maximize any potential opportunities to eliminate loss. Traditionally, the GCC discussion of mitigation techniques has concentrated on national and international policy, and in contrast, the conversation around adaptation has been more of a local movement and has been intensified where CC is already being experienced and poses the most serious challenges.[[7]](#footnote-7) As the IPCC report has pointed out, even with the most aspiring mitigation strategies, there will still be substantial unmitigated CC to adapt to across a wide range of systems, including ecosystems, food, water, health, infrastructure, and energy. Adaption may clash with resource needs for mitigation, for example, needs for water (e.g. for power generation, urban growth, and agriculture). Historically, the water needs of agriculture and power generating industries have been allotted by national agencies, which have bypassed local efforts to regulate these allotments. Many problems arise from a system that defers to a distant entity allotting natural resources, but the one most pertinent to this study is that of disappearing water quantities and increasing water allotments. Many GCC studies being conducted begin with the assumption that scarcity of water has for most of human history been a central factor in both individual survival and collective existence. Furthermore, when an imminent threat presents itself the Cornucopian theory of human survival calls for action, and since our species has shown this theory to be the dominant view, for example our ever growing population, we began the journey of answering this call. As early as 1979, the UN issued a declaration calling on the world's governments "to foresee and prevent potential man-made changes in climate that might be adverse to the well-being of humanity.”[[8]](#footnote-8) Directly after this declaration the UN with the assistance of climate scientists began holding meetings with the UN member states to establish a better understanding of what CC means for our Planet. A few of the topics taking center stage consider policies to mitigate CC, possible remedies for growing holes in the Ozone, and GHG emission regulations. In 1988 as a first step to address these topics, the IPCC was created “as a scientific intergovernmental body to provide decision makers with an assessment of the latest scientific research and its policy implications for mitigation and adaptation.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Following the establishment of the IPCC, in 1990, was the second conference on CC. It was at this convention that a clear “North-South” divide existed between developed and developing countries’ views on GCC. This divide has evolved into the defining debate on which policies meant to ease the stresses of GCC are now hinging. Scholars interested in GCC have no option but to talk about this divide and thus the body of work speaking to the arguments made by the developed and developing countries have flourished into full blown ideologies. Each side believing they are acting in the best interest of their respected constituents. At this point in the discussion of GCC, instead of continuing with a big-picture approach to the “North-South” divide, a winnowing of the subject to a specific tension is useful. In addition, the scope of this paper is more dedicated to understanding the influence this divide has upon the dispersion of green technologies, specifically; green technologies intended to mediate international access to clean water.

This analysis draws heavily on the ideas of Charles Taylor and his concept of the social imaginary. The social imaginary is the way people envision their relations to others, their shared norms and ideas of existence and how that collective sense provides legitimacy to their surroundings. However, for a social imaginary to affect societal change, there are pre-requisites: individuals need to have practices they can employ, and people collectively have to recognize those practices. These co-dependencies of self-community practices within a social imaginary are also intertwined with what Taylor refers to as the moral order.[[10]](#footnote-10) Taking this understanding of social imaginaries and relating it to the issue of access to water, then two research questions arise. The first asks, what are the shared norms, ideas and practices that currently exist within our social imaginary regarding water policies? The second question, which is the foci of the Taylor section of this analysis, supplicates; has the commodification of water caused a rupture in the global social imaginaries of individuals living in the 21st century? In the process of deconstructing these two questions, two clearly opposing ideologies emerge. These ideologies have created divergent currents within the current global social imaginary. For the purposes of this paper these currents are defined as the ‘human right to water’ and the ‘human ownership of water.’ These opposing social imaginaries are best explored using Michael Freeden’s concept of ideologies in conjunction with his morphological approach. To begin an analysis of these two currents, some understanding of Freeden’s theory must first be established. First, this analysis is not seeking truth in a fundamental context; instead it is looking for the activators of power roles within these currents and their influence on the direction of the overall direction regarding water rights asserted by these differing ideological groupings. Meaning, throughout this analysis, do not ask yourself which of these ideologies are true or false, because as Freeden reminds us, all ideologies are bias because they are a selection of “shared ideas and thoughts of groups in society that are represented by directions we should (or should not) go.”[[11]](#footnote-11) So, instead of looking for truth, “identify the role (these currents) play in political life”[[12]](#footnote-12) through a textual analysis of the United Nation’s Resolutions on *The Human Right to Water and Sanitation.[[13]](#footnote-13)* After exploring the divergent currents within the current social imaginaries, the paper revisits the original premise that access to water is inherent to human survival which follows that denial of this basic necessity presents society with a looming social wrong. This final analysis constructs the possible future intersection between the two divergent currents towards a practical resolution to universal access to water. Finally, honing in on the obstacles hindering the restitution of this social wrong and considering how, if at all, the resolution on *The Human Right to Water and Sanitation* will impact that future, allows for a unique framing of this debate not previously explored.

**Social Imaginaries:**

Taylor says our social imaginaries are the “ways we imagine our social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”[[14]](#footnote-14) In order to identify the discourses of water policy in the 21st century, their arguments need to be unpacked. Why does a society believe it is necessary to construct policies regulating a source of life (water)? While human consumption is arguably the most basic use of water, it is by no means the primary use of water in 21st century society. This assumption about water usage is often used as the underlying reason for necessitating water policies. For instance, the most rampant consumption of water is not through human consumption but by agriculture, followed by industrial manufacturing and sanitation.[[15]](#footnote-15) While keeping the many forms of water consumption in mind and going back to the core question that constructs the current social imaginary, the assumption that follows is that we all possess particular expectations regarding access to water. What are these expectations and what are their origins? This is the question explored in the following analysis of the United Nation’s resolution on *The Human Right to Water and Sanitation.*

**Dwindling Natural Resource:**

In 1948 when the United Nations drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), water was of little concern in the social imaginaries of the time. The absence of concern could not be more obvious when noting the omission of the word, water, throughout the entire document. All the while those writing the UDHR outlined the rights that constitute a “standard of living adequate for the health and well-being”[[16]](#footnote-16) of an individual and their family. One substantial argument for leaving one of life’s most fundamental elements out of the UDHR is founded in the social imaginaries of its authors in that this declaration was motivated by the atrocities associated with the Second World War. Leading the authors to gloss over the concept of access to water since the dominant threats to human survival demonstrated by the Nazi regime were motivated by moral and racial contexts. In the perspective of the time, the protections offered by the UDHR carried weight and were easily linked to the devastation left in the aftermath of WWII. The only place in the original UDHR document where access to water can be assumed is in Article 25, which lists what the drafters define as the “right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family.”[[17]](#footnote-17) Article 25 reads:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health

and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing

and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in

the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or

lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

It should not be assumed the drafters were attempting to offer a comprehensive list, though; it is quite obvious they were intending to cover a mixture of self-evident and non-obvious rights. Being that they included food, clothing, housing and medical care it is worth positing why water and even oxygen (arguably as equally necessary for human life as water) are omitted. My reasoning is straightforward. The tone and substance of the UDHR is one directed towards the establishment of moral values and standards. The rights outlined in the original UDHR are a direct assault on the limits of State power, specifically when the State impedes an individual’s right to survival. This reasoning aligns directly with the motivations mentioned earlier for writing the declaration in the first place and can be concluded to be the underpinnings of the social imaginaries of the time. Not only was the UDHR meant to create a foundation on which a human rights discourse could be fostered, but in addition it was also a command to all member States of the UN that it is their responsibility as the governing power to ensure these rights to their citizens.[[19]](#footnote-19) Reasoning for why water and oxygen were excluded from the original Resolution has more to do with obviousness than anything else. It can be reasonably inferred that water and oxygen are guaranteed rights when compared against the right to food, clothing, medical care, etc.[[20]](#footnote-20) An individual would not need the protections offered by the UDHR if they were denied the right to water. Moreover, the absence of access to water is in direct conflict with the basic goals of human rights being constructed by the UDHR. The social imaginaries of the drafters did not necessitate the inclusion of water and oxygen because they assumed these were both inherent and self-evident in their own right.

If the UN did not include the right to water in the initial UDHR then what happened between 1948 and 2002 when the right to water declaration was ratified? What changed in the social imaginary of the international community between 1948 and 2002? Why did the UN believe the right to water required its own explicit protection? The first page, first paragraph of the *Human Right to Water and Sanitation* resolution answers these questions in full.

“The committee has been confronted continually with the widespread

denial of the right to water in developing and well as developed

countries. Over one billion persons lack access to basic water supply,

while several billion do not have access to adequate sanitation, which

is the primary cause of water contamination and disease linked to

water. The continuing contaminations, depletions and unequal

distribution of water is exacerbating existing poverty. States parties

have to adopt effective measures to realize, without discrimination,

the right to water, as set out in this general comment.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

This opening paragraph answers the ‘why’ question for this declaration in 2002. The need for this declaration is obvious from the number of people cited as being unable to access clean water. Another atrocity is pointed to when water is linked with the growing epidemic of unsafe living conditions due to poor sanitation. This connection is the first time the UN recognized the importance of water and sanitation for all. Also, following the tradition established in the UDHR, this declaration places the responsibility for guaranteeing these rights to water and sanitation on the State. As previously discussed, this State obligation follows customs set forth by the UDHR back in 1948, but more specificity was outlined in the 2002 declaration. In the 2002 right to water declaration, the UN charges the “State parties to adopt effective measures” to ensure the right to water was realized.[[22]](#footnote-22) In the 1948 declaration, the UN charged the State with “teaching and educating to promote respect of the rights” included in that document.[[23]](#footnote-23) The specific charge made to States in the 2002 declaration, to create a legal requirement and enforce the right to water and sanitation is a change of direction for the UN. This change is an aggressive move towards action which places added responsibilities on the State. The State is now required to guarantee individuals more than a proverbial right. They must also provide the right to a tangible natural resource, water. This requirement fits seamlessly into the “category of guarantees essential for securing an adequate standard of living, particularly since it is one of the most fundamental conditions for survival.”[[24]](#footnote-24) How then have States held up this responsibility?

**Water as a Commodity:**

Water has a long history of having sacred significant people and their cultural traditions. Springs are one of the most commonly recognized places to go for the purest of water. The healing power of water is one of the reasons for water’s sacredness and springs are often gathering places for people looking for healing and rejuvenation. It has been common practice to take some of the water after visiting the spring. This capture of water at the spring is an example of the first ‘bottling of water.’ In 2012, the United States consumed 9.4 billion gallons of bottled water.[[25]](#footnote-25) The modern method of bottling and consuming water is a completely different process. The only sacred element of the modern method is found in the marketing techniques of their multi-national owners. Take for instance, the bottled water brand Ozarka Springs. Ozarka draws on the historical narrative when they appeal to the traditional idea of spring water being clean, crisp and naturally healthy for life. Their slogan says “Ozarka Brand 100% Natural Spring Water is sourced from carefully selected springs, and contains naturally occurring minerals for a crisp, clean taste.”[[26]](#footnote-26) The idea that Ozarka is capturing the pureness of spring water and delivering it to the population that cannot make the journey to retrieve it themselves is exactly the image they want their consumers to take away.

The bottling of water has created a divergence from the notion that water is a human right and limited natural resource for all. Although humans have paid for water through public management for decades, the idea of capturing and transporting water for the sole purpose of financial gain is new. In the past, water was primarily captured for faring and/or to provide water in a region where it was harder to access. This new system of bottling water for profit creates the commodification of water in a pragmatic process.

**An Ideological Approach:**

The two opposing currents discussed earlier have cultivated two divergent ideologies within the discourses of the water community in the 21st century. The first are a group of individuals and organizations that view water as a human right. One group which for the purpose of this analysis will be referred to as the “right to water crowd” point to the United Nation’s Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UNUDHR) as their guiding text. They define rights in the “sense of genuine rights under international law, where States have a duty to protect and promote those rights for an individual.”[[27]](#footnote-27) This reading of the human right to water recognizes an international (trans-state) obligation on all governments signed to the UN.

**Values for Supporters of the Right to Water:**

Those who see water as a human right establish their view through a lens of three main values. The first value is access to safe and clean drinking water. “The right to water clearly falls within the category of guarantees essential for securing an adequate standard of living, particularly since it is one of the most fundamental conditions for survival.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The second value is to preserve the limited natural resource. “Water is a limited natural resource and a public good fundamental for life and health. The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights.”[[29]](#footnote-29) The third value is to protect the public good for today and future generations. “Water should be treated as a social and cultural good, and not primarily as an economic good. The manner of the realization of the right to water must also be sustainable, ensuring that the right can be realized for present and future generations.”[[30]](#footnote-30) These three values are the foundation for those advocating for the recognition of water as a human right and not a commodity. Those advocating for the human right to water do so by asking for these values to be realized through the requirement of States to protect their citizen’s access through legal recognition of the right to water. This includes he management of third-party (corporate) influence on the natural state of water within the State’s borders. These requirements are justified through the inherent, fundamentalist argument of human survival. As for bringing this recognition from a desire into actuality, the right to water crowd has been less successful and remains fervently in favor of compulsory adherence to the UN declaration on human rights. Some of the concepts they envision are clean water acts for all Nations. They believe clean water acts are fundamental to guaranteeing access to safe, clean water for all people. As for the third-party players (corporations), the right to water crowd foresees compulsory participation within the confines of the human right to water declaration and strong oversight by the nation in which these third-party players are operating. Some of the most effective ways this crowd foresees these ideas being protected is through enforcement of water as a public good by way of financial, technological, and social mechanisms.

**Water Rights:**

Earlier in this paper the example of bottling of water was used to differentiate between how water can be viewed as a commodity or as a public good. In order for the argument of water as a commodity to have any grounding then it must be viewed as property. In other words, water is a separate entity bundled within the purchase of a piece of physical property. This means an individual can sell the water on their land just as they can sell the land itself. This bundling and separating of property rights allows for the owner of property to differentiate between the water on the land and the land itself. For the water rights crowd their value lies in the recognition of water under state law as a property right. This legitimizes their ability to buy and sell their product. This crowd does not see the natural fluidity of water as a problem. Unlike physical property water travels across land and keeping the same water that was on the land when purchased is impossible. Those advocating for water to be recognized as a commodity believe its natural fluidity compliments the market and incentivizes more people to buy and sell. It is already moving when it is in its natural state, so they are not doing anything unnatural when they sell their water rights to others. The water rights crowd sees the fluid nature of water as making the ownership interdependent on time and place. Meaning when the water is present on your land then it is the property of the land owner, unless they relinquish their ownership rights to another.

These values are idealized in a variety of ways. The first and most significant way is that the owner of the water right has the same protections as other property rights. Each country treats water rights differently, but being that the water rights crowd is loudest and primarily located in the global north, it can be assumed those protections are similar to the protections found in the United States. Due to the high cost and laborious challenges of capturing water in its natural state, they claim fluidity as an equalizer. Unlike the right to water crowd, this ideology is the dominant view across the global north. They argue that the law already protects water as property and changing it would compromise the ownership of citizen’s private property.[[31]](#footnote-31) As for regulation, the licensing and selling of water is a private transaction. This idea of privatization circles back to the claim that water should be protected like all other property. They see the only regulation needed is that concerning the legality of eh transaction and should be conducted by the parties involved, just as is done when buying and selling the physical land. One of the most crucial points tout by those advocating for water to remain a commodity is the belief that taking away water rights has the possibility of endangering personal investment. Whether those investments are related to financial gains or human need does not seem to matter rather it is the loss of value by the owner which draws the most critique.

These two ideologies collide on many different points. In this section an analysis of their disjuncture is conducted in order to foresee the direction for future discourses surrounding water. The recognition of water both as a commodity or a right instantaneously politicizes what was before a natural resource. This is not to say water was not controversial before these two ideologies took root. On the contrary, water has always been a subject of contention whenever there was too much or too little of it. The politicization of the issue happened when water was recognized as having property rights. The politicization of water directly interferes with the UN declaration:

“Acknowledge the importance of equitable access to safe and clean

drinking water and sanitation as an integral component of the

realization of all human rights, reaffirming the responsibility of States

for the promotion and protection of all human rights, which are

universal, interdependent and interrelated, and must be treated

globally, in a fair and equal manner.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

Being that the politically dominant view is that of the water rights crowd and that many nations already have laws that recognize and protect water rights, it is impossible to have a transformation in the water discourse without a change in legal statutes. This means as it stands currently not only are there two ideologies in direct opposition of each other, but on an international level, many member states of the UN are in violation of the human right to water declaration. Take the international violation in mind, pretend for a moment that the UN did not exist making this violation a moot point. Let us consider the economic element of these discourses on water. The right to water crowd does not condemn profit-making outright. They are concerned with the “equitable access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as an integral component” of human existence. Any uses that compromise the equitable access to water and sanitation are in violation of their core claims, but the profit-making is merely a product of unequitable access and not the cause. A concept clearly articulated by the right to water crowd is that the nation-state has an obligation to oversee the equitable access to water and sanitation. They say “water, and water facilities and services, must be affordable for all. The direct and indirect costs and charges associated with securing water must be affordable, and must not compromise or threaten the realization of other (human) rights.”[[33]](#footnote-33) Here the right to water crowd goes so far as to say “affordable,” not free of charge. To exemplify this point a recent report by the World Bank highlighted the imbalance of priorities in our interconnected existence. More people in India have access to cellphones than clean sanitation.[[34]](#footnote-34) This is a failure of priority making for the government of India on behalf of their citizenry. Access is the key word. Rejecting the notion of ‘free’ and embracing the notion of ‘access’ seems to allow some room for the conflicting ideologies to collide. It is conceivable the water rights crowd could counter with the example of bottled water. Meaning bottled water is not necessarily meant for survival, but rather a product of the pervasive convenience culture of the 21st century. Beyond a question of survival and economics, bottled water is also an environmental issue. Bottling water has a negative effect on providing access to affordable drinking water. The reality is the argument of convenience, as the bottled water corporations will make, was realistically the only reason for capturing and bottling water, then access would not be a question. The reality of bottling water has far more to do with commercializing a limited public resource with the sole intention of making a profit, not providing a service. Take for instance the Brazilian population’s relationship with Coca-Cola. A Brazilian citizen consumes five times as much Cola per day compared to water, due to the significantly stratified costs between bottled water and bottled cola. In 2012, Coca-Cola announced its expansion strategy for the next five years will include spending 7.6 billion dollars in Brazil to further the consumption of the already #1 choice of the population, carbonated cola.[[35]](#footnote-35) This is not the only example of how the economic incentives to bottling water have negative effects across the globe, but it is an outstanding example of how profit-making can manipulate access to water.

As for the notion that water should be a commercial good, take into consideration the conditions declared by the right to water crowd:

“The right to water contains both freedoms and entitlements. The freedoms include the right to maintain access to existing water supplies necessary for the right to water, and the right to be free from interference, such as the right to be free from arbitrary disconnections or contamination of water supplies. By contrast, the entitlements include the right to a system of water supply and management that provides equality of opportunity for people to enjoy the right to water.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

As illustrated by the Brazilian example, the commercialization of water takes away more than the “freedoms and entitlements” described above. The commercialization of water alters the social and cultural practices of the population who is now forced to purchase this new commodity at unattainable prices. Water is thrown into the marketplace as an equivalent option regardless of its relationship to human survival or limits on availability. Allowing for the advertisement and commercialization of water detracts from its inherent nature and it relationship to human existence. By commercializing water and making it an economic good, corporations have been granted the right to sell and make a profit on one of the most fundamental elements necessary for human survival.

**Conclusion:**

A group of scholars who self-identify as Futurists have been advocating for deeper, longer focused planning. They think long-range strategic planning for social, economic, government, environment and every other facet of the futures are useful in creating a desirable world for ourselves and future generations.[[37]](#footnote-37) These scholars focus their research on identifying issues which are just appearing on the horizon and which pose significant challenges to the current way of life on planet earth. As you can imagine, water and the ability to access it has been a hotly debated topic for these academics. One such academic, James Dator, has pondered the challenges before us and warned that humans have ignored many signs of a fracturing environmental system and have instead focused primarily on immediate gratifications to the market. Dr. Dator uses the compelling analogy of a tsunami and surfing this massive wave of change instead of paddling against it. He says:

“The sad thing is that these tsunamis have been on the horizon for a very

long time. Futurists…have been trying to alert people to them…for many

years, with little success, I regret to say. In the meantime, not only have

they roared closer and closer, thus getting bigger and bigger, and harder

and harder to surf satisfactorily, but their intensity and danger has been

exacerbated not only by our neglect, but also by policies we have purposely

followed which have made them much worse than they should be.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

The culminating argument of this paper is summed up in Dr. Dator’s analysis of the growing tsunami and supporting governmental policies which build up the commercialization of a natural resource such as water. As the years roll forward and generations begin to accept the commodification of natural resources as the norm, a more powerful and pressing tsunami builds in the face of those advocating for equitable access to these resources. The longer the dominant ideology of water rights prevails and the more ingrained commodification becomes in the social imaginaries of current and future generations the harder it will be to change the policies and practices surrounding access to natural resources. The intention of this paper is not to outline a solution to the issue of commodification of natural resources, but it does add another voice and critical perspective to the tsunami building in strength and speed headed directly for all inhabitants of the globe.

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3. “WG1AR5\_SPM\_FINAL.pdf.” Accessed April 9, 2014. http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/report/WG1AR5\_SPM\_FINAL.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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