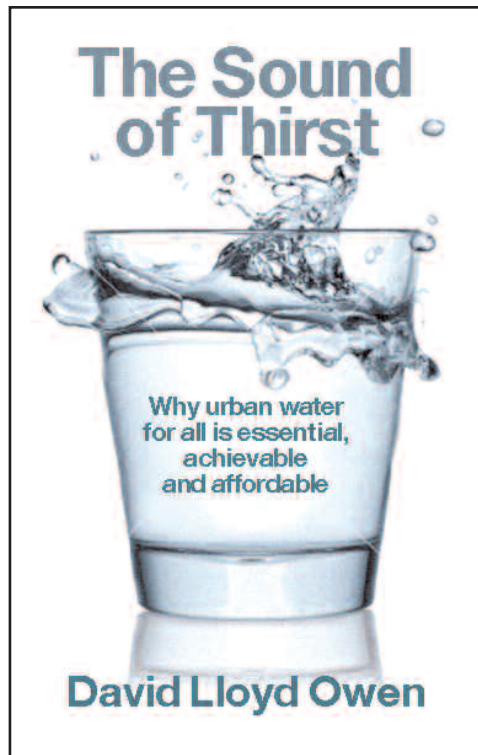

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Water, water, everywhere...
Or is it?

David Lloyd Owen explains why urban water and sanitation for all is essential, achievable and affordable.



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The Sound of Thirst explains the urgency of taking water and wastewater seriously in an age where good management and political will are chronically scarce. This book presents a moral, economic and sustainable case for financing the many trillions of pounds of work needed worldwide in the coming decades to ensure safe water for all – and a cleaner earth.

Leaving behind the old lie that water should be free, *The Sound of Thirst* explores how the human right to water is about empowering people to make reasoned choices about their destiny – and how mismanagement and political expediency have contributed to global inequality.

Written by a leading water consultant, *The Sound of Thirst* will appeal to anybody looking to uncover the realities of our common future which lie behind the rhetoric.

In an era of almost universal mobile communications, towns and cities worldwide make do with patchy water and sewerage connections and erratic services. Why is it that the utilities which ought to serve our most essential needs are the most neglected? From Scarra Brae in the Orkneys to the Indus Valley in Pakistan, ancient societies enjoyed household water and sewerage services; something we are meant to believe is unattainable for city dwellers in developing countries today.

The Sound of Thirst looks at how few people actually have access to safe water and sanitation rather than the already unimpressive official connection figures and takes this on to create a unique insight into areas such as sewage treatment, officially overlooked but essential for maintaining the health of rivers and people alike. Instead of speculating about coverage and costs, hard numbers are provided and hard questions are asked.

The Sound of Thirst challenges the patronising assumptions that universal access is the prerogative of the wealthy and the developed economies and it is unaffordable elsewhere. The world depends on these services for development. Indeed, universal and sustainable access is one of the drivers behind real economic development. Stable, accountable and democratic societies are often connected societies. The water cycle provides priceless services to humanity, it has a value and it needs to be valued. Water services also need to be properly valued.

Misapprehensions about water scarcity are confronted; they obscure the real challenge in sustaining our water resources which is about demoralised management and under-financed utilities along with an even scarcer political will to change things. The sheer scale of population growth and urbanisation is overwhelming conventional supply-led water management. Far from progressing, real access to water and sanitation, which means actual household access to a reliable supply of safe drinking water and household sewerage are in danger of falling back.

The historic achievements of Hugh Myddleton and Joseph Bazalgette show how safe water and sewerage transformed London's public health. Engineers and scientists have long been engaged in a battle of wills against ignorance and prejudice. This started with persuading politicians that disease is carried in water and sewage spreads infections and continues to this day on fronts ranging from climate change denial to a continued refusal to take universal access seriously, let alone adequate sewage treatment.

Politicians, policy makers, regulators and special interest groups need to discover what people want rather than what they consider is best for them. Looking at the development of mobile phones in the developing world and reflecting on the bottled water boom, *The Sound of Thirst* shows how people across the world excel in making rational decisions about spending their money when they are empowered to and they want to do the same when it comes to getting household water services.

Many of our problems arise from a deadly complacency that allows politicians and activists to demand that water is meant to be free and that only governments can be allowed to manage it. What does 'free' water really mean? The unconnected poor pay more for their water than the wealthy do, not only does it actually cost more, but it also taxes their time and health. When utilities are an arm of local politics, they serve local politicians and their connected elites rather than local people.

The Sound of Thirst explores why little has been done to attain universal water services let alone sustaining the integrity of the water cycle and how we can address this. The scope for good practice, innovation and funding and delivering affordable services is immense. It is also eminently achievable when governments, regulators, utilities and the public work together. *The Sound of Thirst* puts water and wastewater management challenges in their global context and suggests realistic ways we can address them.



David Lloyd Owen has been following the business of water and sewerage management for 23 years, looking at how policy, environmental standards and regulation affect the way we regard the water cycle. David runs Envisager, a consultancy firm that advises companies, financiers, governments and multilateral institutions about water policy, finance, environmental regulation, the role of the private sector in service provision and corporate strategy. David is a member of the Advisory Board for the Pictet Funds Water Fund and XPV Capital's Water Fund and is advisor to the Board of Bluewater Bio along with being an Ambassador for Pump Aid.

David read Environmental Biology at Liverpool, has a DPhil in Applied Ecology from Oxford, and is a Chartered Environmentalist (MIEEM, CEnv) and Geographer (FRGS, CGeog). David has written six books on water finance, markets and management including 13 editions of the 'Pinsent Masons Water Yearbook' along with a monthly column for Global Water Intelligence and a wide variety of articles and peer-reviewed papers. He lives on a farm in west Wales with his family and animals wild and tame.

David will be launching *The Sound of Thirst* and giving a lecture at the *Telegraph Hay Festival 2012*.

For any further information, to arrange an interview with David, or commission a linked article, please contact Claire Houguez, Marketing Officer at Parthian Books: claire_parthian@ymail.com / 01792 606605

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