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*Political ecology of small things: the curious case of domestic water purifiers in Bhuj city, Gujarat, India*

A paradox lies at the heart of India's urban water supply. The 2018 national budget allocated 11 billion USD for urban water supply projects. In parallel, the market for domestic water purifiers, mostly using reverse osmosis (i.e., RO) technology, is currently valued at 1.1 billion USD and is growing at 15-20%. This previously unresearched phenomenon, highlights a critical gap in the field of Urban Political Ecology (UPE) – namely, water quality. UPE has produced a rich volume of work on neoliberalisation of centralized water supply technologies, and questions of access, affordability, governance and justice. The interrogation of *how* water quality animates these issues has been limited.

My research in the small city of Bhuj, in the state of Gujarat in India, explores the rising popularity of RO-based water purifiers among the city's middle classes - a pan Indian phenomenon. These small technologies fundamentally alter the taste of 'hard' water through the removal of minerals creating an enduring preference for treated water. This, as I show, it is an indicator of a *parasitical* form of urban water privatisation. One that profiteers neither through control of public infrastructure or the setting up of parallel supply, but by offering a techno-fix to weakened public services. My research shows how small technologies tend to close the public debate on urban water quality in the Global South. It disconnects the middle-classes from health risks of consuming poor-quality public water supply. This works to further normalize indifference towards inequity and differentiated water access in uneven urban landscapes.