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Alternative Ways of Organising Public Services and Work in the Public Sector: What Role for Public-Public Partnerships?

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Die DFG-KollegforscherInnengruppe „Landnahme, Beschleunigung, Aktivierung. Dynamik und (De-) Stabilisierung moderner Wachstumsgesellschaften“ – kurz: „Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften“ – setzt an der soziologischen Diagnose multipler gesellschaftlicher Umbruchs- und Krisenphänomene an, die in ihrer Gesamtheit das überkommene Wachstumsregime moderner Gesellschaften in Frage stellen. Die strukturellen Dynamisierungsimperative der kapitalistischen Moderne stehen heute selbst zur Disposition: Die Steigerungslogik fortwährender Landnahmen, Beschleunigungen und Aktivierungen bringt weltweit historisch neuartige Gefährdungen der ökonomischen, ökologischen und sozialen Reproduktion hervor. Einen Gegenstand in Veränderung – die moderne Wachstumsgesellschaft – vor Augen, zielt das Kolleg auf die Entwicklung von wissenschaftlichen Arbeitsweisen und auf eine Praxis des kritischen Dialogs, mittels derer der übliche Rahmen hochgradig individualisierter oder aber projektförmig beschränkter Forschung überschritten werden kann. Fellows aus dem In- und Ausland suchen gemeinsam mit der Jenaer Kollegsgruppe nach einem Verständnis gegenwärtiger Transformationsprozesse, um soziologische Expertise in jene gesellschaftliche Frage einzubringen, die nicht nur die europäische Öffentlichkeit in den nächsten Jahren bewegen wird: Lassen sich moderne Gesellschaften auch anders stabilisieren als über wirtschaftliches Wachstum?

Die Kolleg-ForscherInnengruppe zum Thema Landnahme, Beschleunigung, Aktivierung und (De-)Stabilisierung moderner Wachstumsgesellschaften wird gefördert von der DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Edlira Xhafa

Alternative Ways of Organising Public Services and Work in the Public Sector: What Role for Public-Public Partnerships?

Abstract

This paper engages with the issue of strategies towards new visions of public services and alternative ways of organising public services and work in the public sector. Reflecting on the need to ground visions of future public services in the existing practices and experiments, the author uses the "publicness" concept as a vision inspired by, and inspiring, the ongoing struggles and initiatives to defend and transform public services. In this context, the paper analyses the role of Public-Public Partnerships (PuPs), which have emerged as a trade union response to privatisation and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), in enhancing some of the key dimensions of the "publicness" concept, namely: equity and efficiency; participation and accountability; and solidarity and (political, social, financial and environmental) sustainability. In conclusion, the author argues that although fragile and facing enormous challenges, participatory PuPs represent "actually existing" forms of resistance, which by pursuing goals of enhancing the "publicness" of public services, contribute at building and strengthening new visions of public services and serve as spaces for the emergence of alternative ways of organising public services and work in the public sector.

Zusammenfassung

Das Papier befasst sich mit der Frage nach Strategien für neue Visionen von öffentlichen Dienstleistungen und alternativen Möglichkeiten zur Organisation öffentlicher Dienstleistungen und Arbeit im öffentlichen Sektor. Die Notwendigkeit reflektierend, dass Zukunftsvisionen von öffentlichen Dienstleistungen in existierenden Praktiken und Experimenten gründen müssen, benutzt die Autorin das Konzept von „Öffentlichkeit" als Vision, die von bestehenden Auseinandersetzungen und Initiativen um die Verteidigung und Neugestaltung öffentlicher Dienstleistungen inspiriert wird und diese gleichzeitig inspiriert. In diesem Kontext analysiert das Papier den Beitrag von Public-Public Partnerships (PuPs), die als Antwort der Gewerkschaften auf Privatisierung und Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) entstanden sind, zur Hervorhebung einiger zentraler Dimensionen des Konzepts der „Öffentlichkeit", namentlich: Gerechtigkeit und Effizienz, Teilhabe und Rechenschaft sowie Solidarität und (politische, soziale, finanzielle und ökologische) Nachhaltigkeit. Zum Abschluss argumentiert die Autorin, dass, obwohl sie zerbrechlich sind und sich großen Herausforderungen gegenübersehen, partizipative PuPs eine „tatsächlich existierende" Form von Widerstand repräsentieren, die dadurch, dass sie das Ziel verfolgen, die „Öffentlichkeit" öffentlicher Dienstleistungen hervorzuheben, dazu beitragen, neue Visionen von öffentlichen Dienstleistungen aufzubauen und zu stärken und als Raum für das Hervorbringen von alternativen Möglichkeiten zur Organisation von öffentlichen Dienstleistungen und Arbeit im öffentlichen Sektor zu fungieren.

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Contents

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1. The future of public services: visions and strategies

Expanding public services is certainly not a mainstream argument in the current era of public budgets austerity. However, as environmental crisis, growing inequality and social exclusion have become more pressing issues, there has been more emphasis on the critical role of public services in mitigating the disastrous impact of these issues and in enhancing social cohesion and solidarity. Such understanding is reflected also in the debates about post-growth societies, which recognise that public services are among those sectors that would still need to expand, even in the global North, after a general turn away from capitalist growth. These debates emphasise the strategic importance of public services in the transition from a paradigm of productivity to one of collective well-being (ESPU and ETUI, 2012: 7) and life satisfaction. Hence, expanding public services requires moving beyond a society that is obsessed with "always more" growth, work and desires and striving for 'more balanced working, family and political lives' (Jany-Catrice, cited in ESPU and ETUI, 2012: 14).

The centrality of a decent work/life balance (productive/reproductive work) in the debate on life quality and well-being calls for construct 'a new and sustainable mode of reproduction' which 'must give collective consumption priority over individual consumption' (Hermann and Mahnkopf, 2010: 324). This suggests a need to construct 'a new distribution of socially necessary work not through ever extension of the commodity-form of wage labour, but through an extension of collective publicly financed activities oriented to efficiency for the contribution of human development' (Candeias, 2007: 11). Funded by taxation, public services are available regardless of individual purchasing power, playing in this way an important equalising role (Beer, cited in EPSU and ETUI, 2012: 11) in otherwise increasingly unequal societies. Here the role of the state is critical 'in encouraging redistributive models of resource management, progressive social relations and redistribution' (Bakker, 2007: 445).

The expansion of public services has the potential to set in motion a set of changes which can lead to democratisation of the state and broader societal transformations. To the extent that social services are provided 'by public institutions in pursuit of public interest rather than of the interest of maximizing profits' (Altvater, 2004, cited in ibid: 315), they can lead to 'relative decommodification' which 'critically shapes expectations, survival strategies and, hence, the mode of living of citizens in capitalist societies' (Hermann and Mahnkopf, 2010: 315). In this connection, framing access to public services, such as education, as a social right which makes possible the development of citizen's personal capacities in terms of 'democratic consciousness and social and political commitment' to face 'collective challenges' of society rather than pursuing individual interests as market players (ibid: 325) could be a way of moving away from individualistic rights.

At the same time, the public sector can be utilised to develop new products, production technologies and services which may be one of the strategies of dealing with the environmental crisis (ibid: 324). One obvious example would be the expansion of public mass transport, given that public transport is responsible for only 5-10% of the greenhouse emissions produced by cars (The Bullet, 2012). Also, the expansion of high quality public services necessitates an increase in the number of public sector

workers and high quality jobs at the same time. To this end, the expansion of the public sector can enhance employment opportunities by providing high quality jobs and serve as a benchmark for employment and working conditions for the private sector (Hermann and Mahnkopf, 2010: 323). Hence, the public sector with its 'considerable bargaining power as contractor, as employer, and as trend-setter and creator of new communicative infrastructure' can become a major economic player transforming the world of work, economy and society (Wainwright, 2012b: 4).

Finally, the planning and coordination involved in building a strong public sector could bring more stability into market-mediated economies and perhaps even contribute toward transcending these economies (Hermann and Mahnkopf, 2010: 323). One important step towards such a goal could be the development of new participatory mechanisms in public services, which can spread to other spheres of economy and society and which can challenge the limits of representative democracy (ibid: 325).

In the light of the above, the expansion of public services necessitates going beyond "more of the same" and involves open debates about new visions for the future of public services and alternative ways of organising public services and work in the public sector. Part and parcel of these debates is the need to discuss concrete strategies which create spaces for the emergence of these alternative models of public services.

Visions of alternative public services: the "publicness" debate

While struggling to resist the commodification and commercialisation of public services, people's movements and workers are experimenting on "new" forms of organising public services, which build on the strength of, and indeed bridge, the "northern past" public-sector models and "southern future" models of participatory democracy (Hall, 2005: 15 and 21). These struggles represent what Wainwright calls examples of "transformative resistance", which provide 'a practical (and sometimes theoretical) vision of state-owned public services that are often very different from the status quo, involving, for example, new forms of worker and citizen participation' (2012a: 72). Hence, grounding the visions of the future public services in the existing practices and experiments necessitates establishing 'a "dialogue" between the theoretical and political "alternative" narratives and "actually existing" social and economic people's initiatives' (Serrano and Xhafa, 2012: 288). Reflecting on these new forms means, then, to reflect on visions of the future public services.

The struggles for defending and transforming public services have built on the critique[1] of both state-owned and privatised public services utilities and have been framed around concepts of "public", "publicness" and "public ethos". While the term "public" in the global North usually implies "state" forms of ownership, in the South, the fact that utilities may be state-owned and operated does not break the

[1] On the one hand, there is a clear analysis of the limitations of traditional public sector institutions: bureaucratic, hierarchical, at times inefficient, exclusive and corrupted, and hardly 'designed to realise the creativity of labour in the process of serving their fellow citizens' (Wainwright, 2012: 83). On the other hand, for-profit models of delivering public services have often benefited private operators at the expense of access, quality, transparency and accountability of services, and quality of jobs and employment for public sector workers.

barriers that limit access to services for the poor (Spronk et al., 2012: 445). In many countries in the South, "public" services 'are limited to the elite', or in other words only to that subset of population 'identified as full citizens, with the full set of rights and entitlements that one might expect' (Bakker, 2008: 239). Hence, discussions about "publicness" go beyond state-ownership as 'public means much more than the State' (Munoz, cited in TNI and CEO, 2006: 7) and speaking of "publicness" means going 'far beyond simply public ownership or management by public employees' (Balanyá et al., 2005: 260).

If a key quality of "publicness" is 'the quality of being public and belonging to the community' (Balanyá et al., 2005: 260), then bringing the debate on "publicness" into the debate on public services means a radical redefinition of the vision of public services in terms of broader 'societal objectives, including democracy, environmental sustainability and human security' (ibid). It also means direct involvement of citizens to ensure that the philosophy of serving to public needs is internalised and consolidated, a concept which Balanyá et al. label "progressive publicness" (ibid). For Cann, "publicness" contains a range of elements pertinent to different actors in the system: 'taking pride in one's work (workers), valuing staff (management and users), transparency and accountability (policy makers), and community participation' (2007, cited in McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 38).

The term "public ethos", too, although used very often in the literature, is not always clearly defined. Expressions of "public ethos" include: a commitment to serve the population (TNI & CEO, 2006: 9); work that 'is felt to have some intrinsic meaning' (Huws: 2012: 78); orienting services towards people, making them responsive and accountable to communities, and overcoming bureaucratic and technocratic tendencies of public organisation (TNI & CEO: 2006: 5); being a determining factor in the 'defence of public-oriented restructuring' (Malaluan, 2012: 278); and defending or reclaiming the public ethos in government as a way of defending the public in the everyday government policy (ibid: 281). At other times it is presented more in terms of the way privatisation can lead to 'the erosion of public ethos' (Malaluan, 2012: 278); and corporatisation 'can dangerously undermine the public ethos' (Chavez, 2012b: 470). In all these references, there is a clear understanding that privatisation (and PPPs) erodes public ethos and that public ethos is itself a commitment of public sector organisations to pursue goals of "publicness". Given the way in which public ethos is referred to in the literature, it would be safe to argue that conceptualisations of "publicness" seem to encompass also the concept of "public ethos".

The concept of "publicness" emerges out of these debates as a vision(s) for the future of public services and the way they are organised and is captured in a number of key elements or dimensions, namely: equity and efficiency, participation and accountability, and solidarity and (political, social, financial and environmental) sustainability. These elements make the "publicness" concept more operationable and allow us to analyse and assess the extent to which various initiatives and experiments of transforming public services are able to enhance the "publicness" of these services and, in the process, introduce alternative ways of organising public services and work in the public sector.

Focus of the research: the question of strategies

Debates about visions of future public services and alternative ways of organising services and work necessitate a serious engagement with the question of strategies. This research paper focuses on a range of "actually existing" initiatives, generally known as Public-Public Partnerships (PuPs). Despite a much older history, PuPs have received much attention, in the last decade or so, for their role in supporting capacity building, restructuring and democratization of public utilities, but also for the fact that they are often proposed by trade unions as alternatives to privatisation and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). While PuPs cover a broad range of partnerships, the main focus here will be on those PuPs which are initiated by or involve trade unions, communities and citizens. Conditioned by the dominance of PuPs in the water sector[2] and the availability of the literature, this research paper is clearly biased in favour of water PuPs.

This research paper does not aim at discussing the question of alternative public services per se, but of strategies towards new visions for public services and alternative ways of organising public services and work. Hence, by establishing a "dialogue" between the vision of "publicness" and PuPs, the paper analyses the role of PuPs as a strategy for enhancing the "publicness" of public services and for creating the conditions for the emergence of new ways of organizing public services and work in the public sector.

What follows is an overview on PuPs which should help to better understand the various forms of PuPs (part 2); an analysis and assessment of the way PuPs perform in relation to some of the key elements of "publicness", namely: equity and efficiency, participation and accountability, and solidarity and (political, social, financial and environmental) sustainability (part 3-5); and a discussion of some of the new forms of organising public services and work emerging through PuPs (part 6). Finally, the conclusions (part 7) highlight some of the main findings of this paper related to the contribution of PuPs in the debates about visions of the future of public services.

2. Understanding Public-Public Partnerships

While the literature on PuPs started to emerge in the early 2000s, some forms of PuPs such as the partnership of Lilongwe, Malawi and the United Kingdom's (UK) Severn Trent, before UK water companies were privatised, were present as early as the 1980s (Hall et al., 2005). In fact, the idea of public partnerships itself seems to have been borrowed from the concept of city "twinning", a mode of fostering the development of intercultural ties that emerged after World War II, and the need to find alternatives to the wave of water privatisation across the world in the 1980s and 1990s (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 2). The term has also been used as an alternative to the surge of PPPs. Indeed, in

[2] Hall et al. have identified more than 130 water PuPs operating in around 70 countries (2009).

response to the UN resolution declaring the right to water a human right, the global union federation of public sector workers, Public Services International (PSI), has declared PuPs its alternative to PPPs (PSI, undated).

What are PuPs?

The PSI's research unit (PSIRU) has provided the ground work on defining PuPs and almost all research done on PuPs has made use of that definitional work, at times adjusting and/or expanding it. According to PSIRU there are two main definitions of PuPs: a narrow definition which considers PuPs as partnerships 'between public authorities of the same type and level (usually inter-municipal consortia)' or 'between different types or levels of public authorities' (provincial and local authorities), and a broader definition which includes 'partnerships between public authorities (government) and any part or member of the general public', such as NGOs, community organisations and trade unions (Hall et al., 2005: 4).

Building on a broader definition of PuPs and based on the type of partners involved in partnerships, Hall et al. have grouped PuPs into four main categories (2005: 5-6 & 12):

(a) Partnerships with other public authorities, which include PuPs in their narrowest definition, are often found in Europe and North America and usually involve water and energy utilities. They may occur between public authorities of the same type and level or between different types and levels. The first group may cover examples such as councils in the UK using a shared audit internal service; municipal and health authorities pooling their budgets in common areas of social services responsibility; and merging of buildings, refuse collection and vehicle-maintenance departments among neighbouring municipalities. The second group covers partnerships among public authorities of different levels, such as housing partnerships among the government and municipalities in declining communities in Pennsylvania/USA. A third group of partnerships in this category includes partnerships among different public authorities, such as municipalities and health authorities in social services in the UK cooperating around children's services and social care.

(b) Partnerships with communities, NGOs and trade unions give communities some role in managing or even delivering service and to trade unions a role in restructuring public utilities. The former includes examples, such as the partnership of the national bulk water company Ghana Water Company Ltd. with six area committees in Savelugu responsible for collecting tariffs and reporting faults to the district assembly[3]. An example of the latter would be the partnership of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) and the parastatal water supply company Rand Water to develop the capacities of peri-urban municipalities of Odi and Harrismith to provide water services.

[3] Such partnership was supported by international NGOs and UNICEF.

(c) Development partnerships resemble the practice of twinning noted above, which in the last decades has evolved to produce specific economic and social benefits. This category may include partnerships between a public authority from a higher income country and a public authority from a lower income country aiming at assisting development in the country with lower incomes.

(d) International associations include partnerships among public authorities from different countries and public authorities from neighbouring countries, such as cross-border cooperation partnership supported by EU funds; the twinning arrangements among neighbouring countries with a shared history in Central and Eastern Europe; or the cooperation of public authorities from different countries to address common issues, such as the Agenda 21 Network.

The Transnational Institute (TNI) and the Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), too, differentiate between partnerships restricted to utilities also known as Public Utility Partnerships or Public Operator Partnerships, and broader partnerships which involve academic institutions, NGOs and any other actor on a non-profit basis (2006: 8). PuPs may cover a range of activities, such as:

- Reforming (and democratising) decision-making and planning;
- Institutional and human capacity building (including training of managers and workers to boost capacity and public sector ethos: including integrity, equity, clarity, accountability, transparency, openness, cooperation, and evaluation);
- Managerial consulting, training and capacity building;
- Administrative support (including working conditions, salaries, benefits, and supervision of any outside contracting);
- Financial planning, social tariff setting (differential for domestic, industrial, commercial, institutional, and agricultural uses), billing, and customer service and collection and assistance in locating available finance;
- Maintenance (including repair and replacement of equipment);
- Leakage control and other sustainability measures;
- Advice and other assistance in operational infrastructure and/or project design assistance in service delivery;
- Construction;
- Operation;
- Expansion of coverage; and
- Information technology. (ibid)

Expanding on the definitional work of PSIRU and TNI and CEO, Boag and McDonald provide a typology of PuPs in the water sector based on a spatial-geographical scale (Table 1).

Table 1. Typology of PUP partnership types.

		Spatial-geographical scale		
		Intra-state (domestic partnerships)	Inter-state (North-North or South-South)	Developmental (North-South)
Organisational Scale	Public authority-public authority	e.g. municipal water provider and national water department	e.g. national water departments from two different countries	e.g. municipal water provider in the South and a municipal water provider in the North
	Public authority-non-state entity	e.g. municipal water provider and a trade union	e.g. national water department and an NGO from another country	e.g. municipal water provider in the South and a union in the North
	Non-state entity-non-state entity	e.g. a water cooperative and an NGO in the same municipality	e.g. unions from two different countries	e.g. an NGO in the North working with a community group in the South
	Beyond twinning: multi-partnerships	e.g. a municipal water provider working with a local union and a local community group	e.g. a regional water utility working with more than one national government	e.g. a municipal water provider in the South working with an international NGO and a municipal government in the North

Source: Boag and McDonald, 2010: 4-5

The authors identify three types of PuPs along the spatial-geographical scale: intra-state or domestic partnerships; inter-state which could be North-North or South-South partnerships; and developmental or North-South partnerships. South-South and North-North partnerships are established especially among partners that share similar economic conditions and face similar constraints and challenges (Miranda, 2007, cited in Boag and McDonald, 2010: 4). In contrast, developmental partnerships, which are the oldest forms of twinning, are more of a donor-recipient relationship in which operators from the global South seek to benefit from the expertise, and perhaps resources, of operators in the global North in order to improve their infrastructure and capacity (ibid: 4 and 8). There is, however, a potential for benefit of the northern operator too, such as cultural exchange and information sharing.

Along the organisational scale axes, Boag and McDonald identify four main categories of partnerships: between public authorities; between public authorities and non-state entities; between non-state entities; and multi-partnerships which include several types of relationships and authorities. As Table 1 shows, all these categories can occur along the three spatial scales elaborated above. The first category, inter-municipality partnerships, is the most common one and it occurs within and between various levels of government within a country or across the borders. In contrast to "government PuPs", Boag and McDonald note that while all state/non-state partnerships occur at the intra-state level, state/trade union partnerships have a better chance of expanding to a national or international scale with the support of big unions. Partnerships between non-state entities are highly localised, although in some cases it has been possible to build partnerships across borders. The category of multi-partnerships, although a

natural extension of the PuPs concept, is less elaborated in the literature and needs to be treated as a separate category (ibid).

Definitional issues: Broad or narrow PuPs?

The work on PuPs is perhaps the best known and the more rigorous part of the literature on alternatives (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 1). However, with the exception of a general consensus that PuPs exclude any partnership with the private sector, the term remains somewhat obscure. In the literature, it is not always explicitly defined beyond the agreement on 'non-privateness'. It is therefore criticized as being incomplete and/or imprecise (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 2), suffering from lack of consistency and for its meaning depending on the context (Hall et al., 2005: 2). Definitional issues with PuPs may well reflect the context in which PuPs have emerged: rather than an 'organic expression of non-commercialised innovations on the ground', the term PuPs has been used mainly to suggest the existence of alternatives to privatisation and failed state operators (Hall, 2000, cited in Boag and McDonald, 2010: 3).

A broad definition of PuPs serving as an umbrella for a range of partnerships and collaborations among public utilities, communities and trade unions appears quite frequently in the literature. Transnational Institute (TNI) and Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) see PuPs as 'an explicit attempt to re-configure conventional models of public service delivery by expanding the role of labour, community organizations and other public interest and government stakeholders in the planning, implementation and financing of services' (TNI & CEO, 2006: 2). The same definition of PuPs is also used by the African Networks for Health Research and Development (AFRO-NETS, 2004). Similarly, Davidson-Harden et al. consider as PuPs not only partnerships between government-run public utilities, but also those including community-based organisations, public sector trade unions and NGOs (2010: 31). Food and Water Watch also include partnerships 'between two municipal water providers, between a municipal agency and a national one, or between an agency and a union or nongovernmental organization within a country' in their definition of PuPs (2012: 1). Similarly, Phumpiu and Gustafsson define PuPs as involving authorities from the public sector, community organisations, consumer organisations, NGOs, trade unions and international associations, but excluding any private sector organisation (2008: 5).

The European Parliament, too, applies a broader definition of PuPs, which covers both twinning of public providers for the purpose of providing capacity building and technical support, and partnerships of state owned utilities with trade unions, communities and/or other non-private groups to both manage and deliver services (European Parliament, 2010: 2). In a spirit of public service ethos and solidarity, PuPs focus more 'on enabling better services' (ibid: vii). While many PuPs go under a variety of names such as 'municipal development partnerships' or 'public utility partnerships', 'there are likely to be many more domestic partnerships with CSOs [civil society organisations] and community groups which are not well documented internationally' (ibid: 2).

However, recently, some authors have argued in favour of a narrow definition of PuPs. In the last years, PSIRU has sought to use a definition of PUPs as 'simply a collaboration between two or more public authorities or organisations, based on solidarity, to improve the capacity and effectiveness of one partner in providing public water or sanitation services' (2009: 2). Bakker, too, uses a definition of PuPs as partnerships among 'public water utilities with expertise and resources (typically in large cities in the North)' and 'those in the South, or with smaller urban centres in the North' (Bakker, 2007: 445).

The reasons behind this shift are not discussed much in the literature, with the exception of Boag and McDonald, who have explicitly argued against a broad definition on PuPs, mainly as a response to the emergence of Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs) developed by the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) in 2006, and of debates on boundaries of "public" (2010: 13). With regard to the latter argument, the authors observe in the PuPs literature that the term public (water) services is equated with state ownership of facilities and resources (distinguishing here from the private sector ownership and management) and often expanded to include ownership by community groups and concepts of communal ownership (ibid, 2010: 13). Despite the distinction made between state and non-state actors, non-state actors 'are lumped together under the rubric of "public-public", unnecessarily blurring the lines between public and private spheres of interest and conflating different notions of public domain' (ibid, 2010: 13).

To address such confusion, the authors introduce a category of "non-profit-private" defined as 'any non-state, non-commercial organisation with an identifiable membership base (formal or otherwise) that operates on a non-profit basis in a limited geographical area and/or with a subset of end users, and willingly plays a role in one or more aspects of water service delivery' (ibid). This category includes community-based organisations, nongovernmental organisations, churches, foundations, social movements, and trade unions. According to the authors, 'although some groups of this category can be considered part of a larger "public domain" they are nonetheless representative of, or provide service to, a particular set of group interests and operate independently of the formal public sector' (ibid).

Taking out "non-profit-private" organisations from the category of PuPs, Boag and McDonald suggest a definition of PuPs in the water sector as a 'twinning arrangement with a stated non-profit motive that aims to improve water services in one or more of the partner regions and which includes only public partners' (2010: 4). Here, "public" is 'limited to state entities that are publicly owned, managed and financed, and subject to political control and oversight', such as 'government bodies and departments (at all levels of state), state utilities and parastatals, state development agencies (bilateral, multilateral) with a mandate to serve all residents in a given geographic area' and corporatised utilities (ibid: 17). To capture other non-commercial water service partnerships, which would have otherwise been under the PuPs category, the authors propose two other categories: "non-profit/non-profit partnership" (NPNPP) and "public/non profit partnerships". The former involves those partnerships where two or more non-profit sector agencies work together to deliver a service while the state is not significantly involved, and the latter involves partnerships among one or more public-sector agencies and one or more non-profit sector agencies to deliver a service (ibid).

Regarding the concern with WOPs, the authors themselves note that although similar to PuPs, there is a consensus that WOPs do not fall under PuPs category due to the fact that they [WOPs] explicitly include private sector operators in partnerships and have taken no issue with corporatisation (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 1-2). Moreover, 'despite the fact that WOPs are clearly modelled after PUPs, there is almost no reference to the original partnership model in any of the UNSGAB literature, including their most extensive report, Framework for Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance, published by UN-Habitat in 2007' (ibid).

The second set of concerns is hardly addressed by the new definition of PuPs proposed by Boag and McDonald. While their concerns over the concept of "public" are entirely legitimate, arguing for the exclusion of "non-profit-private" on the basis that the use of broader notion of the term 'shields us from the reality of creeping commercialisation in the public sector, and the existence of private interests in so-called PuPs' (2010: 17), is problematic for a number of reasons.

For one, as the authors themselves have argued, the term "public" may disguise processes of commercialisation in which public utilities are formally kept "in public hands", but are transformed in "business units" –separated from other state entities, distanced from elected officials, run as financially independent divisions, and hence expected to operate on a full cost-recovery basis by introducing fees and cost-reflective tariffs to cover the expenses (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 14). Commercialisation processes undermine and replace values of equity and affordability with objectives of efficiency, which may lead to changes in the managerial ethos as public utilities focus increasingly on short-term financial goals (ibid). This becomes even more problematic when such utilities engage in PuPs as they carry their "confused identity" in these partnerships and hence the concern that at times PuPs pave the way for commercialisation, if not privatisation (ibid: 15). In fact, according to Chavez, the electricity sector in Latin America region has seen many (narrow) PuPs 'where profit, not solidarity, seems to be the main motivation' (2012b: 479-480). It could even be argued that the chances of a partnership being corrupted by commercial motives of one partner may be limited by the participation of communities and workers. The case of Harrismith-Rand Water partnership, which involved workers union and the communities, seems to illustrate this point. Hall et al. argue that Rand Water's commercial objectives of expansion 'do not appear to have had a greater or more lasting impact than those of other partners' (2005: 25). Clearly, limiting the application of the term PuPs only to partnerships among two or more public sector agencies would not resolve the concern of commercialisation.

Including in the definition of "public" any other state agencies may also be problematic. In a recent piece entitled *Privatising other people's water – the contradictory policies of Netherlands, Sweden and Norway,* David Hall (2004) shows the way state aid agencies of these countries have been active in funding pro-privatisation programmes in developing countries. In fact, in some cases state agencies supporting PuPs have done so motivated by commercial interests. The example of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (and quasi-governmental agencies such as "Partners for Water") insisting to engage in projects abroad on a more commercial basis is quite revealing (TNI and CEO, 2006: 10).

If PuPs are to constitute an alternative to PPPs and privatisation more generally, they need to go beyond traditional state-owned public utilities and indeed engage seriously to overcome limitations, such as: 'inefficiencies, unresponsiveness, and in some cases endemic corruption' (Wainwright, 2013: 3), and lack of proper resources and capacities to deliver public services, especially in developing countries (Balanyá et al., 2005: 257). Contrary to the view of those pushing for privatisation, Hall argues that failures of the public sector in the global South do not originate from 'a problem with the public sector itself'; they reflect more 'a lack of democratic process in the public sector'[4] (Hall, 2005: 20). Thus, becoming an alternative to PPPs and privatisation more generally requires a serious engagement with critical issues of "publicness", among which the democratisation of public services' structures and processes to allow for a meaningful participation of citizens, communities and workers. Rather than treating these categories as external to the workings of the state, the emphasis should be to find ways of democratising the state through people's participation.

Finally, going for a narrow definition of PuPs seems to be one more example of a progressive and potentially inspiring term being abandoned despite evidence of the enormous potential that the involvement of trade unions, community organisations and other groups has in making PuPs meaningful alternatives to PPPs and privatisation. Indeed, as Davidson-Harden et al. argue: 'the sheer variety of partnership arrangements and objectives can make PUPs a flexible and powerful alternative to privatization' (2009: 31).

PuPs definitions for this research paper

Following Hall et al. (2005), this research uses a broad definition of PuPs, that is all those partnerships which exclude any private-for-profit operator and includes at least one state-owned utility. In this way, the research covers both twinning partnerships between public utilities or "narrow" PuPs; and partnerships between one of more public utilities, trade unions, community organisations, citizens' groups, and any other actors of civil society. Such definition covers also some partnerships which do not necessarily identify themselves as PuPs, such as Newcastle's City Council, Norway's Municipality Model, or the remunicipalised Eau de Paris in as far as they ensure workers' and citizens' participation.

In addressing the issues emerging from the fact that "narrow" PuPs are subsumed under the 'broad' PuPs category, this research paper proposes the term participatory PuPs for those partnerships which involve one or more public utilities, workers and/or communities and citizens' groups.

[4] Hall notes here that many developing countries in this period were under dictatorships and very corrupt regimes which benefited from loans made available for public services, such as water, by development banks. It was precisely under such dictatorships and corrupt governments that the beginning of privatisation flourished be it South African Apartheid or the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia (2005: 19).

3. Enhancing efficiency and equity of public services: the role of PuPs

One main argument behind the rhetoric of those pushing for the privatisation of public service has been the inefficiency of state-owned utilities and organisations. Defined in narrow terms, private sector efficiency is often presented as 'neutral, technical and opaque' (Wainwright, 2012a: 94) and it disregards the impact that efficiency gains of a specific service have on other sectors or levels of government (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 32). Hence, efficiency increases of the private sector are achieved by reducing the number of workers per connection[5] and/or making services cost-effective, such as by introducing/increasing fees on access to services, effectively excluding those who are not able to pay.

Such a narrow framing of efficiency 'fails to adequately address the social goals of service delivery such as quality of life and dignity' (Spronk, 2010, cited in McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 32). Instead, the concept of "social efficiency" takes into consideration a range of issues, such as: the financial efficiency of delivering services; resource-efficiency (water/electricity losses, administration costs, environmental impact and others); the level of investment needed to ensure long-term maintenance; the impact of efficiency gains of a service on other sectors or levels of government, on workers' wages and working conditions, affordability, environment, health and safety; quality etc. (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 32& 25). The concept places efficiency in a framework of broader societal goals which have been either unsatisfactory pursued under traditional state-owned utilities or undermined under processes of commercialisation and privatisation of public services.

Similarly, assessing equity objectives means engaging with a range of issues, such as: accessibility in terms of class, location, gender, ethnicity; reliability of the service (issues of power and water shortage); the extent to which people are able to overcome physical, economic and cultural barriers to access services and participate in decision-making; equitable quality and quantity; adequacy of services for effective citizenship; equitable pricing system and institutionalisation, legalisation and formalisation of equity (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 28 & 25). Countries may pursue different strategies in addressing inequities in accessing public services. Some countries pursue vertical equity, i.e. 'distribution of resources according to the need and policies that reduce inequality by treating unequals unequally'; other states may go for providing horizontal equity, i.e. providing a 'basic minimum package of benefits for all or for "target groups" ensuring that nobody falls below a certain level' (ibid: 28).

How do PuPs perform in issues of efficiency and equity?

One of the most common objectives of PuPs is the achievement of greater efficiency, which includes improving coverage and access, and ensuring greater equity in delivering services (Hall et al., 2005: 6).

[5]The World Bank, for example, recommends that water and sanitation utilities employ two to three workers per thousand connections, using this number politically to discipline managers to reduce the number of permanent staff (Spronk et al., 2012: 446).

The crucial importance of institutional and human resources capacities in achieving such objectives has given rise to international (North-South and South-South) and national PuPs.

In a review of 44 documents analysing PuPs in the water sector, Boag and McDonald argue that PuPs are able to expand water services connections to low income and marginalised communities, design connection and tariff payment plans that are affordable to all, and ensure that everyone can afford a base amount of water (2010: 7 & 11). These are often achieved by improving and expanding water services quality and/or quantity, such as reducing leakages and improving water conservation (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 7). Similarly, PuPs in the health sector have contributed to improvements in service delivery (Hall et al., 2005: 18). For example, the Community Partnerships with Health Professional Education Initiative in South Africa consisted mainly in bringing together health professionals and isolated rural communities to increase access to health services, particularly for young people, through development of health clinics, youth desks, and teenage pregnancy projects (ibid).

Hall et al (2005, 2009) provide an overview of the impact of PuPs in terms of efficiency and equity of public utilities. In their analysis of around 20 PuPs in the water sector, some examples of which are provided in this paper, Hall et al. argue that a key objective of PuPs is building institutional capacity of the public sector water and sanitation operators (2009: 2-3). These objectives are characteristic of development (international) partnerships in the water sector, but also of partnerships within the same country (Hall et al. 2005: 7). International partnerships aiming at capacity building are found also in other sectors, such as the energy sector in Ecuador receiving technical support and advice from Cuban and Colombian public electricity companies (ibid).

National PuPs with communities are also quite widespread, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. In Savelugu, Ghana, a Public-Community Partnership between the national public water company (Ghana Water Company) and communities has been successful in improving water supply and reducing water-borne illnesses through a decentralised system (TNI and CEO, 2006: 15). While the national company delivers bulk water to rural communities, the latter are responsible for water delivery, planning and tariff setting, new connections and maintenance to billing the users (ibid). SEMAPA (Servicio Municipal de Agua Potable de Cochabamba), in Bolivia, is working on a public-collective partnership with pre-existing water committees in peri-urban areas to expand access to piped water (ibid). Similarly, the Orangi pilot project (OPP) in Karachi, Pakistan, although known widely for its community base, has always described itself as 'working with government and expanding the model through collaboration with state agencies' (Hall et al., 2009: 7). Examples of such national-level PuPs, in which state water companies send technicians to provide assistance to community-based bodies and NGOs which administer water systems in rural areas are also found in Honduras, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Brazil (Spronk et al., 2012: 432).

PuPs provide the partners with the possibility of sharing skills, transferring knowledge and capacity building and at the same time help build a cooperative relationship based on mutual trust (Lobina and Hall, 2006, cited in Boag and McDonald, 2010: 10). By providing technical assistance and training

programmes for workers and managers, Dutch water companies have built partnerships with a number of public water utilities in Egypt, Romania, Sudan and Indonesia which have helped reducing leakage, introducing quality management and preventive maintenance systems, protecting groundwater resources, improving relations with users, managing of information systems, and in wastewater treatment technology (Hall et al., 2009: 3). Similarly, most health partnerships between public sector health agencies in high income countries and those in low income countries contain a training component (Hall et al., 2005: 14). The efficiency gains achieved by the water partnership between Finland and Vietnam were attributed to a great extent to the fact that all workers got trained (Hall et al., 2009: 10). In Honduras, the national water corporation SANAA provided community-based bodies in Honduras with capacity building through training and assistance which led to important improvements in water conservation and reliability of water services (Hall et al., 2005: 12).

By focusing on the municipal workers and the development of local technical capacities in a country, some PuPs contribute to reducing the dependency of public utilities and governments on expensive international consultants (Wouters, 2005, cited in Boag and McDonald, 2010: 11), to increasing pride and confidence among workers in delivering public water and to finding new ways of being more responsive to users' needs (ibid: 7). In this way, PuPs are able to build a virtuous circle of capacity building as more public utilities are enabled to share their expertise with others (ibid: 11), a process which helps empower and strengthen public utilities (ibid).

The evidence on PuPs' efficiency challenges once more the myth that the private sector is inherently more efficient than the public sector (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 11). In fact, PuPs can lead to improvements of water infrastructure and service delivery capacity at a lower cost than PPPs or public utilities working on their own (Hall et al., 2005, Boag and McDonald, 2010, Food and Water Watch, 2012).

Despite the remarkable achievements of PuPs in terms of increased efficiency and equity, PuPs face a number of challenges. Hall et al. have observed that capacity building 'has not been extensive enough' to sustain the achievements made during a partnership (2005: 24 & 28). At the same time, although many PuPs would subscribe to a concept of "social efficiency" - defined in terms of enhancing the equity of services, such as access for various groups in the society, reliability of the service, quality, adequate services and universal provision – in reality they employ certain practices which contradict a broader conceptualisation of efficiency. For example, Rand Water in South Africa, which although according to the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) made remarkable improvements in cost recovery, did so by cutting-off thousands for non-payment and by installing "trickler valves", which to some were 'stripping people of their dignity' (Hall et al., 2005: 28). At times goals of efficiency have been pursued at the expense of workers, such as the case of the partnership between Lilongwe in Malawi and a UK water authority. While the World Bank claimed that the partnership has led to improved water and sanitation services and 'initiated successful institutional building', the company not only did not seek to involve workers, but it actually dismissed all those who went on strike over demands for pay rise and who criticised the

management for financial mismanagement and excessive spending on expensive vehicles and huge allowances (Hall et al., 2005: 29).

In some other cases, the potential of PuPs to pursue "social efficiency" objectives has been undermined by partners holding conflicting goals. This is exemplified by a PuP between two South African parastatals and the Brazilian water companies which was rescinded because the South African companies saw the partnership as an opportunity to pursue a PPP, whereas to Brazilians it was 'a global vehicle for promoting public ownership and operation of water services' (Hall et al., 2005: 10). Some utilities may hold goals of public service ethos in their operations at home and pursue commercial objectives when operating overseas, such as the Colombian water utility EAAB (*Empresa de Acueducto y Alcantarillado de Bogotá),* and PBA (*Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang*) in Penang, Malaysia (Balanyá et al., 2005: 261). Interestingly, although both utilities have an articulated commitment to public ethos, they score poorly in terms of participation. Hence, PBA, which is often praised as a successful PuP, has achieved goals of efficiency and equity through the strong commitment of managers and workers to provide the population with quality public services, but with limited participation of users (ibid) and by combining 'a commercial outlook with social obligations' (TNI and CEO, 2006: 9). Even more problematic is the case of EAAB, which, while scoring high in economic efficiency and quality of service, has done so by putting the burden of these efficiency gains on workers[6] (Spronk et al., 2012: 442). Partnerships with such companies could be highly problematic, especially in the case of narrow PuPs, which lack the accountability that comes with communities and workers participation.

Building and strengthening the capacities of public utilities and administrations is central to both goals of efficiency and equity. However, aligning goals of efficiency with those of equity, or in other words pursuing goals of social efficiency, is always a contested process. Hence, social efficiency is not only, and perhaps not primarily, a question of capacities: it is a question of democratising public services, of empowering workers, users and communities through a process of meaningful participation. Indeed, as Balanyá et al. put it, the political process of pursuing public utility reforms and alternatives to privatisation defines the character of the public water management approach; 'these political struggles, therefore, are an essential element in understanding the future of water delivery' (2005: 267).

4. Enhancing communities and workers' participation in, and the accountability of, public services: the role of PuPs

The participation of citizens, community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in decision-making enhances the "public" nature of water services; challenges the

[6] Spronk et. al. observe that EAAB has pursued an aggressive policy of subcontracting as a way to reduce the costs of pensions (2012: 442).

approach of bureaucrats and experts to determine what is best for citizens, increases transparency and accountability, empowers users and develops additional political and technical capacities in the sector (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 15). Participation increases the sense of ownership among citizens, contributing to utilities efficiency as well as to greater possibilities for investment and maintenance (Balanyá et al., 2005: 249). In the water sector, social movements have gone beyond issues of access and have engaged with broader issues of participatory democracy, social justice, ecological sustainability and even far-reaching transformation of the society and economy[7] (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 140). In the health sector, social movements have articulated broader goals of social determinants of health: access to water, food and housing, environmental issues and others[8] (ibid: 141). The struggles against privatisation in the electricity sector have been marked by lesser involvement of social movements and by electricity workers taking the lead in forming coalitions and pursuing issues of public interest such as prices and accountability (ibid: 143).

Participation of communities and citizens does not automatically translate in more "publicness". For one, the quality of participation plays a crucial role in defining the extent to which participation can lead to greater "publicness". The tendency to reduce participation to consultation[9], coupled with the introduction of various forms of decentralisation, has been used to 'legitimate or disguise the dismantling of public services' (Wainwright, 2012: 92) and indeed open the way to privatisation (Balanyá et al., 2005: 254). What's more, the advocacy for community involvement may turn out to be a way of freeing the state from the responsibility of providing services to all citizens. Also, there are legitimate concerns that a notion of "public" based solely on community participation may mask power asymmetries within communities and community-based organisations (CBOs) along lines of race, class, gender, geography and ethnicity (Bakker, 2008; Boag and McDonald, 2010; Spronk and Terhorst, 2012). Finally, the capacity of community members to participate meaningfully in decision-making is undermined by unequal financial and human resources and access to technical expertise (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 30).

Another very important issue here is that when discussing participation, public sector workers are often either lumped together with civil society groups, or are missing from the picture altogether. Although self-empowerment of communities has been central in this debate, the main actors of the public stage appear to be only "the state" and "the citizens" leaving hardly any space for public sector workers (Wainwright, 2012a: 88). Indeed, even the debates around "publicness", rarely make an explicit mention of workers' participation in designing public services. The role of labour in democratising public decision-

[7] In Bolivia and South Africa, social movement leaders from the water movement have articulated a socialist agenda, linking demands for democratisation to transformation of society and economy (Coetzee 2004, Olivera 2004, cited in Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 140).

[8] People's Health Movement is a global network of activists, civil society organisations and academic institutions from 70 countries promoting Health for All, universal access to quality health care, education and social services through an equitable, participatory and inter-sectoral movement. For more: http://www.phmovement.org/en/about

[9] Chavez argues that depending on the degree of engagement, participation could refer to consultation, representation, and influence: with consultation implying 'opening channels for the transfer of information and dialogue'; representation involving the institutionalising a 'regular engagement of certain sectors of the population in decision making'; and influence as 'enabling citizens to have a substantial impact on policy design and/or the implementation of service delivery' (2012b: 471).

making has been missing even in the discourse inside the social movements (ibid: 83). This is partly due to the reluctance of public sector unions to move beyond an agenda of protecting their jobs and partly because these movements have unintentionally internalised a mainstream discourse which puts the blame for the inefficiencies and corruption of public sector on public sector workers and sees unions as "vested interests organisations" (ibid). Proponents of privatisation, including global institutions such as the World Bank, have sought to portray public sector workers and trade unions as a barrier to public service reform (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 144) and indeed have made public sector workers one of their main target of market reforms transforming what was once considered to be a model of decent work in the world of work.

Despite the fact that traditional public services were highly bureaucratic, public sector workers were able to exercise a degree of autonomy and embody a high level of expertise and ethical standards, which in combination with stability of employment defined to a great extent the quality of services (Huws, 2012: 76). Subjecting work in the public sector to the market logic has had the effect of undermining the public ethos and the "publicness" of services. In resisting the market logic, public sector workers and their trade unions have shifted their struggle beyond issues of ownership and have engaged with the question of alienated labour[10]: having democratic control over the labour process and over the purpose of labour (which includes issues of accessibility and quality) and challenging the alienation and commodification of labour's creativity by allowing workers 'to express themselves through their labour, in the delivery of services to fellow citizens, as knowing, feeling people, rather than simply as workers selling their labour power' (Wainwright, 2012a: 83). Realising 'the creativity of workers for the benefit of, and in collaboration with, their fellow citizens' would entail 'a new relationship between workers and management and greater worker involvement in decision-making processes' (ibid: 83-4). In other words, if labour's creativity is to be valued for its fundamental importance in delivering public services, notions of division of labour and discipline would be 'based on collaboration and motivation' and not on 'a bureaucratic version of the discipline and divisions of the capitalist market' (ibid: 84).

In the light of the above, ensuring meaningful participation of communities, citizens and workers and hence greater accountability, means engaging with a number of issues[11] such as establishing clear processes and structures and allocating appropriate resources which empower people to change the system of service delivery and aim at their emancipation, rather than an engineering of consent (Balanyá et al., 2005: 255).

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[10] In analysing this shift in the struggle, Wainwright builds on Marx's discussion and analysis of the twofold nature of labour: abstract labour, the value of which is objectified in terms of its exchange value as a commodity and from which the profit for the capital is extracted, and concrete labour involved in the production of use value for both individuals and society. In a capitalist mode of production, Marx argued, 'creative, purposeful activity is subordinated to labour disciplined for the maximisation of profit' (Wainwright, 2012a: 82) creating a constant tension which to Elson (1979) is a tension between self-determining activity and alienated labour. It is in this tension that Wainwright sees 'the source of agency and the transformative potential of labour' which helps understand the shift in labour's strategies in resisting privatisation and other forms of commodification: from defensive strategies to broad alliances with communities and citizens mobilising around the nature, organisation and future of public services (ibid).

[11] A comprehensive overview of these issues is provided by McDonald and Ruiters (2012: 25-6 &30-33).

How do PuPs perform in issues of participation and accountability?

Seeking inclusion of the public in partnerships, positions PuPs 'as intrinsically more democratic than PPPs' (Hall et al., 2005: 8) and more accountable to people. In the health sector, the involvement of communities through PuPs has led to increased effectiveness and more accountability of public health projects (Hall et al., 2005: 19). At the same time, PuPs help to strengthen the support of local communities for the public utility and to provide the utility with feedback on how to improve services (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 7). Hall et al. argue that 'the most effective PuPs had the longest lead-in times and had the community as a partner' (2005: 24).

In the pursuit of objectives of participation and accountability, PuPs may engage with a range of objectives, such as: 'better utilisation of knowledge and skills; a greater sense of "ownership" of services; greater accountability of managers and politicians; improved responsiveness to community and labour needs; overcoming resistance to reforms; greater inclusion of community voice and priorities in decision making; strengthened leadership, planning and co-ordination in service provision; greater trust between providers, clients, communities and financers of services; and strengthened capacities for public interest regulation' (Hall et al., 2005: 8-9). Some of the PuPs elaborated in this section have pursued one or more of these objectives. However, it is important to differentiate between narrow PuPs that at times seek also to consult and involve workers and communities, and participatory PuPs where ensuring a meaningful participation and influence of workers and communities is an explicit objective.

The Brazilian schemes of participatory budgeting and Kerala's People's Plan policy in India are widely recognised as a potential model for democratising local governance and for 'strengthening the control of communities over the financing and delivery of their public services' (Hall et al., 2005: 8). The Brazilian scheme represents a model of "social control" which combines 'participatory budgeting with strong civil society participation in management of the water utility' (TNI and CEO, 2006: 4) and shows that participation does not need to be confined to small communities. More than just dialogue with users and communities, the process of democratising water services has aimed at 'genuine publicness', which entails, among others, 'transparency of the utility's operation, democratic control over key financial decisions and citizen's participation in priority-setting during planning phases' (ibid). Similarly, Kerala's People's Plan policy delegates decision making for 40% of state budget to village councils, p*anchayats.* Such scheme was supplemented by financial contributions from the community, giving rise to participatory water delivery schemes in Olavanna and other rural communities in which people are 'directly involved in planning, management, construction and maintenance' leading to major cost-savings (ibid: 17).

These initiatives have inspired new ways of organising public services in other cities in Brazil and across Latin America, but also in Europe and North America. FEJUVE, the Federation of Neighbourhood Councils (*Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto*), which covers 600 neighbourhood councils in El Alto, Bolivia, has envisaged a model of democratised public utility called "public social company" which is based on 'full transparency and "bottom-up decision-making through people's participation"' (TNI and CEO, 2006: 6). Community representatives would be part of both the general assembly which is

responsible for setting out the overall policies and electing the water company's board, and a new Control and Monitoring Commission tasked to guarantee collective control and a corruption free public utility (ibid). Right across the Latin American continent, a transport project in Canada, has tried to involve communities through a process of active participation of neighbourhood groups, transit advocacy and user groups (Hall et al., 2005: 8). In Italy's Abruzzo, a coalition of civil society groups, environmentalists, trade unions, academics, left wing parties and many local authorities, inspired by participatory budgeting in Brazil, have been advocating 'a system of public water delivery that is participatory, transparent and environmentally and socially sustainable' (De Sanctis and Senta, 2005: 2). The coalition's demands go beyond the status quo - i.e. unreliable, inefficient, unresponsive and unaccountable water service - and include proposals for democratic and citizens' control of the water management, social measures for the poorest and allocation of funds for international cooperation projects (ibid).

Institutionalising the participation of communities by creating new structures has transformed Hidrocapital, in Caracas, Venezuela into one of the most innovative public utility in the country (Spronk et al., 2012: 434). It is a model of cooperation between local communities, the water utility and elected officials to 'identify needs and priorities for improvements, allocate available funds and develop joint work plans' (TNI and CEO, 2006: 16). Established in Caracas by a progressive mayor in the early 1990s as 'local forums to hear citizens' concerns about problems with water supply and sanitation' they developed into 'a citywide communal water council' and later on, technical water committees (*Mesas Técnicas de Agua* – MTAs) (Spronk et al., 2012: 434). While users are typically able to democratically control and hold accountable these councils, in areas needing substantial improvements, such as urban slums, they are heavily involved in planning, decision-making and construction and maintenance work (TNI and CEO, 2006: 16). MTAs are 'a way of coordinating all the knowledge the community [has] about their water network with human, technical and financial resources that [belong] to them through their public water company' (Spronk et al., 2012: 434). MTAs are seen to score high in participation, solidarity, public ethos, equity, sustainability, transferability and even in gender equality (ibid: 435).

At times, PuPs may be 'extremely useful in campaigning for remunicipalisation' (Pigeon et al., 2012: 110) as the recent developments in France and elsewhere have shown. Anne Le Strat, Deputy Mayor of Paris and President of the *Eau de Paris* public company and of *Aqua Publica Europa,* elaborates in more detail the much celebrated case of remunicipalisation of water utility in Paris, France. During 1985-1987, Jacques Chirac, then mayor of Paris, ceded control over production and distribution of water to three private companies for a period of 25 years. When time to renew the contract with private operators came up, the winning left-wing coalition of socialists, communists, ecologists and various other leftwing parties committed 'to switch back to totally public management of water services' and worked to identify the best possible water services for Paris' by undertaking legal, economic and technical studies in consultation with personnel working on the organisational side of the service (Le Strat, 2010: 2). The decision to remunicipalise was based on 'a strong political and ideological choice, one that is totally

assumed as such: water is a common good, which implies an absolute need to control the resource and the services based on a vision and long-term project' (ibid: 4)

In 2010, the municipality of Paris, and the new public body *Eau de Paris,*[12] which now belongs to the municipality, signed a framework agreement which covers a range of technical, social and other indicators and which provides the basis for implementation and evaluation of services in terms of investments, personnel, research programme and water resources protection (Le Strat, 2010: 3). The public utility now has a Board of Directors composed of 10 elected representatives of the Paris Municipality, two staff representative members and five qualified individuals who represent consumer associations and environmental protection initiatives. At the moment of writing the latter played a purely consultative role, but there were plans to give them the right to vote. Besides their participation on the Board of Directors, citizens have the possibility to evaluate the provision of services via a mechanism for social control called the Municipal Water Watch (MWW). The MWW, which has a representative on the Board of Directors, provides a space for all stakeholders to discuss and put forward ideas regarding various issues facing the water utility. The new utility has ended all the overlaps among sectors and jobs and has led to greater synergy in the production sector, enhanced efficiency in distribution, total traceability of water from the source to the tap and increased responsiveness to citizens' demands through newly developed services. The utility has also introduced a series of actions in support of disadvantaged members of community, particularly homeless people. These actions are part of the utility's policy of social subsidies which aims to ensure full access to water in Paris and deal with issues of unpaid bills. More broadly, the movements for remunicipalisation of public services could be seen as an expression of renewing community ownership, which is just one form of proposals for the "commons" (Bakker, 2008: 241).

In some cases, democratising public services and making them more equitable and efficient has meant revisiting and reviving traditional structures of participation. When a water crisis hit the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, questions over the relevance of the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board (TWAD) prompted the management of the utility to begin a process of democratisation based on principles of community involvement and water conservation (Hall et al. 2009: 6). Transforming TWAD 'into a more people focused, community responsive and publicly accountable organisation' necessitated a change of the 'mindset of the technical staff, which involved overcoming bureaucratic and technocratic tendencies' (TNI and CEO, 2006: 5). Reviving the Indian traditional concept of *Koodam*[13], a space for interaction among water specialists and communities 'as equal persons, without distinction of rank, position or privilege and engage in the common task of learning from and with one another' (ibid) was created. The democratisation process was complemented with the Total Community Water Management programme

[12] The old public-private company has been transformed into a public body, whose mission is to produce, transport, distribute and bill for water. All the various professions and operational aspects of the service have been brought together, which means that consumers now deal with a single structure. It is an independent legal entity which has its own budget, and reports to the municipality (Le Strat, 2010: 3).

[13] *Koodam* is a traditional, cultural and social space within which all persons are treated equally; without distinction based on age, status, hierarchy; in which sharing is transparent, experiential, and self-critical; and is based on values of democracy, consensual decision making, and collective ownership (Suresh, 2011).

of education (in 427 villages across 29 districts), which aimed at creating an approach to water focused on the community and resulted in detailed village water master plans prepared by the community with the assistance of engineers (ibid). Within a span of three years (2004-2007), the scheme resulted in a 60% reduction of capital costs per household, 33% savings in budgeted schemes, and in 84% of women surveyed seeing water engineers as members of the community, all of which contributed to a sense of involvement and ownership (Hall et al., 2009: 6).

An example of a partnership pursuing multiple objectives is that of DMAE (*Departamento Municipal de Água e Esgotos*) in Porto-Alegre, Brazil. Here, water services are delivered through a PuP between the municipal government, the independent municipally-owned public water company DMAE and a citizens' organisation (European Parliament, 2010: 16). While the fact that DMAE is 'an autonomously administered, financially independent, municipally-owned utility' is often stressed as one of the reasons for the success of the utility, it is important to emphasise that such a separation was made under loan requirements from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) (Maltz, 2005: 29).

DMAE has gone through remarkable transformations under participatory budgeting. Although it used to serve primarily downtown and affluent areas, after 1989 DMAE embarked on a 'participatory budget' planning where people have the right to vote on budget allocations and it implemented a 'deliberative council' which practices 'social control' by society and ensures full transparency of the department's work; all of which have led to enormous improvements of services (ibid: 30). DMAE, which has become an international alternative model to water privatisation, applies a progressive tariff structure based on strong cross-subsidies and a social tariff for low-income people who have the right to use 10 cubic meters per month, but pay only for four (ibid: 30 & 32). Despite rapid growth of the population, DMAE continues to operate much better than public utilities in other developing countries: the coverage rate is nearly 100%, non-payment ratio is low and the approval ratings for its service are high (Bakker, 2008: 246). Other features include: accountability in terms of safe water and environmental protection and sustainability related to financing and technology (Maltz, 2005: 30). Although it applies a selective use of the private sector for outsourcing, DMAE retains full municipal control over strategic decisions (Bakker, 2008: 246). DMAE's administrators have recognised also the importance of motivated and capable workers who can provide high standard services to meet people's needs. Therefore the utility invests yearly in workers' education, healthcare, insurance and transport among others (Maltz, 2005: 33). Providing workers with scholarships for high school or university, as well for managerial and technical training, has earned the utility important national prizes for social responsibility (ibid: 34). DMAE technicians and activists have also provided advice and solidarity to water struggles in other countries (Spronk et al., 2012: 435).

While increasing the participation of communities and workers may be one of the goals of PuPs, particularly of the participatory PuPs, in some cases it is the deep participation of communities and trade unions in the campaigns against privatisation that has given rise to proposals for bottom-up PuPs as alternatives to resist privatisation and reform public services. By focusing on the case of the public water utility SEDAM Huancayo S. A. in Huancayo, Peru, Terhorst (2008: 2-6) analyses the crucial role played

by the national trade union of water workers FENTAP (*Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de Agua Potable*), a range of social movements under FREDEAJUN (*Frente de Defensa del Agua de la Region Junín*) and one of its members, the local sector trade union SUTAPAH (*Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de Agua Potable de Huancayo*) in establishing a South-South PuP between SEDAM and the union-owned and run public utility ABSA (*Aguas Bonaerenses S. A.*), in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In resisting the privatisation of the water utility, the Peruvian water movements, and especially FENTAP, have sought to employ a multi-scalar and multi-pronged strategy. This has entailed working at the national level with other groups to block legislation that promoted liberalisation and commercialisation of water resources and services, supporting the union in Huancayo in hosting a local forum on water privatisation as a space to build resistance to privatisation, reaching out to transnational networks of the water movement and developing 'workable and functional public alternatives to privatisation from the bottom' (ibid: 2). In 2006, FENTAP and some international NGOs supported a series of workshops with sector experts friendly to the water movements to develop a 'Basic Outline for the Sustainable, Participatory And De-politicised Modernisation Of SEDAM Huancayo Without Privatisation' which aimed at developing professional and technical proposals 'for utility "modernisation without privatisation"' (ibid). The 'basic outline' argued that SEDAM had all the potential 'to be a viable public-participatory utility', able to 'provide adequate water and sanitation services to its citizens-users' and 'developed in detail plans for managerial and institutional reforms that included the proposal for a PuP' (ibid: 4).

When a political managerial agreement to implement the changes through the Social-Technical Council[14] did not materialise, embarking on a PuP became 'a tool to start change at utility level' (ibid). The PuP with ABSA, which was initiated during the Blue October events[15] in Uruguay and signed in 2007, consisted of a 'concept of not-for-profit technical support and collaboration in the study and search for strategies of institutional and management reform that included the development of social and union participation' (ibid: 5). Back in 2008, Terhorst noted the difficulty of 'building social control mechanisms into the PUP and keeping the popular processes of the front more integrally linked to the PUP' (ibid: 5-6). In a later assessment Spronk et al. argue that while the PuP model provided local activists with political tools for reforming corrupt and politicised water companies, convincing local authorities to restructure utilities has been much more difficult (2012: 433).

On another continent, in far different circumstances, Norwegian public sector trade unions have also sought to pursue an innovative strategy to resist introduction of privatisation and competitive tendering. Although not self-recognised as a PuP, the Norwegian experiment consists in a contract among workers and a number of municipalities to work together in modernising public services without privatising.

[14] The Social-Technical Council, which was supposed to be staffed by representatives of local civil society, the church, the university and other relevant actors, was started by the Huancayo Mayor Freddy Arana under the name 'concertation table' (mesa de concertación) as a way of opening and giving certain power over the decisions of the future of SEDAM to the community. However, when it became clear that the front was going to have a strong voice within that Council, the political will of Arana and other groups of civil society dwindled as they did not want to allow the social movements to control SEDAM's future. (Terhorst, 2008)

[15] The Blue October events were a networked initiative across the world where water movements commemorated common struggles and organised a month of action for water in their respective localities. (Terhorst, 2008)

Abjørn Wahl explains the way the well-known Model Municipality Project emerged both as a response to privatisation, but also to weaknesses of public services such as bureaucratisation, low quality and limited access (2007: 4). In response to such challenges, the trade union entered in a three-year partnership with a number of municipalities to reorganise public services through mobilisation of workers 'to further develop and improve the quality of the public services – under the following three conditions: no privatisation, no competitive tendering or no dismissals should take place' (ibid: 5). It was a bottom-up process based on the employees' competence and qualifications, as well as on users experiences and needs. The project has resulted in 'higher user satisfaction, better working conditions for employees and better financial situation for the municipality' (ibid). Given its success, the model was adopted by the centre-left government in 2005 and is now widely known as the Quality Municipality Project.

In similar conditions, the Newcastle City Council branch of UNISON in the UK, facing privatisation of its IT services, embarked on a five-year programme of IT (and other) services modernisation through a multi-pronged strategy, which consisted in: 1) membership involvement in every step of the campaign: mass meetings, election of worker representatives, industrial action against privatisation and reps directly involved in scrutinising the private bid while contributing to the "in-house" bid; 2) intervention in the procurement process and campaign for an "in-house" bid; 3) building popular support for the anti-privatisation campaign which involved communities, trade unions and dissident Labour councillors; 4) democratising the City Council – making it 'genuinely "democracy"-led'; 5) grounding the campaign on strategic research; and finally 6) trade union leadership treating members 'as skilled people who cared about their work' (Wainwright, 2009). The campaign provided the space for real engagement of workers in the process of change: 'from selecting new managers to discussing every significant change' and ensuring accountability for the services (ibid). By 2008, the modernisation has led to enormous savings, significant improvements in services in terms of the speed and accuracy of benefit payments, and a high level of user satisfaction by introducing new services, such as a new call centre and "one stop shops" for all services of the council (ibid). The modernisation has also led to significant changes in management and the way work is organised (some of these changes will be discussed in more details in the next chapter). More generally, the Newcastle example 'is an experiment in industrial democracy with real benefits in terms of quality of services and the best allocation of public money' (ibid).

Participation schemes are less common in the electricity sector. Chavez notes that participation of people in the power sector is almost inexistent with the exception of Venezuela where the concept of water MTAs has expanded to the telecommunications and electricity sectors with the establishment of the *Mesas Técnicas de Telecomunicaciones*, and the *Mesas Técnicas de Energía* (2012b: 471-2). Also, several countries in Latin America provide the possibility for some degree of consultation with people through regulatory frameworks stipulating that all or some decisions of public utilities should be made public and consulted with users' representatives (ibid). Labour's continuous demands for participation in the management and administration of the electricity sector have remained unfulfilled (ibid: 473).

5. Sustainability and solidarity of public services: the role of PuPs

Analysing sustainability of alternative forms of organising public services means analysing various dimensions, such as: *political sustainability* in terms of the political support for the model at various levels and the robustness of the system to resist the global context of neoliberal policies; *social sustainability* in terms of the strength of social engagement mechanisms; *financial sustainability* in terms adequate financial support for the new models; and *environmental stability* which considers the most appropriate scale of using resources, and of technologies and resources (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 27).

Political and social sustainability: One important debate here is related to the role of the state in supporting alternative models of organising public services. While some favour state support to such initiatives, emphasising the key role of local and national governments (such as in Porto Alegre, Kerala and Caracas), others have instead argued for independence and autonomy from the state (ibid). The supporters of the latter view see decentralisation linked to higher community participation, although they recognise that such processes can lead to the devolution of responsibilities for delivering services, but not of adequate resources[16] or to resources and services being captured by the local elites (Murthy and Klugman, 2004, cited in ibid). Despite opposing views, there seem to be a consensus for a 'supportive state to help facilitate and oversee the objectives of the public alternative'; a strong (and not domineering) state which can 'act "with" society, not in replacement of it' (Reynoso, 2000 cited in ibid). The chances for an alternative to survive depend to a great extent on the ability of such alternatives to transform institutional structures: to 'dismantle old forms of the state with a much broader set of actors and innovative forms of governance, opening up new vistas for thinking about how the "public" can operate' (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012a: 6). Likewise, organising services in a way which helps build solidarity among: workers, communities, public sectors managers, politicians, NGOs, end users etc.; other service sectors (health, water and others); and various levels of service delivery (regional international) (PSI, 2003: 27) can play also a vital role in the political sustainability of these alternative models.

Indeed, there is a need to build simultaneously 'alternative public sector provision and new, broader policy capacities, and corresponding means and sources of finance' (Fine and Hall, 2012: 65). Here issues of *financial sustainability and solidarity* are of particular importance*:* sufficiency of state spending to ensure continuity of the new models of services in terms of operating and capital funds, and the extent to which the model relies on donor support (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 27). Having the state support such initiatives is fundamental given that donor funding is not always reliable (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 35), or it may come with political conditions which can contradict the goals of "publicness" (Balanyá et al. 2005: 266). *Solidarity* among public service systems can also play a crucial role. Hall (2008) discusses solidarity within public services in the context of a "European Social Model"

[16] In Fact, many local authorities find themselves locked in a situation where they are given the responsibility to deliver more services with less financial resources available and with few options to raise money locally because they may not be allowed by national authorities or because of inter-municipality competition to attract investors and hence keep taxes low.

committed to income equality, progressive tax systems, public ownership, and political solidarity (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 37). The mechanism of financial solidarity developed in this model aims at reducing inequalities between member states through financing for infrastructure, workers retraining and anti-discrimination measures (ibid). Other mechanisms include public service policies at the international level, global public financing mechanisms and others (PSI, 2003: 38). Finally, there is a need for change at the global level if such initiatives are to be sustainable. Despite important breakthroughs and progress, alternative public services necessitate a more enabling environment also at the global level, 'one that facilitates progressive public solutions rather than hindering them' (Balanyá et al., 2005: 259).

The environmental sustainability is increasingly discussed in the context of the important role that public services can play in addressing ecological concerns. However, the impact of public services on environment is not discussed very often in the literature despite the fact that some public utilities have at times been serious polluters. For example, a 2010 report of NHS shows that in 2007, the carbon footprint of NHS England rose to 21 million of tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions (CO_2e). The level of NHS emissions represents 25% of total emissions of England's public sector (Sander and Reynolds, 2011: 3). Engaging with the issue of the environmental impact of public services necessitates taking into account issues of alternative sources/forms of resources, consumption rates, choices of technology (e.g. coal fired vs. solar electricity) and others (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012b: 37). Whether it is about tapping into regional watersheds or about procuring health products from overseas producers, there is also a need to consider the most appropriate and sustainable scale of resource procurement and distribution (ibid).

How do PuPs perform in issues of sustainability?

The literature on PuPs identifies *funding* as one top issue affecting the emergence and sustainability (Hall et al., 2005 &2009; TNI and CEO, 2006; Boag and McDonald, 2010). Funding can come from a variety of sources, such as external or international sources, external development banks, government at various levels, foundations and others (Hall et al., 2005: 25). In discussions about funding, there is a clear emphasis on the role of governments. In analysing six PuPs in water and health, Hall et al. emphasise the significant role played by governments in providing support for some of the partnerships (2005: 25).

However, due to the specific nature of PuPs, other issues come into play. For example, when assessing the barriers to international water PuPs, Boag and McDonald list several issues, such as: 'language barriers, cultural differences, uneven technological skills, dissimilar hydrological contexts, disparate labour-management relations, varied histories of water commodification, different interpretations of equity, and a host of other large and small discrepancies [that] can lead to competing – even contradictory – objectives and tensions in partnership frameworks' (2010: 12). Clearly, when such barriers are considered, national PuPs appear to be more sustainable.

Hall et al. have emphasised the need for partners to have their objectives expressed clearly as the most effective PuPs are those where partners have a clear understanding of each others' objectives and are willing to work together towards those objectives (Hall et al., 2005: 26). Bert Roebert, former Deputy Managing Director of Amsterdam Water Company and involved in several PuPs, highlights also the importance of respecting the integrity of the partner, by advising and engaging without seeking management control, but also of a long-term commitment in partnerships (CEO and TNI, 2006: 10). Similarly, considering the range of problems that can arise due to partners' different experiences, Laila Smith, a consultant working with Capetown Water in South Africa, emphasises the need for 'building political support, agreeing on joint objectives and creating mechanisms for securing equality and accountability (ibid: 13).

Theoretically, the issue of similar objectives among partners is not particularly challenging in PuPs, given that all partners are public and oriented towards long-term and broader political objectives of equity of access and affordability, which reduces the need for short-term profits and for cutting the costs (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 11, CEO and TNI, 1006: 13). Moreover, in contrast to partnerships with private operators where financial details are protected by commercial confidentiality, in PuPs all aspects of the partnership are transparent (CEO and TNI, 2006: 13). However, in some cases, as shown earlier in the paper, partners that hold commercial objectives may have unwanted effects on partnerships, although generally speaking the extent to which external funders influence a public utility receiving support is not always clear in the PuPs literature. Analysing six case studies of PuPs in health and water, Hall et al. observed that while some funding partners seek to influence policy-making, others do not (2005: 24). It is even more difficult to assess the way external funding has impacted the sustainability of partnerships.

An issue that may be more complicated to deal with is the differences originating from dissimilar histories of public services and different stages of development. For example, TNI and CEO point to the fact that, due to their long history of public services (50-100 years), public water operators of developed countries may be more experienced in maintaining and renewing networks in a context of a relatively wealthy pool of users, whereas operators from developing countries have to deal first and foremost with issues of expanding and improving water delivery services (2006: 12). There is clearly a need to find innovative ways of supporting South-South partnerships where the role of Northern utilities may be of a different kind.

One way of dealing with the main barriers to PuPs is seen to be the establishment of mechanisms which could support and sustain PuPs, some of which were elaborated above. However, creating and sustaining such mechanisms is not an easy task. Attempts to establish mechanisms which support South-South PuPs in Latin America, mainly technical relations among public utilities, were frustrated by 'the lack of national agreement around the core question; the lack of a culture of exchanging information and experiences; limits imposed on public utilities by governments and economic and financial constraints' (Guillermo Amorebieta of the Network of Water Sector Trade Unions, cited in CEO and TNI, 2006: 12). This is the case with certain laws in Brazil and other Southern countries which prevent

utilities from spending public money abroad, but also with the European Union competition law whose competitive tendering requirements for consultancy contracts benefits mostly the private sector due to their experience and financial capacity to compete for grants (ibid: 13). Similarly, such rules limit to a large extent the possibility of public interest researchers and civil society groups to access funding for research and other activities supporting PuPs (ibid).

Given these very complex context and barriers to partnerships, PuPs have to cope with two major challenges: overcoming barriers to transform the nature of public utilities by enhancing their "publicness" and coping with a hostile political landscape locally and internationally.

Political and social sustainability

The literature on PuPs frequently makes reference to the role of the state in providing political and financial support, in introducing laws and regulation which make access to public services and participation constitutional rights, and in setting up participatory schemes for communities and citizens. The way states engage with PuPs, the extent to which they support or hinder new forms of organising public services, is shaped to a significant extent from the neoliberal policies which have dominated the political discourse in the last three decades or so. As Fine and Hall argue, neoliberalism is marked not only by 'policy and ideology favouring the private over the public sector, but this has itself been institutionalised within government capacity itself and commercial pressures to which it responds' (2012: 61). Fine and Hall go on to explain the ways through which such ideology is being embedded in the state (ibid: 62) and they stress the argument that this process 'has been devastating for the potential for formulating and implementing alternative forms of public provision' (ibid: 61).

However, a country's history of democratic processes, but also configurations of power favourable to alternative forms of organising public services mediate to some extent the materialisation of the neoliberal discourse in policy making. As Chavez puts it: 'the specific history and political culture of a country' has an impact on the scope of corporatisation of public services (2012b: 478). In countries, such as Uruguay and Costa Rica, where political systems and democratic traditions are stronger, the style of public management sees public services 'as important instruments for economic and social development, serving well-defined political goals' (ibid). In contrast, in other countries systems of clientelism, nepotism, corruption and political control dominating public services for a long time have impeded the much-needed reforms initiated by PuPs. This is highlighted by the case of SEDAM in Huancayo, where the utility reforms proposed by the PuP were stopped by local politics (Terhorst, 2008). Clearly, in these cases, 'links between public companies and the broader institutional system are much weaker and the objectives of public utilities and other state-owned enterprises are less clear' (Chavez, 2012b: 478). The wave of left-wing governments across Latin America has resulted, among other things, in the emergence and consolidation of radical participatory schemes in transforming public services. For example, public utilities in Caracas and Porto Alegre, which sought to introduce institutional mechanisms to encourage participation of citizens, did so in a context of 'strong state commitment to investment in infrastructure and long histories of democracy building at both the local and national levels' (Spronk et al., 2012: 443).

Hence, the trajectory of PuPs and their sustainability depends on a highly complex context. Clearly, capacity-building and enhancing public utilities' efficiency and access to people and communities are not a guarantee against privatisation and PPPs. Indeed, in some cases, certain achievements made by PuPs have even paved the way for privatisation. Hall et al., argue that despite PuPs achievements in terms of strengthening capacities of public utilities, after the partnerships the utilities were strongly influenced by political changes (2005: 24). This is exemplified by the examples of: Tallinn, in Estonia, where political changes at the municipal council led to privatisation of the reformed water utility; Harrismith, in South Africa, where community participation was affected by changes in the local political context; and Lilongwe, in Malawi, where the World Bank's policies encouraged privatisation (ibid).

Creating conditions for the participation of communities, citizens and workers is of particular interest here, given the essential role played by communities in the robustness of participatory PuPs, and, hence in their sustainability. As pointed out earlier from the PuPs assessment of Hall et al., participation of communities in PuPs is seen to impact positively the longevity, effectiveness and accountability of PuPs which in turn have strengthened the support of communities for the model– a major factor in ensuring sustainability of PuPs in the face of hostile political environments (2005: 19 & 24). Community engagement in public services helps build counter-power to forces of privatisation and commercialisation and, in the process, build new ways of organising public services. For example, institutional changes in OSE were to a great extent influenced by the involvement of social movements which continued even after the referendum campaign (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 149).

Ensuring a deep participation and concrete influence of communities necessitates a continuous process of mutual learning not only with the purpose of building capacities, but also of defining clearer criteria on what constitutes "publicness" for the people in the locality (CEO and TNI, 2006: 13). As Balanyá et al. argue: 'the process of collective learning between public utility managers and water professionals, civil society, trade unions, social movements and governments is an essential tool for overcoming obstacles and needs to be accelerated' (2005: 270-271). Here, the state could play a key role in undertaking initiatives which facilitate people's involvement in shaping public services at a broader scale, such as the case of the "Raising the Citizens' Voice" project in Cape Town, South Africa, initiated by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) in partnership with the city's Water Department with the goal of democratising public water services (TNI and CEO, 2006: 6). The project aims at educating citizens about their rights and how to enforce them; on how services work and on the way to monitor and hold service providers more accountable in providing public services; and finally at enabling them to be more involved in strategic decision making and resource allocation (ibid). In this process, South Africa is seeking to learn from similar experiences of involving citizens in water services in countries such as Brazil, India, Venezuela and Bolivia.

However, having communities and social movements involved, even with clear structures of participation, is not a panacea for sustainability of PuPs. In discussing the sustainability of structures for participation, such as *Mesas Técnicas* in Caracas, López Maya (2009, cited in Chavez, 2012b: 472)

argues that despite political support and financial resources, their future is not clear. Several issues are involved here:

> To expand and deepen experiences such as this one [in the water sector], which provides management skills and power to poor communities, has been a challenge to both authorities and neighbours committed to develop these innovations. The difficult socioeconomic conditions that affect poor people constitute a serious obstacle to the right and duty of participation. Many people, especially women, cannot participate because they face a double shift at work: in the workplace and at home. Sometimes people cannot or do not want to participate in community work because it is unpaid. Crime and violence are also a limiting factor, because the most convenient time for meetings is the evening, too dangerous...Another big problem is the constant uncertainty of Chávez's policies, where the removal of the official in charge usually means a stop in the transfer of resources or a full change of plans... Finally, this type of innovation, if it is not developed within a more comprehensive programme aimed at improving the unplanned urban spaces where today nearly half of the families in Venezuela live, runs the risk of being useless...But nevertheless, the MTA is an innovation in the right direction. When its members are interviewed, most women respond that this experience changed their lives...They have learned a set of skills and assumed a set of responsibilities that have allowed them to grow both as persons and as citizens. (ibid)

More generally, some scholars have pointed to a structural weakness of social movements which, while successful in preventing a "public bad" (campaigns against privatisation), have been less so in generating a "public good" (reforming poor-performing utilities) (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 149). Social movements have found it difficult to become 'long-term agents of sector change' and this is particularly so in cases where power relations of local politics are not transformed (ibid: 148). Indeed, despite important achievements in terms of people's participation in shaping public utilities in Porto Alegre, the sustainability of the DMAE model has been questioned (Spronk et al., 2012: 434). According to some sources, DMAE has 'lost much of its social character after the defeat of the Workers' Party' and 'has allegedly adopted more commercial practices such as imposing a stricter policy on payment including higher rates and more service cut-offs since the change in municipal administration' (ibid: 434 & 443).

The case of DMAE is very informative: the strength of participatory schemes in water utilities seems to have abated with the change in local politics. The participatory scheme was not able to transform the utility into a more robust system which could face political changes. The limited involvement of unions, which meant the failure to embed democracy in the internal administration of the municipality, could be one important factor behind the weakening of the participatory model of Porto Alegre after political change (Wainwright, 2012a: 92). Indeed, one key difference amongst DMAE and OSE in Uruguay is the role played by trade unions: while in OSE, the unions together with citizens' organisations embarked on an initiative to restructure the company, to 'modernise without privatization', in the case of DMAE unions

were involved to a limited extent in the management and purpose of work (ibid: 89). This, despite the crucial role of the Brazilian labour movement in establishing ANAMPOS (*Articulação Nacional dos Movimentos Populares e Sindicais*) - a hub for the coordination of various social movements in the struggle against dictatorship – which provided the legacy and a strong network of political activists during anti-privatisation struggles for the formation of FNSA *(Frente Nacional pelo Saneamento Ambiental*) in 1997 (ibid: 74). While the Brazilian labour movement was successful in stopping privatisation, it was not able to prevent the government from serving the demands of international capital for a greater role for PPPs (ibid: 75).

The case of DMAE emphasises the critical importance of trade unions self-consciously engaging in the struggle to defend and transform public utilities. Examples of trade unions becoming 'Citizens' Unions' by seeking to expand 'the struggle beyond the unions and make society as a whole aware of the importance of defending such essential services' (De Oliveira Filho, a trade unionist cited in Wainwright, 2012a: 74) are abundant. But while, in many cases, trade unions have been able to stop privatisation and commercialisation, they have generally stopped short of transforming public utilities and organisation and transforming work in the public sector.

Despite the crucial role of leadership, the strength and sustainability of these initiatives is highly influenced also by the deep involvement of membership. In the case of FENTAP, in Huancayo, Peru, the activism of leadership was not accompanied by membership mobilisation (Terhorst, 2008). In this situation, local politics appear to have prevailed, given that the PuP has not been able to push through with the intended reforms. There is clearly a need to organise and communicate to members and develop further the 'basic outline', and in that process to challenge membership's inertia, vested interests and fear (ibid). In contrast, Newcastle's UNISON sought to have members involved in every step of the modernising process, while retaining its power to act independently and escalate conflict if necessary on the one hand, and working closer with community groups on the other (Wainwright, 2009).

As some of the cases discussed in this paper show, there are certainly instances in which unions have been able to use their potential and initiate various experiments to transform public utilities. Being social organisations with their own institutional sources of funding puts trade unions in a stronger position to support other organisations (Spronk et al., 2012: 432) and indeed push for the creation of PuPs as in the case of bottom-up PuPs. Here the role of trade union leadership determines to a great extent the emergence and trajectory of PuPs initiated by trade unions. Drawing on a number of experiences of trade unions engaging in alternative forms of organising public services, Wainwright argues that the role of a trade union leadership is highly influenced by the struggles for radical democracy in the country: 'whether it was the participatory democracy of movements against the dictatorships in Latin America, the emphasis on workers' control and civic power in the grass roots resistance to apartheid in South Africa or the refusal of alienated labour and the emancipatory social struggles of the late 1960s and 1970s in Europe, formative influences on these leaderships were democratic political traditions that went beyond liberalism and the limits of representative democracy' (2012a: 90-1).

The strength and sustainability of PuPs initiatives is to a great extent depended on the depth of membership involvement. In the case of FENTAP, in Huancayo, Peru, the activism of leadership was not accompanied by membership mobilisation (Terhorst, 2008). In this situation, local politics appear to have prevailed, given that the PuP has not been able to push through with the intended reforms. There is clearly a need to organise and communicate to members and develop further the 'basic outline' and in that process to challenge membership's inertia, vested interests and fear (ibid). In contrast, Newcastle's UNISON sought to have members involved in every step of the modernising process, while retaining its power to act independently and escalate conflict if necessary on the one hand, and working closer with community groups on the other (Wainwright, 2009). In particular, all aspects of transformation were geared and assessed towards 'a clear common vision of high quality, publicly-delivered public services' which 'enabled the management and union leadership constantly to move the process forward' (ibid). This shared goal also helped renew and emphasise the issue of public service ethic and its meaning in practical terms (ibid). Certainly, the new public sector organisation that has emerged, which treated workers as skilled people who cared about the quality of the service they provided, played a key role in the success of the model and its sustainability (ibid). Similarly, in the case of the Model Municipality Project in Norway, it was unions' conscious effort to both fight privatisation but also modernise and improve the municipal services that marked the success of the model. Here, a politicised trade union movement fought hard to politicise the privatisation process itself by educating communities and trade union members. This, according to Wahl, led to a shift in public opinion from 50% in favour of privatisation in the mid-1990s to almost 70% against in 2005, and it even pushed left-wing parties more to the left (2007: 6).

In some distinct cases, labour has sought to transform the management and labour process while simultaneously pursuing goals of "publicness" as well as engaging in strategies of challenging the power of global institutions to exercise macro-economic pressure on the states (Wainwright, 2012a: 87). Hence, in the case of Norway, just before the fifth Ministerial of the WTO meeting in 2005, the campaign "For the Welfare State"[17] was able to mobilise a broad alliance of organisations representing more than 800,000 members and demand 'a break with neo-liberal trade policies' (Wahl, 2007: 4). Supported mainly by trade unions and farmers' organisations, the initiative led to the establishment of the Norwegian Trade Campaign network (ibid). Similarly, the role of broad mobilisations in Brazil, through FNSA, and in Uruguay through CNDAV aimed at mobilising 'power over the political process' in conditions in which the governments were willing to bow to the pressure of IFIs and left parties were by and large not a reliable force (Wainwright, 2012a: 81). In many ways, these new strategies of challenging the dominant discourse and global institutions have emerged as a response to the lack or limited support of left parties in defending public services.

[17] „For the Welfare State" is the name of a broad coalition in Norway which seeks to reverse the trend of growing inequality, attacks on public services, and ruthless exploitation of environment. For more: http://www.nnn.se/n-model/wahl-1.htm

At the same time, the relationship of workers with popular movements, communities and citizens in "deep coalitions", which go beyond 'tactical and instrumental alliances', have brought together sources of practical, expert and investigative expertise which have been crucial in transforming the public services (Wainwright, 2012a: 80). Such processes have extended well beyond borders through bottom-up PuPs and have been supported by regional and global networks and organisations. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the support of global networks promoting PuPs, such as PSI, *La Red Vida* and Reclaiming Public Water Network has been very important in facilitating the process of building bottom-up PuPs (Spronk et al., 2012: 433). Hence, the role of international collaboration needs to be seen also in the context of attempts 'to build forms of international power and knowledge with which to counter and, if possible, pre-empt corporate capital's attempts to commodify public services' (Keck and Sikkink 1998, cited in ibid).

To conclude, while all the above factors play an important role in the sustainability of PuPs, with some more than the others (depending on the context), the role of communities and particularly of workers remains essential in producing counter-knowledge and counter-power to the dominant discourse and forces shaping public services. Wainwright's argument on the case of the water utility in Cochabamba, Bolivia, is relevant also for the analysis here: 'without an internal dynamic of reforms, gathering inside knowledge through the workers about the working of the company across the traditional division of labour and petty departmental empires, collaborating with the community to work out practical alternatives, attempts to transform the company would invariably falter' (2012a: 88). Indeed, 'as long as the internal organisations of the public sector are top-down, fragmented and semi-oblivious to the real potential of their staff, all the participatory democracy in the world can be soaked up and defused or blocked by hierarchical structures and bureaucratic procedure' (Wainwright, 2009).

Environmental sustainability

The issue of environmental sustainability appears frequently in water and sanitation PuPs. In fact, some PuPs are initiated with the goal of improving the environmental impact of public utilities. One of the most cited examples in the literature is that of the twinning partnership between municipal water companies in Sweden and Finland and those of cities in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Hall et al., 2005: 32). The partnership consisted of a number of major projects developing wastewater plants and also supporting capacity building of municipal water and sewerage companies in the Baltic States to enable them to manage the environmental impact of their cities on the marine environment. For example, the partnership between Tallinn, Estonia and Helsinki Water, Finland included, among others, the construction of new wastewater treatment facilities, operational and maintenance cost savings, sustainable water resource utilisation, improvement of water quality, prevention of pollution and protection of jobs. The Tallinn utility was restructured into a 'self-managed, self-financed water utility enterprise, independent of any state or municipal subsidies' (EBRD, 2002, cited in ibid). However, the utility's corporatisation paved the way for privatisation in 2001, which led to cuts of 200 jobs, price

increases, demands for surcharges on water drainage, and enormous dividend payments and remuneration of the supervisory council.

Another partnership that has paid attention to environmental issues is that between the Amrta Institute for Water Literacy and the PDAM Tirtanadi water utility in Solo in Indonesia which has achieved strong social and environmental performance and responsible financial management (TNI and CEO, 2006: 9). Similarly, the Amsterdam Water Company has partnered with Beheira Water Company in Egypt in a PuP which includes certification of the company's laboratories and environmental activities (ibid: 9-10). Alas, in both cases, the literature does not provide further discussion on the concrete changes in environmental performance.

While the cases above refer more to narrow PuPs, environmental issues have also been taken up in a variety of ways in participatory PuPs. DMAE case, elaborated in the previous section, shows the concern of the utility not only with efficiency and equity, but also with issues of environmental protection. In Uruguay, in response to plans for an environmentally damaging waste water treatment and further privatisation of some parts of the public utility (*Obras Sanitarias del Estate, OSE)*, the national water movement (*Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y la Vida, CNDAV*) – a coalition of the water utility workers' union and various environmental and human rights NGOs – moved beyond local mobilisation and developed a 'far-reaching constitutional reform proposal' (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 147). The reform included substantial changes, such as 'the human right to water, direct public control, participation of citizens in all areas and steps of water resource management, and an ecosystems approach' (ibid).

The workers' union, the Federation of State Employees of OSE (*Federación de Funcionarios de Obras Sanitarias del Estado*, FFOSE), which had a high degree of legitimacy due to its role in the struggle against dictatorship, saw the 'struggle for water as a human right and public good' 'as a continuation of the struggle for democracy' (Wainwright, 2012a: 76). Feeling strongly about the struggles of farmers and rural populations whose livelihood depended on access to water, FFOSE moved beyond demands for jobs. In 2004, it campaigned for constitutional changes, while transforming OSE into a model utility (ibid: 77). In this process, it benefited from the international support organised by PSI, such as research and arguments for strengthening the proposals for amendments to the constitution (ibid). To achieve the latter goal, the union held numerous assemblies to draft proposals for the restructuring of the company and in a few years was able to transform OSE 'from a corrupt and inefficient institution to a public water company that runs a surplus budget and may be now considered a model public utility', and it did so without compromising on working conditions (Spronk et al., 2012: 431). After the success of the referendum, the model included a formal requirement which stipulated that 'citizens and staff have an effective role in the running of the company' (Wainwright, 2012a: 77).

Similarly, the remunicipalisation of the water utility in Paris, elaborated on above, has given rise to a range of reforms which have 'allowed the city of Paris and by the same token the Parisians, to regain control of their water services and to introduce designated environmental, economic, democratic and social objectives' (Le Strat, 2010: 4). With regard to the environmental objectives, *Eau de Paris* has

been active in raising awareness on water issues in Paris and elsewhere in the world (ibid). To this end, the utility has sought to develop campaigns which promote the use of tap water as more ecological and cheaper than bottled water (ibid).

How do PuPs perform in issues of solidarity?

PuPs provide the space for solidarity building among public sector managers, workers, communities, social movements and activists at the local and global level. They provide the space for various actors to meet, share knowledge and enhance their sense of confidence and pride in the ability of public utilities to meet the demands of citizens which leads to improved quality of services (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 11).

The solidarity basis of PuPs varies with the type of partners involved and with the goals the PuPs aim to achieve. Whereas some PuPs are more into broader goals such as improving water services, promoting "public goods" aspects of water services and at times fighting privatisation and promoting public services, others are more context-specific, such as introducing new technology, improving managerial skills and accessing finance (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 6). Partnerships among water service operators are more concerned with infrastructural and capacity goals given their expertise in these particular fields, whereas partnerships with non-operator groups are more concerned with financial, social or political goals, such as tariff design, and transparency and accountability of water services (ibid).

The workers union FFOSE of the Uruguayan public water and sanitation utility OSE, after initiating a PuP with the Argentinean ABSA, insisted on developing an international solidarity strategy in support of other public water operators in the region (Terhorst, 2009, cited in Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 149). Following on such commitment, OSE became one of the main organisers of a regional utilities forum aimed at the establishment of a regional network of non-commercialised public utilities through the promotion of PuPs, and in 2010 it signed a PuP pre-agreement with the municipal utility SEDACUSCO in Peru (ibid: 150). Spronk and Terhorst see these bottom-up PuPs as examples of innovative proposals for water management emerging from the politicised participation of water movements in concrete policy and management decisions, and more importantly, from the 'shift in norms towards equal, not-for-profit strengthening of the public sector' (2012: 150). To Wainwright, these are expressions of concerted efforts of trade unions across Latin America to resist privatisation and to build PuPs across borders 'on the principles of accountability and participation that they have developed locally' (2012a: 87). These PuPs, which are initiated by trade unions and local social movements, are at times supported by PSI, the regional water network (*La Red Vida*) and the global Reclaiming Public Water Network (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 150). In fact, the unions that initiated the first cross-border PuP in the region were PSI affiliates (Spronk et al., 2012: 433).

The examples of bottom-up PuPs seem to indicate a new category of PuP, which goes beyond either partnerships among two public utilities initiated by authorities, or partnerships among a public utility and

workers and communities. These partnerships stand in contrast to most narrow PuPs, or top-down partnerships, which although framed around solidarity, may hold an aspect of charity: the rich utilities helping the poorer ones. With bottom-up PuPs, initiated by trade unions in Latin America, there is an understanding that struggles around public services are connected across borders and that there is a real need to support public utilities everywhere. Indeed, bottom-up partnerships, such as those initiated by workers' unions in Uruguay and Argentina, are amongst the most outstanding PuPs in Latin America (Spronk et al., 2012: 432).

Other networks supporting PuPs are emerging across the world. Several countries have sought to create specific structures which can support PuPs on a more sustainable basis. Hence, in 2005, the Brazilian government passed the Law 11.107 which 'encourages municipalities to form a consortium to provide, regulate, plan and supervise water and sanitation services' and which aims at contributing to "economy of scale": making possible actions that cannot be undertaken by a small municipality (TNI and CEO, 2006: 9). TNI and CEO note that, similarly to the Brazilin experience, in France too is being discussed the establishment of an association of municipalities and regions of public water with a representation of NGOs (2006: 12). The water operator of the province of Buenos Aires (OSBA) has created a foundation 'to advance low-cost technologies and provide advice to other public operators' (ibid). With the purpose of providing assistance to PuPs among public utilities by technicians of water utilities, Costa Rica's national water institute has established a separate administrative body (Spronk et al., 2012: 432). *Aqua Publica Europa* (European Public Water) is a network of European public water operators founded in 2009 of which *Eau de Paris* is a founding member. It provides a space for water operators to exchanges experience and cooperate as well as to have their voices heard at the European level (Le Strat, 2010: 5 & 6). With the recent changes in European funding the network sees more space for developing PuPs. *Eau de Paris* itself is providing support through its staff, skills and know-how to local authorities and NGOs in France, but also to Phnom Penh public utility in setting a social tariff and to the Moroccan water company (ONEP), in partnering with them to implement a water supply system in Mauritania (ibid: 6).

6. New ways of organising public services and work in PuPs

Tracking the emergence of new forms of organising public services and work through PuPs is a challenging task. Despite the limited focus of the literature on these issues, the assessment of PuPs in relation to the key elements of "publicness" provides some indications for tracking these new forms.

New forms of organising public services

In enhancing the various key dimensions of "publicness" - equity and efficiency, participation and accountability, and solidarity and (political, social, financial and environmental) sustainability – several of

the participatory PuPs discussed in this research have also inspired new visions of public services, introduced new structures or changed the existing ones, and have initiated new processes of framing and implementing goals or transforming the existing ones.

Having the quality of building partnerships not only among public utilities, but also among citizens, communities and workers, participatory PuPs provide the space for people to articulate new visions of public services challenging the claim by bureaucrats and experts that they are able to determine what is best for citizens. While inspired by universal goals of "publicness", these new visions reflect at the same time the historical, political, social, economic and cultural conditions of a particular context. A materialisation of these new visions and expectations for new forms of organising public services is reflected also in the language used to describe these new public services. Community-Utility Partnership, Public-Workers Partnership, Communitarian Water Delivery, Public-Social Company, Public-Community Partnership, City Service, Model Municipality and Public Participatory Utility are only some of the new names used to describe the ongoing partnership experiments of (re-)organising public services.

Participatory schemes inspired (not only) by the Brazilian participatory budgeting, have been materialised in various structures and processes in the forms of: the DMAE's "deliberative council", which allows citizens to determine budget allocations of the municipality and ensure the social control of people and the transparency of public utilities; the Kerala's People's Plan policy delegating the responsibility for 40% of state budget to villages, or the revived *Koodam*, where issues are discussed and decisions are taken among villagers and public sector employees treating each other as equals; technical water councils in Caracas coordinating all knowledge that people have about their water network; the Municipality Water Watch in Paris, providing a space for people to discuss issues regarding the water utility and bring in new ideas; the Model Municipality Project in Norway initiating a bottom-up process of rethinking modernisation of municipality services among workers and citizens. All these structures and processes set up to overcome bottlenecks and limitations of public services, have set in motion a process of collective learning (Balanyá et al., 2005: 271) and led to deeper transformations of the way public services are organised. In Huancayo, Peru, the very participation of citizens and workers in restructuring the public utility has led to a bottom-up, international participatory PuP, in which models of politicised participation built locally by movements, are extending beyond borders and indeed setting in motion changes in other utilities.

Having people involved in PuPs through participatory schemes to achieve goals of increased access to, equity and responsiveness of, public services has also given rise to demands for introducing changes in public utilities financial schemes and operational structures. Hence, DMAE has applied a cross-subsidies scheme to increase equity and access. Community Partnerships with health professionals in South Africa have resulted in the establishment of new health clinics and youth desks. FFOSE trade union has persuaded the public water and sanitation utility (OSE) to create a Social Office which is responsible for implementing a social tariff policy (Spronk and Terhorst, 2012: 147). *Eau de Paris*, too,

has introduced a policy of social subsidies to make water accessible for all, independent of citizens' ability to pay.

One crucial contribution of PuPs is certainly its ability to help kick-start a process of rethinking the purpose of public service and provide mechanisms for policy development (Boag and McDonald, 2010: 11). They do so by initiating an interaction and dialogue across public-sector utilities (for example water and health services) and across different scales of government, thus "forcing" policy development throughout the public sector (ibid). In their review of six PuPs, Hall et al. note that long-term work in the health sector often led to other issues being addressed, for example, economic development (2005: 25). Moreover, in pursuing goals of enhanced "publicness", some of the PuPs analysed here, particularly participatory PuPs, have gone beyond actions around a specific utility and have sought to pursue multi-scalar strategies such as: pushing for constitutional changes which recognise the participation of communities and citizens in public services or which make access to public services, such as water and health, a human right, or demanding a break with neoliberal trade policies which affect public services.

New ways of organising work

Among the most frequently cited objectives and activities of PuPs are those related to capacity building and training of workforces on issues, such as integrity, equity, clarity, accountability, transparency, openness, cooperation and evaluation with the aim of enhancing public sector ethos (Hall et al., 2005 & 2009; TNI and CEO, 2006). Despite the specific focus on workers, the PuPs literature reviewed for this paper, with few exceptions, has paid limited attention to new ways of organising *work* in the public sector. However, elements of new forms of organising work can be tracked in some of the PuPs discussed here.

Training and capacity building of public utilities, as one common objective cutting across almost all PuPs, is crucial to improving the work process, which in return brings positive changes in terms of efficiency and quality of as well as access to public services. This is certainly an important empowering factor which helps increase workers' confidence and pride in the services they provide to citizens. However, skills upgrading alone cannot give workers a greater role in decision making and a voice in workplace decisions about how work can be organised. The PuPs literature which analyses the effect of training and capacity building on workers' empowerment and new ways of organising work is rather limited, and it confines itself to general assessments[18] of the overall impact on the services provided. In some cases, which would classify as "narrow" PuPs, it is clear that workers training was not even intended to give them more control over the workplace.

18 Marra's analysis of capacity building through development and the transfer of knowledge in the case of the training partnership between the World Bank and University of São Paulo are of interest for the discussion here. Marra argues that the empirical knowledge and methodological basis for assessing the knowledge transfer is limited (Marra, 2004, cited in Hall et al., 2005: 7). Therefore, despite partnership's objectives of efficiency, effectiveness, and organisational and managerial change 'there is scant empirical evidence on how partnerships work and on whether they bring about the desired outcomes (ibid).

On the other hand, in some of the participatory PuPs initiated by workers and including significant participation of communities, it is possible to identify clear elements of new forms of organising work. These are expressed first and foremost in workers being empowered to have a say in how public services are run, and indeed make suggestions and plans to reorganise services with the aim of enhancing one or several key dimensions of "publicness". Having the communities involved in participatory PuPs compels workers to reconsider issues of efficiency, quality and accessibility of public services and shift the focus of the debate to the societal values of the services they provide. By working together with communities and identifying themselves also as service users, workers are enabled to reflect on the way public services are organised, identify limitations and bottlenecks and propose strategies for restructuring services, and, in the process, make these services more democratic and responsive to the communities. The framework of goals established through community's participation in structures such as the MTAs in Caracas, or the "deliberative council" in the case of DMAE, or the *Koodam* in the case of Tamil Nadu water utility, gives workers pride and helps them articulate a new commitment to quality public services expressed in visions of restructuring public services 'into a more people focused, community responsive and publicly accountable organisation' (TNI & CEO, 2006: 5).

In the case of Huancayo, Peru, the involvement of the workers' union FENTAP in making detailed diagnoses of water utilities, fighting corruption and planning democratisation and institutional reform through a stronger role for workers and citizens (ibid: 7) exemplify the way work is transformed, giving more power to workers and challenging the disconnect between thinking and doing in providing public services. Rather than waiting for the management's plans to determine what is to be done to transform the public utility, workers have engaged with users in a wide process of (re)thinking the goals and means of organising public services. The Peruvian water workers union has also developed a detailed plan for the modernisation of the water utility in the city of Lambayeque, which includes strategies for the expansion of services, renovation and rehabilitation of infrastructure, financial viability, social tariffs and affordability (ibid: 6). Such deep engagement is no longer about short-term solutions; it is about the need for fundamental changes which can bring about more "publicness" in the operation of OSE. Similarly, the unions in Norway embarked in a partnership with municipal services to transform them into models of public utilities. In all these examples, workers have used the space created by participatory PuPs to express their creativity in aligning people's expectations and visions with their knowledge and expertise and relating to the services they provide for the citizens in ways which challenge patterns of alienated labour.

Tracking down changes in the managerial style of public services utilities and organisations is even more challenging. Perhaps the most detailed account of such changes is that of UNISON's branch in Newcastle, which sought to involve workers at every step of the campaign to ward off privatisation and modernise services. By recognising workers' capacities as 'assets to be realised, not costs to be cut'

and by believing and encouraging them, the City Service[19] has transformed its management on the principle of "coaching, no commanding" (Wainwright, 2009).

> Initiative and responsibility has been pushed away from the centre, layers of supervision have been eliminated and replaced by support. The dynamism of the department lies in working across its different sections through project groups involving all those with a relevant angle on a problem to come together to resolve it.
>
> All in all, City Service transformed the centre of its organisation from a traditional model of local government management into a hub from which management supports numerous, largely autonomous projects and activities. A new kind of public sector organisation has emerged, with a leadership role that is more about facilitation and developing a shared direction than it is about exercising control. (ibid)

Most importantly, Newcastle's example highlights the crucial role played by the unions in the process of transforming labour processes and public services. As Wainwright argues there is a need to particularly recognise the 'necessity of a well-organised and democratic trade union to achieve' workers empowerment (Wainwright, 2009).

With the exception of Newcastle's experience, the existing literature on PuPs does not provide clear evidence of changes in the internal hierarchical structures towards flatter structures which delegate decision-making to workers at lower levels. While changes in the structures have certainly occurred, it is not clear whether such changes have enabled workers to exercise more control and autonomy over working time which would allow them to establish a better balance in life and engage in other activities such as personal development. For example, *Eau de Paris* has ended all overlaps among sectors and jobs as a measure to improve efficiency, but there is no mention of increasing workers' participation in decision-making or of altering hierarchical structures. Similarly, DMAE workers were provided by the utility with scholarships to pursue further studies, but here too there is no indication that DMAE has sought to give workers more control at the workplace.

In conclusion, despite the increasing visibility of PuPs in the literature of the last decade or so, there is very limited analysis on new forms of organising public services and particularly on new ways of organising work. While this paper recognises the great potential of PuPs, particularly participatory PuPs, to facilitate such developments, there is a need for more in-depth analysis on the concrete forms of organising public services and work emerging through PuPs and on the conditions which facilitate and constrain the emergence of such forms.

[19] City Service is the name of the new department that brought all reformed services together (Wainwright, 2009).

7. Conclusions

This research paper argues that PuPs can play a critical role not only in resisting the privatisation of public services and PPPs, but also in serving as strategies for enhancing the "publicness" of public services and in creating the conditions for the emergence of alternative ways of organising public services and work in the public sector.

The concept of "publicness" is not used to define the boundaries of what is public; in fact the very concept points to the need of going beyond the nature of ownership. Instead, the "publicness" concept is seen as an expression of visions for alternative public services and captured through a number of key elements, namely: equity and efficiency, participation and accountability, and solidarity and (political, social, financial and environmental) sustainability of public services. Assessing the "publicness" of PuPs, then, means to assess the way through which PuPs are able to enhance the constituting elements of "publicness".

PuPs contribution in enhancing the "publicness" of public services varies. Narrow PuPs, defined as twinning partnerships among two or more public utilities/organisations, with their focus on capacity building and technical assistance, may increase the efficiency and quality of public services and strengthen solidarity among public sector operators and organisations, either within the country or between countries. While such PuPs may enhance certain dimensions of "publicness", the literature on PuPs does not seem to indicate that they are able to initiate new forms of organising public services and work.

Participatory PuPs, defined as those partnerships which involve one or more public utilities, workers and/or communities or citizens, seem to play a more decisive role in enhancing "publicness" of public services. It is their key characteristic – people's and workers' participation – which places them in a very favourable position in the debate on alternative public services. In contrast to twinning PuPs, the explicit objective of ensuring participation of communities and workers in participatory PuPs limits the risk of being affected by partners with a "confused identity", who enter into a PuP for commercial objectives. Moreover, participatory PuPs may also help overcome the dilemma of what happens after twinning partnerships. The cases of Tallin, Harrismith and others emphasise the need for meaningful involvement of communities and workers in restructuring public services. While twinning can indeed provide very important support for public utilities in crisis, whatever potential arising from such restructuring can only be sustained by continuous participation of workers and communities.

Most importantly, participatory PuPs provide communities and workers with strategies of not only opposing privatisation and overcoming the limitations of existing public services, but also of imagining and articulating new visions of public services. Participatory PuPs can push for concrete changes in the existing structures and processes and/or for establishing entirely new processes and structures which deepen the participation of people and workers and enhance the "publicness" and public ethos of public services. In this way, PuPs can contribute to the transformation of public sector work and the world of

work more generally given the power of public sector as an employer and trend-setter (Wainwright, 2012b: 4).

Participatory PuPs open up possibilities for citizens, communities and workers' empowerment and emancipation, helping them to deal with existing power asymmetries within communities or to ease the existing tensions among workers and various social movements or between various objectives of "publicness". A meaningful participation of communities and workers empowers them to transform these tensions into 'creative tensions' (Linera, cited in Fuentes, 2012), giving rise to innovative ways of organising public services that reflect the specific historical conditions in which the PuP has emerged.

Participation of communities and workers in transforming public services through PuPs creates the conditions for new ways of organising work which allow workers to redefine their professional activity in a framework of goals identified by their fellow citizens and overcome patterns of alienated labour in the public sector which have intensified along with processes of commercialisation and privatisation of public services. A continuous and meaningful participation provides a unique space for building counter-knowledge and counter-power to such processes. Here the role of global trade unions and organisations is essential not only in supporting the process of building counter-knowledge, but also in acting as a counter-power in its engagement with global institutions.

By bringing decision-making into the public sphere, participatory PuPs may be seen also as an expression of the "commons" debate, which does not seek to abandon the state, but to make the state more accountable and responsive to a framework of goals and objectives shaped by people and workers together with public utilities and public sector organisations with the end effect of democratising the state. Indeed, the very process of democratising public services through PuPs is part and parcel of the struggle to ensure 'popular control of state institutions with social equality and open democratic institutions' contributing to the liberation of 'the state from the control of narrow elites and corporations and rolling back the frontiers of market power' (McDonald and Ruiters, 2012a: 14).

All PuPs provide spaces for connecting experiences across borders and, indeed, across countries with seemingly very different models of public services. It is from this diversity that new ideas of shaping public services structures and processes can be seen to emerge. Indeed, some PuPs provide the space for future South-North partnership 'as a tool to help spread democratic water management practices in European countries, where many public water operators have lost their sense of "publicness"' (TNI & CEO, 2006: 12). At the same time, the inherent characteristic of solidarity and cooperation among public utilities and other state agencies gives PuPs a strategic advantage in shaping coherent and comprehensive public services systems. In this way, participatory PuPs also help counteract the market oriented reforms tendency to unbundle public services into "autonomous" units concerned mainly with the financial bottom-line and neglectful of the impact they have on each other.

However, while participatory PuPs may enhance various dimensions of "publicness" and create the conditions for the emergence of new forms of organising public services and work, a hostile political environment may pose serious challenges and make positive outcomes less likely. For such potential to

be realised, PuPs would have to be turned into a political project which can be sustained and face those challenges. Realising the potential of PuPs to transform public services and work in the public sector and sustain those transformations requires a continuous movement among various moments (Harvey, 2010) or spaces created by PuPs. Hence, the involvement of communities and workers in participatory PuPs needs to be translated into structures and processes which allow for a deeper and more meaningful participation and influence over goals and objectives of public services. This would require rethinking the purpose of public services and labour processes challenging the logic of commercialisation and alienated labour. It would mean, for example, to frame access to public services as a social and political right necessitating the involvement of other levels of government and policy making with the aim of building more robust public services systems and the introduction of important changes in the legal framework and institutional arrangements. It would also mean to turn capacity building and spaces for workers' involvement into a possibility for transforming labour processes and the hierarchical structures of public sector organisations and utilities to give workers more autonomy over the work they do and a greater say in how work can be organised.

Finally, although fragile and facing enormous challenges, PuPs represent '"actually existing" forms of resistance' (Serrano and Xhafa, 2012: 288), which by pursuing goals of enhancing the "publicness" of public services, contribute at building and strengthening new visions public services and alternative ways of organising public services and work.

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