UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Proceedings of the
Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum
Social Justice Cluster Conference

13–15 February 2018
Balay Kalinaw, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City

"Assuring Affordable, Accessible, and Quality Public Services for All: Tool for Levelling Inequality, Mobilizing for Transformative Change!"

AEPF

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Alternative Development

In cooperation with
ASEAN Parliamentary Network for Human Rights • Tax and Fiscal Justice Asia • DIGNIDAD • Freedom from Debt Coalition • Fight Inequality Alliance • Global Social Justice • Institute for Popular Democracy • Network for Transformative Social Protection • Public Services International

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Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum

The **Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF)** is a broad and dynamic network of progressive and major civil society organisations and trade unions, including peoples' movements, non-government organizations, and issue-based campaign networks across Asia and Europe. For the past 20 years, the AEPF has remained as the only continuing civil society inter-regional network connecting peoples' movements and advancing their voices in the ASEM (Asia–Europe Meeting). It has facilitated the immediate and future collaborations among civil society groups in Asia and with Europe-based organizations to promote people-centred alternatives being built from below. Since its formation in 1996, it has organized peoples' forums parallel to the Asia–Europe Meeting summits. The AEPF has made a substantive contribution to putting the imperatives of a people-centred regional integration on the agenda of civil society in Asia and in Europe—addressing issues of regional democratization, especially on the centrality of citizens' participation.

Our Context

TINA EBRO
Co-Coordinator for Asia, Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum

The world is riven by social injustices marked by worsening social inequality, dispossession, exploitation, and exclusion. In Asia, despite of its booming economy, close to one billion people face massive unemployment and work informalization, with barely any access to social services and support for a life of dignity. In Europe, more than 115 million people are living at the poverty line, facing indebtedness, joblessness, and insecurity. Despite these realities, states respond with policies that cut social services and dismantle public utilities. In the process, institutionalized welfare programs that have served as models of development have been undermined and eroded.

Austerity measures

The dominant development paradigm's market-centric policies have affected the lives and livelihoods of peoples in Asia and Europe, especially the vulnerable sectors. Both regions face austerity measures driven by international public institutions, notably the international financing institutions (IFIs), and in Europe, through the European Union which has given the Commission additional powers to slash and control national public spending plans.

Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) now claims to recognize that current policies increase inequality, and that these harm economic growth and stability. But the IMF and World Bank (WB) continue to worsen inequality through their conditionalities which require cuts in public spending, in spite of their formal priority for poverty reduction. They also promote cutting corporate tax rates and providing generous tax and fiscal incentives, which lead to losing and forgoing badly needed financial resources for social spending. Meanwhile, to recoup these losses, the IMF in particular pushes for the adoption or increase of regressive consumption taxes such as value added taxes, which unjustly burden the poor and low-income groups. Women in great numbers are in lowly paid, insecure, and informal work and are thus disproportionately impacted.

This internationalization undermines and weakens democratic processes and outcomes at the national level. Social movements thus face a challenge of not only of winning public support and national-level political support, but also of defending the democratic processes against the institutions of globalization.

Public financing of services and public-private partnerships

Further, in terms of realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the World Bank and member-states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD) insist on public-private partnerships (PPPs) as the way forward. Yet cumulative evidence demonstrates that these are more expensive (and thus constrain peoples' access), more prone to corruption, less efficient, and less sustainable than using public finance and public sector delivery. The focus of private companies on profit as the primary motive goes against the very basis of public services and even from what constitutes 'public' and 'public good.' No economy can be sustainable without a robust commitment to peoples' access to affordable quality public services. These services are part of the social commons which all people have a right to enjoy. People, as human beings, possess the inalienable right to essential services.

Entering into trade agreements is also promoted by the international financing institutions on the assumption that these will increase foreign direct investment and hence, financing for public services. However, such agreements have proven to be damaging to countries' revenue bases and exploitative of human and natural resources. Investments have served to extract revenue from public services, boosting the returns to transnational corporations and finance capital.

Public goods and equality

All over Asia and Europe, specific public services including housing, healthcare, education, water, energy, and transport (e.g., roads, railways, and ports) are experiencing a serious crisis. These services are vital and indispensable to the life, dignity, and development of individuals and society as a whole. They are public goods or social commons and their provisioning must therefore be guaranteed and financed by states from the taxes they collect through public employment and be subject to democratic control through the participation of citizens. Where governments and local authorities fail to provide such services or mismanage the provision of these services through corruption or negligence or underprovision, states should support the autonomous activities of peoples' organizations and local communities in the provisioning of such services.

Because public services are proportionately more important for poorer groups in the population, poorer people are more affected in times of austerity. The rich and private corporations remain relatively unscathed. The cutbacks invariably target public employment, which further exacerbate inequality. This is because the public sector provides greater opportunities for the employment of women and of disadvantaged ethnic and other groups and because public sector pay is more equally distributed. Moreover, the loss of jobs affects families that depend mostly on income derived from employment, rather than wealthy elites who benefit more from unearned income derived from profit or rent.

Political dynamics

These dynamics have also led, especially in Europe, to the rise of great public anger against political elites which are more committed to neoliberal doctrines than to the welfare of their own people. This anger shows itself in the collapse of support for traditional parties—more particularly social democracy—and a growth in support for xenophobic and authoritarian politicians, as seen in European countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Austria—and in the UK's Brexit vote—as well as in Asian countries including India and the Philippines.

Social movements are playing a vital role in building new political movements, which recognize the real social and economic problems experienced by people, reject the divisive politics of xenophobia, and challenge the unbridled power and impunity of corporations and their capture of economies and states. These movements are already making impact in major cities in both continents, including Barcelona and New Delhi.

Campaigning for public services and social commons is therefore a daunting task for Asian and European social movements. Public services require renewed and strengthened capacity for local and central governments to deliver quality services and use of public finance to do so. It also involves reclaiming the strong democratic and people-centric role of the state, so that it can support and implement key demands of the social movements:

- Reversing the privatization of public goods or social commons;
- Abandonment of the policy of using PPPs in favor of using public finance to fund infrastructure and public services;
- Advancing of democratic control and management of public services, focusing on mechanisms for peoples' participation and monitoring;
- Introduction of legislation—with constitutional underpinning if possible—to ensure that peoples' rights to public services are institutionalized and insulated from market forces and political patronage;
- Mustering enough political will to abandon skewed tax policies which allow the mega-rich to hide their wealth via tax havens and illegal money flows, so that they can be taxed to finance decent public services; and
- Development of 'public-people' partnerships to support non-profit groups like cooperatives and social enterprises which can achieve more people-centered and accountable modes of social service delivery.

The rebuilding of public services is not an isolated campaign. It is linked with struggles of other democratic and progressive institutions across many sectors—for land, food sovereignty, decent work and social rights, just trade, and ecological and climate justice. It is a key part of a vigorous and wide-ranging movement for systemic change to an alternative development paradigm that will place people and the planet at the top and at the center of development.

Conference Program

13 FEBRUARY 2018, TUESDAY

Preliminary Session
Welcome Messages and Introductions

Plenary 1 **Public Services and Social/Economic Development**	David Hall (United Kingdom) Rene Ofreneo (Philippines)
Plenary 2 **Beyond States: Global/Regional Actors and Free Trade Agreements**	Barry Coates (New Zealand) David Hall (United Kingdom)
Plenary 3 **Sectoral Issues and Struggles**	
On Housing/Right to the City	Meena Menon (India) Eric Villanueva (Philippines)
On Water	Miriam Planas (Spain) Alghiffari Aqsa (Indonesia)
On Transport	Mladen Domazet (Croatia)

Breakout Groups
On Housing, Water, and Transport

Sharing of Housing, Water, and Transport Workshop Results

Solidarity Dinner

14 FEBRUARY 2018, WEDNESDAY

Plenary 4
Our Alternatives to Reclaim Our Public Services

Re-municipalization and Re-nationalization	Satoko Kishimoto (Japan/Belgium)
The Social Commons: Democratization and Participation	Francine Mestrum (Belgium)

Plenary 5
Organizing Our Public Services

Financing and Real Progressive Taxation	Mae Buenaventura (Philippines)
Public Services and Labor	David Boys (United States)

Plenary 6
Sectoral Issues and Struggles

On Health	Sharad Onta (Nepal) Vittorio Agnoletti (Italy)
On Education	Peter Ronald DeSouza (India) Raquel Castillo (Philippines)
On Energy	Sören Becker (Germany) Lidy Nacpil (Philippines)

Breakout Groups
On Health, Education, and Energy

15 FEBRUARY 2018, THURSDAY

Sharing of Health, Education, and Energy Workshop Results

Plenary 7
Sharing of Campaigns

World Solidarity Movement	Koen Detavernier (Belgium)
ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum	Eduardo Tadem (Philippines)
Network for Transformative Social Protection	Maris dela Cruz (Philippines)
Coalition of Services of the Elderly	Emily Beredico (Philippines)
DIGNIDAD	Ana Maria Nemenzo (Philippines)
Freedom from Debt Coalition	Sammy Gamboa (Philippines)

Closing Plenary

Summary of Salient Points and Future Actions	Tina Ebro Co-Coordinator for Asia, Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum
Conference Statement	
Concluding Remarks	Charles Santiago (Malaysia)

Preliminary Session

Welcome messages

Tina Ebro, Co-Coordinator for Asia of the Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF), formally opened the AEPF Conference with the theme *Assuring affordable, accessible, and quality public services for all: Tool for levelling inequality, mobilizing for transformative change!*

On behalf of the AEPF, the co-organizers, and the secretariat, she welcomed and thanked the participants for coming to the three-day conference.

Sally Rousset of the AEPF French Collective and member of the International Organizing Committee (IOC) gave a briefer on the AEPF. The Forum is an inter-regional network of social movements, trade unions, non-government organizations (NGOs), campaign networks, scholars, and parliamentarians in Asia and Europe that advocates alternatives for a just and sustainable world. Working since 1996, the AEPF organizes the biennial convergence of civil society organizations prior to the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) of Asian and European governments.

For the AEPF, the current transborder, geopolitical, and social-economic-ecological crises can no longer be addressed at the local and national levels alone, but require the cooperation and solidarity of people's networks regionally, inter-regionally, and globally. The Forum provides catalytic space to analyze and address issues, put forth demands, as well as opportunities, and create linkages and strategize around shared issues and coordinated actions.

Rousset shared that the IOC is continually looking for strategies on how the AEPF can be used more effectively. One strategy is the conduct of thematic conferences, such as this conference of the Social Justice cluster. The IOC monitors how things are developing in the different clusters and strives to provide avenues for critical reflection and synergizing. In her closing remarks, she stressed the AEPF's key role in helping build the solidarity of progressive social movements in Asia and Europe.

Introductions

Ana Vitacion, Coordinator of Buhay na May Dignidad para sa Lahat (DIGNIDAD), recognized the following organizations participating in the conference:

International and regional organizations

- ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
- Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF)–Asia
- Costituzione Beni Comuni (Constitution and Common Wealth)
- Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS)
- Engineering Without Borders (EWB) Catalonia

- Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)
- ASEAN Civil Society Coalition (ACSC)
- Institute for Political Ecology
- Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Jakarta Legal Aid Institute
- Focus on the Global South
- Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH Jakarta)
- Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP)
- Medicina Democratica
- Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), University of Greenwich
- Public Services International (PSI)
- Transnational Institute (TNI)
- 11.11.11
- University of Bonn
- United Nations Civil Society Advisory Committee (UNCSAC)

Philippine organizations

- Alab Katipunan–Youth
- Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) / Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO)
- Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP)
- Center for Energy, Ecology and Development (CEED)
- Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE)
- Buhay na May Dignidad para sa Lahat / Life of Dignity for All (DIGNIDAD)
- Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) and chapters (Davao, Iloilo, Negros, and Western Mindanao)
- HomeNet Philippines
- Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD)
- Institute for Philippine Cooperative and Social Enterprise Development (IPSCED)
- Kilos Maralita (KM)
- Koalisyon Pabahay Pilipinas (KPP)
- Laban ng Masa (LNM)
- Medical Action Group (MAG)
- Oriang
- Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa sa Transportasyon
- Partido ng Manggagawa (PM)
- Palag Na!
- Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ)
- Pambansang Koalisyon ng mga Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK)
- Polytechnic University of the Philippines Student Council (PUPSC)
- Sanlakas
- Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLink)
- Social Watch Philippines
- Sustainability and Participation through Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL)
- Tambuyog
- WomanHealth
- Urban Poor Associates (UPA)
- UP Samahang Mag-aaral ng Asya (UP SAMA)
- UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies Program on Alternative Development (UP CIDS AltDev)

PLENARY 1

Public Services and Social/Economic Development

Public Services Economic Advantages

DAVID HALL (United Kingdom)

On the austerity policy

Austerity policies are not only being applied in Europe, including the United Kingdom (UK), but also in many developing countries, especially those subject to International Monetary Fund (IMF) programs. Eight years ago, the IMF viewed public spending as growing to be too big and getting to be a major problem, thus, the need to implement austerity measures by cutting back on public services. The IMF target is to reduce public spending by 24% in high income countries and 11% in developing countries by 2030.

However, austerity does not help economic recovery; it actually damages the latter—a fact acknowledged by the IMF. This is backed by long-term economic data and analysis, illustrating that investing in public services is linked to growth, employment, and development and that austerity policy has a negative impact on economic growth.

On claims of greater efficiency of the private sector

There is no evidence across sectors to the claim that the private sector is necessarily efficient and even more efficient than the government. Many cases of privatization have come to debunk this claim. For example, among UK privatizations in general, the literature shows "little evidence that privati[z]ation has caused a significant improvement in performance" (Martin and Parker 1997; Florio 2004). A meta-review of 27 econometric studies on comparative public-private efficiency in waste and water, across various countries has reached a similar finding: "We do not find a genuine empirical effect of cost savings resulting from private production" (Bel and Warner 2010).

On public services as enabling greater equality

Many studies on rising inequality fail to factor in the role of access to public services in bringing about greater equality. Public services have a great impact on economic equality and democratic power that is not replaceable by an equivalent increase in post-tax disposable income. The value of public services has been shown to equally benefit people across sectors and income groups, with their value much greater for poorer groups relative to income. In the aggregate, they are worth more than social services overall.

Public services have more impact on income equality than taxes or benefits have. Taxation systems do not have much equalizing effect on distribution of income. Public services also have greater impact on reducing inequality than social benefits have (and far greater impact than taxation), in high-income countries and in Latin America. Furthermore, public services also create greater equality in the distribution of disposable income through public sector employment and through avoidance of 'catastrophic' expenditure.

Public ownership also increases democratic control and enables reduction of overall rise in share of profits (i.e., the Piketty effect).

On the UK experience

The UK has seen growing public support for public ownership and a return to public ownership of public services. One indicator is the public response to the 2017 elections during which the Labour Party released a manifesto in support, among others, of public ownership of water, energy grids and renewable generation, rail, and post. As a result, the Labour Party gained more than 40% of the votes.

There is also an ongoing national campaign against privatization of public services. Dubbed *We Own It!*, the campaign has been fighting against privatization since 2013 by conducting research and highlighting good practices in the public sector. All of these contribute to the aim of changing the discourse that private is better and of shifting the debate towards public ownership of essential services.

Public Services and Philippine/Asian Economic Development in Wicked and Contradictory Times

RENE OFRENEO (Philippines)

The world faces confusing times. On the one hand, there are unparalleled technological advances such as artificial intelligence, the internet, and drone-driven agriculture, among others, and yet more than 800 million people are starving, a third of the world's population is unemployed or underemployed, and inequality has grown so deep that only eight persons own half of earth's wealth. The Cold War has been replaced by the 'war on terror' and new global rivalries have emerged. Demagogues and strongmen/strongwomen are moving into high positions of power, offering draconian solutions to weak governance that is coupled with urgent but unmet peoples' needs.

The situation is further aggravated by the changing direction of globalization, as exemplified by United States (US) President Donald Trump and his protectionist 'America First' policy and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s issuances admitting that neoliberalism has been oversold and has not led to benefits that trickle down to the masses.

In Asia and Southeast Asia in particular, the World Bank (WB)'s and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s warning of rising inequality has come to the fore. In the Philippines, 40 families (out of 105 million Filipinos) control the economy.

And yet, solutions offered by these international financial institutions are more of the same—among them the 'noodle bowl' of free trade agreements (FTAs). However, it must also be noted that the big powers in the region (e.g., Japan and China, and including the US) have their respective national and global agendas that they are protective of as they enter into FTAs.

In effect, while neoliberal economics has lost its allure, it remains the dominant framework in global and regional trade talks and continues to guide macroeconomic planning of many countries, which covers trade, investment, sectoral development (e.g., industry, agriculture, and services), and domestic competition. Neoliberals have also adopted the vocabulary of civil society organizations (CSOs) such as people empowerment, inclusive growth, sustainable development, and gender equity, while still upholding privatization, deregulation, and trade and investment liberalization.

In the face of this changing context, neoliberals have begun undertaking "strategic" adjustments under an expanded and seemingly pro-people 'new Washington consensus.' These include addressing "moral hazards" such as corruption, developing human capital, providing social protection for the poor (e.g., Bolsa de Familia in Latin America and 4Ps in the Philippines), and bringing in some degree of regulation over business and financial practices.

From the structural adjustment program of the 1980s which privatized public assets, the Philippine government has gone on to privatizing several public services through so-called public-private partnerships (PPP). This mode was eventually supported as the primary mode of project implementation through the all-out privatization of infrastructure development and delivery of public services in the country. There is no doubt, as stated in the vision statement of the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022, that neoliberal economics will persist and that trickle-down economics will remain, despite evidence showing it perpetuates poverty and deepens inequality.

In conclusion, there is a need to:

- question privatization as the motor of growth;
- assert peoples' role in controlling the delivery of public services;
- learn from the good experiences and practices of other countries in building a truly inclusive, balanced, and sustainable society through a strong public sector; and
- promote partnership of government (at all levels) with an organized citizenry.

PLENARY 2

Beyond States: Global/Regional Actors and Free Trade Agreements

Free Trade Agreements

BARRY COATES (New Zealand)

The World Trade Organization (WTO)'s General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) was passed after heavy corporate lobbying. Although developing countries were provided safeguards, they have been under pressure to deregulate more sectors and facilitate market access.

The economic implications are huge, considering that services account for more than two-thirds of most economies and an even higher share of employment. They cover important economic sectors, such as energy, transport, and telecommunications; important environmental sectors such as waste, water, and tourism; and vital public services including health care, education, and social services. The GATS further reinforced the race-to-the-bottom for labor rights and wages, for environmental and consumer protection, and for standards that are appropriate to cultures and societies. Social services opened to private investors led to provision based on the capacity to pay higher user fees and non-delivery for groups without the financial resources to do so.

Constraining the right to regulate, the GATS embodies an inherently deregulatory approach to services that denies countries the policy space to support their domestic suppliers. Once countries have made their commitments to the GATS, their governments cannot limit the number or size of suppliers in these sectors. It thus limits the government's right to regulate in the public interest such sectors, which include consumer safety, public health, equal access to education, environmental protection, and action on climate change.

The GATS does not directly mandate privatization, but enables privatization to occur since governments are bound not to compete with or impede investments from flowing in by providing services themselves. Once commitments have been made, they are almost impossible to be reversed due to WTO conditions, including various compensatory measures. Technically, "services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority" are exempt, but since public services co-exist with private suppliers, this exception becomes practically irrelevant.

TiSA as a new threat

A new services negotiation, the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), would not only have a blanket top-down approach, but would also allow multinationals to challenge government laws by asserting

that the effect of the law is greater on them. Another dangerous provision that practically extends the GATS and undermines government authority is that regulation should be "no more burdensome than necessary" to foreign investors. Worse than the GATS, the TiSA will pass the costs of deregulation to vulnerable people, workers, and the environment.

Leaked versions of the TiSA financial services chapter shows the extent of ambition of big banks (such as Citicorp) for financial liberalization, regardless of whether domestic regulations discriminate or not discriminate against foreign investors. Information technology multinationals want to prevent any restriction on the storage of data, while the United States (US) and other countries will allow their national security agencies to override privacy restrictions. Federal Express (FedEx) wants to tap into profitable delivery services. Walmart and other retail giants want unrestricted access internationally, and fossil fuel corporations seek protection from discrimination despite their proven contributions to worsening climate change.

Even though most of the TiSA's text and the offers of sectoral liberalization have already been agreed upon, the election of President Donald Trump has suspended US involvement and TiSA negotiations are currently on hold. There is still time to defeat the TiSA.

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) met strong civil society opposition since it was signed in February 2016. Its most dangerous provision is the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism which allows corporations to sue host governments over new laws or policies that reduce their profits on the grounds that they have not had "fair treatment" or they have been disadvantaged compared to domestic companies or if their investment has been "indirectly expropriated." The ad hoc ISDS panels have generally favored corporate interests, with over 60% of the awards handed to multinationals ranging from US$10 million to more than US$1 billion. Only scant information on corporate claims has been leaked out due to the ISDS' opaqueness, but this already shows a sense of the damaging effects of ISDS on human rights, state regulatory authority, and the environment.

While the TTP is at a virtual standstill because of the US' withdrawal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is making headway among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and six large economies in the region. Civil society has been actively involved in fighting the RCEP, including through strong interventions and negotiations on issues such as ISDS mechanisms, impacts on public health and access to essential medicines, jobs and workers' rights, farmers and small food producers, and fisheries. Governments will attempt to conclude RCEP negotiations in 2018. Civil society campaigning needs to mobilize across the RCEP countries to defeat this push for pro-corporate rules in Asia.

Trade agreements like the TiSA, the TPP, and the RCEP are incompatible with affordable and accountable public services and the protection of the commons. Civil society has won important changes that must be defended and maximized in holding the line against these treaties that create new rights for multinationals. At the same time, we need to set our vision on transforming trade and investment treaties on the basis of core principles that include fair trade and equitable sharing of benefits, ecological limits and sustainability, protection of human rights, and respect for democracy. Treaties must exclude public services; desist from pressuring states to privatize; be subjected to full transparency standards, monitoring, and evaluation; ensure the inclusion of provisions for public consultation during the course of negotiations; and before being signed, must be submitted for parliamentary scrutiny, debate, and decision.

Reclaiming Public Services: Ending the Private Sector Push from Global Institutions

DAVID HALL (United Kingdom)

Despite recognition that access to decent essential public services is an inalienable right, millions of citizens are still denied access to these services in the OECD as well as in developing countries. A massive scale-up of resources for investment in infrastructure is urgently needed, especially in marginalized and rural areas of low-income countries. But these investments should be public investments, supporting the social contract between states and citizens, and built on accountability processes and public participation. They should also entail a transfer of resources to developing countries—a commitment still largely unfulfilled—in order to provide financing for development, and reverse the outflow of economic, environmental, financial, and human resources from South to North.

Public services should not be treated as commodities for trade and commercial profit. They fulfill essential social and economic needs that cannot be delivered by the free market. Government control and delivery of services is crucial for accountability and for ensuring affordable and universal coverage. However, a powerful alliance of the global elites, international financial institutions (IFIs), free trade proponents, donors, and the private sector continues to push private sector investment as the answer. Privatization, corporatization, contracting out, and other forms of private sector involvement, and in more recent years, public-private partnerships (PPPs), are being promoted as the pathway to development, with trade treaties providing the framework to lock in a reduced role for the state.

Efforts to push PPPs among developing countries are continuing despite growing evidence of problems and IFIs remain influential in driving their adoption among developing countries. IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said that "we don't do that anymore," but practice shows otherwise. Pursuing past roles, IFIs provide grants and loans, give advice and technical assistance, promote regulatory change, monitor and evaluate projects, advocate for PPPs, act as intermediaries in negotiations, encourage donors funding, and partner with the private sector.

Accounting for only around 5% of OECD infrastructure, PPPs are being promoted by IFIs and donors among cash-strapped developing countries as the only way to access finance, whether as loans or grants. This is partly because PPPs are financed "off balance sheet," which does not add to their debt levels. Fiscal responsibility is undermined by a lack of transparency over contract provisions, as well as a lack of disclosure of actual and contingent liabilities. This creates an incentive for politicians to regard PPPs as free money, ignoring the high costs in future years, the contingent costs of guarantees, and the costs to users. PPPs are also seen as a way of hurdling capacity limitations within government to manage complex infrastructure projects. However, low capacity means governments may not fully understand the pitfalls of PPPs and have thus little negotiating leverage. As a result, PPPs are often weighted towards the interests of the private sector. They are further hyped as more efficient than the public sector, although such claim is hardly supported by objective evaluation. At best, the record is mixed, with poor PPP outcomes already documented in the health, education, and water sectors in particular.

Meanwhile, there is mounting evidence against PPPs across the OECD, where PPPs are being met by strong public and civil society campaigns to reclaim the services that have been privatized. Though information access is difficult, results of research done by academics, non-government organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and research institutes reveal that PPPs tend to be more costly as investors demand a much higher rate of profit compared to similar projects in the OECD. Higher costs typically result from a number of factors, among them, higher borrowing costs for the private sector than for

governments; complex transactions entailing added costs; higher construction costs; and government guarantees on profits and against contractual changes.

PPPs investors cherry-pick projects that can be profitable, such as in the case of a PPP for a new hospital in Lesotho, for which the International Finance Corporation (IFC) gained US$720,000 as success fee. Half the country's health budget was being spent on payments to the private consortium that built and run the project. This meant scarce public funds were being diverted from primary health care services in the rural areas where health indicators were comparatively poorer. Costs also escalated despite initial claims on the contrary, while investors were guaranteed a 25% return on their equity. The example cited above shows how investors create mechanisms to reduce their risks and transfer it instead to the government. In other cases, governments agree to provide confidential guarantees for the exchange rate and level of demand or pricing that create contingent liabilities.

There is now a strong push to standardize PPP terms, paving the way for entrenching various advantages and privileges for private investors. Consistent with the trend of loading more risks onto governments, investors are gaining more protections to ensure their profits and investments. For example, the standard contract would give rights to multinational firms to circumvent local laws and courts and sue states under the discredited investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS). So far, most ISDS cases have been decided in favor of the multinational corporations (MNCs).

Civil society has had an impact on the design and implementation of PPPs through commissioning critical research, forming alliances, supporting partners, building campaigns, and forming global advocacy alliances. A strong statement denouncing PPPs and favoring public alternatives was signed by 152 civil society organizations. Concerted and joint action has been crucial in highlighting the failures of PPPs, in avoiding some of the worst abuses, and in helping build civil society capacity.

The challenge is not to improve PPPs, but to end them and reclaim public services. The model that multinationals will construct in delivering services for the benefit of citizens is flawed. Pressure needs to be mounted on the IFIs to back off from their support for PPPs and instead endorse public sector alternatives. Accountability needs to be returned to governments to deliver affordable and quality public services, as part of their social contract with citizens.

Addressing the problem of PPPs, the Labour Party put forward the following demands and calls:

- No new PPPs and end all existing PPPs
  - Private finance initiatives (PFIs)/PPPs already discredited by parliamentary reports
  - Problems exposed by collapse of PPP firm Carillion in January 2018
  - Remunicipalization of the failed $1 billion waste management PPP in Manchester
- Deal with cost of compensation problem
  - Not by terminating contracts, which risks incurring huge compensation, but rather by nationalizing the PPP companies, which presents better prospect for compensation (at least in UK law, and possibly in others)
- Alternative international involvement
  - Stop the Department for International Development (DFID) from promoting PPPs in developing countries and instead extend active support for alternatives

PLENARY 3

Sectoral Issues and Struggles (1)

HOUSING / RIGHT TO THE CITY

Housing and Public Services

MEENA MENON (India)

Urban poverty can be understood as a *lack of access* to basic services and basic social protection, caused and aggravated by various factors. Privatization of all services is pushing up profits and is creating huge disparities in most of the Global South, Asia, and in Europe, too, in times of 'austerity.' Social housing is either unavailable or inadequate. Housing has become inaccessible to most—even the middle class—because of the prevailing dominant market approach which has profit as its primary motive. Rental housing is totally privatized as well.

It is expected that 70% of world population will be urban by 2050 and that most urban growth will occur in less developed countries. We thus need to think seriously about our urban futures and to see how urban areas can be sustainable.

Many consider the terms 'sustainability' and 'urbanization' as mutually exclusive. Is it possible to reverse urbanization? What is the role of technology? Should we think more around how cities will have to be made more sustainable, rather than the hope that cities can be done away with altogether—at least in the imminent future? Most importantly, what are the basic social needs of a population that is largely urban and how will they be met?

There is a need for a more comprehensive urban program of action and more policy activism on sustainable cities, urban planning, and sustainable urbanization. Urban activism will perhaps have to go beyond defensive struggles and will need to evolve a better understanding of urban space, solutions to urban poverty, and engagements with urban aspirations. This is critical, not only for the urban poor, but also to save the environment and the planet. Moreover, the idea that rural is naturally and environmentally sustainable and that urban is naturally destructive is clearly neither true nor useful. A discourse on sustainability will have to include the urban demographic in one way or another. Sustainable futures will need a comprehensive planning of both the rural as well as the urban in order to be effective. But we do not have the luxury of time—big cities in developing world are imploding.

A "demand … [for] a transformed and renewed access to urban life," the 'right to the city' (RTC) was a phrase first used by Henri Lefebvre. Well-known thinker and urban geographer David Harvey developed the theoretical framework of this concept as one that is "far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. … The freedom to

make and remake our cities and ourselves." Harvey further stated that the right to the city is possible only through the "management of common property resources for individual and collective benefit."

RTC means that the urban poor must have access to all basic amenities or they will be unable to survive in the city with any degree of dignity. Since there are no common lands, water, lakes, and forests in the city, universal access to all basic amenities is possible only through subsidized public services ensured by the state. Providing shelter is of no use if it is not accompanied by the conscious provision of access to urban services such as water, electricity, waste management, lighting, roads, transport, clean air, open public spaces, proximity to schools and hospitals, and self-sufficiency in terms of employment opportunities so that people do not have to travel far.

Governments signed on to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but these are not legally binding. They are nonetheless expected to establish a national framework for achieving this comprehensive set of demands. At the same time, global policy increasingly reduces the role of governments, while expanding that of private entities, corporations, and the private sector. In this context, we must maximize the opportunity to pressure governments through Goal 11 which specifically seeks to "make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."

Urban planning, as opposed to the market approach, must be multidisciplinary and multidimensional in nature, intersecting the complex needs of urban life and stressing the uplift of the urban poor towards ending disparity. But there is massive urbanization process where the overriding interest is maximum return on investments. For the elite in the developing world, property is not only good asset creation, but also a way to launder money. Land speculation, change of land use, and pro-landowner land acquisition laws have created immense pressure on land, and in most cities, there is hardly any land for public purpose. There is a freeze on social housing and on state-led rentals, such that consequently, home loans are increasing.

Real estate speculation has created immense pressure on land. Freeing land for public purpose—especially for housing—cannot be done without a class-biased land acquisition policy. Excess land of the big urban landowners has to be acquired for housing the urban poor. It is possible to build enough social housing for all those who need it and to provide all public services, as long as urban spaces are comprehensively planned to prevent centralizing land use.

The move towards a radical land policy, land acquisition, public purpose, or eminent domain needs further discussion. Big urban landlords are into land acquisition. Even so-called socialist governments and local authorities hesitate to nationalize. Many urban social movements also support the demand for individual ownership of plots. But protection of public property and public need should be more sacrosanct than the right to private property. We have had only few recent attempts to look at commoning urban land, such as housing cooperatives and common spaces.

In working towards a comprehensive approach for sustainable futures, we will need participatory, people-oriented, and multi-stakeholder planning mechanisms, catering to all the needs of all sections of the people. This will entail a comprehensive planning of both rural and urban areas. City planning should be climate-friendly, as well as based on locality-based self-sufficiency.

Elements of a peoples' vision of the city should include citizens in developing alternative urban plans; a sustainable and equitable plan of the city; parameters on housing and physical infrastructure, labor and employment, social infrastructure, and governance; multi-level dialogues involving citizen groups, experts and academicians, planners, municipalities, and government; and building broad consensus and outreach.

The Urban Poor Movement: Securing Urban Spaces in the Privatized City

ERIC VILLANUEVA (Philippines)

In 2008, the Supreme Court ordered government agencies to clear the waterways in Metro Manila of all obstructions, which included around 104,000 informal settler families living in waterway easements. But the settlers resisted the government's plan to relocate them, as usual, to distant off-city "socialized" housing sites. This input looks at how successful they have been.

As part of the context, the trend among internal migrants in the Philippines is to move to the richest metropolitan centers, which is their most preferred destinations because of comparatively higher wages, more opportunities for formal and informal employment, and basic services that they could try to access. These areas continue to grow in density. For example, the top 200 cities already have a 49.7% share of the total Philippine population. The urban population is projected to reach 102 million by 2050.

The government's standard response, through the National Housing Authority (NHA), has been to build mostly off-city housing. The NHA is currently constructing more than 100,000 housing units (mostly off-city) for informal settlers in danger zones. It has been estimated that *only 30,000 families have so far relocated to NHA-built resettlement sites*. This is because relocation to off-city resettlement sites is the option least preferred by the urban poor, and this is understandably so because of fundamental reasons: the lack of access to water, power, and other essential services; lack of access to jobs; distance and, hence, high transportation costs to access livelihood opportunities in the cities.

They find, however, in the city an inhospitable place where life is especially difficult for the poor and low-income groups. Their problems include lack of access to transportation, clean air, health, and medical services; poor road conditions and natural hazards; prevalence of crimes, prostitution, and sexual harassment; and the threat of eviction. They also do not have access to safe and reliable water service—something experienced by 20% of all Filipinos—due to a number of reasons which include uncertain home tenures, right of way issues, steep capital costs per household for dispersed communities, and geographical remoteness.

Off-city resettlements have been found to have adverse effects on socio-economic impacts: (1) loss of livelihood, (2) lack of adequate access to basic services, and (3) disruption of social networks. Compared to the informal settler families (ISFs) who were resettled off-city and those that remained in-city, the income gap between the two groups rose to more than 50% (World Bank 2017).

Along with the drive to push the urban poor out of the city is the unprecedented privatization of urban and regional planning, in which a handful of large property developers have filled in governance gaps and assumed new planning powers. They play a growing role in mass transit and other infrastructures; cut through the congested and decaying spaces of the 'public city' to allow for the freer flow of people and capital; and implant spaces for new forms of production and consumption into the urban fabric.

In 2010, Kilos Maralita, a national urban poor federation, together with socio-political movements, began organizing informal settlers in waterways and danger zones in anticipation of government actions following the Supreme Court order. Large sub-city and inter-city coalitions were formed and consensus among the settlers was forged on how to relocate. From 2011 to 2016, these efforts resulted in more than 10,000 families successfully securing financing for their in-city or near-city proposals, among many other gains.

Proposals on informal settlers and social housing were also put forward, urging the government to adopt a number of measures, such as using the people's plan approach in social housing projects, particularly the relocation of ISFs; securing in-city and near-city lands for socialized housing projects under ISF people's plans; providing funding for ISFs still in danger zones; and subsidizing social and project preparation and capacity-building in support of ISF housing proposals. These must be accompanied by providing essential services and substantially improving living conditions in existing government resettlement sites and curbing corruption and unnecessary costs in social housing projects. Further proposed were establishing a regulatory and legal framework supportive of people's plans and housing cooperatives and guaranteeing housing as a basic human right of all citizens; recognizing the housing cooperative ownership instrument; exempting all socialized housing from the capital gains tax; and establishing the Department of Housing to integrate the NHA with other housing-related agencies.

WATER

(Re)municipalization in Catalonia and Spain

MÍRIAM PLANAS (Spain)

Building on many years of citizens' campaigning for basic rights and against corrupt practices of traditional politicians, a citizen-led progressive coalition gained power in many Spanish cities in 2015, including in Madrid and Barcelona. A wave of citizens' actions swept through these areas to reclaim public and democratic water from private control in several Catalan municipalities, creating a favorable political environment for remunicipalization.

Valladolid (with a population of 300,000 inhabitants) is the largest city to have remunicipalized water services in Spain after twenty (20) years of privatization. The new government installed after the 2015 municipal elections decided to remunicipalize its water services. In July 2017, it created a public company to remunicipalize and recover water services. Within six months after remunicipalization, the public company managed to increase by one percent the wages of workers which had been frozen for three years.

The second biggest remunicipalization undertaking in Spain took place in Terrassa, the fourth biggest city in Catalonia. A private company (Mina d'Aigües de Terrassa SA) managed the water service in Terrassa under a 75-year concession that was due to expire on 9 December 2016. Neighborhood associations, social movements, and ordinary citizens began organizing in March 2014 to reclaim their water services from Mina. They created *Taula de l'Aigua*, a citizens' platform aiming to recover direct public management of water in Terrassa.

However, compared to Valladolid, it will take a longer time for Terrassa to privatize its water services. A lot of data has to be recovered, including the exact number of workers in the company. Two years of intensive information and educational work done by Taula de l'Aigua succeeded in making the water issue central to the political agenda. In July 2016, the City Council approved a motion in favor of direct management of water. Mina challenged the Council's decision to end the concession and to return the water system to the city government by filing a court case in December 2016, but so far, it has only managed to secure temporary contract extensions. In the meantime, the Taula de l'Aigua continues to promote the management model approved by the Terrassa Citizen Parliament in February 2017 to make sure the recovery of public water in Terrassa would be a step forward in managing water as a common good.

The remunicipalization trend continued in Spain in 2018, when the first Catalan Association of Cities and Entities for Public Water Management was formed. This initiative originated from a conference in Madrid in November 2016 that, for the first time, brought together cities, water operators, and social movements to work for remunicipalization in Catalonia.

The Agbar group (of which Mina is a subsidiary) has strategies of its own. It has managed to have a provision included in the state general budget that makes it difficult for public companies to hire workers from the private sector once remunicipalization happens. It also persists in appealing against remunicipalization through various media campaigns.

This conduct of the Agbar group was met with objections by citizens' actions such as the signature campaign launched in Barcelona last December 2017. In less than two months, more than 15,000 signatures were collected. The citizens' initiative also held an assembly of more than 100 people, media campaigns, exhibitions, conferences, and a solidarity concert. Fifty associations came on board the citizens' initiative.

To counter Agbar's moves, alliances must be strengthened among and between cities, civil society, and water operators. Remunicipalization must be used as an opportunity to build a new model that secures social control. In the case of water, this should take into account the limits of the ecosystem. In reappropriating the limits to water, the human right to water must be applied. Remunicipalization is not only about reclaiming public water, but also about reappropriating democracy and finding new ways of exercising democracy.

Citizens' Lawsuit Against Water Privatization in Jakarta

ALGHIFFARI AQSA (Indonesia)

'Strategic litigation'—used by the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute and the People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice (*Koalisi Rakyat Untuk Keadilan Perikanan*, KIARA) in the legal fight to reverse water privatization in Jakarta—refers to a type of lawsuit that aims to bring about change in the substance, structure, and culture of the law. It requires several elements: conducting in-depth research; involving affected grassroots communities; and creating a social movement that brings together civil society, undertakes strong campaigning, and mobilizes the people.

Jakarta's water privatization was clinched by the World Bank in 1992 when it loaned US$92 million to the state water facility PAM Jaya under the condition of privatizing the city's water infrastructure. The succeeding years would see foreign and local private corporations and politically influential and wealthy Indonesians joining forces to invest in the privatization undertaking. These included Thames Water Overseas, Ltd. (United Kingdom), Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux (France), the Salim Group, and President Soeharto's own son. In 1997, Suez and Thames Water signed a 25-year contract with PAM Jaya for the management of Jakarta's water under the new privatized setup. A new contract was signed in 2001 between the city-owned PAM Jaya and the concessionaires Suez and Thames without the approval of the Jakarta governor.

Building on many years of struggle, the Coalition of Jakarta Residents Opposing Water Privatization (*Koalisi Masyarakat Menolak Swastanisasi Air Jakarta*, KMMSAJ), through The Right to Water Advocacy Team, filed a citizens' lawsuit before the Central Jakarta District Court against the President and Vice President of Indonesia, and ministry and local government officials, among others. The lawsuit charged them with several offenses that included the violation of the Indonesian Constitution and other laws; nepotism and corruption; constraining the state water facility's authority

to manage water; adversely affecting citizens' access to water especially the poor who could not afford rising water tariffs, and their health because of the poor water quality; and losses in state revenues.

The complainants were composed of leaders of Women Solidarity (Jakarta Branch), Friends of the Earth Indonesia (Jakarta Branch), Peoples Coalition on Rights to Water (KRUHA), and the Urban Poor Consortium.

The legal battle was first won in 2015 at the Central Jakarta District Court which found merit in the lawsuit, saying that the defendants failed to fulfill the residents' right to water and also violated the law by handing over the city's water operation to private companies. As stated in the Indonesian Constitution and the Water Resource Law: "Water shall be under the power of the state and be used to the greatest benefit of the people."

However, on appeal, the decision was overturned by a higher court, stating that the plaintiffs did not have legal standing and that the complaint did not fulfill the criteria of a citizens' lawsuit.

The KMMSAJ then filed an appeal before the Supreme Court (SC). Finally, in October 2017, it succeeded in winning a favorable verdict. The SC annulled the district court's decision and granted part of the plaintiff's lawsuit. It also declared that the defendants failed to fulfill the right to water of their citizens and caused losses to the Jakarta government and its constituents. It ordered the defendants to stop water privatization in Jakarta; return water management to PAM Jaya, as provided by law; and conduct water management according to the right to water principle as stated in International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights that has been ratified by Law No. 12/2005, and General Comment No. 15/2012 on Right to Water.

The fight is not yet over. The contract is still valid since there is no explicit verdict to annul the contract. Furthermore, the government has to pay US$2 to 4 trillion if it wants to withdraw from the contract before its expiration in 2022. The impacts on investments and the possibility of being sued in arbitration court may prevail upon government action to maintain the privatized setup.

Thus, as part of the struggles ahead, the Coalition will persist in demanding the SC to execute the court decision; reconsolidate the grassroots organizations and networks; exert public pressure on the government and water companies to follow the court decision; promote the concept of remunicipalization; and recommend the formation of a remunicipalization team. It is expected that the water companies will take action through arbitration, and therefore, the coalition will need all the support and solidarity from international networks.

TRANSPORT

Public services for all: Transportation Two cases from Croatia

MLADEN DOMAZET (Croatia)

Framing this input is political ecology—an approach that combines the instruments of ecology and political economy, in order to explain relations between humans and nature. Specific focus is placed on the different outcomes of social and cultural norms that determine how different communities can access natural resources and services.

This approach has been used in ongoing research in the sectors of water (public water management company), communal services (water and waste) in four Croatian cities, railways, and electricity production. Its main aims are to use public companies as a showcase of democratizing the state and opening doors for incremental introduction of commons-based principles into governance models; develop arguments for social movements and initiatives (in cooperation) that will back up (following failed privatization and public-private partnership (PPP) attempts by government) transformation of public companies; increase capacity for regular social control over public companies; gain broader social support for improvement of services and social impact of public companies; and develop hybrid public-civic collaborative models of governance systems.

Transport and other infrastructure are still publicly held in Croatia. However, problems of corruption, inefficiency, poor quality of service, and indebtedness exist and serve to embolden proponents of privatizing governance and public infrastructure through various ways such as divestment, concessions, and public-private partnerships. Transport is one of the targeted sectors.

Croatian Highways is a publicly owned company that functions as the administrator of most of the highway network. It is important in linking the Adriatic and Continental regions, providing a conduit for major cargo transport, for servicing the tourist industry, and for serving as the means for international transit. It has been wracked by massive corruption scandals.

In 2013, the national highways infrastructure was turned over to a private concesssionaire. The state guarantees the number of cars on the highways or pays financial compensation. This concession would lock Croatian inter-city transport strategy into road transport for the next 40 years—at the expense of railways, despite its environmental, social, and financial advantages.

A civic coalition of trade unions and civil society organizations (CSOs) is opposing this concession. They conducted a citizens' petition—a referendum on the Highways concession through the *We Won't Give Our Highways* initiative—asking for a national referendum on the privatization of highways governance.

Although the effort managed to collect more than the minimum number of signatures required for a referendum, the constitutional court ruled against the holding of the referendum. Nonetheless, the government was forced to step down in the face of public opposition to the concession plan. It then announced the restructuring of the public company.

The Institute of Political Ecology (IPE), based on its 2016 research, developed various proposals such as the democratization of governance of the Croatian Highways; the changing of the performance criteria from profit to physical and social accessibility, road safety, ecological footprint, workers' rights, financial sustainability, and quantity of cargo transport; and equitable regional development.

Croatian Railways is another publicly owned company that the IPE studied. With the overall goal of advocating alternatives and improvements, the research in 2015 aimed to map the governance of railway services in EU countries, analyze current process of governing railway services in Croatia, and assess the results of governing services.

The Croatian Railways management faces several major problems such as the absence of coordination among the three public companies running the sub-sectors (i.e., passenger, cargo, and infrastructure), very poor quality of railway service due to poor infrastructure resulting in declining ridership, corruption cases in public procurement procedures, and the continued presence in the company of a politically appointed management (though these were previously downgraded). The research found private rail cargo companies cherry-picking profitable aspects of business to buy. The

management was also involved in manipulating and sowing disunity in the railway workers' unions. These cases typify the neoliberal push in Europe's railways.

But there are also several cases of democratized railway companies, namely multi-stakeholder cooperatives and not-for-profit railway companies. Recommendations put forward for the Croatian Railways included: (1) developing a long-term transport strategy which includes a railway sector; (2) uniting the three public railway companies into one holding company; (3) creating common benchmarks for annual assessment of public railway companies: quality of service (speed, comfort, punctuality, and safety), physical and social access to railway services, ecological and financial sustainability, gender equality, workers' rights, transparency of procurement, and participation of citizens and clients; (4) enabling the unification of all the railway unions; (5) establishing association of railway users; and (6) changing the composition of the Supervisory Board of the three public railway companies to include additional representatives of workers, users (citizens and industry), external experts, and non-government organizations (NGOs), among others.

Commons-based proposals are needed to fight back the economism logic. There are alternatives, including putting into action various forms of public and civic partnership, introducing social and ecological dimensions beyond profit, developing forms of participation in governance structures and supervisory bodies of public transport companies, adopting digital tools to monitor transactions of public companies, and strengthening and diversifying supervisory role of bodies in public companies.

OPEN FORUM

- On how to exit from lopsided agreements (e.g., infrastructure projects dating decades back and with sovereign guarantees which trap countries/parties in perpetual debt bondage):
  - The following are some exit options: look at the enforcement clause of each contract; consider takeover of the company; change the process of arbitration; pursue action based on the concept of illegitimate PPP debt; challenge legally.
  - Another option is to look for break clauses (e.g., London PPPs included a break clause in the contract).
- On debt servicing:
  - The Philippines is the only country with automatic appropriations for debt servicing.
  - We were able to secure from Congress a provision to conduct a debt audit of 20 loans, but unfortunately, it did not prosper.
  - This provision remains in the 2018 budget and there is also a pending Senate resolution on the audit of all loans.
- On global consultancies:
  - It is necessary to look into global consultancies and the failure of these consultancies.
- On engaging TNCs based on OECD 2011 guidelines and developments on the campaign or binding treaties for TNCs:
  - There are some aspects of the OECD guidelines that can be used; the issue of international regulation of TNCs is crucial.

- On the need to elevate the discourse:
  - There is too much emphasis put on emotions rather than on empirical data. Moreover, discourse must be brought down to the masses.

- On the production of ideas:
  - It appears that even the discourse is a struggle. There are alternative discourses and researches. There is a need to bring in politics to the discourse on public services.
  - The link between public procurement and multinationals must be examined.
  - How the ineffectiveness of government has contributed to the acceptability of privatization must also be studied.

- On how to capacitate the government to undertake effective public services:
  - There is no free lunch and there is no magic formula, but there is a need to look past the false promises of privatization which have been shown to be false.
  - There is a need to analyze the push for reclaiming public services vis-à-vis the lack of consumer movements or groups.

BREAKOUT GROUPS • HOUSING, WATER, AND TRANSPORT

Workshop questions

(1) What are the issues and struggles in reclaiming our public services (housing, water, and transportation)? What are the urgent challenges related to these issues and struggles?

(2) What are the existing policies, programs and practices?

(3) Who are the major stakeholders, players of the sector involved in the challenges and/or barriers?

Workshop 1: Transport

Brief background

With the onslaught of neoliberal globalization, states are forced to accede to the international order. Trade liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of public utilities and services are the order of the day. In many countries, states have succumbed to the structural adjustment policies and to multilateral and bilateral agreements of free trade that have led to the privatization of several public utilities and services, to the detriment of citizens on the one hand, and on the other, to the benefit of transnational companies.

Transport has been identified as one of the important sectors that people must reclaim from corporate control and privatization in the interest of the common good.

Issues that need to be addressed

(1) *Ecological issues*

To address air pollution, which is a common problem in most developing countries, various forms of public transportation are being targeted for upgrading, if not for phaseout. Even as the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs) are developed countries, governments of developing countries are slowly transitioning from crude oil usage to Euro 4 fuels or electric vehicles.

In the Philippines, this move has been met with strong resistance from transport groups because there are no plans in place for a just transition to a low-carbon economy. The transition to e-transport is anti-poor, as this solution will only benefit big businesses and big car manufacturers. The timeline to the transition cannot be met by small jeepney drivers and operators and this will lead to the corporatization of public transport in the jeepney sector.[1]

Another issue is the congestion in urban areas where business, investments, and dwelling places are concentrated, further attracting migrants from rural areas to flock to urban centers.

(2) *Infrastructure*

Indebtedness (sovereign guarantee): This pertains to the State's foreign borrowings from countries such as China to finance its ambitious development plans. The 'Build, Build, Build' program of the current administration is significantly supported by the partnership between China and the Philippines, under which the Philippines' continued control over several strategic areas is contingent on its ability to pay debts owed to China.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs): In the event that the government needs additional funds and operators of a certain project and service, it can enter into a public-private partnership with a corporation. In this case, the contractor can exact possibly higher fees to recover its investments and maintenance of the project, such as in the terms of build–operate–transfer (BOT) schemes.

(3) *Geographical concerns*

Rural and urban mobility (by sea or by air): People's access to other places in the country should not be constrained by the high cost of air and sea fares. The importance of mobility to its citizens—regardless of where he/she wants to go, either to work, spend vacations, or raise a family—must be recognized by government through enabling policies that allow freer and more accessible mobility.

(4) *Economic agenda*

Transport system (affected by tourism and consumerism): To cater to business needs, the transport system in this regard is designed to meet its main objective: profit. Where malls, amusement parks, and tourism areas are developed, the government, private companies, and even individual operators and drivers develop routes and systems ensuring that people from different strata of society will go to or pass by these places, where eventually, people will patronize the foods or products or services available there.

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[1] The National Transport Workers Union in the Philippines and an affiliate of SENTRO submitted a specific proposal on jeepney modernization titled *No Phase Out Without Just Transition and Just Modernization*.

(5) ***Corporatization***

E-transport: If transport groups cannot meet the guidelines set by the government in acquiring e-transport, this kind of transport system will only lead to business control and oligopoly of business oligarchs in the country.

(6) ***Corruption***

Most government agencies that handle public transport rules and regulations are prone to corruption. Illegal terminals set up on the streets, franchising, and opening of routes are some of the realities regarding issues of corruption. With the system already entrenched in the agencies' cultures, there is need for an organized and sustainable campaign by all parties in interest, particularly social movements, to eradicate corruption in the future.

(7) ***High cost of transportation***

Since transportation is a necessity of everyday life, it is one of the basic public services that government should strive to improve. Several factors contribute to the high cost of transportation: high costs of fuel due to value-added tax (VAT), the unregulated petroleum industry, and the role of big business in the transport system, among others. If the state, in the short term, will not strongly regulate the architect of the transport profit regime, the cost of transportation will remain high.

(8) ***Life and work balance***

Rapid urbanization may prove hazardous to people's health and well-being. The long hours spent on work and commuting because of severe traffic congestion have a negative impact on the productivity of workers. With less time spent on leisure and relaxation, work-life balance suffers and people become more vulnerable to stresses.

Three major issues

(1) *Transport system:* The state should reclaim ownership, management, and control of its transport system, particularly the railway, shipping, and jeepney systems.

(2) *Information technology (IT) platform*: Agencies that manage transportation regulation, traffic, and technological platforms should be coordinated and managed by the state and not by big businesses. The regulatory role of the government must benefit the riding public and not the big corporations or businesses.

(3) *Planning*: The right of the people, particularly the marginalized sectors in the transport industry, to participate in the planning, governance, and monitoring of the transport system of their own country should be upheld. This is to institutionalize checks and balances between the government and its people.

What is to be done?

(1) Continue to campaign against schemes such as the PPP and debt appropriation;

(2) Ensure that civil society organizations (CSOs) remain active participants and articulate advocators of their agenda in the government and continue to engage in government planning, with the end goal of achieving sustainable and efficient delivery of services; see to it that life

and work balance is in the mainstream of all the plans in the sector; and strengthen and expand organized groups that will engage the government and big businesses at the local, regional, and international levels; and

(3) Involve unions, non-government organizations (NGOs), commuters' groups, and all interested groups in strategizing to reclaim the transport system in order to be truly beneficial to the public.

Workshop 2: Housing

Issues

- Nonexistent housing tenure, inadequate and unsafe housing, poor access to basic amenities, and threats of eviction and demolition continue to beset millions of people who are known as the urban poor, squatters, or informal settlers.
- The business sector controls most lands and influences urban planning in a way that marginalizes housing for the poor.
- Land and housing are becoming less and less affordable to ordinary families, in both rich and poor countries.
- The housing problem is a manifestation of class conflicts; on the one side of the conflict are the homeless, the poor, and ordinary workers demanding recognition of housing as a basic right of all citizens.
- Policy support for decent, adequate, and affordable housing is either lacking or poorly implemented by governments.
- Financing and funding allocations for housing are not enough or not efficiently used to address homelessness and poor housing conditions.
- In the Philippines, government housing projects, implemented through the National Housing Authority (NHA), are poorly built, inadequate, ridden with corruption, far from in-city jobs, and unresponsive to the needs of the urban poor.
- In the Philippines, the rate of collection of amortization payments for government housing in resettlement sites is very low due to inadequate incomes of beneficiaries. Many families are compelled by circumstances to illegally sell or transfer the rights to their housing units or to move back to in-city informal settlements, where they have better access to jobs.
- In the Philippines, government-built housing is the least preferred by the urban poor. Instead, they demand public financing for their own housing projects that they aim to undertake, implement, and manage through their cooperatives and associations.
- Few applications for housing financing come from urban poor informal settlers due to the lack of capacity.
- In Europe, the management of public housing projects turned bad after tenant takeover.

Actions

- Work towards comprehensive public policy and funding support for socialized housing and demand government accountability on its obligation to provide housing for its vulnerable sectors;

- Demand the exercise of the power of eminent domain by public authorities to ensure the availability of land for socialized housing;
- Support public financing to people's housing proposals and encourage informal settlers to come up with their own proposals and plans for on-site slum redevelopment or for in-city resettlement;
- Document and share people's narratives, success stories, and feasible solutions on housing;
- Adopt diverse socialized housing solutions and models that ensure adequacy, resiliency, and affordability and adopt diverse ownership governance modalities, such as public rental housing and cooperative housing; and
- Support the capacity-building efforts for organizations concerned with housing, including the associations and cooperatives of home seekers and home dwellers.

Workshop 3: Water

Issues

Different issues are still preventing the full enjoyment of the right to water and enabling water privatization to prosper across the region. For one, in areas that have already been privatized, such as Jakarta and Metro Manila, we see the continuous rise in tariffs even as water quality and service remain problematic; the adverse effects on poor peoples' access; the lack of citizens' participation, the lack of transparency and accountability of both concessionaires and state agencies; corruption and mismanagement; and dodging of tax responsibilities, among others.

At the same time, other problems have cropped up or are intensifying. Problems at source, for example, are becoming more felt in the increased scarcity and contamination of water resources. Also, corporations are steadily gaining new rights in such a way that they are now at par with governments and can sue them in arbitral courts or through the investor-state dispute settlement mechanism.

In the face of these persistent issues, we are confronted with the huge challenge of reinvigorating the struggles against privatized water and of mobilizing the people.

Strategies

Organization is a key strategy towards educating and mobilizing people. In Cebu, a province in southern Philippines, a broad coalition called the Cebu United Forces for Sustainable Water was formed to confront the privatized arrangement embedded in bulk water projects, water scarcity, and corruption. Another coalition based in Manila remains active in campaigning and addressing water issues.

For Public Services International (PSI), it is important that we continue to debunk the myth of water privatization. Through the links established between trade unions and community groups, we popularize the message that water is a human right and must not be subjected to the profit-driven motivations of private investors.

One way of unmasking the false promises of water privatization is scrutinizing public finance issues which includes exposing corporate profits vis-à-vis the ways they cut corners on capital expenditures to improve quality, delivery, and adequacy. Another way is showing how corporations pass on to the public, by way of higher tariffs, the costs (e.g., corporate income taxes) that should be borne by any regular business enterprise.

Pressing for informed public participation is another fight that we are waging. The regime of arbitration as the prime and only way of settling contractual violations and other disputes must be resisted because it robs citizens of the right to intervene on a vital resource. Also, because of its inherent opaqueness, it effectively shields corporations and complicit government officials from public scrutiny and accountability.

The demand for a central government agency focused on water has been raised to deal with fragmented policies, varying contexts and unmet needs, and other water-related issues.

What is to be done?

Peoples' organizations and social movements use various forms of advocacy and campaigning that have collectively contributed in exposing the ills of privatization and consequently weakening the privatization discourse. But backlash from corporations needs to be resisted and at the same time, both persistent and new challenges need to be addressed. Some of the ways we can continue to strengthen our fight for water in public hands are:

- Taking advantage of existing platforms such as the World Water Forum;
- Collaborating and mobilizing within and across countries for global and regional actions during World Water Day;
- Linking with trade justice movements in the fight against unequal trade agreements, particularly the provisions for ISDS;
- Linking with trade unions in advocacies and campaigns on tax and fiscal justice;
- Strengthening solidarity in our struggles, not only in fighting against water privatization, but also defending the gains of our organizations and movements;
- Continuing our knowledge-building efforts by sharing campaign lessons and good practices; and
- Building and sustaining consumer networks.

PLENARY 4

Our Alternatives to Reclaim Public Services

Remunicipalization and Renationalization

SATOKO KISHIMOTO (Japan/Belgium)

Thousands of politicians, public officials, workers and unions, and social movements are working to reclaim or create effective public services. They do this most often at the local level. Our research shows that there have been at least 835 examples of (re)municipalization[1] of public services worldwide in recent years, involving more than 1,600 cities in 45 countries. Remunicipalization is taking place in small towns and in capital cities across the planet, following different models of public ownership and with various levels of involvement by citizens and workers.

Out of this diversity, a coherent picture is nevertheless emerging: it is possible to reclaim or build effective, democratic, and affordable public services. Ever-declining service quality and ever-increasing prices are not inevitable. More and more people and cities are closing the chapter on privatization and putting essential services back into public hands. Contradicting the prevailing narrative that public services are too expensive, local authorities and citizen groups are demonstrating that (re)municipalization addresses people's basic needs and that it is possible to meet our wider social and environmental challenges.

Remunicipalization is rarely just about the change of ownership structure from private to public. It is fundamentally about creating better public services that work for all. This includes restoring public ethos, ensuring transparency and accountability of public officials, and providing universal access and affordability to citizens instead of focusing only on the most lucrative parts of the service. This is why several British cities have created new municipal energy companies: to do away with private shareholders, dividends, and bonuses and to shift the focus to access to energy for poorer households.

[1] We use 'remunicipalization' to refer to the process of bringing previously private or privatized services under public control and management at the local level. We are aware that the term it is not always entirely adequate, as in some cases in which the reclaimed services have always been in private hands or did not previously exist. In these instances, 'municipalization' would be a more adequate term. (Re)municipalization covers both instances. There are also examples of public services that have been de-privatized at the national level. We treat such 'renationalizations' separately in order to focus on local actions, and also because some forms of renationalization (when it concerns centralizing power or temporarily rescuing failed private companies) do not fall within the scope of our research. Finally, there are numerous examples of citizens and users taking the lead in reclaiming essential services from commercial entities to run them on a non-profit basis for their communities. For us, these cases also fall under (re)municipalization insofar as they are oriented toward public service values and non-commercial objectives. De-privatization then serves as an overarching term for (re)municipalization, renationalization, and citizen-led reclaiming of public services, all of which are oriented towards fighting against the ills of privatization.

Remunicipalization is a local response to austerity. Energy (311 cases) and water (267 cases) are the sectors providing the most examples of (re)municipalization. Roughly 90 per cent of (re)municipalizations in the energy sector took place in Germany (284 cases), the country famous for its ambitious *Energiewende* (energy transition) policy. Water remunicipalization has occurred mostly in France (106 cases), the country with the longest history of water privatization and home to leading water multinationals, Suez and Veolia.

Remunicipalized public services often involve new forms of participation for workers and citizens. For example, the new water operators in Paris, Grenoble, and Montpellier are making decisions together with citizens about the reform and operation of water services. In Norway, tripartite cooperation where trade unions, the municipality, and local politicians dialogue to solve workplace issues, has gained a track record in improving public services. The democratization of public services is also at the center of the remunicipalization movement in Spain, which was born in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the resistance against evictions and water and electricity cuts.

Finally, remunicipalization is often a first step towards creating the public services of the future: sustainable and grounded in the local economy. Inspiration can be found in the European towns and villages aiming for 'zero waste' with their remunicipalized waste service or providing 100 percent local and organic food in their remunicipalized school restaurants. Public services are not perfect just because they are public or have become public; they must continuously improve and renew their commitments to society.

The diverse forms of public-public partnerships are also flourishing. We see this in the way municipalities and citizens have joined forces in Germany and neighboring countries to push for genuine energy transitions. The new Nottingham municipal energy company catalyzed similar experiences in other cities, and eventually resulted in a common partnership. The French and Catalonian networks of public water operators pool their resources and expertise and work together in dealing with the challenges of remunicipalization. More than 200 Norwegian municipalities exercise local tripartite cooperations with trade unions to make public services efficient and democratic. Over 2,300 cities throughout Europe have united to oppose the European Union (EU)–United States (US) Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) free trade agreement as well as similar deals based on liberalization and privatization policies. The progressive coalition Barcelona en Comú and many other related coalitions in Spain have articulated a global 'municipalist' vision, and drawing from this vision, they practice diverse forms of direct participatory democracy and work pragmatically for solutions to global challenges.

The resurgence of (re)municipalization provides an important window of opportunity for citizens and workers to regain the democratic control that has been eroded by privatization over the past decades. Evidence is building that people are able to reclaim public services and usher in a new generation of public ownership. Fortunately, the momentum is building, as diverse movements and actors join forces to bring positive change in our communities.

Public Services as Social Commons: Democratization and Participation

FRANCINE MESTRUM (Belgium)

Oxfam's study on inequality cites an example of stark inequality: four days of work of a chief executive office (CEO) is equivalent to a whole life of work for a Bangladeshi textile worker. This inequality is unsustainable and is a problem of social justice, as much as it is a problem of re-production.

But how does one solve these problems? For international financial institutions, the way forward is achieving growth and redistributing the fruits of such growth. But the Oxfam data shows this does not work. So now, the poor have to produce the growth themselves.

Structural adjustment was supposed to boost growth, but it only deepened inequality. It led to the dismantling of welfare states, violations of labor rights, and privatization of public services. Privatization and neoliberal globalization enabled and promoted land ownership in the hands of a few, the monopolization of seeds, destruction of forests, the deterioration of health services, public transport, education systems, and the like. Indeed, there has been redistribution, not from the rich to the poor but from the poor to the rich.

Under this setup, all that was collectively owned, such as land and forests and seas, economic and social rights, and public services, are being taken over by big businesses and private investors. In the olden days, this was called the "enclosure of the commons;" today, it is known as as "accumulation by disposession" (Harvey 2004).

To live, we need to produce and re-produce. Our social protection systems (e.g., labor rights and public services, education, health care, housing, water, etc.) are part of this re-production system which people need to live, work, and survive. But this system is in crisis, and it is a crisis of re-production.

Employment increasingly fails to sustain livelihoods. We see this in fisheries, bio-factories, and privatized health and education. People must reclaim all these public services and goods which they need to survive, for they are crucial for production and re-production. These goods constitute our commons and we should not allow new enclosures to block or constrain peoples' access to the social commons, without which we cannot survive.

The 'social commons' refers to collective "ownership" or responsibility and the democratization of access to public services. These services are not necessarily state-owned and provided, because many states, as well as municipalities, are not democratic. The question of social commons goes beyond states and markets, beyond the private versus the public, but the question is *not* without states and markets, nor without private and public ownership. That is not the central question.

What is central in matter of the social commons?

- We will always need states or public authorities to uphold and fulfill human rights, for redistribution, security, and non-discrimination, but we need another kind of state, since the state is a kind of public service itself.
- Markets should not be banned, but commons is based on use value and not on exchange value.
- Private ownership can be excluded, to the greatest extent possible, but this should not in any way give absolute rights to owners.
- The role of citizens and their organizations and trade unions is crucial.
- The commons is the result of a shared process of decision-making: the constitution of the 'we' in a political community at whatever level—local, national, regional, or global.
- The commons concerns the responsibility citizens want to take for their common goods, their use, their regulation, and their monitoring.
- This should happen in the framework of general rules concerning security, non-discrimination, and in cooperation with public authorities.

The social commons is a solution to inequality and the crisis of re-production. To realize it, we need a processes of 'commoning' which implies and means:

- re-imagining all our institutions, politics, economics, and social relationships;
- developing and instituting new social practices in a new context of individual freedom and collective responsibility;
- democratizing democracy itself and re-thinking solidarity; and
- building citizens' power together.

The social commons further offers a participatory and emancipatory way of defending individuals and society, of organizing public services, and a strategic tool to fight neoliberalism, privatization, and commodification.

Social commons is transformative when applied consistently. Upholding social commons leads to constructive changes in power relations and in the economic system, and the sustainability of life, of humans, of society, and of nature.

For the Left, the language of commons, already an old practice, offers an opportunity to re-define its strategies, to renew its thinking on production, markets, nature, and states, and to build a new narrative to better organize our resistance to neoliberal and conservative forces.

Destroying public services is destroying society, social relationships, solidarity, and collective values. Preserving and promoting public services is promoting citizenship and the sovereignty of people.

PLENARY 5

Organizing our Public Services

Tax and Fiscal Justice: Financing for Essential Social Services

MAE BUENAVENTURA (Philippines)

Around 1.2 billion people in Asia and the Pacific live on less than US$3.10 a day, with one-third barely surviving on less than US$1.90 a day. In stark contrast, the number of billionaires in Asia rose from 558 to 680 from March 2016 to 2017, or an additional 122 billionaires in just a year. Their combined wealth ballooned by US$404 billion over the same period. Globally, in the last 12 months, the wealth of billionaires increased by US$762 billion, of which more than half (US$404 billion) went to Asian billionaires (Oxfam International 2018).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are supposed to signal a change in ambition based on overall requirements of additional public financing annually. Estimates peg this at around 27% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of low-income countries (LICs) and 7% of the GDP of lower middle-income countries (LMICs), which translate to an additional financial requirement of around US$1.4 trillion annually. All in all, around US$343 to 360 billion is needed by LICs and US$900 to 944 billion by LMICs in order to achieve the SDGs.

But there is a gap of US$150 billion or more each year. For low-income countries where financing needs are much greater, even if they reach their revenue targets, these revenues will not bridge the public financing gap.

It has thus grown even more urgent to effectively plug the loopholes through which revenues, both actual and potential, are being siphoned out of developing countries and into the private coffers of corporations and ultra-wealthy and politically influential elites through legal and illegal means.

Illicit financial flows (IFFs): Negative flows of financial resources that are largely legal but highly iniquitous resulted in around US$620 to 970 billion bleeding out of the developing world as of 2014. Similarly damaging are illicit inflows (i.e., technical smuggling) estimated at around US$1.4 to 2.5 trillion in 2014 (Global Financial Integrity 2017). Combined, illicit outflows and inflows accounted for 14.1% to 24% of total developing country trade from 2005 to 2014. An average of 87% of illicit financial outflows over the 2005–2014 period was traced primarily to fraudulent misinvoicing of trade (Clough 2017).

Corporate tax abuse: Profit shifting and tax dodging (i.e., evasion and avoidance) by corporations are said to cost all countries an estimated total of US$600 billion in annual revenue losses. But the impacts of these practices are differentially heavier for developing countries. As a share of GDP and total tax revenues, the most intense losses are suffered by low- and lower middle-income countries

across sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia (Turner 2017) Tax-abusive behavior of corporations costs developing countries at least $100 billion per year (Oxfam International n.d.).

Enabling factors built into a fragmented financial architecture driven by self-interested corporations and rich elites aid this hemorrhaging of financial resources from the South. We must stress that North governments are also complicit, as they wash their hands of historical responsibility in the erosion of domestic resources and urge developing countries to curb tax abuse to fund the rollout of the SDGs.

Tax haven/financial secrecy jurisdiction: This is one of the major enabling factors, and the biggest practitioners that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (e.g., Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, etc.) are being hidden by this rich club of only 35 member countries. Almost 70% of world trade occurs via multinational corporations (MNCs) and many of them use subsidiaries in tax havens, where corporate income tax is nil or very low and where offshore accounts are assured an almost impenetrable cloak of financial secrecy beyond public scrutiny, national regulation, and law enforcement. Nine out of ten of the world's top 200 companies use tax havens, which is hardly surprising considering that corporate investment in tax havens grew four times from 2001 to 2014. Studies calculate that at least US$24 to 36 trillion in anonymous private financial wealth, most of which belong to the top 0.1 percent of the world's richest, are stashed in more than 90 financial secrecy jurisdictions worldwide (Henry 2016). United States (US) companies alone (and only 50) accounted for $1.6 trillion as of 2015 (Rai 2017; Henry 2016).

National governments must also be accountable for the revenue-eroding policies and programs that are meant to attract investments, despite evidence on the contrary. One of the most privileged sectors that enjoy a wide range of tax and non-tax perks is the mining industry. The biggest producer and user of coal in the Philippines, the Semirara Mining and Power Corporation, is a case in point. While it claims to contribute heftily to the country's national income, it gains much more from very generous tax incentives provided by the government.

Governments also enter—without benefit of public debate and consultation—into bilateral tax treaties (BTTs), of which the most damaging to the sovereign authority of taxation are those entered with developed countries. Developing (investment-receiving) countries give up more of their sovereign taxing authority than developed (investment-sending) countries do.

As a consequence of revenue loss due to tax incentives, lowering corporate income taxes, free trade agreements, and corruption, among others, there is now a rising trend in the imposition of regressive consumption taxes such as value-added tax (VAT) and goods and services tax (GST). It is well established that consumption taxes unjustly burden the poor, particularly women who are typically low-wage earners and consume VAT-covered basic goods for their families. VAT and GST now account for up to two-thirds of tax revenues in most developing and low-income countries, while only about one-third of tax revenues is raised from these sources in developed countries (UNDP n.d.).

The perspectives of tax and fiscal justice provide a frame and perspective to debunk the standard rationale for privatizing social services (i.e., lack of funds), as well as to promote public investments and strengthen adequate and quality social service delivery. We aim to:

- Affirm the role and obligation of governments to implement progressive and distributive tax policies;
- Mobilize domestic resources for public services and other vital government functions;
- Strengthen state accountability and social contract;

- Reduce state dependence on aid and debt financing; and
- Correct the power imbalance between citizens and MNCs.

And we do these by:

- Exposing the negative impact of tax injustices on ordinary people and our families around the world, from the South to the North;
- Taking transformative actions and campaigning for solutions to end tax injustices; and
- Building a global movement to increase awareness and solidarity around tax justice issues (Global Alliance for Tax Justice n.d.).

Public Services and Labor

DAVID BOYS (United States)

Labor rights are human rights—that is enshrined in the convention of the International Labor Organization, which is the only tripartite agency of the United Nations (UN) with members from governments, labor market regulators, employers, and trade unions.

Labor rights recognize the rights to form trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining. These are recognized because in the capitalist system, the employers own and have the only and main control over the means of production. These rights thus serve as a counterbalance to this reality.

Unions are a collective organization of workers who pay dues. It is only the formal sectors that are unionized and pay a percentage of their wages to the union. But this is not enough to sustain labor unions that also often serve their respective communities.

Over the past twenty years, there has been a dangerous and growing trend of keeping wages low, of outsourcing, and of other unfair labor practices, causing some members to leave their unions or the communities where they work.

Union members have the right to elect their leaders to set policies and priorities. Trade unions are duty- and legally bound to the collective agreements that set conditions, policies, and rights and obligations of both employers and unions. These documents are legally binding under the labor relations system. Under the legal process, a party that violates the collective agreement can be taken to court. Collective agreements defend the rights of labor unions.

In public services such as hospitals, the military, police, and firefighting, not all unions have the right to collective agreement. This is because unions cannot oblige the government to fund their efforts in protecting their rights.

Another labor right is to withdraw labor and to hold strikes when the agreements are violated or not implemented. As a priority, union leaders are expected to protect and defend labor rights to improve workers' conditions, using their collective strength and the bargaining agreement as tools in doing so.

In the private sector, small labor unions ask their global unions to map out all the subsidiary unions in corporations in order to negotiate for a global labor standard.

There are regional and global private actors that directly or indirectly influence their members such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), regional development banks, UN agencies, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the World Health Organization (WHO), and national development agencies like USAID, among others. These organizations do not want to recognize us, and neither do private firms. But they are compelled to do so, which means we have to figure out how to deal with them. At the national level, in order to improve the working conditions and wages of workers, one has to be able to influence the decision makers and their processes.

What we do is to learn to work with the communities that belong to the public services sector. Universal access to quality public services is the cornerstone of the labor union. In Public Services International (PSI), the specific focus is on labor rights and justice. A majority of our members are women who receive very low pay.

On the issue of public-private partnerships (PPPs), many of the labor unions were initially not opposed to privatization. In the first wave, it promised good management techniques, new tools, and good working conditions. But after five years or so, this was no longer the case. Labor started to be outsourced and made increasingly informal and workers were paid with low wages and were subjected to poor working conditions.

We also need to address the immediate concerns of union members and communities on what to do with climate change in relation to public services. There is a rising number of climate refugees who are desperate for protection. Who is going to provide protection to our members in the public sector?

The PSI is working closely with the trade and tax justice movements. We need tax justice for quality and affordable public services. We demand tax justice and accountability in public spending for the common good and redistributing the wealth that workers helped create.

PLENARY 6

Sectoral Issues and Struggles (2)

HEALTH

Social Justice in Health: Struggle of Nepal

SHARAD ONTA (Nepal)

In 1990, the first peoples' movement replaced absolute monarchy in Nepal and a multiparty parliamentary system with a constitutional monarchy was established. But the succeeding years were rocked by the Maoist insurgency from 1995 to 2005. In 2004, the King took over state power and imposed a ban on political parties and jailed or placed political leaders on house arrest. This oppressive regime, however, was short-lived as the second peoples' movement that united the opposition in Nepal displaced the monarchy, leading to the removal of a 200-year-old monarchy and the establishment of a federal republic in 2006.

Nepal has moved forward but is steadily being engulfed by the private sector. This began as early as the 1990s, when the government's structural adjustment programs opened opportunities for the private sector to create a market for health, rationalized by the thinking that people are willing and capable to pay for health services.

Today, more than half of doctors and nurses and more than two-thirds of pharmacists are engaged in the private sector. Over half of hospital beds are owned by private firms. Subsequently, the public health budget was reduced and healthcare became more expensive and concentrated in urban centers.

The poor have been the most affected by the deprivation of healthcare. This is masked by gross national averages that do not show the discrepancies and gaps in health indicators between ethnic groups and between rural and urban areas.

Nepal's constitution guarantees that basic health services should be covered by the general tax and provided as public services, so people should not pay at the time of service use. But there is still conflict between views on social justice in health and the market orientation. On one hand, the progressive forces are fighting to deprivatize health. On the other hand, supporters of the market option are pushing for health insurance based on equal prepayment of premium by all citizens and for expanding the health services market.

The market view does not address the principle of social justice in health and thus cannot contribute in achieving universal healthcare. The progressive option would be to create a public health

fund with contributions determined through progressive taxation, but the health needs of citizens should be adequately met regardless of the scale of contribution.

The Right to Health and Access to Therapies: Our Fight Against the Privatization of Healthcare Services

VITTORIO AGNOLETTO (Italy)

Health is a human right. All States Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights have a legal obligation not to interfere with the rights conferred under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant, including the right to health. This is also reflected in the Italian constitution, which provides that health is a fundamental right and that it should be freely given especially to the poor. However, with the push of international financial institutions such as the World Bank, healthcare has become a market that only those with the capacity to pay can access and where billions of dollars are made in profits.

Meanwhile, states have reduced their budgets for prevention. This is indicated by the 1.8 million people who were infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) in 2016 and the 212 million cases of malaria estimated worldwide in 2015. Italy, for one, had the smallest increase in public spending from 2009 to 2015 as compared to other European states, as well as lower health spending per capita. But this trend can be seen across Europe. In Spain, the universal system was replaced by an insurance company. In the United Kingdom, the National Health Service (NHS) was destroyed and the production of services was privatized. In Lombardy in Italy, the right-wing government is trying to privatize healthcare for more than three million people.

The situation is made worse by the privately-owned pharmaceuticals who have exclusive patent rights to sell the medicines and are thus able to set exorbitant prices. In a span of 29 years, 156 drugs were created, but only 21 of these were made for neglected diseases. Tragically, 10 million people die every year simply because they cannot get medicines that already exist. Drug prices are set to maximize profit for the companies, without regard for difficulties of access among ordinary citizens. The largest pharmaceutical companies spend more on marketing than they do on research and development (R&D), whose actual costs they refuse to divulge.

There are many examples of how big pharmaceuticals are driven by profit and not by medication. Belgium and the Netherlands have refused to provide the cystic fibrosis drug Orkambi because they have not been able to negotiate an acceptable price. Distributors Novartis and Bayer have threatened legal action (i.e., judicial review) should the NHS decide to offer Avastin (generic name: Bevacizumab), which has been proven safe and effective, ten times cheaper.

Recommendations on enhancing access to cheaper medicines include the following:

- On comprehensive access strategies:
  - Publicly funded research and development should include formal strategies for ensuring access to medical products.
  - All potential barriers to access and comprehensive strategies for overcoming these should be considered.
- On non-patenting/responsible patenting:
  - Where possible, the end products of pharmaceutical research and development should not be patented and should be made available as a public good.

  - Generic production of medicines should be promoted for it is an effective strategy in reducing prices and improving access.

- On open access policies:
  - Third-parties should have the rights to use the discoveries of publicly funded research.
  - The principles of open science and data sharing are essential to an effective R&D system.
- On drug prices:
  - Publication of drug prices would facilitate advocacy and improve accountability.
- On Transparency in the Price of Research & Development
  - There is no transparency on the average cost of researching and developing a medicine.
  - Pharma-sponsored studies are likely vast over-estimates; independent estimates have been ten times lower.
  - Publicly funded research must produce public goods.

ENERGY

Asian Struggles on Energy

LIDY NACPIL (Philippines)

In Asia, work related to energy is being done around:

(1) *Fighting for the right to energy and energy services, and democratic energy systems*

There are many struggles across many countries in Asia such as having electricity services, being able to afford electricity services, and having reliable and affordable energy for basic needs and livelihoods. Over two billion people in Asia do not have adequate access to energy and access to electricity in their homes. In many countries, revenue usually comes first before the provision of public services. To sustain profits, areas far from privately-owned services are not prioritized for electricity services. This is a fight for access to affordable and reliable energy for basic needs and livelihood.

The terms 'corporatization' and 'privatization' were actually coined in the context of the electricity sector. Corporatization refers to services that are theoretically stated-owned but are being operated as corporations with profitability as the primary concern. Privatization is private ownership.

The issues stemming from privatization and corporatization include rising costs of electricity, low priority for poor consumers and non-commercially viable areas, grossly disadvantageous financing arrangements that have led to the accumulation of debts (i.e., illegitimate debts), and the public assumption of private risks.

(2) *Resisting dirty and harmful energy projects in Asia (e.g., mega and large dams, coal, agro and biofuels, etc.)*

Agro and biofuels have become a threat to our right to food; they are now a major reason for the massive land use conversion of areas producing staple foods to areas producing agro and biofuels. This

is a common issue in Asian countries, where governments have turned to agro and biofuel production to cater to the high demand in Europe.

While agro and biofuels lessen greenhouse gas emissions for Europe, their production in Asia exacts great costs. These range from harmful impacts on communities, people, and environment due to air, water, and land pollution, displacement of communities, loss of livelihoods, and decline in economic productivity, among others.

(3) *Struggle to fight for the just and swift transition from fossil fuels and harmful energy systems to renewable, clean, democratic, and efficient energy systems and against false solutions*

There are major considerations no less than stopping climate change and stabilizing global warming to 1.5°C. For large and rich countries, the goal is zero carbon emissions by 2030, and for the rest of the world, zero emissions by 2050.

We are currently in the process of building a peoples' platform for renewable energy (RE). There are a lot of parameters around RE, one of which is taking into account the impacts of RE on people and communities. In shifting towards RE, it must also be ensured that their interests are not compromised. The development and adoption of RE should be conducted in a manner that does not threaten our other rights.

Also, RE should not be corporate-driven. Fossil fuel companies are beginning to realize that renewable energy will be their source of revenue in the future; therefore, major fossil fuel companies are investing on this today.

It also requires changes in infrastructure since RE systems work best when the control, management, and distribution are decentralized and redistributed under a combination of state and other forms of ownership.

Flowers in the Cracks of a Core Infrastructure System: Current Transformations in the European Energy Sector

SÖREN BECKER (Germany)

The backbone of industrial capitalism and 'energopolitics,' the European energy market has traditionally pursued certain energy pathways, such as nuclear energy in France, coal in Poland, a mix of nuclear and coal in Germany, and early renewables in Denmark. While several changes have been unfolding, which include the intermingling of public and private interests in the field, these have not been enough to overcome privatization, commercialization, and concentration of the sector that date back to the 1980s and the 1990s. Energy consumers have not felt any positive effects on pricing and delivery, and vulnerable groups continue to experience energy poverty.

However, from around 2005 onwards, the energy oligopoly began to be perforated partly by new local/municipal or cooperative entities decentrally generating energy or running grids on a local or regional level. Their efforts center on renewable energy projects and can be characterized as collective and political and often small and creative (vis-à-vis existing social issues). Specifically, they show collective ownership and political aspirations beyond energy transition, involving cooperatives and communities in the peripheries and engaging in North-South exchanges.

One important urban example of organizational transformation was the experience of Hamburg, Germany, where one of the core remunicipalization cases in Europe has taken place. It was one of the first cities to adopt a remunicipalization approach that involved various sectors.

In 2009, a new public renewable energy supplier called Hamburg Energy was created. Statistical information showed that it led to the increased buildup of renewable energy. But a referendum held in 2013 aiming to gain a new infrastructure organization and take back public ownership of energy services,successfully asserted the importance of a socially just and democratically-controlled energy sector. The state was not only forced to take back ownership but the District Heating Strategy was also decentralized and new channels of participation were opened. Moreover, the Hamburg experience inspired public campaigning along similar lines in other European cities. The idea of state ownership opened new ways of thinking about consuming energy.

In Berlin, a similar referendum with a concrete participatory mechanism and 'water-proof' socio-ecological orientation took place. In London, the "Switched on London" campaign for a climate-just and public energy provider, which was influenced by the Berlin campaign, was launched. In Barcelona, the Foundation of Barcelona Energía (generation, support, and delivery) was set up in February 2018. It has an Advice Center on energy rights which is part of the progressive government agenda and is connected to the debate on new municipalism and technological sovereignty.

The relationship between publics and services is also steadily undergoing transformation. Social movements are highlighting the enforcement of new goals, development of new ownership patterns, and enabling the promotion of renewable energy. Management-wise, control in participatory utility approach and the membership approach in cooperatives are being discussed. Labor is still an underexplored linkage point. For customers, improvements in services are being linked with effective control and implementation. In relation to social justice, the diversity of new forms provides vehicles for more equitable service provisioning.

As steps forward, it is important to make these connections:

- Linking different notions of justice (e.g., energy democracy, energy justice, just transition, and climate justice);
- Linking environmental modernization and labor/trade union issues; and
- Linking different stages in the value chain (including resource extractivism and trade).

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- Elaboration of the participatory utility approach versus membership approach in cooperatives:
  - Through the participatory mechanism, one buys shares on energy through cooperatives. The question, though, is who can be a member of the cooperative? While in the membership approach, the state takes the control.
- On the social commons:
  - What we need are new ways of thinking, learning and working. We need to change our language and concepts to align them with the changing context and realities on the ground. Developing new concepts should be geared towards winning hearts and minds.

- On gender justice:
  - Women mostly bear social reproduction roles. We should include care work in our reconceptualizations. Gender justice as a human right is crucial and also provides avenues for going beyond the political rights.

EDUCATION

Education: The Challenges Before Us

PETER RONALD DESOUZA (India)

The colonization of South countries brought with it the colonization of our minds. In India, the 'Oriental plan' of education was to produce "a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." Today, there is another wave of colonization—a recolonization of minds by the neoliberal orthodoxy and their proxies. On the new vocabulary of the policy discourse on education, what used to be referred to by the World Bank as 'democratic citizens' is now 'human capital;' development of 'capabilities' is now the creation of 'skill sets' required by market (Skill India Mission); what was previously 'social investment' is now 'commercial investment.'

What are the problems of education in India? At the school level, there are many issues such as lack of resources, textbooks, safety, the public-private education divide, absenteeism, dropouts, among others. These can be generally categorized into three: differentiation, discrimination, and disempowerment. Issues at the university level involve curricula, technical education, 'education for sympathy,' and privatization, but we will mention just one: 'cultural nationalism.'

School differentiation is geared towards the production of elites. There are nine (9) types of schools in India, from government schools—especially for the rural poor—to international schools for the elite. Differentiated schools act as filters separating, segregating, and marking children. To note:

- "In a differentiated schooling system the possibility of children engaging in a collective shaping of society is challenged and leads to the loss of generating a democratic culture."
- "A differentiated system is responsible for the persistence of inequities and the widespread and complex problems of denying equality of educational opportunity to all."
- "The children in each of these schools occupy different and graded positions as citizens" (Vasavi 2000).

Discrimination persists against marginal groups such as minorities, women, tribal communities, and migrants. *Dalit* children, for one, experience this in various ways (Nambissan 2009):

- *Attitude of teachers*: Name calling, giving the students menial and not status jobs in school, seating them at the back, not asking them questions in class, conveying a message of social inferiority
- *Attitude of fellow students*: Not playing together, not sharing books and notes, discrimination in drinking water, not sharing food and snacks, not inviting them to their homes
- *Support system*: Dropping out because of low self-esteem, no help with homework, books, financial resources, among others
- *Reproducing low self-esteem*: Harassment when walking to school, absence of cultural capital

The school may thus be an oppressive and not an emancipatory site for some groups in rural India.

Disempowerment, particularly in the case of the Adivasis, highlights the fact that the largest burden of development has fallen on tribal communities in India, resulting in displacement, loss of traditional livelihood practices, and the imposition of the modern state framework on communities that have alternative cosmologies. The education system:

- Results in "systematic marginalization and invisibilisation of Adivasi interests account for the failure to provide adequate relevant and quality education at all levels"
- "…has been deployed in a mode of assimilation and domination which only reproduces the range of inequalities and disadvantages"
- Produces a "neglect of Adivasi knowledge forms, languages and cultural practices which has been detrimental to the cultural core of Adivasis"
- Is challenged in "retaining the positive ethos of Adivasi life-world while also enabling them to engage with the larger world" (Veerbhadranaika et al. 2012).

Reclaiming our education at multiple levels involves:

- Public schooling and citizen education
  - Education as a common good (UNESCO)
  - Education for citizenship
- Reclaiming the mindscape (e.g., curricula, conceptual language, etc.)
  - Decolonization but not nativism
  - Respect for cosmologies of subaltern groups without making them museum communities
  - Respect for plurality while but ensuring social justice
  - Employability but full development of persons not just skills for the market
- Humanities and the social sciences
  - "The education of sympathy is being repressed once again today, as arts and humanities programs are increasingly being cut back in schools in many nations, in favour of a focus on technical and scientific education, which is seen as the key to a nation's financial success" (Nussbaum 2009).
  - The assertion of cultural nationalism against secular education (e.g., onslaught on Jawaharlal Nehru University and Hyderabad Central University, etc.)

Education and Lifelong Learning: Profit Motive at Odds with Concept of 'Public Good'

RAQUEL CASTILLO (Philippines)

Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Education is recognized as a basic right, which means that it is primarily the responsibility of the state as a duty bearer. But, as illustrated in the Philippine experience, the role of the private sector in education is steadily expanding especially in the secondary and tertiary levels.

The Senior High School (SHS) Voucher System being implemented today (until 2019) is funded from a US$300 million Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan to the Philippine government. This program aims to help finance the tuition of private SHS students and the infrastructure for some SHSs under the Department of Education (i.e., public SHSs). Following ADB's proposed modality, it is being delivered through a public-private partnership (PPP).

Since then, more and more amounts of taxpayers' money have been going into the voucher system which supports mainly only private SHS students and private institutions. Globally, we saw an increase from 2005 to 2015 in the number of countries where the percentage of children enrolled in private schools was greater than one-fifth.

We in the DIGNIDAD Coalition and Sustainability and Participation through Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL) call for "Universal, free, quality education for all up to the tertiary level!" in our eight-point demand, knowing the reality that basic education is not enough for decent work and a life of dignity.

This right is far from assured. Republic Act No. 10931 or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Law passed in 2017 is not universal at all, and therefore not rights-based. Provisions in the draft Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) are bound to favor private universities and colleges, as priority will be given to students in cities and municipalities without state universities and colleges (SUCs) and local universities and colleges (LUCs). Moreover, the IRR provides for a Tertiary Education Subsidy to be granted to students in private higher education institutions.

The purpose of education is to build people's capacity development and not human capital development, which is the neoliberal paradigm. Developing skills for work, as against maximizing potential for decent work, is meaningless if this is not embedded in community development plans and ecological industrial policy and plans.

Education and research are public goods and are part of the social commons. As Marc Delapouve points out, research and education are two global common goods crucial for transitioning the relationship between humanity and the earth system, ensuring the conditions for its survival, for peace, well-being, and life fulfillment of all populations.

Such a transition requires that:

- The principles of solidarity and cooperation overcome the principle of competition;
- New financing and technology transfer mechanisms be implemented and adapted to the needs and trajectories of the different countries;
- Procedures be developed that take into account the needs, uses, and specific knowledges of populations; and
- Inequalities be reduced.

"A major contribution of research—including the social and human sciences—and education is indispensable for such a transition. With that aim, it is important to put an end to policies primarily focused on meeting the demands of multinational companies and on promoting the competitiveness of the territories subject to extreme international economic competition created by free trade agreements" (Delapouve n.d.). Research and education must not be reduced to being tools of competitiveness.

The 22nd General Assembly of the World Federation of Scientific Workers in Dakar on 8 December 2017 agreed to call on governments, the world scientific community, and all the inhabitants of our planet who are facing a serious environmental crisis to launch an exceptional research project

amounting to about 1200 billion euros per year. It also addressed authoritarian control over federally-funded research programs and curbing external communications about research conducted in leading federal agencies such as the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in the United States (US).

At the same time, higher education (HE) and research are undergoing deep transformations worldwide, associated with regressions of academic, scientific, and professional freedom. These are expressed in the production and diffusion of knowledge and technics toward the demands of business and the strengthening of regional and national economic competition.

Calls have been raised on these concrete actions:

- Solidarity with all actors in HE and research;
- Access to quality HE for all;
- Severe reduction of reliance on adjunct staff with the creation of permanent positions;
- A sharp increase in direct permanent public funding for research, in order to prop up academic freedom and strengthen the development of knowledge and progress in science and humanity;
- An end to austerity policies which are especially harmful to the fields of arts and letters and human and social sciences; and
- Promotion of the culture of debate and collective action.

Hence, the ultimate agenda is for a transformative education and lifelong learning—common goods that will promote a culture of solidarity and resistance.

BREAKOUT GROUPS • HEALTH, ENERGY, AND EDUCATION

Workshop questions

(1) What are the issues and struggles in reclaiming our public services (housing, water, and transportation)? What are the urgent challenges related to these issues and struggles?

(2) What are the existing policies, programs and practices?

(3) Who are the major stakeholders, players of the sector involved in the challenges and/or barriers?

Workshop 1: Health

Workshop participants were Mercy Fabros (WomanHealth/DIGNIDAD; Facilitator), Ana Maria R. Nemenzo (WomanHealth/DIGNIDAD/Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP)), Nestor Yaranon (Kilos Maralita), Jenny Marbella and Arissa Tomeldan (Institute for Popular Democracy), Emily Beredico (Coalition of Services of the Elderly), Tambuyog, Eduardo Tadem and Ma. Dolores

Alicias (UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development), Sharad Onad (Nepal), Vittorio Agnoletto (Italy), and Maris dela Cruz (NTSP; Documenter).

The group discussion was divided into two parts. For the first part, workshop participants looked into the national context or situation in terms of access or delivery of health service. They identified the common issues and concerns as well as the policies, programs, or practices causing these concerns. The stakeholders were also pinpointed. The second part of the workshop explored possible ways of addressing the concerns or problems that were identified. In particular, the participants ascertained priorities, common actions, and strategies.

In general, the common issues and concerns are on inequity, accessibility, and affordability of healthcare.

An issue raised under inequity was the huge discrepancy or gap in the cost and quality of healthcare service between private and public healthcare providers. Another was low government expenditure on health care, which is below the World Health Organization (WHO)-recommended 5% of the gross domestic product (GDP) for health expenditure or 9% of national budget for healthcare, making out-of-pocket expenses still a higher percentage in health spending by an individual. Lastly, lack of and maldistribution of health human resources were also considered by the group as an issue of inequity.

Regarding affordability, it is not only the high cost of hospitalization, but also the high price of medicines that are among the common issues that likewise make healthcare inaccessible. It appears that medical treatment depends on one's financial capacity. This problem is aggravated by free trade agreements where provisions on intellectual property rights (IPR) exist, posing threat to the public's health as prices of medicine on life-threatening illnesses are expected to shoot up.

Foremost among the concerns is the neoliberal and narrow framework which sets aside a holistic approach to healthcare. Technicalization or medicalization of healthcare, instead of making healthcare a social issue, is a trend in many countries. This is reflected in the current emphasis of governments and private health institutions on curative and tertiary care rather than on preventive and primary care. Social determinants like poverty, work, food, environment, and social services are not given much attention in developing healthcare programs; the preventive and primary care aspects linked with these social determinants are not addressed adequately. Another issue here is the health-seeking behavior of people.

A key issue within the neoliberal framework is the policy of commercialization or financialization of health care—in particular, the privatization of hospitals and healthcare services. The privatization of public hospitals or health services in the Philippines comes in many forms, including administrative costs that are being shouldered by public hospitals and medicines and fees for diagnostic tests that have to be secured outside the public hospital (this means that patients will have to resort to purchasing higher-priced medicines and fees for laboratory tests from privately-owned pharmacies and diagnostic centers).

Aside from privatization, other existing policies, programs, and practices that give rise to the above issues include trade policies or free trade agreements. For example, in the European Commission, drugs used to be under the Health Division, but it is now under the Trade Division. The lean-and-mean or austerity program being implemented in many countries is also among the common programs causing concerns or problems with regard to peoples' access to quality healthcare.

For priorities and common actions of peoples' movements and other stakeholders within the Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF), the participants identified a common goal—that is to make healthcare more equitable, accessible, and affordable.

To realize these goals, it is essential to oppose and stop free trade agreements, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which put peoples' health in jeopardy through privatization and intellectual property rights (IPR) provisions that would make medicines more expensive.

Further, another action would be to call on governments to create a public pharmaceutical industry at the national and international levels. To address 'brain drain' or the movement of health human resources, social movements should push for the adoption and eventual implementation of a code of conduct that obliges states receiving health workers to pay or compensate the state sending them. This compensation is for the cost of training and lost service in the sending country due to the outbound movement of health workers.

The major stakeholders that have to be taken into account in public actions and policy interventions are governments, academicians or researchers, companies (including pharmaceuticals and private health providers), health workers, patients, and civil society groups.

There are several campaign strategies that can be employed to push for the demands above. First is to build a strong network at the continental and global level. This requires strengthening each and everyone's national efforts and exchange of information across issues.

The other strategy is having a convergence of activists under a common goal to guarantee healthcare for all. National, regional, interregional, or international gatherings of campaigners and advocates, public fora, and symposia are important in knowledge sharing and in connecting activists for the convergence of campaigns and collaboration/complementation of actions. Activists have to work together with other international networks on health and trade justice.

Lastly, a public information campaign has to be waged to win more allies and effect greater influence in policy making and a media campaign organized with the WHO and the World Trade Organization (WTO) as among the targets of visibility/communications initiative.

Workshop 2: Energy

The group identified three key issues common to Asia and Europe:

(1) Proliferation of dirty energy projects like coal;

(2) Privatization; and

(3) High cost of electricity.

In the Philippine situation, civil society organizations are currently advocating the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy and they are campaigning against the construction of additional coal power plants. Participants from the Philippine provinces of Cebu, West Mindanao, and Davao narrated the efforts of campaigners to derail and stop the proposed coal power plants.

The participant from Davao mentioned the difficulty of mobilizing people because of the declaration of martial law in Mindanao. The issue regarding the proposed seven power supply agreements pushed by the Manila Electric Company which will build seven new coal plants was also discussed.

Everyone agreed that the proliferation of dirty, costly, and harmful energy can also be attributed to the privatization of the power industry. This is enshrined in the framework law called the Electric

Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA). National organizations such as the Freedom from Debt Coalition are calling for its repeal and are working on developing an alternative law.

In Europe, there is also a push for remunicipalization of the power sector. But in Croatia, the focus of civil society organizations is not on privatization, but on public transportation issues.

All of the participants agreed that privatization and corporate greed are the primary reasons for the high cost of electricity in the Philippines. The participants from West Mindanao cited the privatization of Agus–Pulangi, a hydropower plant complex that supplies electricity in Mindanao. If privatization finally pushes through, they anticipate and fear an increase in the price of electricity.

Struggles and issues

PALAG Mindanao is currently continuing and maintaining the campaign against the privatization of Agus–Pulangi. The National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) is maintaining the operations of the hydropower plant, though there is a move from the private sector and the government to privatize it.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) mentioned an initiative to pilot community projects of reducing and shifting from fossil fuels to renewable energy and a community-managed project for a period of fifteen (15) years. The group also agreed that there should be a platform for campaign sharing and, more importantly, for engagement of social movements against corporate greed.

Andrew Zarate from the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) suggested the publication and dissemination of materials against IFIs that finance coal power plants. Dr. Mladen Domazet from Croatia mentioned Germany and its government's support for the promotion of renewable energy. Whereas the access to energy and just transition in Asia is a big issue, it is already not an issue in some countries in Europe.

Common actions

(1) Continue the Climate Justice Campaign in Asia and Europe;

(2) Support campaigns against energy extraction like mining;

(3) Popularize the demand for a global system following the Paris Agreement; and

(4) Connect workers' issues regarding the construction of coal power plants with the displacement issue, in which workers should be provided with alternative livelihoods.

Major messages

(1) Community energy; power for the people, powered by the people; energy democracy;

(2) Popularize the issue by promoting good practices showcasing the German experience with renewable energy;

(3) Support government's promotion of renewable energy;

(4) Get other countries to adopt the European campaign for commons;

(5) Sustain connection between the European Union (EU) and Asia through common messaging and popularization of reclaiming public services on energy; and

(6) Form and develop a solid body/group after the workshop that will sustain campaign and promote cooperation.

Workshop 3: Education

Participants in this workshop include Marivic Raquiza (Social Watch Philippines and UP National College of Public Administration and Governance), Raquel Castillo (Sustainability and Participation through Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL), Philippines), Alghifarri Aqsa (Jakarta Legal Aid Institute), Peter DeSouza (Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), India), Sharad Onta (Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal), and Michael Alunan (journalist advocate from *Business Mirror*, Philippines).

The workshop group put forward the 'article of faith' or the political position: that education is a right and a public good and it is the state's role to provide universal education. The group recognized that everyone—even neoliberals—says this thing.

Cognizant of actual trends in education, the group wanted to push the envelope further. The discourse had to be sharpened and questions such as "What kind of education?" and "Education for whom?" need to be asked. In response to these foremost questions, the group members came up with their collective insights and declarations.

The kind of education that has been universalized has been not so much of an education, but of a 'miseducation.' We are producing students and graduates who have been so technocratized that they are turning into workers who find themselves caught in the global value chain. It is a trend that promotes passivity, docility, and uncritical thinking—traits we find undesirable because they go against the kind of transformative world that we dream of. Education has become market-oriented, commercialized, and dehumanizing.

The education we desire is one that truly instills in our people critical thinking, a love for social justice, sympathy, and solidarity that allows the mind to revel in an environment of academic freedom. We realize that this battle is getting lost in a predominantly technocratic society.

This is not to downplay the importance of skills-building, especially in the context of a developing country. Developing skills in order to access decent work is definitely a legitimate aspiration. But we would like skill cultivation to happen under a more liberating and transformative paradigm. We would like to see scientists and engineers appreciative of the humanities and the arts so that they develop as full human beings; thus there is a need to focus on offering more progressive curricula and pedagogies.

Another important issue is the inflated role of the private sector in education. The state often invokes fiscal constraint as its excuse for its deficiencies and diminished role in education. As a consequence, there is uncritical acceptance of the increasing role of the private sector in providing this service. This has to be combatted by pushing for increased public investment in quality education and being creative in tapping non-traditional sources of funding, like taxing multinational corporations and other funding modalities.

In this digital age, the unregulated impact of information technology (IT) in shaping and developing minds is another urgent concern. Two things have to be done at the very least. First, we need to embark on an inquiry on owners and IT entrepreneurs and the agenda that they are actually promoting. Where we hear of a push for the sale and ownership of cyberspace, we need to protect the World Wide Web and declare it as part of the social commons in much the same way that we consider education systems as part of the intangible commons.

Second, we need to improve technical education so that people are not limited to being technicians and are provided with opportunities for a liberating or emancipatory education.

It is important to embark on a thorough study of the political economy of education—identify the players, the agendas, and the mechanisms and policies that have promoted the current situation of education—all of which can serve as the basis for our strategy of resistance.

A concrete recommendation is to explore the creation of an independent and representative commission that can help provide guidance to research that will be of help in our resistance.

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- On the "benefits" of PPPs:
  - Experience is the best teacher, but we hope to be able to teach without having to go through the experience.
  - Privatization propagates the notion that the state is inherently inefficient and corrupt; thus public services should be deferred to the private sector.
  - It also promotes the notion that direct investment spurs development.
- The private sector cannot be allowed to wield control over our lives. The private sector has no business in public services; the private sector is geared towards prioritizing and maximizing profit.
- In Asia, control of essential services often lies in the hands of the oligarchy, which exerts huge control and influence over the economy, politics, and other important aspects of society. The inequality framework contributes to exposing them and highlighting the greed and sheer illegitimacy of a tiny elite controlling society.
- The enjoyment of human rights can help generate active citizens and help them think of ways to act strategically.

PLENARY 7

Sharing of Campaigns and Advocacy Strategies

World Solidarity Movement

KOEN DETAVERNIER (Belgium)

With the support of the World Solidarity Movement (WSM), the Asian Network on the Right to Social Protection (ANRSP) was formed in 2014. It is composed of 19 organizations, trade unions, social movements, and non-government organizations (NGOs) in six countries (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Philippines). Rooted in the labor movement, it fights for the right to social protection for workers, a minimum living wage, and the right to a decent life for all.

Part of ANRSP's work is supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) working to achieve social protection for all. One example is the Mutual Association of Solidarity Services (AMUSSOL), which was set up in 2005 by a WSM partner organization in the Dominican Republic. It allows men and women workers in the informal economy to access social protection, a right that is not guaranteed by the Dominican state for this sector of the population. The AMUSSOL serves as a 'virtual employer' for workers in the informal economy. Its affiliates pay their monthly fees to AMUSSOL, which channels it to the national Social Security Treasury. As a result, more than 60,000 men and women workers of the country today are entitled to family health coverage, workplace accident allowances, and pension.

Other efforts include involvement in mutual health schemes in Africa, in trade unions around the world, and in the Christian labor movement in Belgium.

We believe that achieving social protection is a matter of social change, a process that has the following elements:

(1) Rights-based approach

- Upholding and fulfilling the right to health; rights holders as beneficiaries

(2) Multiple stakeholders

- A national social protection policy developed, implemented, and monitored by various stakeholders with different but complementary roles, namely the state, civil society (social movements in particular), and the private sector

(3) Multiple measures

- A universal social protection policy consisting of a number of measures:
  - Measures of prevention (social security)
  - Measures of protection (social assistance)
  - Measures of promotion
  - Measures of transformation

(4) Life-cycle approach

- A widely supported social protection policy that responds to the needs of people throughout their life cycle

(5) Multiple sources of financing

- Building a global, largely supported, and national social protection policy that requires many resources: human resources and financial resources, social contributions, wage policy, and fiscal policy

The national campaign *Social Protection for All* represents consensus built across ideological lines, on one definition of social protection: Social protection must ensure for every person during his/her entire life cycle a sufficiently large income and access to quality basic services, to make sure they are able to cope with the risks and events of life. This can only be achieved when social protection systems consist of a coherent set of solidarity-based, structural, and collective initiatives and measures. As a consequence, social protection may not be commercialized.

Twenty NGOs, trade unions, and mutual health associations are behind this campaign. A manifesto pushing the four key demands below, was supported by 60 CSOs in Belgium:

- Embed the right to social protection in laws and treaties;
- Guarantee sustainable and solidarity-based financing for universal social protection;
- Involve social actors in the development and governance of social protection; and
- Conduct a coherent policy to strengthen social protection at the national, regional, and international level.

New Perspectives on Civil Society Engagement with ASEAN

EDUARDO C. TADEM (Philippines)

Established in 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) is the main forum for civil society engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) process. Its constituents include workers, the peasantry, urban poor, fisherfolk, women, youth/children, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community, indigenous peoples, migrants, older persons, employees, professionals, students, and persons with disabilities. They are organized around the thematic priorities of human rights, social protection, foreign policies, trade and investments, labor and migration, social inequalities, peace and security, food sovereignty, women, gender and LGBT rights, and climate justice.

Throughout eleven (11) years of engagement with the ASEAN, the ACSC/APF has focused on organizing national consultations and workshops, national and regional meetings with government

counterparts, regional consultative meetings, crafting the ACSC/APF annual statement, holding of a parallel conference with the ASEAN Summit, mass mobilizations (e.g., rallies, etc.), and an interface with ASEAN heads of state.

ACSC/APF addresses a wide range of issues and concerns:

- Iniquitous free trade agreements
- Rampant land conversions and land grabbing
- Heightened militarization
- Pollution
- Disasters
- Migration
- Feminization of the informal sector
- High-skilled and low-skilled divide among migrant workers
- Internal conflicts and displacement
- Absence of a genuine agrarian reform and land de-concentration
- Neglect of agriculture
- Gender inequality and disempowerment of women
- Lack of universal health care and poor access to education
- Power and water issues
- Homophobia and misogyny
- Trafficking of persons
- Marginalized informal sector

A major lesson learned from ACSC/APF's ten-year review of its work (2005–2015) is that "individual ASEAN member countries have consistently resisted and vacillated with regards civil society participation and engagement." Further, "ASEAN and its member governments have been seen to be more comfortable with the private sector and academic and research think tanks than with civil society." The review concluded that "the level of commitment of ASEAN is perceived to be only on the level of rhetoric, and not as intentional, owing to the fact that enabling environments are not present to facilitate people's participation."

What we need now is "thinking and acting outside the ASEAN box." This means developing strategies of engagement that go beyond mere assertions of its independence and autonomy from the states' agenda, and taking the lead in initiating the process of establishing a regional integration model that offers an alternative to the existing ASEAN process—one that is based on people-to-people interactions rather than state-to-state relations or purely market-oriented interactions.

This roadmap towards an alternative regional integration model has the following elements:

- Economic: People-to-people trade via the media of alter-trade organizations through producer and trading cooperatives
- Production: Social enterprises, producer cooperatives, and communities engaged in exchanges on the technologies of sustainable food production systems
- Power/energy: Community-based renewable energy systems such as solar, wind, and biogas technologies

- Political
  - Informal and formal networks of civil society organizations and social movements on various issues: environmental issues, women's rights, workers' and human rights, human security, and many other concerns
  - Joint political advocacies and peasants' rights, corresponding actions via mass mobilizations during international gatherings, as well as lobbying with states and multilateral organizations
  - Communities that have engaged in local planning and have practiced conflict settlement mechanisms
- Social
  - Long existing self-help groups and local networks that have coordinated their social protection activities
  - Community-based health systems guided by primary care principles, "barefoot" health practitioners, and the development and fine-tuning of age-old healing practices, including the use of organic and generic medicines
  - Alternative learning practices such as folk schools, non-formal centers, and lifelong learning advocacies
  - For shelter, vernacular architecture principles that utilize indigenous designs, technologies, and construction materials
- Cultural
  - Visual artists and other performers who have been networking through regional events that showcase the richness, diversity, and historical depth of Southeast Asia's creative arts
  - Political and economic issues that are the concern of civil society groups which are also highlighted and represented via these cultural interactions and presentations

Civil society movements play a key role in addressing several challenges towards alternative regionalism. They need to build and strengthen linkages between and among local and national groups. Research and documentation and constant monitoring of popular initiatives are needed to build a data base of practices. Since these innovative practices are often marginalized, they require information campaigns to mainstream the challenge and alternatives to orthodox models of production, marketing, and distribution.

In its November 2017 statement, the ACSC/APF resolved to "develop and adopt a new vision for engagement by civil society with ASEAN based on greater people to people interactions that will establish, expand and strengthen a new peoples' regional integration process based on the alternative practices of peoples, networks, and organizations across the region's societies."

ACSC/APF must therefore firm up and tighten its links and interconnections and establish close working relations with grassroots initiatives and relate directly with the creative practices of peoples struggling to carve a better and more dignified life for their families and communities and for future generations.

Coalition of Services of the Elderly

EMILY BEREDICO (Philippines)

In the Philippines, a law was passed in 2010 expanding the Senior Citizens' Act to include a social pension for indigent older persons amounting to PhP500 per month (or less than US$10 today). The Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE) and HelpAge International reviewed the implementation of the program and found that (1) while social pension has a meaningful impact on the income and expenditure of recipients, this impact is limited by the very low benefit level (i.e., the real value of the social pension benefit has depreciated); and (2) targeting and selection of beneficiaries were highly subjective and lacked a systematic process. They recommended increasing the benefit amount from PhP500 to PhP1500 per month so that it meets the basic needs of older people and indexing it to inflation, and studying the feasibility of more universal approaches to a social pension.

A universal rather than a targeted approach recognizes social pension as a right and not as a gift. It also has several practical advantages: targeting errors are avoided, security for low-income informal sector workers is provided, eligibility criteria become simple and transparent, and administrative costs get cheaper.

COSE continues to wage its campaign for a Universal Social Pension. Despite expansion of the Senior Citizens' Act, the pension system is still limited, catering only to salaried formal sector workers and to indigents. This means that senior citizens who are neither of the two are being left out. Recent developments show that the 2018 national budget will cover only 34% of the projected 8.7 million senior citizens. Much bigger budget allocations have been given to salary hikes for military and uniformed personnel and to the pension and gratuity fund of military and government retirees.

Senior citizens themselves have actively mobilized and trooped to Congress to make their issues and demands known. A bill has been filed that removes the criteria of indigence, and if passed into law, all senior citizens who are not already receiving pensions from contributory schemes will be entitled to receive a social pension. It is now under review by the House Committee on Appropriations.

DIGNIDAD

ANA MARIA NEMENZO (Philippines)

DIGNIDAD is the local face of the Network for Transformative Social Protection, which is our regional network. The National Network on Transformative Social Protection (NTSP) also helped organize DIGNIDAD in the Philippines. Our previous formation was known as the Campaign for a Life of Dignity, but this expanded to include other networks and coalitions.

DIGNIDAD has a wide range of sectoral members which include the urban poor, women, older persons, persons with disabilities (PWDs), labor, and faith-based groups, among others. It was launched on 22 February 2016 during the campaign period of the presidential elections and as part of the electoral campaign of Walden Bello for senator.

Our demands are:

- Decent work and sustainable livelihood;
- Free and quality heart care;
- Socialized and decent housing;

- Free education up to the tertiary level;
- Safe and affordable food;
- Guaranteed access to water and electricity;
- Safe and reliable public transport;
- Living pension for older people; and
- Adequate income support for children, PWDs, the unemployed, and calamity survivors.

We participated in the National Social Development Consultation where the concept and agendas of social protection were introduced—Universal Transformative Social Protection. We also participated in consultations conducted by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) in the drafting of the Philippine Development Plan 2016–2022.

An assessment we conducted on the Philippine Development Plan showed that the government failed miserably as the economic development framework still follows the neoliberal globalization policy which fosters global competitiveness, privatization, and deregulation.

The fight for social protection is not a standalone project but should be accompanied by economic and social changes, in the framework of viewing the economy as the provisioning for human life. Realizing democratic governance is an essential element of this struggle.

Freedom from Debt Coalition

SAMMY GAMBOA (Philippines)

Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) is one of the longest-running broad coalitions in the Philippines. Formally launched in March 1988 by 90 organizations, we are a nationwide multi-sectoral, non-sectarian, and pluralist coalition conducting policy advocacy work and waging campaigns to realize a common framework and agenda for economic development. The FDC has grown over the years to include more than 250 organizations and individual members in the National Capital Region and in Luzon, and in seven chapters in the Visayas and Mindanao regions.

The Coalition addresses the economy and economic development. Specifically, our scope of work includes the following:

- Fiscal and tax policies;
- Reclaiming the commons, which includes the right to public services; and
- Alternatives in the context of developing a people's economic agenda.

One of our focus areas in the immediate is to launch a renewed push to audit the debts claimed from the Philippines. This is guided by the notion of illegitimate debts, which basically proceeds from the conviction that citizens should repudiate and press states to cancel loans tainted, among others, by environmental destruction, community displacements, and other forms of harm; lack of public consultations, transparency, and accountability; and contracted at the behest of public officials.

Through our work as a coalition, twenty (20) suspicious debts have been identified for closer scrutiny by Congress to establish the basis for cancellation. These debts continue to enjoy an allocation in the national budget. At the same time, FDC will lead efforts to reinvigorate an independent citizens' debt audit process that shall conduct its own review process and put forward recommendations. Funds

freed from debt servicing of debts found illegitimate should go into building public capacity for the provision of adequate, affordable, and quality public services.

FDC also continues to do advocacy and campaigning on essential services, particularly water and power, which disastrously, have already been subsumed under the government's neoliberal framework of surrendering these vital sectors to the profit-seeking directions of the private sector. With the failures of privatization already surfacing in many parts of the country, the push for a reversal or a return of essential social services to public hands gains more currency than ever.

Network for Transformative Social Protection in Asia (NTSP)

MARIS DELA CRUZ (Philippines)

Universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection towards a life of dignity for all.

The NTSP is a regional platform advancing a campaign for a life of dignity for all through universal, comprehensive, and transformative social protection and for the agenda to put social dimension in regional integration, such as the agenda for a social ASEAN.

The Network was formed in 2009, a year after representatives of human rights and poor peoples' movements in Southeast Asia tackled the responses to financial, energy, and food crises at the sidelines of Asia Europe Peoples' Forum (AEPF)–7 in Beijing in 2008. Peoples' organizations, sectoral, and issue-based movements of workers, urban poor, women, youth, older people, persons with disabilities, academics, and parliamentarians in Asia—most of which are based in Southeast Asia—comprise the Network.

The NTSP believes that social protection is a tool for tackling poverty, inequality, exclusion, and vulnerability; that it is a mechanism for social justice, sharing the benefits of growth and country's resources equitably. However, social protection coverage remains low: only 27% of the world's population enjoy comprehensive social protection.

Poverty and inequality incidence have remained high in Asia, where majority of the population are in precarious living conditions. Social protection is a human right and a common. Work, essential services, food, and social security, which comprise social protection, are entitlements for people so everyone can live a life of dignity.

To be effective and meaningful, social protection must be participatory, legislated, state-guaranteed, integrated in the national development strategy, gender-responsive, ecologically sustainable, and solidarity-based.

NTSP calls for a social protection that is universal—*for all*. It must be *comprehensive*—employing the life-cycle approach to attain full human potential and life with dignity; it covers work and living income (e.g., decent work, sustainable livelihoods), essential services (e.g., healthcare, housing, education, water, energy), food, and social security (e.g., living pension/income for older people, PWDs, children, unemployed, and calamity survivors). Finally, social protection must be *transformative*—empowering people and transforming society by addressing power imbalances, structural causes of poverty and inequalities (i.e., neoliberal economic programs, tax/fiscal policies, patronage system, etc.), and development goals that go beyond providing safety nets.

Overall, the NTSP campaign aims to contribute in strengthening social movements and in helping the poor and marginalized become active agents of social change in order to realize their collective

economic and political strength. It endeavors to build movements, connect or link up with other struggles, and win allies, including parliamentarians, to jointly push the campaign agenda at the national and regional levels.

The activities of NTSP include agenda building, public awareness-raising, capacity building, linking with other related struggles (e.g., tax, trade, climate, SDGs, fighting inequality, anti-privatization campaign, human rights, and democratization), and lobbying at the national and regional levels.

Moving forward, the NTSP aspires to do more information, education, and capacity building activities through country-level discussions, learning exchange visits, and fellowship training programs. Together with broader groups, it shall advance anchor campaigns on universal healthcare, living income for workers, older people, and calamity survivors, and adequate and affordable food. It shall also sustain its engagements/participation at the regional levels such as with ACSC/APF (ASEAN), AEPF (ASEM), and on the global Sustainable Development Agenda. It will continue to link with other related campaigns and proactively promote social protection.

NTSP works with the Working Group on Social ASEAN (composed of CSOs, trade unions, migrant workers, and parliamentarians), Asia-Europe People's Forum–Social Justice Thematic Cluster, ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum, Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, Fight Inequality Alliance, and with tax and trade justice campaigners. It also collaborates with other networks on social protection like the Asian Network on Right to Social Protection, Asian Roundtable on Social Protection, and the European Working Group on Social Protection, as well as with academics and policymakers, such as the joint project on social inclusion and healthcare by the Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS) of the University of the Philippines and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

OPEN FORUM

- What is the democratic governance measures that are being implemented by the various regional efforts and mechanisms, so that there is accountability to the different members of the regional formations?
  - Effectiveness of the regional networks is based on the effectiveness of the national networks. It is not easy to be proactive, but it can be done.

- If national affiliates are active, efforts will be effective. Also, activists should be more proactive than reactive.
  - Democratic governance, both at the national and regional levels, are a work in progress. Decisions emanate from the national level, but these decisions should be arrived at and from the consultations done at the regional level.

- Can the economics of social protection be applied at the municipal level?
  - Economies of scale are needed for social protection (also sustainable finances), so applying social protection policies at the municipal level may be problematic.
  - There is always room for change and improvement on the finances (on and for democratic governance).

- The government (power) discourse should be discussed so that counter-discourses can be strengthened. The legal structures should be engaged so as not to weaken the counter-discourse.
    - The struggle is a process. It is important to carry out reforms and changes at the local level. Regional structures cannot be changed; however, the power structure at the national level can be challenged. It is a process that needs everyone's help.

Closing Plenary

Conference Statement

Assuring Affordable, Accessible, and Quality Public Services for All
Asia Europe Peoples' Forum
Social Justice Cluster
Manila Conference, 13 to 15 February 2018

POLITICAL DECLARATION

One very clear message came out of this conference: **public services should be in the hands of public authorities and citizens and be fully and exclusively committed to serve the society as a whole**. Some speakers put emphasis on the role of the state, others on municipalities, and still others on citizens and their self-organizations. But they all agree that **public services must not be made into profit-making mechanisms**, which international institutions and many governments now tend to do.

The privatization efforts of the past decades have failed. Many essential services are not affordable for the majority of poor people; quality is substandard; and employment and wages are undermined. Research shows that privatization leads to excess profits for corporations and high costs for the public. Whether we speak of water, healthcare, education, public transport, and energy, in each and every sector, the same problems arise.

Moreover, **transnational corporations**, the drivers of privatizations, do not hesitate to push for free trade agreements with private arbitration clauses so that they can sue governments whenever laws or regulations proposed in the interest of citizens but possibly affecting their profits.

As a consequence of failed privatizations, the conference shared many examples of reclaimed public services that resulted in significant public benefits, including lower costs for consumers. Eight hundred and thirty-five (835) examples of services taken back from private to municipal ownership and control have been documented, demonstrating that the title of the conference *Reclaiming public services* is becoming an exciting reality.

Movements of citizens and residents are getting stronger to reclaim what is theirs: the universal quality of fundamental infrastructures and services in the public interest. To make this possible, governments will have to seriously question, in a participatory process, their macroeconomic framework and their tax and public spending policies, as well as their unjust laws, so as to make financial resources available. Public services will also have to contribute to the reduction of the disastrous inequalities and to the sustainability of the environment.

Whether these services are provided by states, municipalities, or peoples' organizations, the way they are conceptualized, regulated, and monitored is crucial for their success. **Real participatory democracy is therefore an essential and common characteristic of the public services that this conference wants to promote, based on successful best practices.**

Public services go beyond public ownership to embrace dynamic forms of democratic participation and accountability. The conference cited examples of democratic planning of inclusive public services, such as those for transport, renewable energy, and housing.

It means that in this new era, we have **a new awareness of what is necessary for a life of dignity for all**, and with a better understanding of the fundamental differences between progressive policies and a neoliberal and conservative ideology, we can overcome the simple divisions between state and market, and private and public.

This conference has been a major contribution to **the alliance of all progressive forces**, working under the framework of the commons, our collective ownership of our common nature and built infrastructure. We work to redefine strategies, to renew our thinking on production, markets, nature, and the State, and to create a new narrative **to better organize our resistance to neoliberal and conservative forces**.

New forms of cooperation are required, among public authorities at different levels, trade unions and other social movements, and academics and legal experts. In the same way that this conference was built, progressive forces can make real progress once they understand their common interest. Victory is possible.

Destroying public services is destroying the very society that makes us what we are—our social relationships, our solidarity, and collective values. Preserving and promoting public services is promoting citizenship and the sovereignty of the people.

Summary of Salient Points and Future Actions

TINA EBRO
Co-Coordinator for Asia, Asia-Europe Peoples' Forum

Amidst this gross and rising inequality of 62 people owning as much wealth as 3.6 billion of the poorest people in the world, and amidst massive unemployment and work informalization which is becoming structural, workers' families have barely any access to affordable, accessible, and quality public services like universal healthcare, free education up to the college level, decent public housing, a living requirement of water and power, and reliable public transportation, among other public essentials.

We need to answer the plea: "Can we achieve a dignified life for all?" People, as human beings, have the inalienable right to essential services. These are public goods and are part of our social commons. They are vital to life, to the dignity, and to the development of individuals and society as a whole. Their provisioning must therefore be guaranteed.

Yet the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) continue to impose conditionalities that cut public spending and require privatization of public service financing and delivery. Inequitable trade agreements lock in privatization and expose our governments to the risk of costly arbitration in one-sided international tribunals. States continue to retreat from their obligation to guarantee and finance decent public services.

However, a movement to reclaim public services is sweeping across Europe and is gaining momentum in Asia. Inclusive peoples' platforms and unions, academics, local officials, parliamentarians, and policymakers have taken up the challenge of reversing the privatization of public services and returning them to public ownership and democratic control. International campaigners and scholars have joined with their Philippine counterparts in Manila to share insights and experiences.

Together, we have deepened our understanding of the mounting evidence that reveals the failed promises of privatization. We affirmed that effective and accountable public services are a powerful tool to promote greater equality, build social cohesion, and improve living standards for all.

We shared documentation, including the 835 examples of municipalities that have benefited from replacing privatization with democratic and participative delivery of public services. We have been inspired by those and by other alternatives.

This conference has been a great learning experience, and our exchanges have strengthened our advocacies through the sharing of best practices, strategies, tactics, and lessons learned. We have identified new initiatives to build a more powerful movement to reclaim public services.

Our discussions have stressed the following:

- We will continue our vigorous and wide-ranging campaigns that will enable us to generate the broadest public support and understanding of our agenda.
- We will widely disseminate our messages and alternatives through social and mainstream media and seek to encourage media coverage of our campaigns. The Asia Europe Peoples' Forum will disseminate the Final Statement, papers, and video clips through social media and key outlets in mainstream media and target relevant state agencies at the national, regional, and global level.
- We will continue our painstaking lobby work to grow more advocates among legislators and policymakers, and unite all groups reclaiming public services, through building broad coalitions at the national, regional, and global level.

In our discussions, we were inspired by Jeremy Corbyn, who urged the immediate social ownership and democratic control of public services, a vision which will require great change in societies and a major social struggle worldwide. Our effective cooperation at the regional, inter-regional, and global level is more important than ever.

But the real battleground for reclaiming public services is in the streets, workplaces, communities, and villages. In addition to our research, lobbying, and movement-building, we will also need to act strongly and directly, through litigation and legal reform, civil disobedience and strikes, national consultations and massive protests, consumers' actions and boycotts, and pickets and marches, among others.

There will be change in national and global policies only when we have strong social movements that embrace the fight for social, economic, and ecological justice across countries and across continents. So we will promote broader and stronger forms of organization and mobilization that can create the compelling pressure from below to reclaim the state and support our key goals to:

- Introduce legislation, with constitutional underpinning if possible, to ensure that peoples' rights to public services are institutionalized and insulated from market forces and political patronage;

- Finance public services by building the political will to enforce real progressive taxation and abandoning unjust tax policies, which allow the mega-rich to hide their wealth through tax havens and illegal money flows;
- Abandon the policy of using PPPs and use public finance to finance infrastructure and public services;
- Establish public ownership and democratic management of public services, including mechanisms for peoples' participation and oversight; and
- Foster public-poor-partnerships that enable impoverished communities to participate fully in the planning, implementation, and oversight of projects.

Lastly, we recognize that rebuilding public services is not an isolated campaign. It is closely linked with struggles for decent work, land and food sovereignty, just trade, and climate justice. It is part of the transformative change towards an alternative development paradigm for the people and the planet, within a more enlightened socio-economic system that, as Naomi Klein characterized, "closes deep inequalities, strengthens, and transforms the public sphere, generates plentiful, dignified work, and radically reins in corporate power."

Concluding Message

CHARLES SANTIAGO (Malaysia)

In 2007, the *Financial Times* featured a write-up on the "masters of the universe." The article was about the restructuring of Europe after the financial crisis. Playing key roles were the United States (US) Secretary of Finance, the President of the European Central Bank, and other individuals, all of whom were from Goldman Sachs.

So who is running the world? Who's running the policies of the world? Profits and finance rule the world.

Governments are increasingly no longer the ones making public policy. Although they are elected, their authority has been handed over to corporations and lobby/interest groups. Corporate capture of public policy facilitates the entry of privatization in social services. It is advanced by international financial institutions and cronies capturing government privatization contracts for healthcare, education, and other services. Lobby/interest groups sit and plan with governments on how to restructure public policy. They wage media campaigns that sugarcoat the so-called advantages of privatization. They have become very powerful over the years.

For example, the push for plain packaging in Malaysia was supported by the government. But soon after the announcement was made, all the intellectual property rights organizations in Southeast Asia were all over the government of Malaysia with the message that "if you do it, we will sue you." The government immediately backed off, saying that this will send the wrong message that Malaysia is not too investor-friendly.

We are here talking about privatization of social services, but the decisions to turn them into profit-making activities lie in a small handful of people. We have lost control.

However, if the 99% come together and exert pressure on our governments, we can reverse this situation and turn the pyramid on its head. We need to consolidate this political power. The challenge

is to organize around these issues and to fight inside and outside parliaments, starting fundamentally with making our governments accountable.

Elected governments must be people-centered governments. But we are in an environment, especially in Southeast Asia, where it is difficult to push genuine development. Seven of the ten ASEAN member countries are headed by dictators. What we need to do is to start thinking of new forms of politics and new ways of working together, but all change must come from the bottom.

In Selangor, Malaysia, the change has started at the most basic level—the local councils. The state today provides 20 cubic meters of water free of charge to everybody, so every household in Selangor gets MYR 11.40 subsidy every month for water. Last year, the state introduced a provision that every household earning less than MYR 3,000 ringgit a month be given a MYR 500 subsidy for healthcare. This has been raised to MYR 700 ringgit.

Further, because the cost of living has gone up, while wages have remained low, another measure will be introduced in Parliament that will provide MYR 2,400 ringgit subsidy in a year for the basic needs of families earning less than MYR 2,000 per month, especially for women-headed households. This will be sourced from revenues which come from the people and which will now be returned to the people. Selangor has a very small state budget of only about MYR 3 billion or less than a billion dollars, which is not very much. But from very little, we can do a lot.

We need governments working in the interest of people. This is the only way to take on the masters of the universe.

Adjourn.

Speakers' Profiles and Thoughts on Public Services

ALGHIFFARI AQSA is the Director of Jakarta Legal Aid Institute, one of the oldest and biggest legal aid organizations in Indonesia. He is also a fellow of The Global Network for Public Interest Law (PILNet) and International Commission of Jurists Victoria (ICJ Victoria). He was appointed Overseas Counsel of the Victoria Bar Counsel.

He was involved in strategic litigations involving judicial review against privatization of higher education, blasphemy law, and privatization of coastal and small islands and citizen lawsuits against torture and forced eviction and on the right to water.

The citizen lawsuit for the right to water sets a precedent for the poor and marginalized groups of Indonesia who wish to claim their human rights when they have been violated by either the government or private companies. The public can exercise oversight and control over government policies that use cooperation agreement schemes in the provision of public services through citizen lawsuits.

This lawsuit is also an instructive example of successful collaboration among many parties, including lawyers, NGOs, national and international academics, ordinary citizens, as well as the media. Various non-litigation advocacy activities accompanied the proceedings inside the courtroom, such as demonstrations, community organizing, hearings, lobbying, and public discussions.

Jakarta experienced twenty years of water privatization. Last October, the Indonesian Supreme Court ordered the termination of water privatization and restored public management to ensure the peoples' fundamental right to water. The Indonesian struggle demonstrates the effective working together of unions and citizens networks to bring about transformative changes. Unions, NGOs, and journalists worked together to reverse this through persistent research, education, advocacy, and mobilization over the years.

However, there is need for vigilance at this juncture, since corporations may sue the Indonesian government at an international arbitration court. With little investment, these corporations made huge profits, left half of the population of Jakarta without water access, and made its price of water one of the most expensive in Asia. After all, they are accountable to no one. Privatization is the model of profit over people. We cannot allow these corporations to steal any more money from Jakarta.

BARRY COATES was recently a Green Party Member of the New Zealand Parliament. He was active in campaigns on climate change, corporate accountability, and trade justice for the Pacific

as Executive Director of Oxfam Aotearoa New Zealand from 2003 to 2014 and as Co-chair of the Global Campaign for Climate Action before the Copenhagen Summit. Barry was previously Director of the World Development Movement (renamed as Global Justice Now!) and led campaigns on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), the World Trade Organization (WTO) (No New Issues), and the GATS (General Agreement in Trade in Services), as well as campaigns for corporate accountability, indigenous rights, and workers' rights. He was Chair of the UK Trade Justice Movement and active in the fair trade movement in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Barry has a degree in economics and a master's from Yale University.

After leaving Parliament in September 2017, Barry has been undertaking research on finance and investment. He plans to work with others to build a strong public movement to divert finance away from exploitation, short-term greed, and unsustainability towards inclusive and responsible finance, corporate accountability, and impact investment.

Ending the private sector push from global institutions

Access to decent public services is an essential part of a rights-based approach to development. Public services should not be treated as commodities for trade and commercial profit. However, a powerful alliance of the global elites, international financial institutions (IFIs), free trade proponents, donors, and the private sector are focused on another agenda. Private sector investment is being promoted as the answer to infrastructure needs for the developing world. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become their instrument of choice and trade treaties the framework to lock in a reduced role for the state.

Civil society has made important gains in forcing accountability for the IFIs and defeating agreements like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Now, there is a desperate attempt by the hyper-globalizers to lock in frameworks that would prevent civil society from regulating global corporations and reclaiming public services. The World Bank is pushing PPPs in their new long-term strategy that gives priority to private sector finance and delivery of infrastructure and is supporting publicly-financed services only as a last resort. Meanwhile there are negotiations on trade and investment treaties like the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that would establish a binding deregulatory model, giving multinationals new rights to sue governments in ad hoc international tribunals.

Once again, civil society and social movements need to gear up to oppose and defeat these dangerous initiatives. Crucial decisions will be made in the coming months. But we need to also use these campaigns to build on our growing base of support, setting out a positive vision for a huge increase in affordable and accountable public services to meet the needs of all.

DAVID BOYS is the Deputy General Secretary of Public Services International (PSI) and assists the General Secretary in implementing the priorities from the PSI Congress. David oversees PSI sectoral work and directly coordinates PSI's international work on the utilities of water, waste, and energy. This includes helping unions and allies fight privatization and promote remunicipalization and conducting policy and advocacy work on finance and governance of utilities, as well as union and worker mobilization and representation.

David is a recognized authority in the water sector and was a member of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. PSI advocates public-public

partnerships among public utilities as an alternative to the for-profit public-private partnership model which has dominated the sector for the past 15 to 20 years. David also coordinates corporate social responsibility and investment issues with worker-trusteed pension funds.

DAVID HALL is a Visiting Professor in the Business School of University of Greenwich, London. From 2000 to 2013, he was Director of the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), which carries out empirical research into public services and privatization globally. He has published numerous reports for PSIRU, articles in academic journals, book chapters, and two books. He has addressed meetings of many global institutions, including the World Bank's infrastructure division, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the European Parliament, the European Union (EU) Economic and Social Committee, the constitutional court of Indonesia, and the global congress of Consumers International.

FRANCINE MESTRUM has a Ph.D. in social sciences and worked at European institutions and several Belgian universities. Her research concerns the social dimension of globalization, poverty, inequality, social protection, public services, and gender. She is an active member of the International Council of the World Social Forum and helps in the organization of the Asia Europe Peoples' Forum events.

She is the author of several books (in Dutch, French, and English) on development, poverty, inequality, and social commons. She is the founder of the global network Global Social Justice and currently works on a project for social commons.

Though social protection lacks a serious theoretical foundation, several ideologies can be used to implement it. It can be at the service of people, but it can also be at the service of markets and growth. The current neoliberal philosophy wants governments to cut public spending, which means that at any rate, social expenditures are severely limited.

However, markets and the production system they require cannot function properly without a decent reproduction. Simply put, if people have no clean water, no education system, no healthcare, and no public transport, among others, the economic system will fail. Moreover—and this is to us an even more important argument—social protection is a human right, as confirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and repeatedly and explicitly stated in the International Covenant for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, as well as other regional treaties.

All over the world, the experiences of the past decades have shown that privatized public services cannot do the job. They are too expensive, and poor people cannot afford them. They are rarely universal because if they were, then they would not have been profitable. Also, they cut back on employment and do not allow for any democratic and participatory approach.

That is why there is now a broad movement to reclaim these services at the national, the regional, or the municipal level. This is the movement that we want to support and promote. Social protection and public services are ours: people pay for them with taxes and social contributions, and this is why we call them social commons. They should be universal and be at the service of all, and not only for

those who are rich enough to pay for them. Public services belong to the public, they can and should be organized in a democratic and participatory way.

MEENA MENON is an activist, researcher, and writer. Meena worked as a full-time organizer with a Left party for twenty years. She was Vice President at Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti (GKSS, Mill Workers Struggle Committee), Mumbai and was the India Country Coordinator of Focus on the Global South. Until recently, she was a senior consultant on urban policy of Action Aid in India, where she helped set up the urban policy group Citizens Rights Collective (CiRiC), a network of labor organizations working in the informal sector, and a policy training school called the Urban Action School. She played an active role in the Peoples' SAARC process in India and the global network called Peoples' Agenda for Alternative Regionalisms (PAAR) initiative with Focus on the Global South and the Transnational Institute. She is currently working with a network of labor researchers in India. Meena's areas of work include labor, urbanization, housing, alternative regionalisms, peace and security, and new politics. She is co-author of the book *One Hundred Years, One Hundred Voices: The Mill Workers of Girangaon, An Oral History* (2004). She is currently working on a book on radical student politics in India in from the 1960s to the 1970s.

The worst form of poverty and inequality is no longer a condition associated solely with impoverished villages. It is the reality behind the glittering façades of most modern cities, especially in the developing world. In 2008, for the first time, the world's population was evenly divided between urban and rural. It is expected that 70 percent of the world's population will be urban by 2050. There is an urgent need for policy consensus to ensure effective urban planning and solutions to the immense challenges posed by rapid urbanization and the disparity that accompanies it.

Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals sets out the objective to "make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable." It is time make the urban habitat a major policy focus in the discourse of civil society. Housing is one of the most difficult areas of urban life. High cost of rent and the exceedingly higher costs of buying a house, the lack of proper social housing solutions, and the paucity of even minimal housing have made housing a major area of policy pronouncements and a chief subject of electoral promises in most developing countries of Asia. However, it is a policy area marked by a singular lack of consensus. Most urban movements are reactive movements demanding a stop to the destructive and cruel eviction of the poor from slums and shanty towns. But there have been fewer attempts to find solutions to and build consensus on these issues. Questions under debate with respect to social housing include the following:

- Should the focus be on ownership or rental?
- Is it upgrading or rehabilitation of slums and shanties that we want?
- What various kinds of housing should be offered to cater to different kinds of needs in the city?
- How should land be owned and used?
- What kind of housing services should be made mandatory?

There was a time when a demand for shelter essentially referred to a roof over one's head. However, habitat does not merely refer to the built structure. It encompasses essential civic services and a concern for the environment. No one in this sector discusses comprehensive city planning; the discussions tend to focus on issues with regard to the free market approach. Solutions must include:

- comprehensive planning as opposed to market approach;
- access to urban services such as water, electricity, waste management, lighting, roads, and transport (especially when houses for the poor are built outside city limits);
- clean air and open public spaces;
- public and cleaner modes of transport rather than private transport; and
- sustainable buildings and aesthetics.

Social housing is therefore one of the most critical areas of public services that needs discussion on solutions. Any discussion of public services without integrating housing needs would be incomplete and ineffective. It also follows that if people are to survive in the urban space, comprehensive planning with a conscious bias towards the poor and vulnerable has to be part of the city's main priorities.

MÍRIAM PLANAS is a member of Engineering Without Borders Catalonia, which works for development cooperation to guarantee universal access to basic services. She is also actively involved in the citizen platform Aigua es Vida, which consists of more than fifty organizations working towards public, democratic, and non-commercial water management. She is also an active member of the Spanish Public Water Network and the European Water Movement.

Water is life, not only for people who cannot live without water, but also for the environment, thus protecting the quality of water and ecological flows in rivers should be of concern for us. (Re)municipalization of water is a tool to move a step forward in requiring municipalities to develop water policy that takes into account the limits of the quality of local water resources. Water management is a key tool for ensuring regional balance and respect for the environment, based on the concept that water is not a resource, but a natural good and an essential part of the ecosystem in which we live.

Participation must be the anchor of a new water management model. This model needs to ensure that the reclaiming of public water management in municipalities results in genuine democratic deepening, through mechanisms of transparency, accountability, education, and training for citizens. All of these serves to keep the old practices of the private management model at bay, as these are characterized by opacity, corruption, and enrichment.

MLADEN DOMAZET is a Research Director at the Institute for Political Ecology in Zagreb, Croatia. He graduated with a degree in Physics and Philosophy from the University of Oxford and completed a doctorate in Philosophy of Science at the University of Zagreb. His research currently focuses on theories of scientific explanation, degrowth-compatible explanatory frameworks of social metabolism, and social attitudes relevant to sustainability. He shares insights that originate from the Institute for Political Ecology's research on the democratization of public services.

Our research aims to explore a whole spectrum of public services in the country, from water and waste management to electricity production and railway transport. We see the state enterprises handling natural resources and public infrastructure as a battlefield where struggle for good life, sustainability, public interest, and quality of services should be won.

Moreover, since Croatia and the larger region of South Eastern Europe are exposed to the strong push for the privatization of public services, our research findings aim to serve as an instrument for movements and coalitions opposing privatization and advocating to leave services in public hands. The research informs these movements of the potentials and pitfalls of the current management of public services and its transformation without privatization.

Fortunately in Croatia, public services are publicly owned and we have to keep it that way. We need to resist the strong push towards privatization by showing how the quality of services can be maintained only if they are in public hands and if citizens have control over their management.

However, our research also shows that we cannot keep the current model where the state enterprises don't work in the public interest, but serve the interests of a small number of political and economic elites and is tarnished by suspicious, non-transparent, and corruptive practices. This is why the anti-privatization struggle needs to go hand in hand with the democratization of the governance systems of state enterprises and the broadening of civic understanding of public interest.

Our state enterprises behave irresponsibly toward citizens and toward public interest, so our research aims to argue for more transparency and participation in their everyday operations. We argue for the introduction of principles that would ensure quality, accessibility, operational sustainability, accountability, user participation, environmental protection, and which, in turn, we could use to assess whether state enterprises work for the public interest. We also need to gain broader public support and understand that the quality of services can be protected and maintained if they remain publicly owned, but with more regular civic oversight.

At present, we primarily see infrastructural degradation and the reduction of quality and scope of railway transport services, together with their inefficient financial and economic performance. Also, workers' rights are becoming more and more fragile and their solidarity fragmented. Such a situation opens the door for privatization, which should be prevented. We must avoid repeating the costly and frustrating mistakes of other European countries that are currently remunicipalizing or renationalizing public services after privatizations have failed to uphold the public interest of services.

SATOKO KISHIMOTO is an activist researcher at the Transnational Institute (TNI), a research and advocacy non-government organization (NGO) based in Amsterdam. She started the water justice project in TNI that seeks alternatives to water privatization. She is the co-founder of the Reclaiming Public Water (RPW) Network which was created as a result of the book *Reclaiming public water: Achievements, struggles, and visions from around the world*, published in 2005. Lately, she engages with joint research and advocacy projects on remunicipalization in the water sector and in other public services. She edited the book *Our public water future: The global experience with remunicipalization* (2015) and *Reclaiming public services: How cities and citizens are turning back privatization* (2017).

The book *Reclaiming public services: How cities and citizens are turning back privatization* is a sharing of new initiatives in public ownership and the variety of approaches to deprivatization. From New Delhi to Barcelona and from Indonesia to Germany, thousands of politicians, public officials, workers, unions, and social movements are reclaiming or creating public services to address peoples' basic needs and to respond to environmental challenges.

There have been at least 835 examples of (re)municipalization of public services worldwide in recent years, involving more than 1,600 cities in 45 countries. Remunicipalization is taking place in

small towns and in capital cities across the planet, following different models of public ownership and with various levels of involvement by citizens and workers.

Why are people around the world reclaiming essential services from private operators and bringing their delivery back into the public sphere? There are many motivations behind these remunicipalization initiatives: a goal to end private sector abuse or labor violations, a desire to regain control over the local economy and resources, a wish to provide people with affordable services, or an intention to implement ambitious strategies for energy transition or the environment, to name a few.

Out of this diversity a coherent picture is nevertheless emerging: it is possible to reclaim or build effective, democratic, and affordable public services. Ever-declining service quality and ever-increasing prices are not inevitable. More and more people and cities are closing the chapter on privatization and putting essential services back into public hands.

SHARAD ONTA is Professor of Community Medicine and Public Health at the Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. He is also a member of its Faculty Board (the highest academic authority of the Institute), a member of the thesis committee for the Institute's Master in Public Health (MPH) and Ph.D. programs, and coordinator of the Community-Based Learning Program of the Department. He is likewise a member of Tribhuvan University's Academic Council and is involved in teaching international health, supervising research projects, theses, and scientific publications, and in contributing academic policy decisions to the public sector. He is author of several scientific papers and chapters of books on public health and health policies.

Health is not just a biomedical entity. It is life with dignity—a fundamental human right. Diseases do not always kill people, as science and technology have invented remedies to ailments. What kills people is the socio-economic and political environment created by unjust values, structures, and systems which deprive people of these remedies. Therefore, our fight is not only against the diseases and to overcome and eliminate them, but is also a struggle for the establishment of sustained systems guided by equity and social justice. This is not a community- or country-level issue alone, but a global issue.

The argument that low-income countries do not have capacity to safeguard the health of its citizens has no basis. This argument has resulted in discrepancies in health that exist among peoples across the country, region, and the globe at large—something unacceptable in a civilized world. This is a prime moment to establish the value that every country—rich or poor—must protect the health of every citizen. This is possible if we act together with vision, commitment, and honesty.

On the Social Agenda of the Left in Nepal

Left political parties have brought significant positive policy changes when they began to share state power, like free essential health services, free maternal health care, and social support to elderly citizens, among others. People have given Left parties an overwhelming mandate to form their central and provincial governments—though these governments are not yet formed. It is hoped that Left political parties will meet the expectations of the people to craft and implement pro-people policies.

Nepal introduced the user's fee for health services in public facilities in the early 1990s. Following the peace negotiations with the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN Maoist Center) after a period of armed insurgency, state power was shared with the CPN and allowed a Maoist to lead the Ministry of Health. Under this leadership, in 2008, the user's fee was abolished and essential health services were

made free for the people. During that period, I was with the Advisory Team of the Ministry of Health. Later, free basic health services were included in the constitution of Nepal as a fundamental right of its citizens, which is an achievement considered significant by the Left.

SÖREN BECKER is a geographer interested in alternative ways of organizing infrastructure and technology in cities. He has developed this general interest while studying the rise and impact of new forms of organization in energy transitions in Germany and beyond that seek to promote democratic participation, social justice, and ecological sustainability. His work on energy remunicipalization and community energy was published as various academic articles. He is working as a researcher at the University of Bonn and Humboldt University Berlin, where he is involved in both teaching and research. His current research focus is conflicts in the realization of 'smart city strategies' in Berlin and other European cities.

The uninterrupted provision of energy (mainly in the form of electricity) is seen as a backbone for modern life, in both the spheres of production and consumption—including everyday amenities. Energy is thus a major public service and its importance resulted in an intermingling of state and business interests in the field. The sector was transformed in the 1980s and 1990s, and it was characterized by privatization, commercialization, and concentration. However, after around 2005, the energy oligopoly became partly perforated by new local municipal or cooperative entities decentrally generating energy or running grids on a local or regional level.

This development has often been linked to renewable energy technologies producing less carbon emissions. However, across Europe, energy generation projects have likewise generated social justice and democratic participation issues. The resulting new forms of organization are interesting in three respects: (a) they have questioned the commodification of public services and business goals directed at reducing economic costs only; (b) new patterns of local ownership have altered who makes and controls core decisions about the development of energy infrastructures and who profits from them; and (c) new experimental models of citizen participation that could also inform other sectors have been implemented. Significantly, these developments have unfolded in both rural areas and major metropolises like Berlin, Hamburg, London, and Barcelona.

On a more general level, these developments point to the possibility of alternative forms of organizing and directing public services towards the needs of the populace and addressing the challenges of climate change. Creating islands within the concentrated corporate energy landscape and claims for collective ownership have become an important means for discussing the direction and condition of public service provisions. In practice, however, ensuring the orientation towards new goals implies more than discursive shifts. To materially alter business practices and technology used, the traditional form of public ownership has been reframed by new channels of direct citizen participation and control.

VITTORIO AGNOLETTO is an occupational health and medical practitioner and Professor of globalization and health policies at the University of Milan. He is also part of the International Council of the World Social Forum. In November 2017, he was spokesperson of the International Forum for the Right to Health on the occasion of the G7 Summit. He was a member of the European Parliament who worked on human rights and free trade agreements, especially the EU–ACP FTA. In 2001, he was spokesperson of the global movement against the G8 in Genoa.

He was founder of the Italian League Against HIV (LILA) and member of the HIV National and International Committees of the Italian Ministry of Health. He has managed a lot of research projects in Europe and in Africa on public health, access to medicines, drug addiction, HIV, and compulsory license. He is also author of several scientific publications on national and international health policies and reviews. He is likewise a member of the associations Medicina Democratica (Democratic Medicine) and CostituzioneBeniComuni (Constitution and Common Wealth).

Health is a right of everyone, not the business of a few.

The privatization of health increases everywhere year by year and only the rich are able to access medical treatment. It is not true that the privatization of health systems produces savings in government spending. What actually happens is that substantial expenses are transferred from the state to the individual citizen. The privatization of health and the appropriation of the human body as a source of income go hand in hand with the privatization of common goods, such as water and land, which are necessary for the survival of mankind and of other species.

As the World Health Organization (WHO) states, health should be "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the absence of the state of illness." Poverty, housing conditions, and unemployment affect the quality and duration of our lives; in the United States, the poorest die 14 years earlier than the richest people.

Big pharmaceuticals compete with the military industry for the best dividends to be distributed to its shareholders. Eleven million Italians have given up seeking medical remedy on at least one ailment and half of the world's HIV-positive people cannot access treatment. In the so-called 'rich West,' more than a million people are unable to get the new effective treatments against hepatitis C.

We ask that our governments challenge the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in the World Trade Organization (WTO), as it makes no sense to guarantee a monopoly of production for twenty years, when in one year, companies often have recovered all of their expenses and investments.

The challenge we are launching is to contribute in constructing a long-lasting alliance between a sector of the scientific world and the social movements because health can have neither a master nor borders.

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