6 Social movement struggles for public services

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In the context of widespread public sector crises engendered by neoliberal globalisation, social movements have sought to resist the privatisation of basic services such as water, electricity, and health care and to promote democratic development of public and community alternatives (Parliamentary Forum WSF 2006). In contrast to literature on participatory governance in public service sectors that focus on how institutions work rather than how they come about, this chapter focuses on the role of social movements in advancing the development and implementation of "alternatives to privatisation".

The first section reviews some of the main trends in social movement theory, arguing that Harvey's (2003) concept of "accumulation by dispossession" offers a useful analytical framework for assessing the strengths and limitations of the struggles for public services for all in the water, electricity, and health sectors. The second section analyses the differences in social movement dynamics in these three sectors, drawing attention to the importance of their political economies on social movements' perceptions of these services as "commodities" and their abilities to draw links between the sectors. The third section begins with an analysis of the politics of coalition building among the main social movement organisations involved in struggles over service delivery: trade unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community-based organisations. It then examines the role of social movements in developing alternatives to privatisation and explains the potential – as well as the limitations – that social movements have on influencing the paths of reform.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACHES IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Given that the term "social movement" is used for phenomena as diverse as revolutions, religious sects, trade unions, and consumer campaigns, it comes as no surprise that the concept defies precise definition. Complications also arise from the fact that distinct traditions give prominence to different aspects of social movements (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008) as

they pertain to rival ideological frameworks and concepts of social change ranging from Marxism to liberalism. As Jelin notes: "Social movements are objects constructed by the researcher, which do not necessarily coincide with the empirical form of collective action. Seen from the outside, they may present a certain degree of unity, but internally they are always heterogeneous, diverse" (cited in Egan and Wafer 2004, 2).

At stake in the debate over the definition of social movements are scholars' different ideas of what constitutes the social order but also disagreements about which strategies and tactics are most effective to bring about social change. The contemporary debate has been coloured by the perceived decline of class-based movements such as labour, peasant, and socialist organisations that threatened the political order during the period of nascent industrialisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Tilly (1978) explains, the early growth of social movements was connected to broad economic and political changes that accompanied the process of capitalist development – urbanisation, industrialisation, and proletarianisation. The process of urbanisation, which created large cities, facilitated social interaction between scores of people. Similarly, the process of industrialisation, which gathered large masses of workers in the same region, was responsible for the fact that many of those early social movements addressed matters important to that social class, such as the lack of basic services (Hamlin 1998). Indeed, the labour and socialist movements that emerged in the industrial centres of the late 19th century were seen as prototypical social movements for most of the 20th century, by Marxists and non-Marxists (such as Tilly) alike. With deindustrialisation in the North from the late 1950s onwards, the orthodox Marxist conception of revolution – centred as it was on the idea that the organised industrial working class was the privileged historical subject to bring about revolutionary social change – became increasingly criticised, accompanied by the rise of various anti-oppression struggles through the course of the 20th century that did not take the relationship between capital and labour as their main focus.

Beginning with the student mobilisations of May 1968 in urban centres as diverse as Mexico City and Paris, a body of literature describing "new social movements" (NSMs) emerged, which professed that old forms of "class organisation" had waned in the context of the post-industrial society, particularly in continental Europe (Touraine 1969). Unlike labour and socialist movements of the past, the NSMs that emerged in the late 1960s – such as the civil rights movement, feminist movements, and gay movements – did not concentrate on the contradiction between capital and labour but on other forms of domination and violence, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia.

The supposed historical shift signalled by the rise of these "new" movements inspired the bifurcation of the mainstream academic literature into two theoretical paradigms that emerged on opposite sides of the Atlantic: the "political process approach" of North American sociology and the

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"NSM approach" of continental Europe (Foweraker 1995, Canel 1997). These two schools of thought were reacting not only to historical events but also to the perceived shortcomings of different bodies of theory to interpret them. Specifically, the political process approach emerged as a response to earlier theories of social movements inspired by French sociologist Émile Durkheim, which saw protest either as a result of participants' pathologies or the destruction of community affiliations in mass society. By contrast, the NSM approach sought to overcome reductionist forms of Marxism, which assigned the working class (conceived narrowly as the industrial proletariat) a privileged place in the unfolding of history.

While much ink has been spilled about the superiority of one approach over the other, the supposed theoretical differences owe much to the fact that each approach examines social movements at different, but complementary, levels of analysis. The political process approach tends to focus on the public, outward manifestations of social movement activity (e.g. their relationships with the state), while NSM tends to focus on internal processes (e.g. identity formation amongst participants). Since the 1990s, the trend has been to seek convergence between the two approaches, as researchers from both paradigms aim to link considerations of microlevel analysis of the process of mobilisation (the focus of the NSM school) with the macrolevel political and institutional context (the focus of the political process approach; Haber 1996). This rapprochement has encouraged scholars from the political process school to integrate "cultural" considerations into their analysis (Rao et al., 2000, McAdam et al., 2001), while NSM scholars have aimed to bridge debates about structure and agency through the analysis of networks (Diani and McAdam 2003).

The relevance of both of these approaches for understanding struggles for public services in the global South is, however, limited for several reasons. First, both schools emerged in an attempt to explain the significance of social movements in "post-industrial" societies, yet most parts of the global South lie on the periphery or semi-periphery of the capitalist world economy and therefore cannot be characterised as "industrial" let alone "post-industrial". Second, the political process approach was developed based on the experience of liberal, capitalist democracies and the concepts fit rather awkwardly in post-colonial contexts of the global South (Cook 1996, Almeida 2003). Third, while social movement struggles for health, water, and electricity are sometimes identified as "new" social movements because they focus on non-class forms of identity (Schonwalder 2004), these struggles are still very material in the sense that they place demands on spheres of reproduction, which coincide with the demands of the working classes (Castells 1977, Mainwaring 1987). Fourth, the literature on new social movements creates a division between "old" (read labour) movements and "new" movements that is shown to be false by the emergence of social movement unionism (Moody 1997), which has been an important phenomenon in struggles for public services. Fifth, contrary to the claim

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of NSM scholars that a defining feature of these "new" movements is their claims for autonomy from the state, most social movements in the water, electricity, and health sectors use a rights-based discourse, which implies demand making on the state (Nelson and Dorsey 2007, Dugard 2009).

Harvey (2003), a geographer who has written extensively on social movements, identity politics, and Marx's critique of political economy, gives us an alternative way to understand contemporary struggles for basic services in the global South that is sensitive to the concerns about identity raised by the NSM scholars, while paying attention to the historical context in which different social movements emerge. In his work on "new imperialism", Harvey draws our attention to changes in class formation affected by capitalist development that took place over the 20th century, arguing that the kinds of struggles that favoured the formation of trade unions at historical moments of expanding production in the 19th and first half of the 20th century have since been usurped by "insurgent movements against accumulation by dispossession" (2003, 166). These struggles, mainly taking place in the sphere of reproduction, such as the struggle of the Ogoni of Nigeria against Shell oil or the campaign for a universal health care system in the US, do not take place under a working-class or trade union banner or with working class leadership identified as such. Rather, they draw from a broad spectrum of civil society groups that have in various ways been subject to dispossession, marginalisation, and impoverishment. Given the wide range of social interests that participate in these struggles, Harvey posits that they aggregate in "a less focused political dynamic of social action" than the revolutionary socialist movements that emerged throughout the world during the early and mid-20th century. He warns, however, that amongst these movements a "danger lurks that a politics of nostalgia for that which has been lost will supersede the search for ways to better meet the material needs of impoverished and repressed populations" (2003, 168, 177).

Many of the contemporary social movements struggling for public services for all can be characterised as struggles against accumulation by dispossession (Bond 2005, McDonald and Ruiters 2005, Spronk and Webber 2007): they involve diverse constituencies, including the most marginalised members of society (the "poors"), middle-class professionals (NGOs) and public sector workers; the site of organising tends to be a territory, neighbourhood, or the city rather than the workplace; and they are fighting contemporary forms of capitalist enclosure, particularly evident when infrastructure such as public hospitals and water and electricity networks built over decades are transferred to the private, profit-seeking sector for next to nothing.

Most importantly, as Harvey's work highlights, contemporary struggles for basic services are one strong indication of the changes to class formation under neoliberalism. The historic role of trade unions as leaders of the working-class struggle has been usurped by coalitions of social movement organisations dominated by informal workers. In the context of post-apartheid

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South Africa, for example, scholars have observed that class-based forms of struggles led by trade unions have been transformed into "struggles about direct relief for marginalized groupings" (Ballard et al., 2006, 8). As Nash similarly observes in the context of the social havoc caused by World Bank-sponsored structural adjustment policies in Bolivia, the primary concern of the majority of the working population on the margins of capitalist development during the neoliberal era became "the right to live in a world with a diminishing subsistence base" rather than "class struggle against exploitation defined in the workplace" (1994, 10). Indeed, as Olivera, a trade union activist and a spokesperson of the coalition of diverse civil society groups that formed to fight water privatisation in Cochabamba, Bolivia, describes it, in the "new world of labour" social movements have increasingly focused on fighting for the "basic necessities of daily life" as a means by which to broaden the base of struggle for larger social transformation (2004, 126).

These contemporary social movements, however, still draw on social movement repertoires from the past. Barchiesi reminds us, for example, that despite the shift in the focus from production to reproduction, the "new generation of social movement politics in South Africa" have "organizational and ideological/discursive relationships with long standing experiences of working class organizing" (2006, 38). One of the central demands of social movements of past and present is the call for the "decommodification" of basic services, a term that was popularised in the academic literature by Esping-Andersen (1990). During the first half of the 20th century, the Scandinavian welfare state grew because urban-rural, worker-farmer alliances demanded that the elite extend social protection to the working class and small farmers to guard against the vagaries of employment, especially during periodic recessions, by building a social safety net of state-provided services. Over a period of decades, these social protections took the form of generous pensions, health care, and education, which were financed through the taxation system and provided by the state at no cost to the direct user, which, like childcare and eldercare, disproportionately support and liberate women. The goal of decommodification – taken up by contemporary social movements – is therefore to remove basic services, such as water, electricity, and health, from the market (Leys 2001), based upon the proposition that the decisions about the production and delivery of goods and services that are decided by the market are beyond the realm of democratic control.

GEOGRAPHIES OF SERVICE DELIVERY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

During the neoliberal era, social movements fighting for the decommodification of basic health, water, and electricity services have challenged government privatisation policies in Peru, South Africa, Thailand, and India, amongst many other states (McDonald and Ruiters 2005, Arce 2008, Hall

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2010), and have even contributed towards political transition in countries such as Bolivia and Uruguay (Santos and Villareal 2006, Spronk 2007). There are also *transnational* social movement networks that operate across regions, particularly in the health and water sectors – making it possible to talk about *global* health and water movements – although this is not so in the electricity sector. At the local level, by contrast, the same people are often involved in struggles for water and electricity, while different coalitions of actors are involved in struggles for health.

Why do we observe these differences between social movements in the three sectors? Following Harvey's emphasis on the interconnections between capitalist development, geography, and struggle, we posit that the major differences amongst the sectors owe to the particular political economies and geographies of service provision, which affect social movements' perceptions of these services as commodities and open possibilities for making intersectoral links. First, all three sectors involve high levels of public investment but the electricity sector is the most capital intensive of the three, involving generation (e.g. dams), transmission, and distribution. On the other hand, while urban water and sanitation systems and advanced medical care facilities can certainly be technologically sophisticated, low-cost, "home-grown" alternatives exist. As the hundreds of thousands of rudimentary artisanal systems in the rural and peri-urban areas of the global South attest, water is a "gift from Nature" that can be extracted from the ground and distributed with basic technology. Health services can also involve capital-intensive technology such as medical resonance imaging machines, but in most cases, primary public health – the focus of most social movements – requires basic care and prevention rather than the promotion of costly pharmaceuticals and equipment. This is to say, the relations between citizen and electrical services have always been mediated by capital and/or the state, while the same is not true for water or health services, for which traditional, artisanal alternatives still exist.

Furthermore, the hierarchies of human needs make it easier for social movement leaders to argue that access to water and health are "human rights", facilitating the construction of global movements, while it is less common for demands to be framed this way in the electricity sector.[1] Water has no physiological substitute, making it the "essence of all life". It also has cultural importance since it has played a central role in the development of humanity (Illich 1985). Similarly, health care is primordial and, like the various meanings assigned to water, perceptions of "good health" tend to be culturally specific (Paulson and Bailey 2003). There are substitutes to "modern" health care – such as "traditional" systems – but these are increasingly integrated into formal health systems, particularly at the primary level. Many people employ more than one health care stream, making it difficult to separate demands for the different options. Electricity, on the other hand, is a recently constructed "need" and is not essential in the same way as health and water. Instead of cooking on the stove or turning on the

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light, it is possible to burn wood or light a candle (although, of course, these options may be more damaging to the environment and health than generator-provided electricity or cooking gas). In addition, the substitutes for electricity (wood, candles, etc.) are organised on the level of the household and do not require the social organisation of a community in the same way as a neighbourhood hand pump or a traditional health system. This is not to say that manifold protests of urban residents seeking connection to the electricity grid do not exist, but rather that such protests are not as likely to generate a social movement dynamic, as is the case in the water and health sectors. To date, the "need" for health and water has facilitated the mobilisation of the rights discourse in these sectors compared to electricity, where it is less present. For instance, there are international advocacy networks mobilised around rights in these former sectors, but not in electricity (see Nelson and Dorsey 2007), although international organising around climate change may change this scenario.

Second, the geography of service provision also leads social movement actors to make connections between water and electricity, but activists who defend public health care systems tend to be an entirely different group of people. Two factors help explain the former. First, as networked, infrastructure services, water and electricity services are often provided by the same level of government or the same utility. In the case of trade union organisations, workers in the water and electricity sectors are more likely to belong to the same trade union confederation. Furthermore, water and electricity services are subject to the same kinds of cost-recovery policies because of their similar point-of-consumption tariff structures. A good example of this synergy is the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, in South Africa, which sees as its principal task to "participate in wider struggles over water ('Operation Vulamanzi') and housing ('Operation Buyel'ekhaya') – in short '[w]hen the ANC government fails to deliver we must deliver where it is possible'" (Egan and Wafer 2004, 10). Second, links between the water and electricity sectors tend to be particularly strong in agricultural communities populated by small farmers who depend on electricity for pumping irrigation water. In the Andean region of Latin America, for example, coalitions of user groups, including urban consumers and peasant irrigating associations, have taken on the state to prevent the privatisation of public water and electricity utilities, framing the struggle as a defence of national patrimony (Olivera 2004, Arce 2008).

Social movements in water services

It is widely accepted that the "global water justice movement" is composed by a multitude of social and political struggles at local and national levels in all continents, and organised in transnational networks (Balanyá et al., 2005). Fighting the trends of privatisation, commercialisation, and deregulation, water justice movements "went global" in the late 1990s (Hall et

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al., 2005). Acting in a field that is shaped by conflict, struggle and disruption, "activists from social movements, non-governmental organizations, and networks...struggle throughout the world in the defence of water and territory and for the commons" (International Forum in the Defense of Water 2006, 1).

Liberal analysts such as Morgan consider water movements primarily as "consumer movements" reacting against private sector participation and neoliberal global governance. For Morgan, water movements are largely disruptive, producing "fractious parallel trajectories of legislative change and social protest that occasionally intersect but largely coexist in uneasy tension" (2006, 412). More radical scholars, on the other hand, understand water social movements as potentially counter-hegemonic forces that not only seek the immediate goal of securing "services for all" but in so doing also build challenges for participatory democracy, social justice, and ecological sustainability. In Bolivia and South Africa, social movement leaders from the water movement have articulated a socialist agenda, linking demands for democratisation to transformation of the society and economy (Coetzee 2004, Olivera 2004). Although the water justice movement was born as a reaction to privatisation policies, one of the central demands of the movement is the democratisation of the social and property relations around water, as expressed in the discourse for "the commons" (Bakker 2007).

As Swyngedouw observes, "the water problem is not merely a question of management and technology, but rather, and perhaps in the first instance, a question of social power" (2004, 175). It is because water systems are embedded in broader socio-historical institutions shaped by struggles over resources that water movements face many challenges in meeting their own aspirations to develop and implement alternatives (Terhorst 2009). Nonetheless, there are a large number of successful campaigns across all continents: the numerous legal and constitutional affirmations of the human right to water that seek to prohibit privatisation, especially in Latin America (Mychalejko 2008, Taks 2008, van Schaick 2009); a series of movement-sponsored reform processes in public water utilities designed to keep water in public hands (Balanyá et al., 2005); and various initiatives to promote public-public partnerships (PuPs; Hall et al., 2009). At the level of global governance, movement challenges have not only disrupted proceedings of the World Water Forums and challenged the corporate lobby within UN agencies, which has led to the inclusion of social movement representatives in the global governance bodies such as the United Nations Secretary General's Advisory Board (UNSGAB) and the Global Water Operators, Partnership Alliance (GWOPA). But the water movements, especially the international NGOs such as the Council of Canadians, were also instrumental in securing a vote on 28 July 2010 at the General Assembly of the United Nations, introduced by the Bolivian government, in favour of a resolution on the human right to water and sanitation.

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Social movements in health

According to a recent publication on health under capitalism (Panitch and Leys 2009), health presents a major field of the political economy that is determined by the struggle between forces of commercialisation and popular forces that struggle to keep or make it a public service with equal access for all. Given the multidimensional nature of the determinants of public health, social movement organisations in the health sector tend to have broad goals, intervening on debates about the political, economic, and environmental issues, such as the importance of access to water, food and housing, amongst a myriad of issues (Zoller 2006). As noted in the *Civil Society Report to the World Health Organization's Commission on Social Determinants of Health*, "peoples' quest for health [is] inseparable from unjust social and political forces, both internal and external" (CSDH 2007, 195). Similar to water, struggles for health are often used as an "entry point" for social movements seeking radical transformation of the political-economic system.

While social movements on health-related issues have existed as early as the industrial revolution, when concerns over occupational health were of importance, the body of social movement theory has been applied only recently to health movements. As a consequence, the wide array of different movements and their strategies, tactics, and political approaches have not been sufficiently studied in depth or comparatively (Brown and Zavestoski 2004). Scholarly attention, especially in the North, has focused on social movements for occupational safety, the women's health movement, HIV/AIDS activism, and environmental justice organising, recognising their significance for the history of medicine and health policy and politics. At the global level, Obrinski identifies a widening array of actors that form health social movements as driving "key changes in the discourse and practice of global health" (2007, 29). Examining the process of global health politics and governance, he concludes that health social movements are major forces that have redefined the conceptions of global health in the past.

Brown et al. (2004) identify three types of health social movements, all of which can be found in the global South, although the first two tend to dominate given poor provision of primary health care. *Health access movements* seek equitable access to health care and improved provision of health care services, for example, through national health care reforms to push for primary health care or the extension of health insurance. *Constituency-based health movements*, such as the women or gay and lesbian health movements, address inequality and health inequity based on lines of social division such as race, gender, or class. *Embodied health movements* aim at the treatment and/or research of illnesses or diseases, which have hitherto been denied recognition, such as breast cancer due to environmental pollution and the movements that aim to have recognise the illnesses of health care workers at Ground Zero who attended to the victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001.

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One example of a health access movement is the People's Health Movement – with its central slogan "Health for All" – a transnational network of social actors that strive for the right to health care and politicise the debates about the social determinants of health (e.g. clean water, food security, etc.). With its Global Right to Health Care Campaign, the network aims to document violations of health rights, assess the right to health care in different countries, and campaign for the fulfilment of the right to health from the national to the global level. Such a bottom-up, rights-based, and antagonistic movement on health addresses today's environment of policy making that is framed by economic and ideological globalisation.

Social movements in electricity

As noted above, given that the electricity sector lends itself the least to a rights-based discourse, there appear to be fewer social movement struggles over electricity than in the other two sectors we have documented. And given the perception of electricity as a "commodity", social movement struggles emerging in this sector tend to be primarily local in nature and directed against punitive forms of neoliberalism, as illustrated by two well-known cases of social contestation in the electricity sector: Arequipa, Peru, and Cape Town, South Africa.

As Arce (2008) argues, the Arequipa uprising against the concession of two state-owned electricity companies, Egasa and Egesur, to a Belgian company by the Toledo administration in Peru in 2002 is an example of a massive social response to neoliberal reform measures. Similar to the 2000 "Water War" in Cochabamba, Bolivia, "[t]he protest was fuelled by the conviction that economic growth and increased prosperity had not been beneficial to the poorer layers of society" (Biekart 2005, 87). The Common Civic Front of Arequipa (*Frente Amplio Cívico de Arequipa*, FACA), which grouped together trade unions, popular organisations, transport unions, agricultural workers, unemployed workers, and left political parties, led protests which successfully blocked the sale of the companies. Two people lost their lives in the protests known as the *Arequipazo*.

In South Africa, residents from many cities in the country have taken matters into their own hands, reconnecting electricity services by ripping out prepaid electricity meters and/or tapping "illegally" into electricity lines (Ruiters 2007, McDonald 2009). Articulated with the national Anti-Privatisation Forum, the community movement represents a radical challenge to "disciplinary neoliberalism" and demonstrates the effectiveness of direct action tactics given the many concessions that have been won by these electricity social movements (such as a free basic allotment of electricity of 50 kWh per household per month).

The relative silence on social movement struggles in the electricity sector (compared to water and health), however, might also be related to the fact that trade unions rather than "civil society" organisations have tended to

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lead these struggles. As Hall argues, "[m]ost of the [anti-privatisation] campaigns [in the electricity sector] have been led by trade unions". Electrical workers all over the world have opposed privatisation, often in coalitions with political parties, environmental groups, community organisations, and consumer groups, "based on the clear economic interest of workers whose jobs and working conditions are threatened, but the unions have generally campaigned on wider issues of public interest, including prices and accountability" (2010, 192). In comparison to the electricity sector, trade unions in the health and water sectors have formed deep coalitions with other actors such as NGOs and community-based organisations, acting as lead organisations in these coalitions.

FROM MOVEMENT COALITIONS TO ALTERNATIVES

Social movement organisations and the politics of coalition building

Social movement organisations (SMOs) are formal organisations that do not necessarily involve the majority of the participants of social movements but prepare the terrain for "episodes of contention", such as protests and campaigns. The distinction between social movements and SMOs is based on the observation that as organisations grow and become formalised structures, they also tend to become more bureaucratic and conservative (Zald and Ash 1966). In the contemporary water, electricity, and health sectors in the global South, the most important SMOs represent the producers and users of these services – trade unions, community-based organisations, and NGOs. Since these organisations involve such broad and diverse constituencies, it is not surprising that tensions, but also synergies, emerge among them.

Public sector trade unions have been a favourite target of attack in neoliberal reform. Governments facing fiscal pressures have sought to weaken or destroy the bargaining power of unions in order to claw back workers' wages and benefits by using arguments that these "privileged workers" are overpaid relative to the rest of the population. Unions that represent workers providing services in water, health, and electricity services have been no exception to the rule (Hall 2005). Indeed, in the global South, public sector unions find themselves in a particularly difficult political situation in highly segmented labour markets in which the majority of the working population is engaged in informal types of work. In such a context, public service workers tend to be viewed by other members of the public – even by their allies – as a privileged "labour aristocracy". Under such conditions, meeting citizens' rights to affordable services and workers' rights to decent wages, benefits, and working conditions within public utilities becomes a challenging political balancing act (Spronk 2010). For these reasons, joint political mobilisation between trade unions and community-based organisations,

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often referred to as “social movement unionism”, has been upheld as a way forward for organised labour in a neoliberal world economy (Moody 1997).

Trade unions have been at the head of coalitions to defend water and electricity utilities against privatisation in Uruguay and Peru, assisted by international organisations that have provided crucial resources to the trade union leadership (Novelli 2004, Taks 2008, Spronk 2009). In a successful campaign to prevent the partial privatisation of the public health care system in El Salvador, health care workers were the lead organisations in a coalition with peasant organisations and NGOs that brought 20 000 people to the streets of Salvador in a mass march for public health in 1999 (Almeida 2006). As discussed further below, however, in many situations in which trade unions have historical alliances with the political parties in office, they have colluded with privatisation processes in order to preserve their jobs and benefits, as has been well documented in several cases in Latin America and India (Murillo 2001, Uba 2008). It is not very well known, for example, that in the case of the 2000 “Water War” in Cochabamba, Bolivia – a widely cited example of social movement unionism – the public water workers’ union was notable for its absence, and it was the local manufacturing workers who played a leading role (Spronk 2009).

If trade unions are seen as the *bête noire* that impedes public service reform, civil society organisations such as NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) are often seen as the *cause célèbre* (see, for example, World Bank 2004). For neoliberal ideologues, NGOs are conceived as organisations that are driven by shared values rather than by the quest for economic or political power and thus are innovative private organisations with a “public” ethos that are more capable than the state or the market at promoting people-centred development (Cernea 1988). Such an idealistic view of NGOs ignores, however, two of the principal problems faced by these organisations. First, they purport to speak for “the poors” but lack formal accountability mechanisms to any constituency but their donors (Hulme and Edwards 1997). Second, in the context of state retrenchment, they tend to be staffed by middle-class professionals who have little in common with the public they purport to serve and represent (Pfeiffer 2004). As the title of a recent collection published by the INCITE! Women of Colour against Violence collective on the “non-profit industrial complex” suggests, “The Revolution will not be Funded” (2007).

Nonetheless, it is important not to paint all NGOs with the same brush. Many organisations are militant advocacy organisations that play a crucial role as facilitators and brokers in social movement struggles, providing research, expertise, and leadership in social movement networks (Baud and Rutten 2005). As the many examples scattered throughout this book attest, NGOs have also played a crucial role in defining and supporting the implementation of alternatives to privatisation. Environmental NGOs and policy think tanks play a crucial role in defining alternatives in the energy sector

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(e.g. International Rivers). International NGO intervention in the field of health policy has been effective in securing access to anti-retroviral drugs for those living with HIV/AIDS (Nelson and Dorsey 2007). The intervention of international NGOs was also crucial to pressuring Bechtel to drop its controversial case against the Bolivian state for cancelling the water concession contract arising from the "Water War" in 2005 (Spronk and Crespo Flores 2008).

CBOs, in contrast to NGOs, are "mass organisations" that tend to be more representative of the constituencies that they represent. The positive and important role of CBOs in delivering health services, particularly in intervening in culturally sensitive areas of service delivery such as HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, has been particularly well documented (see, *inter alia*, Chillag et al., 2002). The advantage that CBOs have in terms of (potential) representativeness and their sensitivities to local context does not mean, however, that they do not face the same problems as NGOs; they, too, are embedded in local power structures. A case study of NGO-CBO-state relations in efforts to reduce urban poverty and improve service delivery in three cities in India finds that "rather than being vehicles of empowerment and change, CBOs and their leadership often block progress, controlling or capturing benefits aimed at the poor and misusing them for private (political) interests" (de Wit and Berner 2009, 927). Indeed, breaking out of the clientelist logic often requires that CBOs become part of a broader social movement involved in militant, direct action. As Piven and Cloward's (1977) classic work on "poor people's movements" has demonstrated, disruption has historically been the most effective tactic to gain concessions from state authorities, especially because "the poor" exist in such large numbers.

Building coalitions between trade unions, NGOs, and CBOs might be necessary to pull together the large protests, which have proven effective in pressuring governments to reverse privatisation (Olivera and Lewis 2004, Almeida 2006), but it is not always a straightforward task. A good example is the relationship between the South African Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) and the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) in South Africa. Social movement unionism was born in the context of apartheid when trade unions were independent, combative organisations that took on the structures of the apartheid state. In the early 1990s, Samwu took an oppositional stance to privatisation, perceiving that as public sector workers they were caught in a "producer-worker squeeze" as "SAMWU members are not only depot workers whose working conditions and job security were under attack, but also community members threatened by service cut-offs and poor delivery" (Lier and Stokke 2006, 813). In November 2002, Samwu called an indefinite strike in solidarity with the APF, but as Barchiesi (2007) explains, its objectives quickly faltered due to the accommodating position of the trade union umbrella, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), which had renewed its allegiance to the ANC during the elections that were

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to take place the following month. When push came to shove, the local union's oppositional stance was compromised by its stronger loyalty to the workers' central, irrespective of the support for the APF within the rank and file of Samwu.

The impact of social movements on public sector alternatives

In the chapter thus far we have demonstrated that social movements and their organisations have been crucial actors in the struggle to defend public sector alternatives. During the neoliberal period, social movement campaigns have tended to be overwhelmingly "reactive", centred on defending actually-existing systems from perceived threats, rather than being proactive (i.e. proposing new alternatives that seek to overcome the perceived problems with the old systems). Yet over the past decade, as the neoliberal model has become increasingly discredited, social movements have built upon their victories by opening public dialogue on, and advancing political demands for, alternatives.

Given the victories of social movements against privatisation in the water sector, it is here that the debates on alternatives tend to be the most advanced. While their international networks initially focused primarily on the defence against privatisation and commercialisation, over the last decade they have undergone a remarkable qualitative shift towards a constructive, positive challenge for public water alternatives (Terhorst 2009). As a representative from the Public Services International (PSI) put it during a water workshop in the World Social Forum of 2005 in Porto Alegre: "We are winning the privatisation debate – and what now?", reminding participants that movements for "public services for all" are confronted with the challenge to advance alternatives because of their own achievements in defeating the privatisation agenda.

The current discourse on alternatives takes up this challenge and argues for the protection, restoration, and promotion of public and community sector water management. Today, water movements aim for the revitalisation and democratisation of non-commercialised public and community water management that is appropriate for their local political, socio-economic, and political-ecological contexts (International Forum in the Defense of Water 2006). Given the differences between the movements, some of which launch a strong anti-systematic critique of capitalism and liberal democracy while others seek improvements within the existing system, it is no surprise that there exist unresolved conceptual and political tensions in what exactly presents a desirable alternative. For example, there is a debate over whether social movements should promote the human right to water or endorse the idea of water as a commons, as it is feared that the former can serve the interests of corporations, while the latter presents a systemic alternative to capitalist social property relations (Bakker 2007). Nonetheless, different political tendencies within the movement share a common goal to universalise services, arguing that the democratisation of

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institutions will depend on effective intervention of social movements at all levels, from local to global. Given the fact that water systems are embedded within the broader relations of production and reproduction and systemic barriers to change, the clarification of the who, how, and what of alternatives presents a formidable challenge for social movements. In the context of waning neoliberalism, the strategic political task of social movements today is to widen their organisations and repertoires so that they become proactive and constructive, but nevertheless still confrontational organisations that push for the reform of public service systems based on collective ownership and popular democracy.

The struggles for reform in the water sector in Peru, Bolivia, and Uruguay, and the Treatment Action Campaign to increase access to anti-retroviral drugs in South Africa, illustrate the point. The water struggles in the Peruvian regional capital of Huancayo that started in 2003 demonstrate how movement coalitions, which in the first instance are a defensive reaction against privatisation, can develop proactive movement strategies towards public alternatives. The Regional Front for the Defence of Water and Life in Huancayo presents a "deep coalition" between citizens, users and organised civil society – such as market stall owners, pensioners, social welfare organisations, neighbourhood committees, and the water utility workers union (Tattersall 2005, Spronk 2009). In 2005, the Front successfully stalled a planned privatisation of the municipal water utility, SEDAM Huancayo. Demonstrating how crucial alternatives are for movement strategies, the privatisation was cancelled fully in 2006 only after a series of popular seminars developed, socialised, and politicised an alternative management plan for the modernisation without privatisation or commercialisation of the local utility (Terhorst 2008).

In another example, the creation of the Uruguayan national water movement coalition (*Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y la Vida*, CNDAV), composed of the water workers' union from the public utility and environmental and human rights NGOs, which promoted a successful national referendum campaign in 2004, started off initially as a limited civic and union response to development plans for environmentally damaging waste-water treatment and further privatisations of parts of the national utility, *Obras Sanitarias del Estado* (OSE). From the initially localised and limited social mobilisation in one department of the country, there developed a national referendum campaign by a broad coalition of social forces that brought together an impressive range of social actors to develop a far-reaching constitutional reform proposal that included a series of substantial changes such as the human right to water, direct public control, participation of citizens in all areas and steps of water resource management, and an ecosystems approach.

Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa is another example of how movement organisations not only develop resistance strategies but also intervene in the sector with constructive policy and institutional proposals.

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TAC, launched in 1998, works for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS in poor urban townships and rural areas. It started to engage in service delivery work and advocacy for cheaper access to anti-retroviral drugs in South Africa. In 2001, TAC created a research committee and held workshops and conferences to develop a proposal and campaign for a "National Treatment Plan". After a successful case at the Constitutional Court for the socio-economic rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, TAC pressured the government through formal and informal channels to realise a roll-out of anti-retroviral drugs in 2003 (Makino 2009). TAC is an important source of cultural innovation in the health sector of South Africa, highlighting that new organisational forms, values, and sector practices "are infused into social structures via political contestation" (Rao et al., 2000, 275).

These three examples demonstrate how movements seek and strategically strive for the transformation of public service through the radical transformation of the social relations of production, distribution, and consumption, thereby affecting the political ecology and political economy of these economic state apparatuses. But as Bond (2005, 353) argues for the South African context, "the challenge...as ever, is to establish the difference between 'reformist reforms' on the one hand, and reforms that advance a 'non-reformist' agenda on the other, allowing democratic control of social reproduction, of financial markets and ultimately of production itself".

Once the barricades come down, however, and the defensive struggle has been won, it is difficult to maintain the social energy required to shift the balance of power that would be required to create true "non-reformist" alternatives. Such has been the case in Bolivia and Uruguay. The struggle for alternatives began in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 1999 with urban demands for the reduction of tariffs and demands from the powerful irrigators' association for the modification of the government's pro-privatisation law. By the time the Bolivian government finally backed down, cancelling the privatisation contract and modifying the national water law, the cycle of struggle had further expanded into a movement for the reappropriation of the municipal utility under the banner of participation, transparency, and social control. These demands turned the social movement organisations themselves into agents of change inside the utility board, as they occupied two of five seats in an interim utility board, but crucially, the most powerful actor in the coalition – the irrigators' association – moved onto other projects of greater relevance to their immediate interests. In the following years, the social activists who remained developed proposals and implemented mechanisms of social control and popular participation in the public water and sanitation utility, SEMAPA. However, these movement-induced changes did not reach the desired result of a well-functioning public utility (Sánchez Gómez and Terhorst 2005, Spronk 2008). The fact that SEMAPA today remains an ill-performing and badly governed utility only highlights the difficulties of social movement organisations in turning themselves into long-term agents of sector change, particularly in the absence of a transformation of the power relationships that characterise local politics.

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In comparison, the campaign for constitutional reform in Uruguay was successful, but only in narrow terms. Under the constitution, water services and resources by law now have to be governed by a specific and centralised public body that has to insure the participation of citizens and workers. As a result, the government created the National Directorate for Water and Sanitation Services (DINASA) and its Advisory of Water and Sanitation (COASA) in 2007. These institutions, however, were not the far-reaching reforms that the movement had demanded and expected from the left-of-centre government that was elected in 2005. Instead, they represented a state-centric step in sector development that was strongly criticised at the time for its lack of radical change and exclusion of CNDAV from the parliamentary decision-making process (Santos and Valdomir 2005).

On a more positive note, the constitutional entrenchment of the human right to water has affected Uruguay's international negotiations, upsetting the organisers of the neoliberal World Water Forums. Also, the improvement of public sector management has been turned into a political priority and involved the movement members in formal and informal participation, especially the trade union FFOSE. At FFOSE's insistence, the public water and sanitation utility (OSE) has created a Social Office to implement amongst other things a social tariff policy and has developed an international solidarity strategy to support other public water operators in the region (Terhorst 2009). OSE is also one of the main organisers of a regional utilities forum proposed for 2010, which aims to create a regional network of non-commercialised public utilities through the promotion of PuPs. These institutional changes in OSE and in the union would have been inconceivable were it not for the constructive intervention of the social movements that started but, most importantly, did not end with the referendum campaign. CNDAV also stands out as an exceptionally positive example of how movement coalitions can involve social movement unionism, generate social capital, create resources, and take advantage of political opportunities. The example of CNDAV in Uruguay confirms Diani's argument that "the solidity of the linkages within the movement sector as well as – more crucially – of the bonds among movement actors, the social milieu in which they operate, and cultural and political elites" (1997, 129) increases the influence and impact of social movements on the reform of public institutions.

These two cases illustrate that it is easier for movements to generate procedural outcomes than it is to enforce substantive change. That is to say, it is relatively easy to create new channels of participation that include social movement actors but it is another matter altogether to actually implement the decisions they generate. In addition, social movements are more likely to be successful in a campaign to prevent a "public bad", for example, by preventing privatisation, than in creating substantive movement outcomes that generate a new "public good", for example the reform of an ill-performing utility. Following Kriesi (1995), such positive substantive outcome requires that the state has both the capacity and the political will to put into operation movement demands. While the cancellation of a privatisation contract does

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not require too many state resources, apart from the high financial costs that can be related to contract cancellations, the implementation of a new alternative path of development does. For example, although TAC won the case in the South African Constitutional Court and successfully exerted formal and informal pressure on the Health Ministry, which resulted in a policy decision for an anti-retroviral drug roll-out scheme for people living with HIV/AIDS (Makino 2009), the actual implementation of such a policy decision depended on the state's capacity, political will, and resources. At the stage of policy implementation, however, social movements have reduced power to influence as legal and institutional changes are processes that can take decades and are not easily influenced by social movements (Soule and King 2006). While TAC became a recognised actor with access to formal policy decision making within corporatist bodies of health policy making in South Africa, it also maintained its oppositional stance by using direct action tactics to confront the Health Ministry (Makino 2009) in order to compensate for a certain lack of strategic capacity within the policy implementation process.

Apart from these limitations that movements face in moving from procedural to substantive reforms and from defensive to proactive, the innovative power of social movements lies particularly in the diffusion of repertoires. One such example can be found in the water movement networks that diffuse and elaborate PuPs. The water movements, especially trade unions but also some international NGOs, have developed this mechanism on the basis of existing practices in the field of water management, such as twinning arrangements in the Baltic Sea, and have politicised and filled these neglected tools of exchange with renewed normative meaning and political impetus (Hall et al., 2009). A number of PuPs have developed "from below" in recent years at the initiative of trade unions and local social movement organisations (see Chapter 15, this volume, on the water sector in Latin America). They were facilitated through the networks of the global trade union confederation of Public Services International, the regional water network (*La Red Vida*), and the global Reclaiming Public Water Network. The Uruguayan utility OSE, for example, signed a PuP pre-agreement in May 2010 with the municipal utility SEDACUSCO in Peru. Such bottom-up PuPs exemplify how water movements generate novel proposals for water management through their politicised participation in concrete policy and management decisions. They also show how a shift in norms, towards equal, not-for-profit strengthening of the public sector, can generate new forms of interaction between social movements, managers, and workers.

CONCLUSION

Bevington (2005) emphasises the need for scholarship that prioritises the relevance of research to social movements themselves and argues that this requires a turn away from the theoretical schisms that merely emphasise different variables instead of looking comprehensively at movements.

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Accordingly, we have developed an account of the distinct characteristics, roles, and impacts of social movements that seek alternatives to "accumulation by dispossession" in the health, water, and electricity sectors and which avoids the schism between "old" and "new" social movements which has little relevance in analysing struggles for basic services in the global South.

During the neoliberal period, social movement activity in the health, water, and electricity sectors has been primarily defensive in nature, focused on preventing or reversing the privatisation of state services. Having won campaigns against this corporate agenda, social movement leaders face the question "Now what?" and have increasingly turned their attention towards making proposals to remedy the perceived weaknesses of state-public and communal forms of management. These tasks involve the elaboration of a new set of social criteria by which to define what an alternative is and how to evaluate its "success" (hence the emphasis in this book on research methodology, as discussed in Chapter 2).

Despite several successful cases of social movements that have had an impact on the provision of health, electricity, and water services, our survey of social movements in these sectors confirms the findings of other scholars that collective action is less effective for achieving policy change than generally believed (Foweraker 2001, Burstein and Sausner 2005). While the coalition form of organising has proven an effective way to rebuild the capacity for mobilisation lost over the past three decades of neoliberal restructuring, it has been a challenge for social movement leaders to maintain the social energy required to move from single-issue, defensive campaigns towards the more complicated task of elaborating proposals for alternatives. In the case of multi-actor coalitions, the participation of key stakeholders – particularly public sector workers – is key, as demonstrated by the perceived failure of reform after the Bolivian "Water War".

This survey also suggests that it tends to be easier for social movements to achieve procedural rather than substantive outcomes, as illustrated by the case of TAC that sought to expand access to anti-retroviral drugs in South Africa, and that continual pressure on the state is often necessary to transform policy into action. Furthermore, since political bargaining and negotiation with state authorities often requires compromise, initial policy decisions for radical reforms proposed by social movements are often watered down in the course of their execution by the state, as was the case with the Uruguay referendum for the right to water.

As the social movement slogan "Another world is not only possible, it is necessary" suggests, however, the crisis of neoliberalism, and more recently the global financial crisis, have created new opportunities for public debate about alternatives to models that have dominated the policy agenda for the past three decades. Introducing ideas of transparency, democracy, participation, equality, and collective ownership, social movements struggling for "services for all" make an essential contribution not just to sectoral debates on service delivery but to much broader local and global debates on economic and social justice.

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NOTES

1. South Africa because of its history of privatisation after apartheid – particularly the unfulfilled promises to extend basic services made by the African National Congress (ANC) government – appears to be an exception. On a rights-based framework in electricity, see Ruiters (2007) and see Dugard (2009) on the movement to self-reconnect water and electricity services in defiance of prepaid meters.

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