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## The New Water Wars: Struggles for Remunicipalisation

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**ABSTRACT:** Remunicipalisation is one of the most significant shifts in water services policy in a generation. After 30 years of privatisation, hundreds of cities around the world have taken water services back into public control, and the pace appears to be growing. There are forces that may slow or reverse this trend, however, with private water companies increasingly concerned about the impact that remunicipalisation will have on future profits, international financial institutions that remain broadly supportive of private sector participation in water services, fiscal austerity that forces local governments to abandon plans for remunicipalisation, and legal barriers. There are also diverse – even contradictory – motivations for remunicipalisation, putting into question its future as a coherent policy trend. This Special Issue seeks to advance our understanding of these broad international trends – identifying key stakeholders and investigating the nature of their support for, or opposition to, remunicipalisation – thereby shedding light on the ways in which these actors and ideas impact local and global policymaking. It looks at successes and failures in the remunicipalisation arena, with new case studies and extensive interviews with major powerbrokers in the water sector. Our hypothesis is that remunicipalisation will continue to grow in the medium term due to widespread dissatisfaction with privatisation on the part of elected officials, civil servants and citizens, but that differences within the remunicipalisation movement, combined with ongoing fiscal restraints and growing resistance from powerful multilateral actors, may make it difficult to sustain this growth without significant changes to strategy, engagement and resources, yielding useful lessons for remunicipalisation in other sectors as well.

**KEYWORDS:** Remunicipalisation, urban water supply, research, challenges

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### INTRODUCTION

Remunicipalisation<sup>1</sup> is one of the most significant shifts in water services policy in a generation. After 30 years of privatisation<sup>2</sup> (including public – private partnerships and outsourcing), cities around the world

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<sup>1</sup> Different terms have been used to describe this phenomenon – including de-privatisation, reclaiming public services, taking services back into public hands, insourcing, and social reappropriation – some of which reflect the different institutional and ideological characteristics that are at play. We have opted for the (admittedly inelegant) term 'remunicipalisation' because most water services are in fact operated at the municipal level and because it has become the most widely used expression in the literature on this topic. It should be noted, however, that in some cases water services are being made public at the national or regional level (for example, in Uruguay) while in other cases they are being made public for the first time, in which case the appropriate term is 'municipalisation' (for example, in Barcelona where the water supply was never municipal, or in Missoula, in the United States, which made its water services public for the first time in 2017 (see these case studies in this Special Issue)).

<sup>2</sup> We employ a broad definition of 'privatisation' in this article and in this Special Issue as a whole, as per Budds and McGranahan's (2003) description of "processes that increase the participation of formal private enterprises in water and sanitation provision, but do not necessarily involve the transfer of assets to the private sector", which includes public–private partnerships and other

are taking water services back into public control. Over the past 15 years there have been at least 267 cases of water remunicipalisation in 37 countries, affecting more than 100 million people (Kishimoto and Petitjean, 2017). The pace of remunicipalisation appears to be growing, and there is an expanding international movement in favour of publicly managed water (Lobina, 2015).

There are also forces that may slow or reverse this trend. Private water companies appear increasingly concerned about the impact that remunicipalisation will have on future profits; international financial institutions remain broadly supportive of private sector participation in water services; fiscal austerity continues to force many local governments to privatise or abandon plans for remunicipalisation; and legal barriers to remunicipalisation are multiplying. There are also diverse – even contradictory – motivations for remunicipalisation, putting into question its future as a coherent policy trend (McDonald, 2018).

It is unclear how these global dynamics will play out and how they may shape local debates on remunicipalisation. This Special Issue seeks to advance our understanding of these broad international trends – identifying key stakeholders and investigating the nature of their support for, or opposition to, remunicipalisation – thereby shedding light on the ways in which these actors and ideas impact local and global policymaking. Our hypothesis is that remunicipalisation will continue to grow in the medium term due to widespread dissatisfaction with privatisation on the part of elected officials, civil servants and citizens, but that differences within the remunicipalisation movement, combined with ongoing fiscal restraints and growing resistance from powerful multilateral actors, may make it difficult to sustain this growth without significant changes to strategy, engagement and resources.

The research is timely because hundreds of municipalities around the world will be making difficult decisions over the coming decade about whether to remunicipalise their water services or renew their private contracts, and many will be seeking reliable information on how these debates are unfolding elsewhere. The papers in this Special Issue serve to strengthen our conceptual understanding of arguments for and against remunicipalisation, deepen the empirical record, and assist with the building of multiscale research methodologies that blend local and global insights on the topic. As such, the research hopes to help local authorities, funding agencies, academics and community groups better understand the potential prospects of remunicipalisation and how they might develop their own water policy positions. It also lends insights into remunicipalisation in other sectors, most notably electricity, where reverting to public ownership has been growing rapidly (Wollmann et al., 2010; Becker et al., 2015; Wagner and Berlo, 2015; Cumbers, 2016).

### WHAT GOES UP...

The potential for continued remunicipalisation in the water sector appears strong. One reason for this is its broad appeal, including dissatisfaction with private sector service quality and infrastructure investment (Food and Water Watch, 2010; Hall et al., 2005, 2010, 2013; Le Strat, 2014; Valdovinos, 2012; Warner, 2010; Warner and Hefetz, 2012), the high costs of monitoring and regulating private contracts (Bel et al., 2010; Wu and Ching, 2013), abrupt departures of private companies before contracts end (Azpiazu and Castro, 2012), and a lack of (credible) bidders for private contracts (González-Gómez et al., 2014; Ohemeng and Grant, 2008; Pigeon, 2012a). In addition, there is growing and widespread dissatisfaction with the adverse socio-economic and ecological impacts of processes of privatisation and neo-liberal deregulation, leading to a call for greater public involvement, control and regulation.

This collective frustration has emboldened a growing pro-public-water movement, prompting the chair of *Eau de Paris* (which remunicipalised in 2010) to claim that "a counter-attack is underway and is spreading throughout the world (...) giving rise to a new generation of public companies that are beginning to play a stronger role in the water sector" (Blauel, 2015: 2). Although the majority of

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forms of delegation and outsourcing. In other words, privatisation is not only about ownership. It is also a matter of private sector control over decision-making processes and the broadening of the commercialisation of water services.

remunicipalisation has thus far occurred in two countries – France and the US – it is a truly global phenomenon, including cities as diverse as Accra (Ghana), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Antalya (Turkey), Bamako (Mali), Budapest (Hungary), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Conakry (Guinea), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and La Paz (Bolivia). Half of these cases have occurred since 2010, suggesting an acceleration of interest (Lobina, 2015: 10).

Further support for remunicipalisation is evidenced by the wide cross section of actors behind it who come from a range of political persuasions, including governments, labour unions, NGOs and social movements (Assies, 2003; Beveridge et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2013; Le Strat, 2014; Nickson and Vargas, 2002; Pigeon et al., 2012; Wollmann et al., 2010). A broad-based revival of state-led development and a growing international pro-public movement give further impetus to the remunicipalisation trend (Bollier, 2014; Chavez and Torres, 2014; Clifton et al., 2007; Clò et al., 2013; Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2014; Farazmand, 1996; Florio, 2013a, 2013b; McDonald, 2016; McDonald and Ruiters, 2012; Negri and Hardt, 2009; Ramesh et al., 2010).

### ...MAY COME DOWN

But this growth in water remunicipalisation will not go uncontested, nor has support for privatisation of water services disappeared. Far from it. Private sector participation in the water sector continues to be buoyed by governments, international financial institutions, multilateral agencies, and professional water associations. Although there is no comprehensive, global database on the extent of private sector participation in the water sector, there are indications that the number of such engagements continues to grow (albeit at a slower pace than previously), with about 12 percent of the world's population receiving water services from private companies in 2012, up from 5 percent in 2000 (Owen, 2012: xiii, 8-9).

World Bank data also suggests that private participation in infrastructure (PPI) in water and sanitation remains robust. Of 1102 PPI projects recorded between 1990 and 2017, the World Bank (2018) claims that 87 percent are "still active", 6 percent are "concluded", 1 percent are "distressed", and only 6 percent were "cancelled". Notably, (by dollar value) 55 percent of these private contracts are in East Asia (45 percent in China alone) and 31 percent are in Latin America, with less than 4 percent in sub-Saharan Africa and only 1.1 percent in low-income countries. The World Bank (2016) and its agencies have also been increasing their support for private sector participation in infrastructure more generally, with the following statistics providing a sense of the scale and scope of their activities:

- Lending, investments and guarantees have increased both in absolute terms and in relative terms, rising from US\$900 million in 2002 to US\$2.8 billion in 2016;
- Loans with a public – private partnership (PPP) component grew between 2002 and 2016, totalling US\$15.6 billion;
- The Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF) has supported 169 knowledge activities and 1164 technical assistance activities in 139 countries, with total approval expenditures amounting to US\$290 million. PPIAF's support has contributed to leveraging US\$18.3 billion in investment financing for infrastructure PPPs globally;
- The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) supported 81 PPP projects through political risk insurance, with a total US\$5.1 billion gross exposure between 2002 and 2012;
- The International Finance Corporation's Transaction Advisory in PPPs advised on 187 transactions between 2002 and 2016 and invested in 249 PPPs with total commitments of US\$9.8 billion.

This data does not include the resources of private water companies themselves or the many other governmental and non-governmental organisations in support of privatisation in general. By comparison, resources available to organisations promoting remunicipalisation are puny, underscoring the David and Goliath metaphor that permeates the tone of all the papers in this collection.

The future of remunicipalisation is also complicated by the fact that there are radically different interpretations of what remunicipalisation is, why it is being done, and the very meaning of 'public'. The remunicipalisation movement covers a broad spectrum of political theory and water governance practices, from state capitalists seeking control of key sectors of the economy (such as water services), to social-democratic governments pushing for a more equitable distribution of resources within a market framework, to pragmatic bureaucrats looking for cost savings, to anti-capitalist civil society movements searching for non-commodified forms of water delivery, and anarchist/autonomist movements seeking alternative ways of delivering water that are not controlled by state or corporate interests (McDonald, 2018; Driessen, 2008; Gorostiza et al., 2013; Marston, 2015 Bao and Fang, 2012; Bremmer, 2009; Teo, 2014; Heller et al., 2007; Spronk et al., 2014; Tankha and Fuller, 2010; Warner and Hefetz, 2012; Spronk and Webber, 2007; Terhorst et al., 2013).

Finally, many state bureaucracies have been transformed by the ideologies of 'new public management', favouring the creation of service entities with legal and financial autonomy, operating on commercial principles – a trend called corporatisation (Dagdeviren, 2008; Marin et al., 2010; McDonald, 2014; Smith, 2004). Many of these arm's-length public utilities operate much like private companies, outsourcing services and seeking private water contracts in other jurisdictions. In these cases it is not always clear what is 'public' and what is 'private' about a water operator, creating confusion as to the public status of a remunicipalised water utility (Amenga-Etego and Grusky, 2005; Brousseau and Dedeurwaerdere, 2012; Clarke et al., 2007; Clifton et al., 2007; Fraser, 1990; Hill and Montag, 2000; Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Kaul, 2012; Magdahl, 2012; Mansbridge, 1998; McDonald and Ruiters, 2005, 2012; van Rooyen and Hall, 2007).

One implication of this diverse ideological practice is that the remunicipalisation movement may fragment into different policy camps and associations, with some advocating for a robust and interventionist state, some promoting commercialised public utilities, and others demanding stronger 'social control' of water services on the part of citizens (Bakker, 2008; Barraqué, 2009; Beveridge et al., 2014; de Gouvello and Scott, 2012; González-Gómez et al., 2014; Grant, 2013; Gunawansa and Garcia, 2013; Heller et al., 2007; Nissan et al., 2004; Valdovinos, 2012; Wainwright, 2012; Driessen, 2008; Laurie and Crespo, 2007; Marin et al., 2010; Pigeon, 2012b). This is not to suggest that a 'one plan fits all' strategy is needed, but the existing diversities of remunicipalisation do serve to underscore the need for a more open and critical debate about the implications of such heterogeneity in remunicipalisation struggles. This diversity also highlights the challenges of building alliances that advocate for remunicipalisation, rendering it difficult to forge a political coalition that is cohesive enough to engage in the difficult and often lengthy and exhausting process of (re)making water public.

## **NEW RESEARCH TERRAINS**

This Special Issue is an attempt to advance our understanding of water remunicipalisation trends in three interrelated ways. First, it provides insights into the actions and perspectives of powerful, high profile organisations involved in global water policy debates, including the views of private water companies, multilateral and bilateral agencies, water associations and NGOs. These mainstream organisations have been remarkably silent on the topic, with none of the establishments and institutions interviewed for this research having any formal policy on remunicipalisation. Indeed, most had never heard of remunicipalisation when contacted for an interview. The vast majority also claimed to be neutral on the question of public versus private water, although many were openly supportive of privatisation efforts in practice.

In his paper on the subject, David McDonald describes the results of interviews with 47 such 'powerbroker' organisations, offering the first systematic insight into what these institutions know about water remunicipalisation, why they think it is happening, and what their plans are (if any) to engage with it in the future. The conclusion is that a coordinated counter-attack on remunicipalisation from private water companies and mainstream water organisations is unlikely in the near future, but that a lack of support (if not outright resistance) from large funding agencies and NGOs means that for many years to come, remunicipalisation struggles are likely to remain relatively weak while private water companies are bound to step up their resistance strategies. Even public water associations seem to offer little in the way of moral or financial support for remunicipalisation trends – though there are notable exceptions such as *Aqua Publica Europea* – sharing with their private sector counterparts many technocratic, market-friendly principals. There are some supportive voices amongst these water agencies, but remunicipalisation activists should not expect much backing from the most powerful and influential global water organisations. The process of privatisation has become so common over the past few decades that leading organisations and institutions have simply not engaged with the possibility of a counter-process of remunicipalisation.

The second paper in this Special Issue examines the ways in which existing and potential international trade agreements and investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms can shape how remunicipalisation unfolds. Britta Kynast analyses a new generation of agreements, many of which seek to liberalise and privatise services. Observers have predicted that these agreements have a 'chilling effect' on remunicipalisation (Alderson and Beckfield, 2004; Barlow, 2009; Kishimoto, 2015; McCarthy, 2004; Public Services International, 2014), but this is the first systematic attempt to review key trade laws and the risks they present for remunicipalisation advocates. Kynast argues that municipalities run the risk of infringing on ISDS provisions when attempting to remunicipalise, but argues that this potential liability can be limited by understanding trade agreement details in advance and by incorporating special clauses into future trade agreements. She also advocates a greater role for local authorities in developing trade agreement rules given their expert knowledge on how local services such as water are organised. Nevertheless, the potential chilling effect of ISDSs on remunicipalisation cannot be ruled out at present.

A third and final set of papers lies at the heart of this Special Issue. These look at five case studies where there is an ongoing water remunicipalisation debate. These cases are in geographically, politically and economically diverse locations, and are intended to provide a broad range of insights into different struggles for remunicipalisation. Most importantly, we focus on cases where remunicipalisation may or may not succeed, with as much attention paid to why they might fail as to why they may move forward. Our aim is to uncover the good, the bad and the ugly of remunicipalisation efforts, revealing the enormous challenges of fighting private water companies in their own backyards and the realities of building uneasy coalitions of public water advocates, extracting what might be learned from these experiences before they are blurred by the fogs of time.

Each case study involved intensive interviews with key personnel from a cross section of local and international organisations, including senior managers from private water companies (where feasible), senior bureaucrats in government departments responsible for water services, elected officials responsible for developing water policy, representatives from funding or donor agencies engaged in policymaking or financing municipal water services, union representatives, and representatives of consumer associations, NGOs and social movements engaged in local water policy debates. A preparatory workshop was held with the research team to develop consistent fieldwork methodologies and survey instruments. All case studies were conducted within an eight-month window from late 2017 to mid-2018, in an effort to hold constant as many transnational factors as possible, thus helping to better identify and evaluate the extent to which endogenous influences shape the tone and possible outcomes of local remunicipalisation disputes.

The results do not always paint a rosy picture. Indeed, two of the remunicipalisation campaigns we studied have effectively fizzled out, another is under attack from powerful political and private sector

interests, and yet another has had partial successes that have been repeatedly beaten back. Only one case has been truly successful and is now in public hands. Nevertheless, it is from disappointments that we sometimes learn the best lessons, and each of these case studies shed important light on the challenges and opportunities of remunicipalisation campaigns. Indeed, one of the central messages to emerge from this project is the need for more research on 'failed' cases of remunicipalisation in order to learn more about what went wrong and the extent to which these lessons can be of help in other locations.

The paper on Jakarta (Indonesia) by Emanuele Lobina, Vera Wegmann and Marwa looks at the long-standing struggle in that city to remunicipalise water, which was privatised in 1998 after the state-owned water company signed a cooperation agreement with two private international firms, Thames Water and Suez. The private operators are responsible for the entire water system, but critics argue that it is the public partner that bears the financial risk. The Coalition of Jakarta Residents Opposing Water Privatisation (KMMSAJ) filed a lawsuit against Jakarta's administrators in 2013, arguing that the private water operators failed to provide an adequate supply of clean, potable water to the city's residents. The Central Jakarta District Court annulled the private contract, but an appeal by the private companies has delayed the city administration's takeover of services and it may take years before the legal process is completed. The Constitutional Court's subsequent dissolution of Indonesia's Water Resource Law, which formed the legal foundation for water privatisation in the country, has caused further uncertainty, but in early 2019 the Governor of Jakarta made a public commitment to terminate private water contracts, adding another swing to the back-and-forth pendulum of political debate and remunicipalisation struggles.

The second case study is Barcelona (Spain), by Hug March, Mar Grau-Satorras, David Saurí and Erik Swyngedouw. Barcelona has been served by private suppliers since the late 19th century (except for a short interval during the civil war), with water services currently operated by Spanish multinational Abgar (now owned by Suez). The current 35-year contract was signed in 2012, but critics say it was awarded without appropriate tender. There is now an active campaign to remunicipalise water services in the city, promoting community-controlled, non-commodified water management, spearheaded by *Plataforma Aigua és Vida* and recently given a boost by the election of a new left-wing local government, but the battle is not an easy one. This paper chronicles the complex, meandering, contested and path-dependent unfolding over the past few years of a remunicipalisation agenda that has been pursued by a range of political forces and social movements. The remunicipalisation process has been marked by increasingly convoluted and intricately intertwined and enmeshed institutional configurations, legal controversies, entrenched and contested political positions, and sustained social activism. Barcelona's water supply system is emblematic of the difficulties and contradictions that emerge when a long-standing status quo is challenged by the rising momentum of an oppositional agenda. It is made more complicated by the Byzantine nature of the institutional configuration of the water supply, which is organised at a metropolitan – regional level comprising 22 municipalities plus the city of Barcelona.

Sofia (Bulgaria) is next. Georgi Medarov and David McDonald provide a history of urban water management that spans inter-war dictatorships, post-war Soviet-era socialism, and aggressive neo-liberalism. In the aftermath of a banking crisis in 1996-1997, a loan was given to the Bulgarian government by the IMF with conditions that included legislation enabling privatisation. In 2000, Sofia's water services were leased on a 25-year contract to *Sofiyska Voda*, which operates as a subsidiary of Veolia, a French transnational company that manages water, waste and energy services. Veolia holds 77 percent of the company's shares while the rest are in municipal hands. The water and sanitation systems were in poor condition before privatisation and critics argue that the private contract has made it worse. There appears to be strong public support for terminating the contract, but a proposal in 2013 to hold a referendum was blocked by the municipal council, in part because of a legal clause that allows *Sofiyska Voda* to sue the Bulgarian government for loss of income. *Solidary Bulgaria* is an NGO that has been driving the push for remunicipalisation in the city, but support for public water comes from a diverse and

uneasy array of interests, including far-right nationalist parties. It is very unlikely that the contract will be ended early, but Medarov and McDonald argue that there is a strong potential for a progressive coalition of groups to force the city to bring water back in-house when the contract ends in 2025.

Our fourth case study, by Susan Spronk and Emily Sing, focuses on Marseille (France). Marseille has one of the oldest water privatisation contracts in France, and was renewed with a Veolia subsidiary in 2013 for another 15 years despite legal challenges by citizen groups wanting to remunicipalise water services. In 2014, the Regional Court of Auditors issued a report criticising the contract process, reigniting efforts to cancel the concession. The debate has since faded from public view but remains significant given the importance of the city for Veolia and the private water industry in general, underscored by the fact that Marseille is home to the World Water Council, widely seen as the most important global lobby for water privatisation. In the end, Marseille is presented here as an unsuccessful attempt by local water justice activists to cancel a concession contract. The authors argue that the hegemony of the French model is so deeply embedded in Marseille's corrupted political economy that, in the absence of a major political shift or scandal involving the local water company, the contract in Marseille may be one of the hardest to break in France.

Our fifth and final case study is that of Missoula (USA), and here we see a success story. In fact, shortly before Cory Mann and Mildred Warner began their fieldwork, the city municipalised its water for the first time in its history, using the legal tool of eminent domain. In 2017, the city took ownership of its water system from The Carlyle Group, a large international private equity firm, with the Missoula case providing a lens into the promises and pitfalls of eminent domain as a tool for (re)municipalisation. The case focuses on the challenges of the 'condemnation' process and assessing fair market value. Timing is critical because of information and power asymmetries, as well as rising legal costs and increasing asset value as the utility is sold to private equity, but the condemnation process is not quick. The findings suggest that other American municipalities may be able to use eminent domain to retake their water supplies, but it is no panacea. Much depends on the nature of each state's eminent domain law, the ability to provide evidence of public value, the technical decisions of the courts, and political and financial support. Increasing power asymmetries between municipalities and international private equity firms also raise questions about the future of water regulation and the ability of cities to pursue eminent domain as costs escalate.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Each of the papers in this Special Issue offers a host of context-specific lessons about water remunicipalisation, but we will highlight five general insights here. The first is that attempts to remunicipalise water are likely to become increasingly difficult in the future. As opponents to remunicipalisation become better informed and more coordinated in their efforts – and if 'neutral' organisations such as multilateral agencies and mainstream NGOs refuse to assist with remunicipalisation campaigns – the potential for remunicipalisation to continue to grow at a pace similar to that of the last 15 years will be challenged. Remunicipalisation advocates must recognise the growing clouds on the horizon and be all the more strategic in their forward planning.

Second, alliances of pro-remunicipalisation organisations are critical. Not all coalitions can accommodate the diverse range of ideologies that are pushing for public water, and there are instances where it may be best not to include objectionable voices such as far-right nationalist movements; however, broad associations of organisations will be unavoidable in most cases. Labour unions in particular are critical, given their relative resources and capacity to organise, but they should not insist on playing a vanguard role. Unions must also be willing to engage in debates about the failures of some public service provision and to address perceptions that public sector workers have not always operated in the interests of all, especially marginalised groups.

A third point is that public education is critical. It cannot be assumed that all residents are opposed to privatisation or share the same concerns. More significantly, there will invariably be a wide range of opinions as to what constitutes a 'good' public service. Once again, education cannot be vanguardist in its right and wrong interpretations of what a progressive public water operator should look like. Outreach must serve to open up conversations about the scope and potential for different forms of public provision, partly in an effort to engage citizens as 'informed participants' in a public water system rather than as mere 'passive recipients' (Clarke et al., 2007). As such, it is essential that pro-remunicipalisation campaigns are willing to be critical of 'old school' public services – which have not always been very democratic, equitable or accountable – in an effort to advance a 'new' kind of dialogue on the meaning of public water.

A fourth point revolves around widening the scope of the political argument. There is a growing trend towards reconsidering the public nature of public services, including energy, waste, sewage, communications, and transport. The organisation of water services should align itself with broader political and social movements that aim to take back public control of the means of urban collective reproduction. Many processes of remunicipalisation are part of broader politicising movements that seek to deflect the trajectory of pervasive neo-liberalisation that has propelled privatisation to the top of the agenda. These politicising movements see water services as only one of the necessary terrains that need to be recaptured in a process that nurtures greater social inclusion and democratisation, accountable public control, and more socially just and ecologically sensible policies.

Finally, the tools and mediums for innovative remunicipalisation education campaigns will need to be carefully thought through. Mainstream media outlets have shown little interest in carrying remunicipalisation stories, and the complexities of redefining and remaking public water services has made coalition building difficult because – unlike with efforts to resist privatisation – there are no simple or singular narratives to bring people together. Social media has opened up new vistas of communication, but engaging people in a complex debate that takes them beyond the tired binaries of public and private will require new forms of engagement, much of which will necessitate intensive face-to-face discussion in workshops, conferences, information booths, etc.

In the end, future remunicipalisation strategies will need to be grounded in their local realities, alert to the regional and international trends that continue to shape water policies. They will also need to be flexible enough to accommodate a diverse and unsettled swathe of opinion on what constitutes public service 'success'. This is a tall order for a disparate and under-resourced collection of remunicipalisation advocates, but one that cannot be avoided if future remunicipalisation campaigns are going to withstand stiffening forms of resistance that are bound to sprout up in the future.

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