

Public-Public Partnerships and Alternative Ways of Organizing Public Services and Work

The promises of New Public Management reforms to modernise public services and make them more responsive to the needs of contemporary societies have by and large not materialised and in many instances worsen the access to, and quality of, public services. The research *Public-Public Partnerships and Alternative Ways of Organizing Public Services and Work* engages with some of the main questions of the post-growth societies' debate, such as the expansion of social services, organisation of work, and issues of social inequality and democracy. Recognizing that even in post-growth societies some sectors, such as social services, would still need to grow and the key role of public services in addressing issues of social inequality, the research investigates on the new forms of organizing public services and work in the public sector.

The focus of the research is on Public-Public Partnerships (PuPs) which have been often proposed by unions, both at national and international level, as alternatives to privatization. Although PuPs have a much longer history, they have become more prominent in the last decades as a response to surge of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). In contrast to PPPs, PuPs are broadly defined as partnerships which exclude private sector operators. In simple terms, two or more public authorities or organizations (i.e. trade unions, civil society groups and others) set up a collaboration based on principles of solidarity and with the aim of improving the capacities and effectiveness of one partner (Hall et al., 2009: 2). This research focuses on those PuPs which are initiated by, or involve trade unions and civil society organisations and which provide the space for alternative ways of organizing public services - especially in terms of decommodifying, democratizing and making them more egalitarian – and of organising work in terms of workers' control and autonomy over working time (allocating time for leisure, personal development, community involvement and meaningful participation in democratic decision making processes), linking work and care work, voice and participation at the workplace, job enrichment and new concepts of productivity (knowledge and skills upgrading), among others.

In the light of the above, this research attempts to establish a “dialogue” between ongoing social experiments and initiatives involving Public-Public Partnerships (PuPs) and theoretical work on alternative public services thereby contributing to a more coherent public debate on post-capitalist alternatives (Serrano and Xhafa, 2011: 288).