***Critical Reflections on Public Private Partnerships: an introduction***

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**Abstract**

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) have proliferated in high, middle- and low-income countries since the mid-2000s. They are often promoted amidst claims they are an effective mechanism to address inequalities in public services and have been endorsed within the Sustainable Development Goals as a key development financing mechanism. Yet while there has been a proliferation of studies that look at PPPs in a given sector, very little analysis has taken a comparative view across sectors. The chapter thus offers a comparative framework for considering PPPs across different social sectors, namely education, health, housing and water. The chapter proposes four different means of comparing PPPS – describing what a PPP looks like in one sector compared to another; asking how ideas and actors associated with PPPs travel across sectors; asking whether PPPs in travelling between sectors are ever changed and finally, reflexive comparison. The chapter sets out a brief discussion of what constitutes a PPP and offers a historical overview of their expansion within a development context. Reflecting on all of the chapters presented in the book, it asks what a comparative

analysis of PPPs can add to our understanding particularly in relation to their impact on inequalities.

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) have proliferated in high, middle- and low-income countries since the mid-2000s. They are often promoted amidst claims they are an effective mechanism to address inequalities in public services. In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), PPPs figure as a key development financing mechanism. SDG 17 deals with strengthening the means of implementation of all SDGs and building global partnerships. One of its targets (SDG17.17) is to increase the number of PPPs worldwide. But, despite this high profile, PPPs are highly controversial – sponsored by enthusiastic advocates, and disparaged by critics. Key criticisms are that PPPs exacerbate, rather than ameliorate inequalities, and fail to contribute to poverty reduction. This book collects together accounts of how PPPs have worked in different sectors in a range of developing countries. The chapters look at development financing, health, education, water and housing. Through critical scrutiny we aim to make an analysis of the ways in which PPPs do or do not contribute to poverty reduction and tackling inequalities.

The book has grown out of the work we have done together as part of the *EQUIPPPS* (Equalities in public private partnerships) project.[1] We began work on this book in 2018, when

[1] EQUIPPPPs was funded with a GCRF network grant. Grant reference: ES/P006353/1

there was considerable momentum behind PPPs. Largely this was associated with a questioning of the public service capacity of states to deliver on large infrastructural projects and on social development. We are completing this introductory chapter in July 2020, in the midst of the global coronavirus pandemic, when in many countries a discourse of public good is, possibly temporarily, and perhaps only in some sectors such as health, emerging alongside depictions of the virtues of the private sector. Currently there is a stress on public health, public health systems, publicly-funded research in higher education, education systems working with the state to get economies back on track, and state support for the economy. PPPs have not disappeared, but the configuration of the relationships between government and the private sector with regard to social development is in flux. There are many calls at the current moment to re-envision the ways in which work is understood and relationships between government, employers and workers are organised to deliver on social development (Ferreras et al, 2020; TUC, 2020; NEU, 2020). These pose challenges to the assumptions built into many PPPs.

At the same time the COVID crisis has heightened concerns around government's abilities to manage payment obligations on debt associated with some PPPs where access to financial markets is constrained and government revenues decline significantly. These difficulties have profound consequences for how or whether people can access any form of social or sustainable development delivered through a PPP. For example, even before the COVID pandemic in September 2019 the Deputy Health Minister in Lesotho asked people to refrain from using the PPP-run Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital except where specialist care was urgently required.[2] PPPs often require governments to make fixed monthly

[2] 'Tšepong bleeds govt of millions'. https://www.pressreader.com/lesotho/sunday-express-9f83/20190929/281505048012494

payments over a number of years and, unlike other forms of public investment, these cannot be scaled back at moments of crisis.[3] In the case of Lesotho, the government could no longer afford the high costs they were required to pay for each patient seen in the hospital as part of the PPP agreement. This raises concerns about governments' ability to maintain payments in PPP arrangements post COVID and has led to the IMF to call for PPP contracts to be reviewed to 'identify likely materialization of contingent obligations' (IMF 2020: 4). This book provides part of a backstory to whatever new relationships around PPPs might be struggled over and settled on in the future in a landscape radically shaped by the experience with the global pandemic of COVID 19.

There are very few scholarly works which look at the effects of PPPs in relation to addressing inequalities across infrastructural and social development sectors in the developing world.[4] Most studies of PPPs have looked only at particular sectors, such as health (Vecchi and Hellowell, 2018; Kumar, 2019), education (Robertson et al., 2012; Steiner Khamsi and Draxler, 2018), water (Marson and Maggi, 2018) or infrastructure (Hilyard, 2016; Osborne, 2002; Vaillancourt Rosenau, 2000; Leigland, 2020). There is virtually no comparative work across sectors considering the form of PPPs and their effects, apart from the summary review by Fabre and Staub, 2019, which comments on three sectors separately – health, education and infrastructure. Leigland's (2020) analysis of PPPs in Africa looks at roads, water and electricity, but not at social development sectors. The argument we make in this volume,

[3] https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Fiscal-Affairs-Department-How-To-Notes/Issues/2018/10/17/How-to-Control-the-Fiscal-Costs-of-Public-Private-Partnerships-46294

[4] Fabre, A., & Straub, S. (2019). The Economic Impact of public private partnerships (PPPs) in Infrastructure, Health and Education: A Review. Working Paper, Toulouse School of Economics looks at PPPs in high-, middle- and low-income countries in the three sectors, and draws out somewhat different effects in each. It thus engages with some of the same issues as this book, but does not attempt to make comparisons across the sectors.

discussed in some detail later in this chapter, is that comparison of the ways in which PPPs have worked in different sectors is a key element in evaluating them. The book looks closely at PPPs and their use as financing mechanisms in both international and national contexts, drawing out similarities and differences across sectors. It offers a range of empirical case studies, of how PPPs have played out in practice across different sectors and different geographical locations, with a specific focus on the implications for inequalities. It considers some features associated with the structures, agents and discourses associated with PPPs in different sectors that tend towards addressing or entrenching inequalities. In this introduction we draw out the ways in which the discourses that promote PPPs move between sectors, and what this illuminates about the larger frameworks of ideas associated with PPPs. The book thus offers a practical guide for understanding and evaluating PPPs and provides empirically grounded analysis to support more inclusive arrangements for expanding the capacity of the public sector.

In this introductory chapter we provide some background and context to PPPs. We outline definitions of PPPs, locate the emergence of PPPs in different sectors in historical context, and discuss the literature which has looked at PPPs across different sectors, noting the theoretical resources deployed. We point to the significant role played by PPPs in promoting materially and ideologically the shift to, private finance in public sector provision. We go on to highlight some key issues and areas of concern that have emerged in the discussion of PPPs and suggest some frameworks for comparing PPPs across sectors as deployed in the chapters that follow.

***Definitions***

PPP is a loose term that covers a wide range of arrangements across different sectors and is open to a diverse range of interpretations, as the chapters in this volume show. According to the World Bank overview,[5] PPPs are "a long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk and management responsibility, and remuneration is linked to performance" (World Bank, 2019a). Fabre and Straub (2019) include PPPs contractual arrangements such as performance based management contracts, leasing, franchise, concessions, build – operate-transfer (BOT), and build-own-operate (BOO) arrangements, but exclude public procurement projects such as service contracts, turnkey construction contracts, and full privatizations in which asset ownership transfers permanently to the private sector. These standard definitions, used for example by the World Bank, in compiling databases of PPPs often mutate in local settings, as all the elements are rarely fulfilled. Thus the length of time of the PPP contract, how public the service is deemed to be, whether the risks are borne by the private sector or the state, and how performance is evaluated vary considerably, as the chapters in this book will show.

The variance in definition of PPP, within and between sectors, is a feature of some of the discourses that surround them, and the many actors involved in promoting them. Some observe that the term PPP represents yet another development buzzword (Cornwall, 2007; Standing, 2007) which masks more profound shifts in relationship away from inclusion and social justice. Many consider PPPs equate to wholesale privatisation of the public sector (Hall, 2015; Bhattacharjee,2020). As evidenced in this volume PPPs have been initiated across the

[5] https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/overview/what-are-public-private-partnerships, last accessed 9/3/20

social sectors and can bring together a multitude of partners in a variety of settings and a range of different arrangements.

The importance assigned to private finance, and to PPPs, was outlined at the Third UN Conference on Financing for Development that took place in 2015 in Addis Ababa (United Nations, 2015b) where powerful constituencies argued for PPPs (Mawdsely, 2018; Murray and Spronk, 2020). Consequently, PPPs have been advocated by a diverse range of actors including bilateral donor agencies, United Nations' agencies, the World Bank Group, global accounting firms, the World Economic Forum, governments and philanthropic organisations. The SDGs specifically refer to the use of PPPs as "means of implementation" for other development goals, in relation to poverty, health, education and environmental protection. SDG17 includes a call to, "encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships" (United Nations, 2015a). In this formulation there is no distinction made between private partnerships for social development which involve profit or commodification, and those that do not.

This constellation of support for PPPs is not new. Over the last fifteen years development discourse has been increasingly dominated by a strong call to increase the involvement of the private sector in development. PPPs have been promoted as a key financing and policy tool to achieve this. In 2013, PPP funding for infrastructure projects in developing countries amounted to around US$159 billion, having increased after the economic and financial crisis of 2008/2009 but then falling from a peak in 2012 (UNCTAD, 2015a). In 2019 the estimation of private finance provided for infrastructure in energy, transport, information and communications technology (ICT), water and municipal solid waste (MSW) infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries totalled US$96.7 billion across 409 projects in 62 countries (World Bank, 2019).

The World Bank database on Private Participation in Infrastructure only includes data on economic infrastructure, that is energy, telecommunications, transport, and water and sewerage.[6] The database maintains a distinction between “economic” and “social” infrastructure, where the former refers to “the physical infrastructure that is a direct input to economic activity”, , while the latter (social or soft infrastructure) “refers to the facilities that aid the provision of social services, such as schools and hospitals (Chong and Poole, 2013:66). This distinction, however, has been contested by scholars suggesting that economic and social issues are indivisible aspects of a “transformatory” approach (Elson and Cagatay, 2000) or linked in supporting human development (UNDP, 2019) and issues of social justice (Whiteside, 2019). The PPP Knowledge lab (https://pppknowledgelab.org) includes resources on PPPs in education and health, but its maps cannot be searched to look at sectoral projects. Some indication of the range of PPPs by region can be found in the scholarly literature. For example, a recent systematic review of PPP financing and delivery of health care services in Southern Africa found 52 individual PPP initiatives, representing eight distinct PPP models (Whyle and Olivier, 2016). A review of PPPs in education identified 199 impact studies published between 1992 and 2018 reviewing five different forms of PPP arrangement (Verger et al, 2020). The fragmented assembly of information on PPPs in social sectors raises difficulties for cross-national analysis. Relevant figures for health and education PPPs may be available at a national level but are not currently collated by any organisation cross-nationally. The indicator associated with the SDG 17.17 target on increasing the number of PPPs is only concerned with tracking increasing investment in physical infrastructure, and the UN organisation, UNCTAD, overseeing progress on the target comments on the importance of maintaining public

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financing, the small number of countries in which PPPs are located, and the lack of investment they have generated for key sectors such as water and sanitation (UNCTAD, 2016)

Debates around definitions have generated their own internal discussion. A growing body of work has focused on developing sector-specific definitions and typologies of PPPs, looking for example at housing, water, transport, health or education and distinguishing forms of the relationship entailed in PPPs (See PPP knowledge Lab and Romero and Van Waeyenberge, this volume, for a full discussion of this literature). Critics, such as Bayliss and Van Waeyenberge (2018), argue that what is as, if not more, important than this granular look at PPPs by sector, is to have a detailed and in-depth understanding of the wider context in which PPPs are put into practice. They see them as one element of the private turn in development finance, representing a wedge in how the policy space around public service provision is being redefined, with important repercussions over and above their (relatively small) immediate financial significance. The chapters in this volume track the history of the emergence of a discourse around the desirability of PPPs in different sectors, the material forms taken by PPPs in different sectors, and document how discourses around definition and political struggles over forms of regulation of the private sector are played out in processes of implementation.

***A brief history of PPPs: The private turn in development finance***

The history of the emergence of PPPs links with debates which began in the 1980s over whether states or markets could better deliver on development. A push for privatisation in public service provision first emerged in 1981 in a report by the consultant Eliot Berg for the World Bank entitled *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Plan for Action* (Berg, 1984; Bayliss and Van Waeyenberge, 2018). The approach resulted in an intense debate by academics, different governments and civil society organisations (Green and Allison, 1986; Sender and Smith, 1985; Fosu and Ogunleye, 2017; Leighland, 2020). Support for privatisation grew following the publication in 1992 of an empirical study by the World Bank that concluded that privatisation of monopolies can bring about net welfare gains. The study was seen as offering a clear justification for widening the scope of what could be privatised and legitimising widespread privatisation policies (Cramer, 1999). This led to a period in which many initiatives expanding privatisation of the public sector emerged (Bayliss and Fine, 2008; Leighland, 2020; Bhattcharya, 2020). By the early 2000s there was a growing recognition within the World Bank that privatisation was not an end in itself resulting in a notable decline in support for privatisation in both development policies and discourse (Cramer, 1999; Bayliss and Van Waeyenberge, 2018). Yet this is not to say that support for privatisation waned. In 2002 the World Bank adopted a *Private Sector Development Strategy* as the corporate blueprint for the institution, demonstrating their on-going support of private financing for development (World Bank, 2002). The first objective of the strategy was to reform the investment climate by extending the reach of the market with specific support measures given to small and medium sized enterprises (World Bank, 2002: ii). A second objective was to improve access to basic infrastructure and social services through private participation (World Bank, 2002: ii-iii). The 2007 Long Term Strategic Framework published by the World Bank (World Bank, 2007) reaffirmed these two intentions and represented a significant contribution to the process by which 'development was redefined as private sector development' (Van Waeyenberge, 2015: 7).

Support for private financing of development was also justified by the need to finance the MDGs. The Monterrey Consensus, produced at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002 was a direct response to the growing recognition that huge resources were required to fund the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and represented a substantial shift away from earlier financing that was predominantly via public funds (Goodfellow, 2020). The Monterrey Consensus states that:

> Private international capital flows, particularly foreign direct investment, along with international financial stability, are vital complements to national and international development efforts (UN, 2003: 8).

The Monterrey Consensus advocated funding the MDGs up to 2015 through increased trade liberalization, export-led growth, privatization and government reduction in social expenditure, rather than increased state spending by both donor and national governments (UN, 2003). Through these discursive framings the Monterrey Consensus emerged with support for the notion that, finance for development was to be extracted from international markets, and corporate actors were to be encouraged to expand their operations in the global South (Soederberg, 2005, cited in Sharma and Soederberg, 2019: 6). This process, commonly termed as 'the private turn' in development cooperation, gathered pace as the frameworks to succeed the MDGs began to be debated (Nunnenkamp and Thiele, 2013; Lund-Thomsen, Hansen, & Lindgreen,2019). For many the private sector came to be seen as key to the successful delivery of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda (Stafford Smith et al, 2017; Kamphoff and Melisen, 2018; Jafri, 2019; Archer & Muntasim, 2020). PPPs were an integral part of this strategy providing new opportunities for global finance to seek profit infrastructure in the Global South (Gabor, 2020). The Fourth OECD-DAC High Level Forum in Busan, Korea, in 2011 for example acknowledged the contribution of the private sector and explicitly opened up opportunities for the sector to deepen its engagement in development policy and direction and play an active role in the design and implementation of development policies (Scheyvens et al., 2016: 374). The push for private financing has mainly been associated with actors located in the Global North while many from the Global South have argued for a greater role for public financing (Murray and Spronk, 2020). The 2015 Addis Ababa Agenda contained no new financing commitments and, while it advocates strengthening the public sector, the United States and United Kingdom led a successful campaign to block the establishment of a UN regulatory tax body to prevent illicit financial flows out of developing countries. Such prevention is seen as key to domestic resource mobilization in the Global South (Murray and Spronk, 2020: 275).

The significance of private finance interests with regard to the SDG agenda is also evident in the access corporate players have gained in central decision-making arenas with regard to this framework. Key players from the corporate sector were invited to participate in high level talks to discuss what would come after the MDGs, and corporate actors from the Global North have continued to play a role in critical debates and discussions around the SDGs (Bull and McNeil, 2019; Dahlman, Stubbs et al., 2019 Pingeot, 2014; Scheyvens et al., 2016). In the field of education, the large tech companies were major players (Unterhalter, 2018; Wynn and Jones, 2019). A key idea promoted by representatives of large corporations was to increase resources available to developing countries by mobilizing finance and investments from the private sector instead of increasing public resources (Van Waeyenberge, 2015: 9). This form of corporate-led participation in development edged out support for alternative ideas for funding initiatives in support of the SDGs such as levying a tax on global financial transactions or air travel. Part of the argument made for the direct role given to private sector finance rested on a narrative that presented the public sector as inefficient, corrupt, or unable to deliver, requiring PPPs to add speed, depth and/or know how. The form of this narrative was slightly different across sectors. We exemplify this by looking at four sectors – health, education, housing and water.

In the health sector active promotion of private sector investment in health and PPP arrangements was associated with a discursive shift. The 1993 World Bank World Development Report (WDR) *'Investing in Health'* called for a greater role for private investment in health provision. Critics noted how the report presented health service financing and provisioning as potentially lucrative economic activities (Laurell and López Arellano, 1996; Birn et al., 2016; Sparke, 2017).

The publication of the WDR resulted in a 'common sense' view being promoted to the global health and development communities that healthcare commercialization and the application of business methods were inevitable and more efficient (Mackintosh and Koivusalo, 2005; Hunter and Murray, 2019: 5), although there was scant evidence supporting this (Laurell and López Arellano, 1996; Birn et al, 2016).

The 1993 WDR had a significant impact on shaping subsequent health policies and gained legitimacy in health policy circles and among governments. The British government played an active role in the promotion of health PPPs in developing countries and, indeed, consider themselves to be 'the acknowledged world leader in healthcare PPPs[7] with over 25 years' experience of PPPs. In 2016 the UK government had partnered in over 130 major healthcare projects and had invested £12 billion of capital value in healthcare PPP projects around the world.[8] Analysts have noted that this drive is part of the UK trade and industry strategy, rather than being informed by UK health or development policy, and prioritises British trade interests rather than the health needs of those in the Global South (Holden, 2009). Since 2015 an integral aspect of what has been termed the 'beyond aid agenda'

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-your-partner-for-healthcare-infrastructure/the-uk-your-partner-for-healthcare-infrastructure--2#contents
[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-your-partner-for-healthcare-infrastructure/the-uk-your-partner-for-healthcare-infrastructure--2#contents

(Mawdsley, 2018) has been an increase in the use of loans and equity investments to support the growth of a range of private sector companies delivering health and education services in parts of the Global South. Large commercial hospital chains in emerging economies have been the biggest recipients of UK aid (Hunter and Murray, 2015).

The discourses associated with this portrayal of healthcare as a commodity have gained widespread currency. In 2013 the renowned health journal, *The Lancet*, published a Commission Report, 'Global Health 2035: A World Converging within a Generation', the outcome of a study chaired by two economists, Lawrence Summers and Dean Jamison, who had been central to the writing of the 1993 WDR. The report reiterated the need for investment in health suggesting that technologically-oriented medical interventions alone will address the health consequences of poverty and inequality (Birn et al., 2016) whilst failing to engage with the social determinants of health. There has thus been a reconceptualization of healthcare provisioning as a market where patients are clients, choosing among competitive options and individually responsible for their own health choices (O'Laughlin, 2016: 695–96). The health PPP has emerged out of this reorientation of ideas.

In education, PPPs emerged in the 1990s out of a perception that state systems of education were inefficient in addressing the needs of all the people as they offered poor quality provision and had no space for parental choice. There were many challenges in establishing school systems to meet the needs of diverse children, and the withdrawal of funds to public education systems under conditions of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s made this process harder. In this context there were a number of reform initiatives that sought to dismantle or restructure the forms of democratic local government engagement with schools in favour of central government directed interventions or particular school based governance arrangements which promoted the private sector, sometimes using global frameworks associated with the rights of parents to choose education for their children. Thus, education PPPs were putatively promoted as vehicles of choice enhancing education quality. These took the form of vouchers to enhance parents' ability to access schools which they perceived to be better, charter schools or other governance arrangements which allowed for the establishment of schools outside the mass system of education, and support for supply-side initiatives, such as tutoring (Verger et al, 2020). Unlike health, where PPPs were the outcome of a discursive reformulation of health in terms of the outcome of specific interventions, in education PPPs were initially the outcome of organisational re-arrangements led by some governments and some important private sector networks which promoted education initiatives associated with parents and commercial organisations (Ball, 2012) . Only later, from the mid-2000s, was a discursive frame constructed for this by seeking to point to the inefficiencies of public schools This was associated with a learning crisis in which, whilst large numbers of children had accessed schooling, learning as such had been limited, particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy (WDT, 2017). The challenges of ensuring quality and inclusion in schooling were real enough. But PPPs were presented as the solution with limited evidence of their effectiveness (Verger et al, 2020).

Steiner Khamsi and Draxler (2018) identify three major threads in the expansion of education PPPs. Firstly, they note in high- and low-income countries the influence of new public management in shaping discourses and arrangements so that there was a shift in focus from government-run education systems drawing on arrangements associated with the state, to forms of partnership with non-state bodies, regulated through governance arrangements. Secondly, they note a solution to the learning crisis being formulated, which entailed shifts in the discourse about education, so that schooling was reconceptualized not as a set of human interactions, but as a chain of commodities mediated by technology for which new markets could be created. This resonates with some of the reconceptualisations of health. Third, they note the active promotion of PPP arrangements in education by powerful actors associated with development co-operation.

As in health and education, a growing number of countries have adopted PPPs in housing to promote construction of affordable housing. Countries that have adopted housing PPPs include Brazil and Colombia (Santoro, 2019), Ghana (Kwofie et al., 2016), Malaysia (Abdul and Kassim, 2011), India (Bhide, this volume) and Tanzania (Kavishe et al., 2019). Housing PPPs have been an outcome of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). Research on Nigeria show that, the introduction of the SAP 'necessitated a shift of emphasis away from government sponsored social to commercial housing in 1987, as government was no longer able to provide subsidies for low-cost housing' (Ibem, 2011: 136). Van Waeyenberge (2018) outlines how the entry of the World Bank into international housing policy entrenched self-help and private provision as the orthodoxy of international housing interventions. As a consequence, forms of provision that had existed, such as collective forms of tenure that had previously been offered by housing associations or public housing, were neglected in favour of a commitment to owner-occupation tenure forms. Moreover, the Bank facilitated a move away from publicly-funded provisioning to provisioning determined by individual capacity to pay via user charges while at the same time lowering standards to create 'affordability' (Van Waeyenberge, 2018: 294). For example, in Nigeria in 2002, the government introduced the National Housing and Urban Development Policy, promoting the private sector as a key means of 'addressing the severe shortage and high cost of housing and provide[d] the legal framework for actual transition from government direct provision to a collaborative approach in housing provision' (Ibem, 2011a:136). This consolidated the growth of PPPs in the housing sector with a consequence of extending homeownership and affordability among a few high-income elites without any significant contribution to housing for low-income residents in cities such as Lagos. Similar findings have occurred in other geographical contexts, raising questions about the ability of PPPs to meet the needs of low income residents (Abdul-Azziz and Kassim, 2011; Khare, 2018; Santoro, 2019; Trangkanont and Charoenngam, 2014). In their analysis of ten low  cost housing PPPs in Thailand,  Trangkanont and Charoenngam,(2014) found that one significant barrier faced by potential residents was their lack of access to financial support to buy or rent properties due to high interest rates as well as the need to produce formal documentation in order to take out loans which many potential residents lacked.

In the water sector Bayliss (2014) charts from the 1980s the transformation of water from a strategic and abundant resource delivered as a public service to a private commodity with an economic value (as state budgets and the high cost of delivering public services were increasingly scrutinised). The private sector, it was argued, would make water utilities more efficient and prices more cost-reflective. As had happened in the health sector, water users were reframed as consumers rather than citizens. A recent review of water PPPs in Asia has shown that despite mixed evidence over their results they have continued to expand across the region. Moreover, although no surveys of Asian public opinion exist, media reports and politician's statements suggest that the public is highly sceptical of water PPP (Jensen, 2017). This is perhaps unsurprising given evidence that the introduction of PPPs in the water and sanitation sectors led to a reduction in employment in the sectors (Gassner et al., 2009). Moreover, critics have demonstrated that corrupt governments have no incentives to promote coverage in the sanitation sector, thus allowing the private investors to seek to align their investment projects with their profit-maximization strategy (Pusok, 2016:  287). Critical governance issues need to be addressed if PPPs are to successfully deliver on the SDGs, including SDG6 on access to clean water and sanitation for all.

In all four sectors it can be seen that a new discourse is associated with the entry of commercial actors into sectors that had been the province of state provision or oversight. In health the notion of the social determinants of health and public health as a key government responsibility is replaced by an idea about the effectiveness of specific technical interventions. In education the data on the learning crisis positions the government and its running of public education systems as inefficient. In housing, the notion of owner-occupation displaces other forms of public housing, and in water the stress on efficient delivery of a commodity replaces the notion of water as a key resource for life which governments need to support. These discursive shifts sometimes predate and sometimes follow the establishment of PPPs, which have their own dynamics and material form in each sector. In all four sectors the conditions for PPPs were established in the era of structural adjustment, with the dramatic withdrawal of state spending. The consequences of SAP meant that states were unable to immediately 'build back better' and active choices were made to support the participation of the private sector in public provisioning, without attention to the inequalities that would follow. The active promotion of discourses around inefficiency and lack of success of public systems diverted attention from the inequalities that were so clearly a feature of privatization and PPPs. Thus, a feature of all four sectors is the formulation of a key PPP idea which shifts the discourse. Even when the number of PPPs decline the idea of the importance of private finance to support public provision remains (Gabor, 2020). But what we can see in each sector is that the organisational and material form of the PPP is different, and that the nature of the sector appears to put significant limits on how much responsibility the private sector will take, and what kinds of reduction of public provision are tolerated for which sectors of a society.

PPPs were widely promoted as a feature of discursive and organisational shifts , although as many commentators note there is little evidence to support claims for their success in delivering better health, education, wider access to water or housing , especially to the poorest( Gautham et al., 2019; Montagu et al., 2016; Patouillard et al., 2007; Prasad and Sengupta, 2019; Languille, 2016); Verger et al, 2020); Ibem, 2011a & b). Much of the PPP literature is descriptive of the nature of the relationships with few empirical or evaluative studies. Aerts et al. (2017) suggest this may be in part due to the lack of transparency and accountability surrounding PPPs that makes conducting empirical research very challenging.

***PPPs and inequality***

As the chapters in this volume highlight, the increased use and promotion of PPPs – both as policy model and a practical set of arrangements – raise specific issues in relation to their impact on inequalities. The emergence of PPPs as a policy form can be tracked as occurring alongside the widening of inequalities in a number of forms, noted by extensive data compilations, and associated with capital, income, ideas about social division and inequality, and choices in social policy with regard to addressing poverty and inequality and limiting the requirement on people to buy social services (Milanovic, 2016, Palma and Stiglitz, 2016 Piketty, 2019). The inequalities associated with PPPs need to be assessed taking on board intersectionality and is important in evaluating social policy. Recent work has signalled the significance of looking beyond broad social divisions such as gender or socio-economic status to understand inequalities within these groups and the ways in which the institutions, associated for example with education or economic development, build in assumptions and forms of power and categorisation limiting the development of equality (Cordirolli and Cook, 2019; Scheim and Bauer, 2019).

The growth of PPPs has significant implications for the reconfiguration of the relation between public and private sectors (Languille, 2017). Reconfiguring the role of the state to enable PPPs includes its reorientation towards the commissioning of services, rather than being in charge of direct provision and, often, the creation by the state of a secured revenue stream for private sector companies in the context of essential services provision. This has profound consequences for how or whether the state can attend to inequalities by ensuring provision for the most vulnerable and excluded groups in the society, such as women, low-income groups and ethnic minorities.

Attention to gender issues has generally been lacking from PPP debates although there are some notable exceptions (Hawkes et al., 2017; Gideon et al., 2017; Gideon and Unterhalter, 2017). This is perhaps unsurprising given that an examination of gender integration into World Bank funded projects, using the Bank's own scoring system of gender integration, found that progress has been limited (Kenny and O'Donnell, 2016; Berik, 2017). At the same time reviews of the work of the IMF on gender issues has revealed that gender expertise and awareness is limited, and very little attention has been given to gender concerns (Berik, 2017). Nevertheless, a small but growing number of PPPs, and particularly those located at the global level (GPPPs), have made claims to address gender inequalities through a focus on women's empowerment. Examples include initiatives such as UN Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles, launched in 2010 with UNIFEM (now UN Women) and the World Bank Private Sector Leaders Forum set up in 2009 as a partnership between the World Bank group and the leaders of 21 global corporate companies including Goldman Sachs and Nike Foundation and Unilever (Bexell, 2012).

More recently the World Bank have acknowledged that a focus on gender has been missing from the discussion of other types of PPPs, particularly those oriented towards economic infrastructure. In 2019 this led to the publication of a World Bank primer entitled 'Gender Equality, Infrastructure and PPPs'. Despite the focus on road and transport infrastructure the primer sets out more general relationships between gender equality and PPPs. (World Bank, 2019b: 2). drawing on the 2012 World Bank World Development Report (WDR) and the 2015 World Bank Gender Strategy document which both encapsulate the World Bank's view on gender equality and articulate their approach to addressing gender inequalities through what has become known as 'smart economics'. Within 'smart economics', emphasis is placed on harnessing the capacity of women and girls for the purposes of economic growth while at the same time girls and young women are encouraged to make 'smart' reproductive decisions and prioritise labour market participation over having children.

Since its publication in 2012 the WDR and 'smart economics' have been subject to considerable criticism from feminist observers on a number of grounds. One central criticism of the WDR is that while the acknowledgment of the need to address gender inequalities is widely welcomed, the report failed to accept the role that macroeconomic policies, such as cuts in public expenditure, privatization, liberalization of financial flows and foreign direct investment, have had in perpetuating gender and other inequalities. As Berik and Rodgers observe:

> 'The report's solution then is to promote gender equity policies, making sure that women and girls catch up, rather than revisit the macroeconomic policies that generate adverse effects' (2012: 184).

It was the multiple ways in which women acted as buffers to the fall-out of the macroeconomic reforms of structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s that first informed the thinking behind smart economics (Chant and Sweetman, 2012). Yet it is the 'survival strategies' and resilience of poor women (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2001) that are used to justify women's central role in the smart economics approach and assign them multiple responsibilities for bringing about a range of developmental outcomes. In essence, smart economics constructs women as rational individuals. Each woman is seen as 'both poor and financially responsible, with her cheap and flexible labour central to driving economic growth while her reproductive labour fills welfare gaps' (Gerard, 2019: 1024). Thus, women are positioned as acting rationally on a stage where relationships are already fixed, expanding their limited choices, rather than questioning the arrangements and seeking a reconfiguration of power relationships.

For the World Bank, solutions to gender inequalities are grounded in social policies, associated for example with education or reproductive health, which are seen to be unconnected to the economic realm and therefore standard macroeconomic policies are insulated from critique (Elson and Cagatay, 2000; Berik and Rodgers, 2012). For example, the 2012 WDR calls for more public investment – for example in the health sector to improve maternal health services and reduce maternal mortality, a call that is also echoed in the Bank's subsequent 'Global Agenda for Gender Equality' (2015). Similar calls are made for increased investment in girls' education, which is often presented as the key to solving all (gendered) development problems. However, these calls for public investment in infrastructure to promote maternal health and public health overlook the funding requirements as well as how the privatisation programmes required by the Bank set back the attainment of these goals (Berik, 2017: 565).

Moreover, this fails to acknowledge the role of the World Bank in pressuring countries to privatize health services and adhere to fiscal austerity over the past three decades (Berik and Rodgers, 2012: 185). Critics have also pointed to ways in which lack of rigorous regulatory systems in the context of privatisation have enabled private sector actors to constrain women's access to their sexual and reproductive rights as well as contributing to an increase in medicalised approaches to childbirth (Murray, 2016).

In line with critiques of the WDR, the WB Gender primer on PPPs fails to acknowledge how the lack of investment in infrastructure may have contributed to gender inequalities. Instead it offers practical guidance such as ensuring gender disaggregated data in the monitoring and evaluation of PPPS and gender sensitive stakeholder consultations. While this is not to detract from the importance of such initiatives as part of the promotion of gender equality, these kinds of activities do not address the structural causes of gender inequality, intersectional inequalities, or gendered vulnerabilities to poor health or education (that promoting increased private investment in the health or education sector, via PPPS, can potentially exacerbate).

As the studies in this volume indicate the intersectional inequalities associated with PPPs vary across sectors and locations. Some are associated with discourses, some with forms of structural arrangements, and some with the actions of particular organisations or networks. There is a need for further work on how PPPs have been enmeshed with widening inequalities in the pre-COVID 19 period in order to make an evaluation of how corresponding insights may be used in addressing the effects of the current epidemic. In the final section of this chapter we distil some ideas to contribute to this future thinking derived from comparing across sectors. Before reviewing what emerges from some reflection on comparison, we now turn to a brief summary of the chapters in this volume.

***An overview of the chapters***

In Chapter 2 Ben Fine seeks to locate PPPs within a broader discussion of globalisation, neoliberalism and financialisation. While acknowledging the controversies surrounding attempts to define neoliberalism, he argues that PPPs can only be effectively understood as an element of the contemporary stage of capitalism if they are located within the wider context of neoliberalism. He outlines how three different phases of neoliberalism – the Washington Consensus, the Post-Washington Consensus and finally the current stage - have been accompanied by increasing levels of financialisation to the extent that economic and social reproduction have become governed by financial interests and influences. PPPs are important because they illustrate a defining characteristic of the current stage of neoliberalism whereby state resources are used to promote private financing of what was previously public provisioning. This offers new opportunities for private finance to infiltrate sectors such as economic and social infrastructure that were previously seen as hard to privatise. He goes on to present a Systems of Provision framework as a critical analytical tool for understanding the ways in which PPPs play out across in different contexts and allow us to start to make sense of the diverse ways in which PPPs have emerged over the past few decades.

In Chapter 3 Maria Jose Romero and Elisa Van Waeyenberge also offer some theoretical insights into how we can make sense of the diversity of PPPs across different economic and social sectors. While they provide an insightful review of a number of different existing typologies that seek to understand PPPs as more than just another development buzzword, andcontend that relying on typologies is limited in what it can offer. Following on from Fine they argue that it is more important to understand how the broader trend of transforming infrastructure into assets is an overall process of which PPPs represent an integral, not separate, part. Such processes play out in local settings to produce varied practices and outcomes. They argue that seeking to understanding the multiple forms of private sector involvement in infrastructure or public service provision as variegated forms of financialised infrastructure is a more useful approach to fully understanding PPPs rather than seeking to fit them into a well-developed typology focused upon themselves alone.

Chapter 4 offers the reader an opportunity to focus on the development of PPPs in the Indian housing sector. Here Amita Bhide shows how PPPs have been utilised as a means of working towards delivering 'housing for all' by 2022. The Slum Redevelopment Scheme in Mumbai has been seen as a successful example of a PPP in rehabilitating tenements for slum dwellers. Bhide argues informal settlements represent an attractive challenge for private finance since many of the settlements are located on high-value land in India's large cities but until recently a combination of factors has constrained entry of construction into these areas. As Bhide notes, a slum is only valued for the land underneath rather than its built environment so this creates new inequalities where only certain slums are seen as potential targets for redevelopment through PPPs. Although small-scale private developers have been involved in slum redevelopment since the early 1990s, since 2000 following the building of new roads and other infrastructure in Mumbai, redevelopment projects have been seen as potential investment for large-scale corporate developers, bringing about a complete change in the dynamics of the redevelopment process, marginalising existing residents and converting informal settlements into sites of financial speculation.

In Chapter 5 Kate Bayliss draws attention to the changing relations between societies and natural resources, such as water, which have become increasingly commodified over the past few decades. She offers a cogent example of the ways in which a vital element of public infrastructure has become a commercial asset. Bayliss shows how despite widespread resistance to water privatisation in different geographical contexts, efforts have continued to mould the water sector to meet the needs of investors. Yet despite water privatisation occurring in a range of country settings there is very little empirical evidence to support the benefits of delivering water through the private sector. Moreover, in line with Bhide's analysis of housing PPPs, Bayliss shows how current water PPPs have enabled the entry of new financial actors into the sector with a shift away from more conventional infrastructure companies. Instead specialist funds managed by global financial agents such as JP Morgan enable private investment in the water sector in ways that mean the needs of water consumers are marginalised and kept out of policy debate and consideration. At the same time, in the context of resistance to privatisation, these forms of engagement facilitate a 'quieter entry point for global capital' (PAGE REF).

In Chapter 6 Elaine Unterhalter and Lynsey Robinson look at the ways that public revenue, mobilised to support education aid budgets, have come to be spent on promoting private schools in poor areas. These moves have been presented as a contribution to poverty reduction. They review some of the arguments, research and partnerships that were mobilised, largely by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in support of the use of aid for private education providers. Drawing on data from a study of different kinds of public and private schools in Lagos, they show how PPPs were adopted as pragmatic partnerships, but how, in the process, there was an evasion of engagement with rights and an entrenching of inequalities.

In Chapter 7 Carolina Junemann and Antonio Olmedo provide an example of the ways in which ideas and practices concerning education PPPs have been mobilised and disseminated by Ark, a philanthropic organisation, working in the UK, India and South Africa to establish or support schools in poor areas. They examine the ways in which Ark has formulated a rationale for education PPPs, which stresses the non-state sector has managerial superiority and can deliver school effectiveness, quality and equity. The chapter describes some of the policy networks Ark has mobilised to promote PPP schools and the funding, consultancy, and other services provided. The chapter notes the rapid spread of ideas about PPPs through philanthropic organisations and raises questions about their implications for democratic forms of government with regard to school systems.

In Chapter 8 Sonia Languille examines how the PPP model was considered central to the development of higher education in Senegal. She highlights some of the unstable meanings of PPPs in relation to tertiary education, and how a discourse emerged in Africa that PPPs were an essential component for the modernization of universities, associated with state legitimacy and a process of local and international capital accumulation. In Senegal PPPs, linked with specific university infrastructural and student support arrangements were a site of intense struggle. Although the discourse around PPPs stress partnership the hard budgetary constraints associated with their implementation edges out their public good dimension.

In Chapter 9 Maria Jose Romero and Jasmine Gideon consider the promotion of PPPs as a means of delivering on the commitment within the SDGs to universal health coverage[9] (UHC). Drawing on the case of Peru they examine the wider debates around health PPPs, giving particular attention to the rise of hospital PPPs. Despite the lack of evidence to support claims around their effectiveness, Peru has two PPP hospitals where projects involved the building and clinical operation of new hospitals, each with corresponding primary and urgent

[9] It is important to note that the term UHC has itself become highly contested in the context of the SDGs – See Birn and Nevri (2019) for a more detailed discussion of this.

care centres, and several more are planned for the future. Given the already fragmented nature of Peru's health care system and the historically-embedded gendered, racialised and geographical inequalities, serious questions remain around the viability of using PPPs to effectively deliver on UHC and related SDGs.

Continuing with a focus on health PPPs, Chapter 10 explores the case of India. Here Rama Baru and Madhurima Nundy trace the history of PPPs in the Indian health sector and highlight how the role of the private sector in health increased during the 1990s as part of the influence of the World Bank promotion of SAP. As the authors argue, the role of the World Bank and expansion of PPPs in the Indian health sector are inextricably linked and by the early 2000s PPPs were an integral part of health service strengthening in many rural areas. The ubiquity of PPPs in the Indian health sector, including at the primary level, offers a contrast to the Peruvian case where they have – so far – been confined to the hospital level. Baru and Nundy draw attention to the wide variety of PPPs that have been implemented across the Indian health sector and reflect on the potential benefits of these partnership arrangements. Nevertheless, they argue that despite the on-going promotion of PPPs there is still very little concrete evidence that PPPs are able to improve the affordability and accessibility of health care services for low-income groups.

Chapter 11 offers an examination of the implantation of PPPs intended to support countries in the Global South in meeting their commitments to UHC as set out in the SDGs. Jessica Hamer and Anuj Kapilashrami focus their analysis on the expansion of partnerships between European donors and private sector partners across a range of countries. Their study considers the variety of mechanisms and modalities utilised in this type of partnership but raises questions over the ability of these partnerships to address wider health inequalities. For example, much of the private sector investment is targeted on large hospitals in urban centres in middle-income countries at the expense of more marginalised populations in rural areas while the health needs of those living in low-income countries are not considered sufficiently profitable for private sector investment. Their study also highlights important governance and accountability concerns as much of donor investments into the health sector are channelled via financial intermediaries, which are often domiciled in identified corporate tax havens.

In Chapter 12 Elaine Unterhalter, Maria Ron Balsera and Delphine Dorsi discuss what is to be done in the face of the widespread promotion of education PPPs. They describe the process of developing and adopting the Abidjan Principles, a framework to evaluate the implementation of education PPPs using human rights law. They suggest the application of human rights law to the regulation of education PPPs is a fruitful area for further documentation through research studies, policy dialogue and education activism oriented to promoting alternatives to education commodification. This raises questions for how PPPs are to be monitored, evaluated and regulated, with implications for comparison across sectors.

***Comparing across sectors***

One of the key concerns of this book has been to investigate what can be learned about PPPs in comparing across sectors. Comparative scholarship has generated its own methodological debates. For some (Lijphart, 1971) comparison is no more than a form of method, but in whole fields of analysis from education, social policy through to literature, comparison illuminates complexities of cases, contexts, and the history of processes of change. In comparative education, Cowen (2000) distinguishes between three forms of comparison – descriptive, mobile, and transformatory – which we have found illuminating in thinking about PPPs in different sectors. We build on these and a form of comparison Unterhalter (2020) has termed reflexive comparison. While the contributors to this volume worked on analysing how PPPs work within particular sectors and particular contexts, reading across the chapters it can be seen that there are some suggestive lines for comparative investigation.

One form of comparison is primarily descriptive either looking across sectors or across contexts. In looking at PPPs this would generate questions asking what does a PPP in health look like, for example in Chile, when compared with a PPP in education or a PPP in water in the same country. Which actors are involved? What kinds of organisations are linked in what kinds of relationships? Which kinds of discourses are deployed and which kinds of inequalities are reduced or amplified in the process? In this book in Chapter 3, Romero and Van Waeyenberge describe PPPs in terms of having something that is common but looks different in different contexts.

A second form of comparison entails looking at what happens when ideas and actors associated with PPPs travel between sectors. Steiner Khamsi and Draxler (2018) and Verger (2012) look at how actors in aid in education have actively promoted PPPs as a travelling policy. In this book a number of authors use this approach to comparison and show how PPPs can be analysed as travelling from one sector to another, mostly moving from economic policy, where they are associated with enhancing the role for markets or facilitating the growth of private capital through opening up opportunities in social sectors. Bhide shows this with urban land and low-cost housing in India, Romero and Gideon for the health sector and hospitals in Peru, and Baru and Nundy in relation to primary health care in India. Languille points to similar ideas from economics travelling into higher education policy and management in Sengal. Junemann and Olmeido observe how the form of an education PPP travelled from the UK to India and South Africa through association with one philanthropic organisation. This approach to comparison illuminates how particular ideas may be promoted by the same interest groups, excluding a broader range of perspectives and options, It highlights how PPPs are financed through resources from particular kinds of multinational company or philanthropic endeavour, as well as being contested by more or less similar alliances in different countries.

A third form of comparison asks whether PPPs in travelling between sectors are ever changed. Thus, in moving between sectors or countries do PPPs develop more towards inclusion, equality and redress, or not. Do they change shape in other ways possibly beginning with many promises, that become diluted in travel, meaning that the cost of supportive and remedial measures for the PPP as a financial arrangement come to outweigh any putative social benefits? In the chapters of this book the mobile policy associated with PPPs, taken from the world of finance , is shown to change social sectors more towards forms of inequality, in housing (Bhide), health (Romero & Gideon, Hamer and Anuj Kapilashrami, Baru and Nundy), and education (Languille, Junemann and Olmedo and Unterhalter and Robinson). However, in two chapters, Bayliss on water, and Unterhalter and Robinson on primary schooling, there is a discussion how features of the sector itself limit or moderate the extent of privatisation that can occur. Thus, the PPP is itself in a way curtailed by the sector, the patterns of ownership and some of its complexity and the ideas about rights involved.

A fourth way of thinking about comparison, Unterhalter (2020) terms reflexive comparisons. This starts with taking a normative position and considers how comparing salient parts between case may illuminate an aspect of the injustice. This form of comparison helps direct attention to the different forms of inequalities the authors in this volume highlight, for example with regard to location (Romero and Gideon), political orientation of city, province or state government (Bhide on housing, Baru and Nundy on health, Junemann and Olmedo on education). Fine draws out the diversity and instability of forms of PPPs, while

Unterhalter, Ron Balsera and Dorsi highlight how addressing inequalities of the systems associated with PPPs and regulating their impact on social sectors through existing human rights frameworks is a political move that can be made. This form of comparison prompts questions about monitoring the nuance of inequalities and reviewing frameworks for regulation.

***Final Reflections***

Over the last twenty years PPPs have emerged across infrastructural and social sectors, and policies and practices have changed shape as they have moved. The COVID crisis has seen them take new prominence in relation to some health and education responses. To what do we need to be alert in a future with PPPs or their close relations, especially given the welcome turn to the state to respond to the pandemic ? It is clear from the debates about the length and form of lockdowns that advocates of free choice and market provision are still a significant voice. A future expansion of PPPs may be one way in which this group are engaged.? In his final report, submitted to the UN council on Human Rights in July 2020, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, casts serious doubt over the ability of PPPs to significantly address current levels of poverty and inequality across the world, particularly in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. His report stresses that PPPs are a 'fiscal illusion' in that they are unable to offer better value for money than traditional public investments (Alston, 2020; Cepparulo et al., 2019), although such observations had been longstanding in the critical literature. A door ajar to push against has arisen out of the pandemic. He draws attention to the ways in which PPPs enable the prioritising of corporate interests over the needs of vulnerable and marginalised communities and challenges claims that such an approach will facilitate the fulfilment of the SDGs as well as addressing wider issues of climate justice that jeopardise the future well-being of many groups (Alston, 2020). By taking a comparative approach, the studies presented in the book strongly substantiate this view and offer clear evidence from across a range of sectors of the ways in which PPPs exacerbate existing intersecting inequalities. Our analysis reinforces the need for on-going debate and activism to challenge the widespread view that PPPs can effectively promote sustainable forms of development and deliver on rights to health, education, water or housing which all need to be understood in terms of public goods. Now more than ever, as countries around the world attempt to rebuild societies in the wake of the global health pandemic, against a background of economic and environmental crisis, the need to create just and equitable societies could not be more starkly apparent.

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