
Title of the project: Municipal Innovation in Democratic Public Ownership (MIDPO)

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Area: Analysis, Management and Evaluation of Public Policies.

What

The objective of this project is to explore the role of municipalities in supporting transformative approaches to the ownership and governance of goods and services. The research has a particular focus on innovative hybrid models of ownership and governance that mobilise civil society organisations and the public sector.

The research project is funded under the EU's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action International fellowship programme.

Who

Bertie Russell (PI).

Why

For the past four decades, the form and function of public institutions has been continuously remade so as to promote and extend an entrepreneurial logic into all aspects of life. In particular, public goods and services have been increasingly framed and subjected to market logics, resulting in a fundamental erosion of their public character, worsening standards of provision, and a narrowing of the prospects for developing alternative socio-economic pathways. Against this backdrop there has been a wave of experimentation, often at the municipal level, in redefining how public goods and services can be (co)produced. This experimentation reflects a contestation over the boundaries of the public in terms of *what* gets provided, but also a proliferation of hybrid approaches to ownership and governance that go beyond conventional understandings of the public. This research is particularly focused on the potential for these municipal innovations in democratic public ownership to produce wider system effects and contribute to the advent of new democratic regimes.

How

The project outlines an ambitious long-term comparative research strategy to analyse and theorise emerging approaches to hybrid ownership and governance at the municipal scale. The research draws on the [Public Futures](#) database, a secondary dataset of almost 1500 cases of 'de-privatised basic service provision' in sectors such as water, energy, waste, education, health care, public transport, housing, cultural institutions and public

infrastructure. Through initial evaluation of those cases of co-ownership and co-governance, a series of cases will be selected for further qualitative analysis. These cases will be complemented through processes of participatory research involving the co-design of hybrid ownership and governance models in a number of cases. Consequently, the project will contribute to our theoretical understanding of hybridity in democratic public ownership, deepening our understanding of how democratic public ownership can contribute to interstitial processes of socio-economic transformation.

When

Start Date: 2022-04-01 / End date: 2025-03-28 (Part-time)