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THE FUTURE IS PUBLIC

In the face of climate catastrophe, mounting inequalities and growing democratic unrest, public services are more important than ever. As privatisations fail across the world, people are building better, more democratic and inclusive public services.

Resistance to privatisation has turned into a powerful force for change: *(re)municipalisation* is a new (clumsy) word meaning *reclaiming public ownership and creating new public services*. The Transnational Institute and partner organisations have identified more than 1,400 successful cases, involving over 2,400 cities in 58 countries.

But *The Future is Public* report from the TNI is about more than just numbers. A growing international movement is building democratic public services for the social, ecological and economic challenges of our time. (Re)municipalisation is redefining public ownership in the 21st century, offering a new route towards community-led, climate-conscious and gender-sensitive public services.

Some of the most progressive municipalities, such as the Philippine cities, Binalonan, Caloocan and Lunuza, are re-centering their public services to restore priority to the needs of the most marginalised people in society, including women, people with disabilities, and low-income families, among others. Other cities, such as Paris, Terrassa (Spain) and Wolfhagen (Germany), dare to

share decision-making powers and open up ownership models to representatives of workers, civil society and research institutions. Together, they are shaping a template for how to expand democratic public ownership to all levels of society.

Data and stories also illustrate the diversity of efforts in remunicipalisation, taking us to new countries and new sectors that present their own specific challenges, such as waste management in countries of Africa, many new public pharmacies in Chile, and the call of the United Kingdom Labour Party to provide public internet access as a human right.

Civil Society Organisations, trade unions and local authorities can play their part in this movement for change by pushing together for democratic, public ownership on all levels and calling for universal public services, so that all residents can live dignified and prosperous lives. This way, we put ‘the public back into public services, while actually changing the design of our economies’.

As racism, fascism and xenophobia are on the rise, we must offer solidarity and concrete solutions – decent jobs, public services for all, and resilient local economies. Our public future lies in the hands of communities – not corporations.

Source: The entire ‘*The Future is Public*’ report can be downloaded free at: www.tni.org/en/publication/the-future-is-public
Submitted by Mary Boyd.

CREATING A FOREST MONITORING PROGRAM SACRED HEADWATERS - AMAZON

In the the GJOP Bulletin, November 2021, we reported on the uncontrolled balsa harvesting in the Amazon region and the plans for sustainable forest management. This article offers an update.

Ecuador has been a leading exporter of balsa wood to world markets since the 1940s, but with increasing worldwide demand, the balsa plantations on the coast could not keep up and that demand spread to the Amazon.

When COVID-19 shut down eco-tourism, a primary source of income for the Amazon region was lost. With ongoing needs for medicines, school supplies, and other basic necessities, many Indigenous communities were lured by balsa traders (balseros), who came to the region willing to pay cash for harvested balsa trees. Uncontrolled harvesting threatened the forest ecosystem

A management plan to protect the forest

In the last year, as tourism and travel in general has opened up again into the Amazon, a forest protection fund and sustainable management plan for balsa was launched by Pachamama Alliance and Stoknes Norway, our allies from Europe, in partnership with Fundación Pachamama — Pachamama Alliance's sister organisation in Ecuador — and the Achuar people.

The fund has been established and the plan is now finalised and Fundación Pachamama and Achuar communities are working to implement the first steps. An important next step is the monitoring of areas where balsa should not be extracted. The Achuar

community of Sharamentsa has been identified as a critical area for protection, because the balsa groves there have been largely untouched by the earlier deforestation.

In March 2022, thanks to our generous donors, we raised money to purchase GPS devices, drones and laptop computers so that Sharamentsa residents can constantly monitor the territory. They will use this equipment to develop reports to understand and evaluate the current use and management of forest resources by people within and beyond the community and will also monitor biodiversity, biomass, and more.

Training the Achuar to monitor the forest using drones and GPS

Now, Fundación Pachamama is committed to building the capacity of the Sharamentsa community to use the drones, GPS devices, and software that contribute to the monitoring and information gathering process.

In June 2022, the first phase of training began. Sharamentsa community members, Nantu Canelos and Santa Tentets, were selected for training in drone operation, safety protocols and the procedures for take-off, flight, image capture and landing.

They mastered those skills quickly and then learned how to add GPS technology so that they can measure and capture data in the field and record it on accurate maps.

*Source: Pachamama Alliance,
www.pachamama.org
Submitted by Alison Healey.*

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK (IPEF) COMMUNITY GROUPS DEMAND TRANSPARENCY

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is a recent initiative of the USA. a body of 14 countries: the USA, Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the

Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Ministers from these countries met in Los Angeles in early September this year.

A number of these countries are already engaged in a range of contractual arrangements with one another, including two existing large regional trade agreements: the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) of the ten ASEAN countries with five additional countries, and the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) of 11 Pacific Rim countries. 'Australia, for example, already has a series of legally binding, overlapping bilateral and regional trade agreements involving IPEF countries, including the RCEP, the CPTPP, the Australia-New Zealand-ASEAN free trade agreement, the PACER-Plus agreement with Pacific Island countries and numerous bilateral agreements,' writes Dr Patricia Ranald, Convenor of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET).

The USA, however, is not party to the RCEP or the CPTPP. This initiative of the Biden administration is mainly motivated by strategic competition with China in the region, and by US domestic politics.

There is bipartisan US Congressional opposition to legally binding agreements which would increase imports into US markets. The US proposes IPEF to be a trade and investment framework for US-aligned countries in the region (without offering more access to US markets), enhancing transparency, recognising the importance of fairness, achieving high standards in the following areas, described as the 'four pillars of the framework':

- **trade** (including labour and environment standards, agriculture and digital trade);
- **supply chains** (between IPEF partners increasing security and resilience, implying less dependence on China);
- **clean economy** (cooperating on clean energy and climate-friendly technologies, enhancing energy security and reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions);
- **fair economy** (levelling the playing field by combatting corruption, curbing tax evasion, enhancing transparency, and recognising the importance of fairness).

These are worthy goals, but it is not clear how they will be negotiated outside of a legally binding trade agreement framework.

Some rules of procedure have been proposed. Governments can opt to join or not join any of the four pillars, but if they opt in, it appears that they must agree to all aspects of the pillar. India has opted out of the trade pillar. It is not clear how the development needs of lower income countries will be considered, although there may be offers of aid projects. For example, big tech companies have offered digital training for women. For civil society groups, a particularly alarming requirement is that IPEF participants commit to keeping negotiations secret. Governments have agreed to keep all documents exchanged during the negotiations 'in confidence' for five years after the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework enters into force or the talks otherwise come to an end.

It is still unclear how commitments made in each pillar will be legally enforceable. The statement mentions the need for consultations with business, unions and civil society groups, but so far only business has been involved.

Further negotiations on the content of each pillar will begin soon and the next meeting of trade ministers is scheduled for early 2023

Before the meeting of Ministers in Los Angeles, forty-six civil society organisations in the region, including AFTINET, endorsed a collective letter, that called for transparency and participation for a new trade model that prioritises the interests of working people, as well as the environment, consumers, family farmers and indigenous peoples instead of only big corporations. During the meeting, unions and civil society groups held a rally outside.

Also, in other correspondence with their particular governments, the civil society groups expressed their views and expectations of the IPEF negotiations. Below are some Australian examples:

'Negotiations must be based on a new model that prioritises the interests of working people in all countries, as well as the environment,

consumers, family farmers and indigenous peoples instead of just big corporations... A transparent and participatory negotiating process is critical to ensuring the best possible outcomes from IPEF or any other future trade negotiations' (collective letter)

IPEF cannot meet its claimed goals of improving workers' rights and environmental standards without a far more transparent process with genuine involvement of unions, environment groups and other civil society groups'. (Dr Patricia Ranauld, AFTINET)

'IPEF agreements will impact directly on peoples' lives in terms of labour rights and environmental standards, and many other areas, and there should be access to negotiating proposals for the public and community groups, including unions and environment groups. Without such access, IPEF cannot meet its claimed goals of improving workers' rights and environmental standards.' (P. R.)

Source: AFTINET www.aftinet.org.au
Compiled by A Healey.

From the
PROCLAMATION, INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1998

Let us build a culture of care for the future of humankind and for the life of the planet, so that the condition of our world might be changed:

from the startling growth in human population and human needs to a life-giving environment for the generations to come from the 'human cruelty' of mere survival to a life of simplicity and inner joy for all;

from the trend towards monoculture to the full richness of diversity;

from churches enclosed in narrow walls

to broad ecumenical interaction and a wide sense of belonging;

from individualism and violence to a culture of caring.

It is the Spirit of God who first cared for us and who gives us life and courage to labour for a just full life for all. United in the Spirit, we pray: God of love and care, give us the courage to care.

**Contributions to the Bulletin and responses to its content are welcomed.
Deadline: 14th of each publication month. Publication office in Sydney.**

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Design: Thanks to Marian Kelly (Sydney) for the gift of her talent and time.