

Resisting Empire and Building an Alternative Future in Medicine and Public Health

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Presenter Disclosures

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(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose

OVERVIEW

Public health and health services have played important roles during the rise of empire and during its subsequent decline.

Conditions during the 21st century have changed so that a vision of a world without empire has become part of an imaginable future.

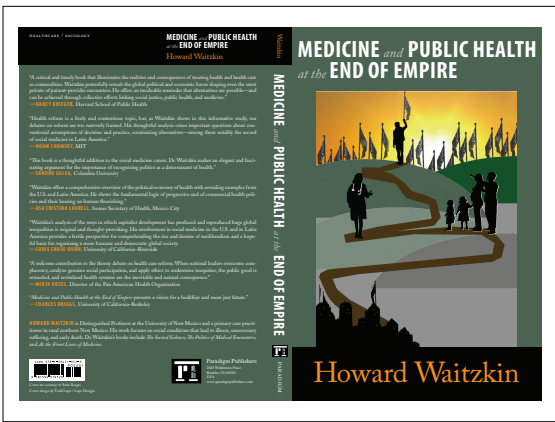
OVERVIEW

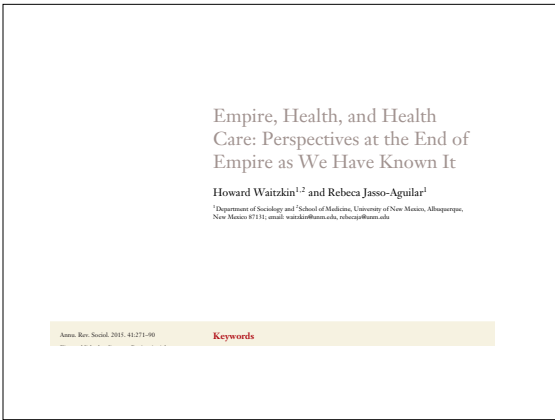
Latin America became an especially fertile ground for resistance against neoliberal policies that favored privatization and cutbacks in public services, and for the emergence of alternative policies not based on the neoliberal model.

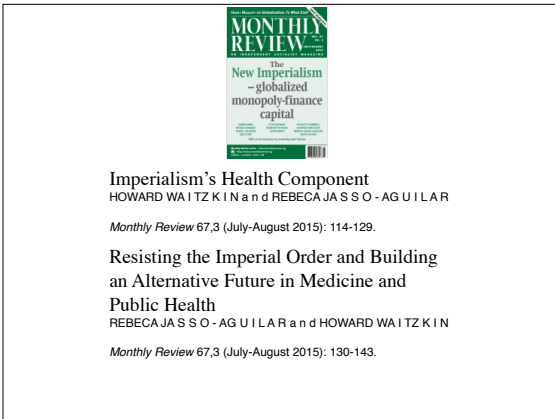
Background

- In addition to these struggles *against*, groups in several countries have moved to create alternative models of public health and health services.
- These efforts – especially in Latin America – have moved beyond the historical patterns fostered by capitalism and imperialism.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS







Background

- We have selected countries that have not pursued a path of violent revolution, such as Cuba
- because the non-violent path has predominated in recent popular struggles focusing on imperialism and health.

Background

- All the struggles that we describe remain in process of dialectic change and have continued to transform toward more favorable or less favorable conditions.
- However, all show a common resistance to empire and a common goal of public health systems grounded in solidarity, not profitability.

Background

- Neoliberalism (1980s to present):
- seeks to assert the superiority of the market over the state
 - aims to reduce drastically the role of state in the economy and to favor:
 - austerity
 - fiscal discipline
 - deregulation
 - privatization
 - dismantling the welfare state

Background

- Neoliberalism (1980s to present) led to:
- massive transfer of resources from the public to the private sector
 - reduction or elimination of the safety net
 - worsening social and economic inequalities

Background

- Latin America became a fertile ground for resistance against neoliberalism.
- We analyze several popular struggles in which we have participated during the past decade as researchers and activists.

Background

- This work conveys a picture very different from that of the historical relation between imperialism and health:
 - Diminishing tolerance for the public health policies of imperialism and growing demand for public health systems grounded in solidarity rather than profitability.
 - Participation of common citizens in social issues usually discussed and decided by political and economic elites.

Background

- As one Bolivian participant put it, people have seized the right to decide on matters of the public policy (“*el derecho de decidir sobre lo público*”).

The struggle against privatization of health services in El Salvador

Theme: maintenance of strong public sector in health and public health to provide access to services

- World Bank’s structural adjustment program proposal (late 1990s)
- Coalition of professional and non-professional unions
- Reversal of privatization process
- 2009: Election of Mauricio Funes as President, representing the political wing of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)

The struggle against privatization of health services in El Salvador

- Dr. María Isabel Rodríguez returned from exile as national Minister of Health.
- 2014: Salvador Sánchez Cerén, a former guerrilla leader with the FMLN, won the election for President.
- Ministry of Health: more initiatives to strengthen the public sector in health services

The struggle against privatization of health services in El Salvador

- Dr. Salvador Allende Movement of Health Professionals
- Selection of San Salvador as the site of the November 2014 congress of the Latin American Social Medicine Association
 - thousands of progressive health workers to advance the struggle against neoliberal policies and in behalf of alternative models that strengthen public services

The struggle against privatization of health services in El Salvador



Resistance to privatization of water in Bolivia

Theme: availability of clean water supplies as a fundamental goal of public health; resistance to privatization of water

- *Regantes* (“irrigators”); *usos y costumbres* (uses and customs)
- World Bank’s privatization proposal
- Multinational corporation (subsidiary of Bechtel)
- 2000: “War of water” - Cochabamba, then national
- 2005, 2009, 2014: Elections of Evo Morales

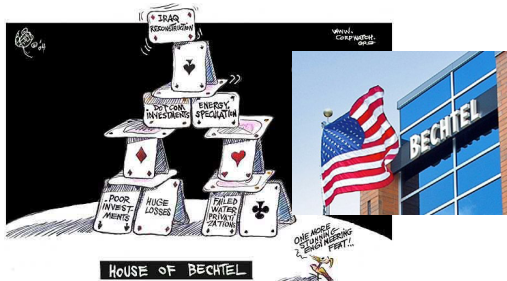
Resistance to privatization of water in Bolivia

- Novel processes of democracy and participation have taken place during the Morales administration.
- New cabinet position: Minister of Water.
- Ministry included a social-technical commission formed by social movements, social organizations, and academics with expertise in water issues.

Resistance to privatization of water in Bolivia

- To exercise "*control social*" = co-management between government and civil society
- One of several exercises in community participation to exert control and demand accountability from the Bolivian government

Resistance to privatization of water in Bolivia



Resistance to privatization of water in Bolivia



Social medicine's coming to power in Mexico City

Theme: vision of health services and public health from progressive perspective of Latin American social medicine

- 2000: Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) – Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)
- Versus neoliberal orientation of Party for National Action (PAN) – Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderón – and Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – Enrique Peña Nieto

Social medicine's coming to power in Mexico City

- Asa Cristina Laurell as Secretary of Health
- Major expansion of public services and institutions, food, medications, pensions
- Financing: reduced administration, corruption (“the government isn’t robbing you anymore”)
- Elections of 2006, 2012.
- Continuing dialectic: “Legitimate Government of Mexico”; Movement of National Regeneration (MORENA).

Social medicine's coming to power in Mexico City



ISAGS presenta:
Asa Cristina Laurell en línea

"Sistemas Universales de Salud: retos y desafíos"

La ponencia será transmitida en español con traducción simultánea al portugués y al inglés.

21 feb

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Sociomedical Activism at the End of Empire as We Have Known It

Confirm core principles of public health:

- right to health care
- right to water and other components of a safe environment
- reduction of illness-generating conditions such as inequality and related social determinants of ill health and early death

Sociomedical Activism at the End of Empire as We Have Known It

- Activism that
 - seeks alternatives to neoliberalism and privatization
 - encourages participation
 - emphasizes solidarity
 - rejects traditional political forms
- Challenge:
 - to develop strategies for activism that can extend these "counter-hegemonic" spaces to broader social change.

Sociomedical Activism at the End of Empire as We Have Known It

- Goal of social movements is not simply to win but also to encourage public debate and raising the level of political consciousness.
- This new consciousness
- rejects the inevitability of empire
- fosters a vision of medicine and public health constructed around principles of justice rather than commodification and profitability.

Sociomedical Activism at the End of Empire as We Have Known It

- As the era of empire passes, no other path will resolve our most fundamental aspirations for healing.
