



RECLAIM MODERNITY

BEYOND MARKETS
BEYOND MACHINES

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jo Littler, Neal Lawson, Will Davies and Michael Rustin for invaluable input and advice.
Thanks to Jack Philo for performing the crucial role of proofing the document.

Foreword

Zoe Williams

Despair is a pretty strong word. It would flatter Westminster politics too much to say that its ideas, in their smallness, have extinguished hope all around it. And it would be just plain wrong to look at the UKIPers, the career politicians, the nervy opposition MPs, raw with the anxiety of not knowing what to oppose, and say that they represented the limits of the political horizon, the farthest reaches of what people were talking about.

Nevertheless, I would be lying if I said I didn't sometimes feel dispirited, by the narrow scope of the mainstream debate, its deliberate distortions and rejection of sophistication, its steadfast myopia around things that mattered, and overriding preference for the trivial and the mean-spirited.

Reclaim Modernity, you could read in any mood – but I commend it in particular for those moments of pessimism. Of the many things its authors show, with drama and clarity, perhaps the most striking is this one: disappointment needn't be the price of modernity; disillusionment is not the unavoidable cost of admission to “real life”.

It's true that the hope and enthusiasm of 1997 was comprehensively torched by what followed – but those were some pretty feeble dreams that went up in smoke. All the things that made us hopeful in the first place, the forces of cooperation and creativity that made us think things could be different – those still exist. If, as Fisher and Gilbert contend, “the internet has become the main nexus of human culture”, then the old political game plan – to ideologically capture people's ambition, with an under-ambitious agenda, then hope for the best – seems less and less viable. The language of defeatism and compromise, where the left falls into line with market realism, has always been uninspiring; now it also looks dated.

Even though the free market and the bureaucratic state are polar opposites in political rhetoric, they both accept, apparently without question, the same founding principle: that people struggle to do worthwhile things for their own sake. We either need to be incentivised by money and self-interest, or we need to be harassed by targets, league tables and other simulated market-conditions. What is missing from this picture is one crucial fact about human conduct, which is that everything we've ever done of any value, we've done neither for money nor to avoid censure, but for the joy of discovery and the exhilaration of sharing it: everything we've ever built, of note, we've built together. Is cooperation our only natural impulse? Not necessarily. But considering what it yields, it is strange that the two over-arching oppositional worldviews whose clashes count for politics should both refuse to acknowledge this axiomatic thing.

The old iteration of modernity is essentially to look at the status quo and call that modern life. If you refute the supremacy of the market, you're stuck in the 1980s. If you object to the global reality that work and wages are a race to the bottom, you merely prove what you've failed to notice; that the starting gun has already gone off, and this race won't be over until it's over.

As Roberto Mangabeira Unger once described, “In the present climate, around the world, almost everything that can be proposed as an alternative will appear to be either utopian or trivial. Thus our programmatic thinking is paralysed. We have lost faith in any of the large available understandings of how structural change takes place in history, and as a result we fall back on a bastardised conception of political realism, namely that a proposal is realistic to the extent that it approaches what already exists. This false view then aggravates the paralysis of our programmatic ideas.”

So reclaiming modernity means rediscovering those “large available understandings” in the first instance. It means articulating the misunderstandings that have taken their place, the ideas that we now see pass for “economics” or, more comically, “common sense”—that all relationships can and must be monetized and made “efficient”; that all of human connection can be reduced to performance metrics, which can then be turned into targets; that everyone is, first and foremost, a consumer; and everybody values, above all other things, the right to make consumer choices.

But it also means noticing that creativity and cooperation are irrepressible, that no amount of managerialism and false freedoms, no rigged markets, no bureaucracy, is large or strong enough to stop people looking for ways to solve the problems that our current politics insist are unsolvable. Almost every situation – from energy to health, public services, inequality, democratic debate and accountability – if you look at it from a national or international perspective, seems vast, intractable, inevitably thus, shored up by too many powerful interests, the greatest of which being the inertia which it strikes into the hearts of all who behold it. But if you look more closely, whether it’s at the governance structure of an indie band or a school system in Alberta, whether it’s a community renewables project or a peer-to-peer lender or a cooperative council, there is always somebody, somewhere, who’s figured it out. It is daunting, nauseatingly so, to entrust your future to the creativity and vision of hopeful people. It takes patience to find them and openness to see them. But reading this, I conclude that ignoring them is harder; they’re everywhere.

Introduction

This paper outlines a viable direction for pragmatic progressive politics in the UK today. Its argument is based on analysis of our current political moment and on the history of successful reform by progressive governments - especially Labour governments. Our approach is particularly informed by attention to the implicit possibilities of new political, cultural and technological trends. We argue that the current political moment is characterised by widespread disillusionment with both the centralised, paternalistic, bureaucratic state and the neoliberal, market-led policies that have dominated politics across much of the world in recent decades. Our argument considers the various ways of understanding the nature of the modern world which have shaped recent political tendencies, and asks whether there are not trends in contemporary social change which should be welcomed for their creative and democratic potential. This is not a comprehensive progressive manifesto, but it is an exploration of some key issues and possibilities, in particular those pertaining to the democratic reform of public services. At the same time, our argument addresses and draws on some of the significant political developments to have occurred outside the parliamentary sphere in recent years. We are mainly concerned here with the possible programme that could be pursued by a progressive, presumably Labour (or Labour-led) government in the near future, but we hope that these suggestions will be of interest to radicals and progressives in other parties and in non-parties, including the partisans and supporters of protest movements such as Occupy and UK Uncut.

The paper explores how politics based on such an approach would appear, on what historical resources it could draw, and what some of its practical implications might be. Along the way we consider a number of perhaps surprising areas of recent cultural change, such as the crisis in the music industry and the changing cultures of public broadcasting. While these may not be normal points of reference for a political position-paper of this kind, we invite readers to reflect that they are undoubtedly important areas of our shared culture and of our public life, the consideration of which may well shed light on a range of political problems.

Ultimately, we argue that Labour can only succeed by presenting a programme to the public that seems to belong to the age of Facebook, rather than the ages of Lord Reith or Margaret Thatcher. We argue that such a programme must take seriously, as no mainstream political party yet has done in the UK, the very real crisis of democratic institutions and social authority which faces us today. We argue that the potential for democratic renewal and progressive reform is real; but only if Labour shows the courage to present itself as a modern party for the 21st century. At the same time, we draw attention to an emerging agenda for radical democratic institutional reform which we believe could form part of the broad set of demands coming from a range of radical actors - from Occupy to the Green Party to more imaginative strands of the community organising movement.

Part One: Where Are We Now?

A New Political Moment

For the first time in a generation, Labour is not moving inexorably to the right. New Labour is over, buried by its own successors, as Ed Milliband actively distances himself from much of its legacy. Yet it remains unclear what the content of Labour's programme or the nature of its political strategy will be in the coming years. The next few months, during which the party's most important policy review since 1988 will be concluded, will in fact prove crucial to answering this question: can Labour develop a strategy and a programme which offers a convincing alternative to neoliberalism in the form of Cameron's programme for permanent austerity? Is the only possible alternative to such a programme one based on an appeal, quite literally, to Victorian values?

The challenge is immense. We live in a moment of widespread disenchantment, not only with particular political parties, but with parliamentary politics itself. The groups that one would expect to support Labour seem, at best, un-enthused by its current programme and vision. The sense of hope that surrounded Tony Blair's first term has long since evaporated, replaced by a legacy of disillusionment – partly as a result of Blair's period in government itself, which for many killed off any remaining hope that neoliberalism could be challenged by parliamentary politics. Members of the working class no longer see the party as theirs. Public service workers have a sense of glum resignation about their institutions: they expect their autonomy increasingly to be eroded by state-bureaucratic control and the growing influence of corporations. Young people looking for radical alternatives to capitalism turn to incoherent forms of anarchism, while many older people dissatisfied with the parliamentary consensus have looked to UKIP.

Having said this, there is little doubt that historians of the future will not remember this moment for anything taking place in the corridors of Westminster, or for the eruption of yet another periodic backlash against immigrants and welfare claimants, or even for the protests and political upheavals which have peppered the globe since 2008. What they will remember is the dramatic shift in the very nature of human culture which is taking place at the present time: the development and spread of social media. We are living through the moment when the internet finally moves

from being a secondary transmitter of information produced elsewhere, to becoming the main nexus of human culture. Any form of politics which does not reflect upon the nature of this shift and respond to it creatively to it is going to be left behind.

This is not to say that a politics hoping to produce a renewal of democracy should simply pander and adapt to existing ways of imagining and inhabiting cyberspace. It is merely to note that this is the terrain in which such a politics must intervene. This is the zone in which a sense of personal selfhood and a wider feeling of belonging are now most intensely produced – especially amongst young people – as anyone who looks around a railway carriage and sees most of the passengers fingering their smartphones will recognise. It will not be enough to simply enter into this field seeking to increase support via social networking. What is required is precisely an intervention, which would amplify the democratic potentials inherent in the internet, while counteracting the individualising and sometimes pathological effects of capitalist cyberspace.⁽¹⁾ To be very clear here: we do not think that the currently dominant forms of social media are likely to help human beings achieve a better, more democratic, more fulfilled existence, except in some very limited ways. We recognise that in their current forms, such technologies do at least as much harm as good. But we also think that any form of politics which fails to recognise the vast changes that such technologies are enabling, and which does not try to intervene in order to help define what those changes might actually be in the future, is going to be left behind very soon.

Over the past few years, in the face of the most direct assault on the welfare state in its history, an unprecedented political movement has emerged since 2008, at least partly facilitated by such technological change. The protests that shook British high streets in 2010 and 2011 – most notably, the student protests and the actions of UK Uncut – have not yet developed into a large, sustained movement. But they were arguably unprecedented in that they mobilised a new level of militancy and creative disobedience in defence of a broad social democratic inheritance, rather than in the pursuit of utopian or millenarian goals. In 2011-2 the Occupy movement showed the potential for an international democratic populism successfully disseminating the idea of the '99%' as a coherent constituency bound together by their disempowerment at the hands of Wall Street and the City of London. 2012-3 saw the quiet but significant growth of the People's Assemblies: local grassroots initiatives bringing together diverse strands of

opposition to advanced neoliberal austerity. This period also saw the 2011 riots in England. Despite the Right's attempt to depoliticise and criminalise these events, they were very real - and very troubling - indicators of disenfranchisement and disaffection amongst large swathes of the urban population.

After Russell Brand's famous televised clash with Jeremy Paxman⁽²⁾, even Economist writers and Radio 4 pundits believe that the new militancy constitutes an important new political tendency⁽³⁾. The question is: can such tendencies crystallise into a movement that can really alter the balance of social forces in the UK? In a country wherein huge resentment towards the arrogance of finance capital has yet to find any significant expression at the level of government action, this is a crucial question. It is one whose answer in part depends upon whether any section of the political class can offer at least a degree of sympathetic leadership. But it also depends upon whether that movement can, at least occasionally and provisionally, cohere around a set of achievable demands. We do not hope to write the manifesto for such a movement here, and we welcome other attempts to return a democratic and egalitarian set of demands to the political agenda⁽⁴⁾. But we do hope to present a series of pragmatic proposals that could form part of the content of future radical demands.

One Nation: The Politics of the Past or the Politics of the Future?

The idea of 'One Nation Labour' has been mobilised over the past couple of years, by the Labour leadership and those close to it, as an organising discourse for an inclusive new political project⁽⁵⁾, committed to a combination of communitarianism, localism and grassroots democracy, although proposals for any real democratisation of either the Labour Party or the British state are thus far conspicuously absent from its programme. In fact the programmatic contents of One Nation Labour remain partially unspecified; but the one nation that its proponents seem to want to live in sounds like a good place, united by broadly egalitarian and democratic principles, characterised by the development of 'relational' institutions which are not governed by the instrumental, 'transactional' logic of the market⁽⁶⁾ or of overbearing bureaucracy⁽⁷⁾.

Ed Miliband's recent speech on public-sector reform makes very clear that Labour is moving in exactly the right direction. So far the proposals for democratising public services seem understandably cautious, but we

will argue here that the case for a far more ambitious rejection of both neoliberal, market-driven politics and traditional centralising bureaucracy remains strong, as well as probably more exciting to a wider public than the current set of proposals, as welcome as they are. At the same time, we ask fellow radicals to consider the implications of the existing proposals. Like Miliband's promise to set a limit on energy-price increases, these may be measures which sound unexciting and limited compared to the utopian aspirations of many contemporary anti-capitalists. But they are also the most progressive and the least pro-capitalist set of policies to be proposed by a Labour leader for two decades: as such, they must be welcomed. Labour must be encouraged to go further and faster, and the danger posed by the very strong residual neoliberal elements in the Labour movement should not be underestimated.

The 'One Nation' frame within which these policies have been presented to the public has much to recommend it. A deliberate revival of the One Nation Tory tradition was probably the most likely route to a full-scale popular revival of the Conservative Party, given the widespread public disquiet about growing social inequality, and has now been effectively closed off. However, as Anthony Barnett⁽⁸⁾ has recently suggested 'The concept has at least three big problems: it offers no criticism of the British state; it implies no fundamental clash with vested interests; and, anyway, the UK is more than one nation.' Such observations suggest that some of the potential problems with this approach require attention.

The real trouble with this phrase is that the deliberate evocation of Disraeli's Victorian conservatism suggests a strategy predicated on abandoning New Labour's rhetorical modernism - its insistence on newness, youth and modernity as good things in themselves and for their own sake - as well as Tony Blair's commitment to neoliberalism. This is understandable, but as we will show shortly, history suggests that it is very unwise, because Labour only ever wins support by presenting itself as modern. Advocates of 'One Nation Labour' make explicit their intention to be 'both radical and conservative'⁽⁹⁾. We all know what they mean and of course nobody could disagree that there are some things we would like to preserve and some things that we would like to change: but this is true of nearly every political project ever (except, perhaps that of the Italian Futurists). The biggest risk of this approach is that it's the conservatism rather than the radicalism which ends up being emphasised. This would be a terrible strategic mistake. Labour has adopted a conservative,

reactive communitarianism at several points in its history, and this has only ever lead to electoral disaster. Conversely, Labour has only ever been successful when it has presented itself as a modernising party with a forward-looking agenda.

At the same time, this would be a mistake based on a categorical error. That error is to accept the basic premise of the New Labour and neoliberal argument: namely, that unquestioning accommodation of global neoliberalism is the only possible form of modernisation in the 21st century. This premise necessarily implies that resistance to neoliberal individualism and the rule of the market can only equate with resistance to modernisation as such: in other words, with some kind of conservatism. However, any such assertion misses a crucial dimension in its understanding of current social trends. Our contention is that this era is as much about new forms of collective creativity - from social networks to peer-to-peer finance to innovative new forms of public service delivery - as it is about the relentless onward march of competitive individualism and predatory capitalism. Labour will only prosper if it can connect with these new sources of democratic energy and collective self-organisation. As Graeme Cooke of IPPR has shown, too many of Labour's assumptions are still based on an imagined social world which is essentially unchanged since the early days of New Labour⁽¹⁰⁾. Only a recognition of the democratic potential, as well as the social dangers, of new cultural, technological and social forms can really get Labour beyond this impasse.

Amongst the very first public reactions to Ed Miliband's now-famous 'One Nation' speech to Labour Party conference in 2012 was a worried vox-pop from a party member, broadcast by the BBC from the conference hall, who expressed her concern that such rhetoric 'makes us sound old'.

At the same time, the enormous public support for those aspects of the London 2012 Olympics spectacle which celebrated the cosmopolitanism and heterogeneity of contemporary British culture suggests that the latent potential of a genuinely popular cosmopolitanism - an ethic and aesthetic which would be at once inclusive and libertarian, collectivist yet tolerant - could be prove very powerful if it were only allowed to express itself politically. Such cosmopolitanism runs counter to what opinion polls

may currently say about anti-immigration sentiment but it will only be able to crystallise if it is articulated by appropriate political leadership. The question is: Can Labour show that leadership?

Away from temporary spectacle of the Olympics, far from the street protests and the new assemblies, but at an even more fundamental level - that of everyday life - the British people reveal their commitment to a democratic, egalitarian modernism every waking hour. The advocates of 'Blue Labour' have made much of the idea that it is necessary to connect with people and their communities 'where they really are': in other words, in the social and cultural context where people actually invest time and emotional energy. We applaud this approach. However, such commentaries seem to focus very heavily on the idea that 'where people are' is in very traditional, organic, localised kinds of places: at church, at the allotment, on the doorstep chatting to neighbours. The problem is that people interact in lots of other places too: they're on Facebook, they're on holiday, they're more likely to move away from home than at any point in history, they're on Skype, they're downloading from the internet, they're at work in very different kinds of jobs from the ones our grandparents knew. If Labour can't speak to them there, and can't speak to them about the energetic, democratic, polyglot and cosmopolitan world they find there, then it will indeed 'sound old', and will not be speaking to people where they are at all. How can it do this?

In fact, all of these questions resolve themselves into a single one: can Labour develop a programme and a strategy which expresses the desire of a very considerable part of the population for a form of public life which far exceeds that permitted by neoliberalism? It is towards the resolution of this problem that we offer the following analysis. Our purpose here is not to make a critique of 'One Nation Labour'. Rather our intention is to show how the most ambitious elements of One Nation Labour can resonate even more powerfully with the most dynamic elements of social change and political innovation at work in the contemporary world, and how the creative energy and imagination of the new protest movements can be reflected in a realistic reforming agenda.

Big Societies: the crisis of the state

What are the basic terms of reference shaping almost all debate within the political mainstream since the crisis of 2008? If we can understand these terms systematically, then we can get somewhere both in understanding our historical moment and in understanding the limitations of how it has been described and understood up until now.

Society good, bureaucracy bad. From a historical perspective, it's remarkable how completely this assumption has seemed to define the parameters of political consensus and debate since 2008. In today's climate, it is remarkable even to reflect that there was a time when the defenders of benign technocratic efficiency could present themselves as the very vanguard of progress and reform; this was essentially the context within which social democrats, in the Fabian tradition, hegemonised British politics from the 1940s to the 1960s. There was also a time when, albeit with less confidence and less candour, most of the time, Thatcherites could proclaim in various forms the doctrine that there was 'no such thing as society'.

Today, however, no mainstream politician can claim to be in favour of state action and nobody can be an avowed individualist. The central theme of One Nation Labour is its apparent preference for civil society and 'community' over the market or the state. The problem is that's exactly what everyone else is saying too. This formulation applies across the entire political mainstream, with a few changes of emphasis along the way, encompassing all of the major political factions on both Right and Left: the Conservative advocates of the Big Society; 'Red Tory' Philip Blond and a cluster of centre-right think tanks who share his ideas (ResPublica, Policy Exchange, etc.); the ex-Blairite advocates of 'community organising', James Purnell, David Miliband, Stella Creasy etc.; Maurice Glasman, and the 'Blue Labour' thinkers positioned near to him; Ed Miliband and his allies; Compass, whose interventions embrace an increasingly explicit politics of radical democracy; even the 'anarcho-populists' of the Occupy movement are similarly seeking a form of collective life beyond both the market and the disciplinary state. They're all in favour of the social, the collective and the shared: they're all sceptical about the forms of technocratic government that came to characterise the advanced stages of New Labour. None of these commentators seem to have a very

clear idea of how or why New Labour ended up where it did, but we will return to that question shortly.

Of course, the apparent similarities between these positions belie enormous ideological differences, and the purpose of this list is not to posit some real homogeneity between them. What is significant is that despite these differences, the language and nominal assumptions that they share are so similar. This suggests that however different their political conclusions, all of them are responding to a very deeply felt set of concerns which are shared across a wide spectrum of opinion, both within the political class and amongst the public at large. One way or another, each of these positions responds to two very widely shared intuitions: the sense that something about contemporary culture inhibits the formation of 'potent collectivities'⁽¹¹⁾ - of groups bound together by shared goals or identities, capable of resolving social problems together; and the sense that intervention in these social problems by central government is not an adequate substitute for the empowerment of the groups whom they affect.

Here, of course, the similarities cease. The coalition's socially disastrous economic policy has been underpinned by the economic theory of 'crowding out'⁽¹²⁾, which maintains that intervention by 'the state' in any domain of social life tends to 'crowd out' innovative activity by other actors. In British public discourse, this is an argument most frequently encountered in debates over broadcasting policy, with advocates for the commercial sector insisting that the BBC 'crowds out' innovation from commercial rivals across a range of spheres, and we will therefore give some attention to the politics of broadcasting later on in this document. This is a thesis which is closely related to the claim that generous welfare provision produces 'dependency' in the poor and so undermines initiative and self-worth. As is well known, both of these theories lack any serious evidence in their favour although the extent to which they serve the interests of various powerful constituencies is self-evident, which is enough to explain their persistent popularity with those very constituencies. From this perspective, the reduction in state expenditure and the encouragement of private initiatives to address social problems is all that is required to engender a renewal of collective agency, and it is implicitly assumed, albeit rarely explicitly stated, that the medium of that agency will in the main be commercial institutions. Conversely, the

Leftist versions of this position all depend on an acknowledgement of the socially corrosive effects of capitalism itself, and on the problems engendered by the importation of managerial models from the private to the public sector. It is also striking that both the various strands of communitarian politics that have been recently influential, and the main writers for Compass, stress the centrality of 'democracy' to their vision of an alternative polity.

However, there is also a marked difference in what these different sets of thinkers seem to understand by this latter term, which reveals a more fundamental difference in their politics. Communitarian thought often seems to operate with an understanding of 'community' which is largely static (even while it acknowledges the importance of ethnic pluralism), such that 'democracy' could be understood as being manifested by any political expression of communal identity whatsoever, even where it lacks any demonstrable political purchase. So, for example, the capacity of London Citizens to mobilise large numbers for its assemblies is enthusiastically celebrated, despite their very limited success in actually affecting the course of governmental decision-making.

This conception of democracy is certainly continuous with the political assumptions of the most influential strand of the community organising movement in the UK, which tend to be predicated on the assumption that 'communities' are homogenous and relatively static entities which can be 'mobilised' simply through the effective recruitment and training of 'community leaders' (so it is little wonder that despite the adulation they have received across the political spectrum, they have had no significant success at all in mobilising non-religious communities of affiliation). The problem which all of these variants of communitarianism can never confront is this: what does communitarian politics have to say to that vast majority of individuals and small groups in the UK who do not belong, or feel themselves to belong, to some clearly-identifiable and demarcated 'community', but who are nonetheless demonstrably disempowered by their lack of opportunity to co-ordinate their desires and aspirations with those of others?

Compass, on the other hand, has tended to propose a programme of public-sector reform based on the rolling out of participatory models of democratic governance in most of those areas (e.g. health and education) in which neoliberal policy has attempted to impose marketised, consumerist systems for the allocation of resources and responsibilities.

Importantly, this is a model that prioritises the implementation of mechanisms of democratic deliberation and decision-making, rather than appealing to a notional 'community' that is presumed to pre-exist the political processes by which potent collectivities might be brought into existence. This difference is crucial, because it recognises the active and constitutive role that politics and institutional invention can play in the formation of democratic constituencies. From this perspective, democratic politics is not simply about empowering communities which already exist: it is also about enabling effective collectivities to come into existence. It is this position, which, in part, we seek to elaborate, contextualise and radicalise here. Another excellent example of a policy proposal that follows this latter course is the IPPR's recent call for the constitution of 'citizen schools', which would function democratically and in the service of democratic education. One of the great virtues of this proposal is its recognition of the active role that institutions can play in assisting potent collectivities to emerge, enabling disparate aggregations of families to become something like a 'community' where they were not necessarily one before. A further example is Compass' radical blueprint for the democratisation of the National Health Service: a model for this kind of programme conceived on a national scale⁹.

Real Radical Ideas 1:

Zoe Gannon & Neal Lawson's report *Co-Production: The modernisation of public services by staff and users* shows in well-researched detail how a new, collaborative, democratic paradigm for public services can be developed and applied.

They write:

- The public service reform agenda cannot succeed simply by the top down imposition of centralised targets or more market based choice. A new public service reform paradigm needs to be opened up based on the principle and practice of co-production.
- Co-production is simply the recognition that services can and are modernised and reformed every day through the interaction of staff and users.
- Co-production is about the recognition of mutual interests, co-operation and participation. It is based on the insight that workers know best how to deliver at the sharp end of service provision and the public cannot be passive recipients of services but have a decisive role to play in their co-creation.
- Crucially, co-production will help us manage the central paradox of public service reform, namely our competing desires for equality, or universalism, and the need for innovation through diversity. It can achieve this by creating spaces where tensions can be understood, shared and managed.
- Co-production taps into the latent dynamic energy and productive power of workers and users, combining the two to allow services to be modernised and reformed on an ongoing basis.
- Because it is about the empowerment of workers and users, co-production cannot be imposed from the top down; instead it requires a cultural shift that allows people to empower themselves. It is not an empty theory or a new buzz word but an intensely practical experience, which can only work through the process of production itself. It is going on all the time in public services. It just needs to be enshrined and scaled up.
- The benefits of co-production are both instrumental – more responsive and better services produced more efficiently – and intrinsic – ensuring services are valued because they are social, collective and participatory. Coproduction adds to our sense of community and feeling of well-being. It provides a moral underpinning for public services.
- Like any reform model, issues will arise and need to be addressed. In particular the state locally and nationally will need to direct support to ensure that existing social and economic inequalities are not exacerbated by some participating in co-production processes more than others.
- Co-production has the potential to help transform users and citizens from passive receivers of consumption and production demands to active participators in the creation of public services. Workers can flourish as partners in designing and improving services, not just fulfilling the role of “robots” within a service specified and managed at a distance. Users will no longer be expected to accept what they are given within a limited choice range of rigid services. Working together they can refashion every aspect of a service collectively.
- Co-production cannot be legislated for. It can only happen through the process of shared production. The role of government is to create the necessary context through resources and support in which co-production can flourish.

To allow that to happen there must be:

- Greater autonomy in budgets and decision making
- The spread of good practice
- Knowledgeable and confident workers and users
- Time and space to innovate, succeed and, yes, sometimes to fail.

Co-production is an important approach in the process of re-energising public service workers and users, who are currently demoralised. Going beyond the market or machine models of reform, co-production provides a practical and values based approach to public service reform that is self-sustaining and enduring. On the basis of coproduction, support for public service can be embedded regardless of who is in power.

See <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CO-PRODUCTION.pdf>

Part Two: What Would A Good Modernisation Look Like?

What does it mean to be modern? Competing Visions of Modernity⁽¹³⁾

It is worth observing at this point that there is a long tradition on the Left of proposing that the social dislocations wrought on 'traditional' communities by capitalist modernisation cannot be reversed, but can instead become the basis for a new politics of universal collective aspiration. This is what links Tom Paine's *Common Sense to The Communist Manifesto* to *Let us Face the Future* (Labour's 1945 manifesto), and it is an idea to which the conservative tradition of Burke et. al. has always been opposed⁽¹⁴⁾.

Importantly, it is only when it has situated itself in this tradition of democratic modernisation that the Labour Party has ever enacted successful projects for government. Labour spoke a language of fellowship and community through much of the 1930s, while completely failing to mobilise support during the deepest crisis in the history of capitalism: it only recovered a measure of political authority once it adopted the language of technocratic modernism which helped to win not just the 1945 election⁽¹⁵⁾ but also the 1964 contest. Blair may have flirted with a version of communitarianism in the mid-1990s, but this was quickly abandoned in government, while it was the language of 'modernisation' that provided the only consistent theme to his leadership of the party and of the successful 1997-election campaign.

Naturally, all of these different Labour modernisms have been characterised by enormous problems, precisely to the extent that they passively accepted an account of modernity supplied to them by capitalists and their agencies. The bureaucratic authoritarianism that characterised much of the post-war welfare state was typical of ideologies of corporate governance prevalent in industry at the time⁽¹⁶⁾, while Blair and his advisors simply accepted without question the assertion that neoliberalism and the forms of globalisation which it entailed were unalterable facts of the modern world to which public institutions must conform or perish. Of course, in the long run, this is a disastrous strategy, which simply retreats from the radical responsibility of all politics to try to change the world rather than merely to adapt to it. This is why thinkers such as Jon Cruddas MP are right to want to recover some of Labour's alternative, suppressed

democratic traditions. However, a mere reversal of the modernising approach, rejecting all forms of modernisation and celebrating an ill-defined 'civil society' as the magical alternative to both 'state' and 'market', would be equally disastrous. Not only would it be doomed to failure, but such an approach implicitly accepts the foundational assumption of its opponents: that there is only one possible modernity, which can either be embraced or rejected. This is, in fact, the founding claim of the ideology which Mark has named 'capitalist realism'⁽¹⁷⁾, and it is one on which no progressive politics can be based.

At the same time, any attempt to respond politically to elements of popular conservatism must proceed very carefully indeed. Cultural conservatives correctly identify a general disenchantment with the present, and nostalgia for the past, as key elements of contemporary 'structures of feeling'⁽¹⁸⁾. However, they generally make little attempt to understand the specificity of contemporary forms of nostalgia. Interpreting such nostalgia simply as an expression of generic conservatism, which could only be given political expression by conservative policies, misses the point that what most people are nostalgic for today is precisely the forward-looking optimism and democratic progressivism of the post-war era. It's not the 1930s that many people would seem to like to go back to: it's the 1950s and 1960s, the most thoroughly modernist decades in our entire cultural history. It is not the 'community' of some lost rural village life which British people often mourn today (that had disappeared from this country by the 1820s): it is the sense of solidarity and national purpose expressed by the 1951 Festival of Britain. It is their dissatisfaction with the post-modern moment of pessimism and public disenchantment which people express in their rejections of contemporary culture. This dissatisfaction with the present derives from longing for modernity itself, and for its characteristic sense of hope and a common future. To mistake this feeling for a simple rejection of all possible forms of modernisation would therefore be a disastrous historical mistake.

Blairite Modernisation: Not The Only Way

Our call for the Left to modernise may have an ominous and familiar ring for some, who might hear in it an echo of Blairism. So it is important to emphasise that, for us, Blair's project was based not on modernising the Left, but on the assumption that the Left and modernity are fundamentally incompatible.

The general analysis of Blairism and its consequences is now very well advanced⁽¹⁹⁾. However, it is worth re-visiting its general features and historic novelty. Briefly, Blairism sought to continue and intensify the neoliberal economic programme - privatising public services, lowering taxes, and casualising the labour market - which was begun in the last years of the previous Labour government and carried on in a peculiarly ideological fashion under Thatcher. Blairism's distinctive differences from Thatcherism were: its social liberalism, as exemplified in its reforming attitude to gay rights; its willingness to use the state in a much more direct interventionist way in order to achieve its (wholly neoliberal) goals, for example by forcing public services to adopt a neoliberal ethos even where they were not to be privatised; its relative commitment to the meritocratic goal of 'equality of opportunity', which was always rigorously differentiated from any concern with actual equality. Thatcher and Major's largely cosmetic commitment to certain kinds of social conservatism, their reflexive hostility to the very idea of state intervention in social and economic life, and the nationalist hostility of their party to the European Union had all come to seem antiquated even from a neoliberal perspective by the late 1990s. This was precisely why New Labour was able to attract support from key sections of the press and from key financial institutions.

While Stuart Hall influentially understood New Labour as a composite project, tempering a broadly neoliberal programme with some genuinely redistributive measures⁽²⁰⁾, others have pointed out that even New Labour's egalitarian policies and interventionist dimensions were expressions of a meritocratic and liberal-individualist ideology⁽²¹⁾ which was ultimately consistent with a purely neoliberal programme⁽²²⁾. This programme promised to level the social playing field, but never to change the rules of the game. Either way, despite Blair's flirtation with communitarian thought in the mid 1990s, once in power his government was characterised by an almost fanatical commitment to neoliberal principles, which were implemented by stealth (e.g. with the rolling out of the partial privatisation of the National Health Service⁽²³⁾ where they could not secure even a partial popular mandate. At the same time, Blair actively tried to remove constitutional reform, Scottish devolution and the minimum wage from New Labour's governing programme: only the broad-based grassroots pressure created by the Scottish Constitutional Convention on the one hand, and the trade unions on the other, ensured that these policies were enacted. This is surely an important lesson for our moment.

Throughout his premiership, Blair justified his programme with reference to the assumption that 'the modern world' is characterised by an implacable and monolithic set of tendencies which demand adaptation and which cannot be reversed or transformed⁽²⁴⁾. These tendencies were assumed to include: the inevitable individualisation and attenuation of social relations; the increasing flexibility of labour markets and the implacability of corporate-led processes of economic globalisation. Blair's basic assumption is crucial to grasp here: this was the assumption that there can be only one possible form of modernity - of which American liberal capitalism is the most perfect expression - and so the only task of government can be to enable or to force its citizenry to accept this fact and to adapt accordingly. The social effects and the political implications of such an assumption are predictable and obvious: the major beneficiaries were a social elite made up of finance capitalists and those politicians, institutions and media operatives to whom they had the closest direct or indirect links; the rest of the population was increasingly disenfranchised and disinherited while the political character of the government was shaped more by its slavish devotion to U.S. priorities than by any popular mandate.

It is actually possible to defend a great deal of the New Labour programme by examining its historical situation in a broader global context. From this point of view, any analysis must take account of the fact that New Labour did not come to power on the back of a popular mass movement, but in the context of widespread disillusion with and disengagement from democratic politics. Blair became Prime Minister in 1997, only 8 years after the fall of Soviet communism and only 3 years after the formation of the World Trade Organisation, an institution created by the Clinton administration with the express intention of consolidating neoliberalism's global hegemony after the final defeat of 'actually existing socialism'. Facing an implacably right-wing press, a capitalist class buoyed up by 18 years of Thatcherism and a battered, weakened labour movement, any government which wanted to survive was going to have to make significant accommodations to the global neoliberal agenda.

Any left-leaning politician finding themselves in government under such circumstances could be forgiven for concluding that the only course available to them in the short-term was simply to regulate the inevitable process of privatisation as best they could while retaining a strategic role for the state in the administration of services, and working to ensure - as far as possible - that all citizens enjoyed an equal

opportunity to enter the labour market and compete there for the rewards which an advanced consumer economy could offer. This is pretty much what New Labour did, and we can already see, less than one parliamentary term since they left office, just how much worse a genuinely right-wing government can be.

However, what even the most resigned and pessimistic progressive government might have been expected to do under such circumstances would have been to make some efforts to change the strategic situation in the long-term: to rebuild the unions, to re-energise local government, to facilitate the growth of an alternative media sector (would there ever have been an easier historical moment to do this, just when the print sector was reeling under the impact of the digital revolution?). It is the fact that New Labour made no effort to do any of this for which history will condemn it most roundly: unlike even the weakest previous Labour government, New Labour left the country less equal, the culture more degraded and the labour movement no stronger than it had been when it took office. It left us weaker, stupider and less democratic. And ultimately, this failing must be attributed to a chronic failure of imagination, to the fact that - with greater or lesser degrees of willingness - all of the key players in the New Labour governments finally accepted the ideological neoliberal claim that this was the only way that things could ever be. Ignoring the latent potential for a radical democratisation of society and culture which so many of the social and technological changes of the time seemed to offer, they simply accepted that liberal capitalism - with its concentrations of power, its weakened sense of collectivity, and its slow erosion of all democratic institutions was the only kind of modernity that was possible.

The trouble with this way of thinking is that, as well as being inimical to any democratic politics whatsoever, it is also demonstrably inaccurate. Any given moment in history - any social formation, any situation whatsoever - is replete with a complex set of possibilities and implicit tendencies. There is no one singular and inevitable future that can be extrapolated from the present: if there were, then prophecy would be a science and nobody would ever be surprised. This is a truism, put in these terms: and yet both versions of 'capitalist realism' which we have just described - the Blairite and the 'left conservative' - entirely overlook it. Once we remember this obvious

point, surely it becomes clear that the task of a progressive politics is never simply to accept or to reject the leading tendencies of a given moment, but to pick through a range of implicit possibilities and to work to bring about those with the most democratic potential (and to inhibit those with the least)⁽²⁵⁾. From this perspective, it becomes crucial to reject the Blairite claim that there is only one (neoliberal) form of modernity, and that consequently every form of anti-capitalism, or even every form of democratic egalitarianism, is necessarily anti-modern. This is the founding claim both of Blairite politics and of the programme of self-styled 'heir to Blair', David Cameron; as such, neither of these political projects can be successfully transcended without a direct refutation of it. Such refutation is not difficult, however.

A wealth of literature today - from the most considered theorising to the most naive cyber-utopianism - concerns itself with the democratic potential inherent in emergent social forms and implicit in the technologies of the cybernetic revolution. Of course, anyone who has ever believed that, for example, the internet was inherently democratising and liberatory in its effects, was going to be disappointed. The potential for new, frequently trans-national, forms of communication, organisation, deliberation and participation is only one of the sets of potentials that this new technical paradigm afford. Others include the potential for new forms of corporate surveillance, for an entrenchment and multiplication of commodified and alienated forms of personal and sexual relations, etc. etc.⁽²⁶⁾ Yet this latter point in no way undermines the former; despite the regressive tendencies of our emerging networked world, its democratic potential is clearly also real, in ways which could have profound implications for whole swathes of our culture and the economies which sustain it.

Ourspace: Capitalism and Creativity in a Networked World

Just look at Myspace. This social networking site may have failed as a rival to Facebook but, for a while, Myspace became the site at which contemporary music culture occurred, as fans and musicians used it as the key locus through which music and reactions to it were exchanged. Bypassing the traditional intermediary channels of the press, broadcast media, music retail, and the 'A&R' ('Artists and Repertoire') and marketing divisions of major record companies,

Myspace obviated the functions of these institutions in the cycle of musical circulation, to the point where it was no longer clear how or if music culture could remain a site of efficient capital accumulation in the 21st century. As such, Myspace was a critical factor in the provoking the crisis of profitability in the industry.

And yet it is clear that this need have no detrimental effect on music culture at all; none of the intermediaries who have been displaced have ever contributed anything directly to the production of music. Musicians can produce, fans can listen, all can communicate, without the intervention of these once-dominant, but ultimately wholly unproductive, elements and agencies. At the same time, MySpace proved commercially disastrous for its owners News Corporation, who, having bought it in 2005 for 580 million dollars, simply failed to develop a business model which could render it profitable, ultimately selling it for 35 million in 2011.

Myspace enabled music culture to function without the music industry. In fact, it enabled the dispersed and concentrated forms of collective creativity upon which music culture has always depended entirely to free themselves from the logic and the institutional control of capitalism. Of course, under current socio-economic conditions, this poses major problems for musicians, who no longer have the opportunity to achieve creative independence as small-scale entrepreneurs⁽²⁷⁾, but that does not alter the importance of the wider lessons that we can draw from this story.

This is a crucial part of our recent history to understand, because it illustrates something important about the relationship between creativity, institutions and capitalism. Capital turned the general matrix of collective creativity which produces music culture into a machine for the generation of profit only by strategically occupying and monopolising key intermediary sites; and in the long term, its relationship to those creative processes has been revealed to be merely parasitic in nature⁽²⁸⁾. The creative energy that capital needs does not depend upon it, but upon relations of co-operation and exchange that can now be organised more efficiently without it. Might the same not be true of many other areas of

social life? Might it not be the case that the requirement that the social goods produced by, say, healthcare professionals or educators, be measurable in terms of profit and loss, in terms of their utility to 'industry' or their capacity to generate narrowly-defined forms of 'customer satisfaction' only holds back the potential dynamism and retards the creative efficiency of the social networks which generate them? Shouldn't we be looking for new types of institutions which can maximise the true creative productivity of those networks, rather than imposing arbitrary restrictions on the forms which they can take? This is by no means simply a matter of 'liberating' institutions' from 'state control', as Michael Gove's regressive Free Schools policy sought to do. Rather it is a matter of freeing them from those restrictions which inhibit institutional creativity while embedding them in relational networks which facilitate it and protecting them from the predations of corporate parasites. As mentioned already, IPPR's recent proposal for 'citizen schools', democratised and community-facing, provides one strong and well-evidenced example of such a model, which would facilitate the shared capacity of all involved to learn, develop and maximise their potential.

We can turn back to music culture to see what happens when culture is deprived of a supportive network of institutions. It is becoming increasingly recognised that today music culture is in a state of stasis, locked into repetition and lacking in innovation,⁽²⁹⁾ despite its institutional liberation from the music industry. To explain why this has happened in the UK – once the world centre of new popular music – we would have to look in places that neoliberal propaganda has made us overlook. Contrary to the neoliberal narrative, which equates social democracy solely with a dreary state bureaucracy inimical to creativity, we can now recognise that the role that the welfare state, student grants and social housing played in producing the space and time necessary for innovations in music.⁽³⁰⁾

Let's be clear as to what musical history teaches us about the necessary conditions for collective creativity, lest we be seen to take a contradictory position. We are saying both that the MySpace

moment has demonstrated the autonomy of creative processes from circuits of capital accumulation, and that in the absence of social-democratic support, such autonomy cannot lead to full creativity.

If we consider the history of musical innovation since the beginnings of the recording industry, or even since the 18th century, then two key facts become clear. On the one hand, capitalism as such never promotes innovation. Innovation has often come from individuals or organisations (in particular independent record labels, in genres ranging from jazz to jungle), who were commercially motivated, in the sense of seeking to generate revenue in a competitive marketplace. But such organisations have never been capitalist in the proper sense of pursuing unlimited capital accumulation. The latter type of organisation has only ever promoted homogenised and conservative cultural forms, and has always depended upon the forms

innovation generated at other sites. On the other hand, it is now clear that the forms of innovation made possible by, for example, independent record labels, were themselves dependent upon specific social conditions which included the backdrop of support provided by the social-democratic state. We suggest that this is probably an instructive model for understanding the conditions of possibility for social creativity across a vast range of economic sectors, particularly in the 'knowledge economy': from software design to pharmaceuticals. The argument for rebuilding and renewing this collective provision is not, then, only about social justice – it is also about increasing the possibilities of cultural creativity. Who knows what a culture in which the internet co-existed with strong social security would look like?

Real Radical Ideas 2:

Robin Murray's *'Co-operation in the Age of Google'*

Economist and innovator Robin Murray has produced a startling and thorough blueprint for the revival of the co-operative movement. He writes:

1. We are living at a time of profound economic and social transformation which is leading to the redrawing of the economic and institutional map. I have referred to this as the Age of Google.
2. The current recession signals a point in this transition, parallel to previous major financial crises, when the way opens for a new socio-technical paradigm (in this case the information and communication revolution) to become generalised in areas that have been largely untouched.
3. The new paradigm presents a wide range of possibilities for co-operative expansion, reflected in the cross party political support for co-operation.
4. The economic transformation affects all current co-operative operations. This poses threats and opportunities for individual co-operatives and places.
5. To make the most of the possibilities the co-operative movement will need to strengthen its capacity to act as a movement, and in particular to bring in changes that reflect the new socio-technical paradigm.
6. A primary task is to develop the central co-operative idea both in terms of its economic proposition and its democratic one. The movement should shift its definition of co-operatives from form to values, and should refocus its role in relation to the two dominant issues of the coming period: the growing environmental crisis and the reconstitution of the welfare state.
7. It should then redesign its educational, intelligence, financial, infrastructural and information systems both to strengthen individual co-ops and their integration.
8. It should draw on the lessons of the social movements, not by abandoning its democratic structures but re-invigorating them with new forms of local organisation.
9. The central organisational issue is the gap between that half of the movement organised through the Co-operative Group and the half which is fragmented and where many of the new opportunities are now opening up. The latter needs to have a much strengthened Co-operatives UK.
10. It needs to develop a new financial model for financing the growth and integration of the co-operative economy as a whole.

See <http://www.uk.coop/ageofgoogle>

Part Three: What is Democracy For?

When Democracy Goes Right: Maximising our Collective Intelligence

What is at stake here is the very question of collective intelligence⁽³²⁾: how to enhance it and how to mobilise it. The neoliberal solution to this problem is to organise institutions (or de-institutionalised domains wherein a purely commercial logic is allowed to operate) according to a notion of efficiency that is incredibly narrow in its scope. This approach deliberately reduces all interactions to commodity transactions, and it demands that outcomes be measurable in terms that enable direct competitive comparison between participants. This reductive process manifests itself in a habitual attitude which Marc Stears calls the 'transactional mindset'⁽³³⁾.

It's important here to understand the close relationship between a logic that understands all value in terms of commodity values, and one which insists upon establishing a strict hierarchy of achievement. According to neoliberal theory, everything has to have a market value, and competition is the only desirable form of relationship between different individuals and equivalent institutions. But how do you ascribe a market value to something like a publicly-funded education? How do you create competitive norms within an area of activity like education, which is inherently collaborative in nature?

In fact you can't do either, in classical terms. So what neoliberals do instead is to impose an almost entirely arbitrary set of mechanisms for the evaluation and ranking of outcomes, to create inequality and competition where none occur spontaneously. This, for example, is the only real function of school 'league tables', whose complete failure to predict the results which will eventually be achieved by individual students has been well documented⁽³⁴⁾. The consequences of this programme are well known: education, for example, becomes oriented towards the fulfilment of specific criteria - the achievement of high test scores and consequently high placing in league tables - to the exclusion of all else. It is crucial to be clear about what is at stake here. It is not simply the arbitrary imposition of inappropriate criteria that produces such outcomes, so the situation

cannot be improved simply by refining the criteria according to which institutions such as schools are ranked (through the measurement of 'added value', for example). The imposition of any such ranking process and any such criteria, however refined, inevitably tends to encourage those who are being subject to them to narrow down and homogenise their practice. This is not to say that educational institutions should not be accountable to the public, the government, and their users and staff; but it is to insist strongly that the desired outcomes from such institutions are too complex to be adequately measured in a way that can allow them to be ranked. The processes by which such institutions are rendered accountable to their users and the wider public can only be effective if they are deliberative and participatory from the ground up, enabling all concerned parties to be involved in the design and delivery of services, rather than merely judging and measuring outcomes after the fact. In other words: democracy, not marketisation and enforced competition, is the only way to deliver true excellence.

Of course constituencies such as parents encourage ranking practices themselves: the idea that one can transparently and immediately 'know' the 'quality' of a school just by looking it up on an Ofsted website is very appealing to parents who would often prefer to delegate the education of their children to a trusted institution rather than have to take responsibility for it themselves, and yet who do not feel able to trust that institution in itself. But we on the modern Left should have the courage to point out to parents what a misleading fantasy this is, and we should not indulge the infantile notion that there is any substitute for parents, students and the wider public involving themselves in the practical governance of a school, or comparable public institution.

What we are dealing with here, in fact, is a core element of neoliberal consumerist ideology, which reveals its close proximity both to the assumptions underpinning the practice of management consultancy and to those underpinning the general decline in political participation in recent decades. In each case, we encounter the fantasy that we might be able to divest ourselves of our responsibilities as decision-making members of a wider public. The dream of simply conceding authority to experts - be they in government, in schools or in business - so that we don't have to make any significant decisions for ourselves, and so that we don't have to deal with all

the hassle of making those decisions in discussion with other people, is a resilient and powerful one which in fact feeds much of contemporary culture. It is a fantasy that it is the task of the modern Left to expose and counter.

There is a critical point to grasp here. It is not only that neoliberal mechanisms of administration, centralisation, micro-management and ranking are distasteful. They are also unable to carry out the functions that they claim to fulfill. Many of these functions can be understood in terms of the attempt to find ways of managing the growing range of social and individual risks (the risk of educational failure, for example) which are typical of highly complex societies⁽³⁵⁾. The problem is that neoliberal solutions to such problems simply do not work. Their effect is merely to privatise such risks, devolving them onto individuals, reinforcing the existing advantages accruing to the powerful and the existing injuries suffered by the weak. Only the democratisation of social problems - socialising risks, enabling the whole community to share them, and therefore lifting the burden from the weakest, whilst also collectivising and distributing decision-making - can actually generate mechanisms and solutions which are themselves sufficiently complex to address such issues⁽³⁶⁾.

The Paternalist State, The Neoliberal State, The Democratic State

Lest we be mistaken for mere anti-statists, or advocates of Cameron's Big Society, let us make something clear: the institutional experimentalism which we advocate could only prosper, given current political conditions, if it were heavily sponsored and supported by sympathetic governmental institutions. This is because so few concentrations of organised collective power currently exist outside of the corporate sector; which is why, under current circumstances, any evacuation of particular social terrains by state institutions almost inevitably creates a vacuum which is filled not by 'grassroots' organisations but by capital in search of profits.

This is exactly what happened with New Labour's policy to disaggregate the National Health Service into a set of supposedly semi-autonomous 'trusts'. One of the authors can well recall a conversation around 2002 with a New Labour advisor who was quite convinced that foundation trust hospitals would in effect function as co-operatives, democratising healthcare while handing power to professionals and service users.

It was always clear to any informed observer that this was a fantasy; it might have been plausible in a world in which rapacious private health providers were not working at every institutional level to open up new markets, close down competition from the public sector, and maximise their profits. But that is not the world we live in, and predictably both foundation trust hospitals and primary care trusts were almost entirely captured by private-sector interests⁽³⁷⁾. Under circumstances such as these, the role of any truly democratic government is not simply to exercise power, or to devolve it, but to facilitate the creation and concentration of forms of collective power at sites where the current disaggregation of individuals and small groups leaves them open to abuse and exploitation. At its best, this was always the aim of social democratic reformism: the constitution of institutional forms through which collective interests can come into existence and exercise real power⁽³⁸⁾.

Of course, part of the reason that public services have found themselves incapable of resisting remorseless market logic is the sustained ideological assault on the concept of the 'public' itself. Once the idea of the public is eliminated, it is no longer possible to appeal to a 'public interest' that can be distinguished from a consumer preference. A mistake of state bureaucratic models of socialism and their critics was in identifying the state with the public. By strong contrast with this, we want to argue that the public is to be understood, not as the passive object of top-down state centralisation, but as something actively produced by the processes of radical democracy we describe here. The state can clearly play a role in preserving, promoting and extending a radically democratic public sphere, but it should never be equated with the public as such. This gives a very different sense to the idea of 'public ownership' than it had in the postwar period. Public ownership would now mean giving more power and control to workers, users and the wider public – something that will be very appealing to these groups, who are now accustomed to being treated either as 'customers' or as those tasked with delivering yet another top-down initiative.

When the Market Goes Wrong: The Case of Public Television

Here we might turn to the example of the BBC. While it may be true that the BBC is a historically hierarchical and at times even authoritarian organisation, it remains imperative to observe that its output was more experimental and more creative at a time when it is

perceived to have been far more authoritarian and paternalistic than it is today. The patrician paternalism with which the old BBC has so often been charged was certainly problematic from a democratic perspective. Yet it also produced the conditions under which it was possible for producers, directors, actors and writers to engage in routinely ground-breaking experiments, without fear that their three-month employment contracts would not be renewed if a slight drop in ratings ensued.

The scandal over the BBC's complicity with Jimmy Saville's obscene exploitation of his celebrity power demonstrates just how unsustainable this paternalist model was in the long term. But was marketisation the only available alternative? Of course not. For example, the remarkable success both of Channel 4 in its early incarnation (as a partially public-service organisation commissioning from independent production companies) and of the body which oversaw it and ITV between 1972 and 1991 - the Independent Broadcasting Authority - demonstrates that alternative models, allowing for a better combination of creative freedom and collective oversight, have always been available.

Was the output of the BBC in the 60s and 70s or Channel 4 in the 80s a less 'democratic' outcome than the current situation, in which market populism dictates an almost uniform blandness of television output? It depends what we mean by 'democratic'. If by 'democratic' we mean simply 'resulting from the aggregation of a set of immediately gratifiable, wholly individualised demands and desires' then maybe, yes. Understood in those narrow terms, an organisational strategy oriented solely to toward the production of high-rating programmes is more 'democratic'.

But this is surely not an adequate definition of 'democracy': it is a definition of 'the market', which is not the same thing at all. If we understand 'democracy' - as we must - to imply processes of collective deliberation and decision-making, then the answer is 'no'.

From this perspective, even the 'paternalist' BBC was at least motivated by an ideal of public service which went beyond the demand that it simply imitate and reproduce the logic of commercial culture. The Oxbridge mandarins of broadcasting house may have been poor representatives of a wider public interest, but even they served that purpose better than today's market populists (most of whom, significantly, are no

less likely to have come through Oxbridge and Eton than their predecessors). They left us the weird, wonderful, uniquely British legacy which is still Dr Who, which was Play for Today and the experimental drama of Dennis Potter. Does anyone really believe that the contemporary Beeb would commission anything so unexpected or so dangerous? Are the remarkable exercises in multicultural, queer-friendly, working class and radical broadcasting that characterised the early output of Channel 4 even imaginable in today's TV climate?

The case of public service broadcasting before the 1990s highlights the way in which a public service institution was capable of meeting the desires for the strange and the unexpected in a way that, for all its rhetoric of innovation and novelty, neoliberal culture has clearly failed to. When public service broadcasting succeeded in this respect it was not, as its neoliberal critics claim, because it was condescending and infantilising, but, quite to the contrary, because it was prepared to wager on its audience's desire to be challenged and surprised. The market-driven BBC just cannot match the creative power of such an institution: and so low-budget satirical comedy seems to be the only thing that British TV is still really any good at.

Of course it is true that American television is arguably going through a 'golden age', as US cable stations have generated a number of excellent, critically-acclaimed dramas and comedies in recent years (Deadwood, Six-Foot Under, Breaking Bad, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Girls etc.). There are several points to make about this phenomenon. On the one hand, the key funding stream for these productions is normally subscription-based, which suggests that there is no good reason why an institution like the BBC ought to be unable to match them, and that funding models and quality-control methods which are not simplistically market-populist in nature are worth experimenting with. Secondly, it is important not to exaggerate the status of these series, whose global audience is lucrative, but small, the programmes being carefully targeted at urban professional elites. At the same time, formally and generically, few of them have really gone beyond the generic conventions of the thriller, the situation comedy or the action adventure. The world still waits to see what genuinely experimental TV might look like in the century to come. What is very clear is that the neoliberal BBC cannot offer it.

Democracy vs. Bureaucracy: The Legacy of the New Left

Of course, the BBC, like other the great institutions of the post-war state, was subject early on to the criticism that its centralised and authoritarian structures would ultimately inhibit its ability to fulfill a democratic vocation. In fact this was obviously true, and it was the failure of such institutions - from the nationalised industries to the core public services - to heed such warnings which left them so vulnerable to populist attacks after the crisis of the 1970s. But it is absolutely crucial to recognise that the earliest forms of this critique did not come from the right, from market populists and neoliberals: they came from the Left, from the New Left in particular⁽³⁹⁾.

As early as 1961, Raymond Williams identified a sclerotic tendency in the bureaucratic authoritarianism of much of the public sector (including schools and the BBC), proposing a radical democratisation of those institutions - with the introduction of mechanisms for real deliberation and decision-making by their users and staff - as the solution⁽⁴⁰⁾. At much the same time, the authors of the Port Huron statement - the founding document of the American New Left - also proposed a renewal and widening of the scope of democracy as their key objective. The critique of bureaucratisation was as central to their vision as it was to Williams', at a time when most commentators assumed - for better or worse - that the onward march of bureaucratic regulation would never be halted, in the corporate sector or in the wider culture.

The only roughly equivalent critique came from what was then the lunatic fringe of the libertarian right - from Hayek and his followers, who would go on to become the gurus of neoliberal thinking. Hayek et al - as we all know to our cost - understood all forms of collectivism only as impediments to human progress. But the New Left saw a deepening of democracy's capacity to empower collectives as the only means to go beyond the limitations of the administered society. After 30 years of neoliberalism we can all see the cost of making Hayek's vision a reality, which is why no mainstream politician can publicly espouse it any more. Isn't it time that we gave the New Left's alternative a try?

The BBC at its best, during its creative heyday in the 1970s, was able to deliver the strange (Dr Who) and the challenging (The Ascent of Man, as recently remembered by Simon Critchley⁽⁴¹⁾) because it was at that moment already in the process of moving beyond an authoritarian model of paternalism, towards what

Williams would have recognised as a genuinely democratic culture. At its best such a democratic culture would operate according to a kind of gift logic rather than a commercial logic, taking very different kinds of risk to those implied by a consumerist model based on 'choice'. This was the risk that a gift might not be accepted, that the audience might reject what was offered to them. No broadcaster today will take such a risk: focus groups and market-research would kill any unsafe project stone dead before it ever got the chance to find its audience. Such a risk involved wagering that an audience would collaborate with cultural producers in exploring experimental forms which could actually fail. This was dangerous indeed, but the creative dynamism that this deliberately and self-consciously non-commercial practice made possible remains exemplary, in many ways.

It is crucial, therefore, that we understand what happened to enable this culture of creative risk-taking to be displaced by the logic of market populism. In particular, it is essential to recognise the way in which a legitimate critique of paternalist authoritarianism was appropriated by neoliberal ideologues and the corporate interests that they support. It should go without saying that the critique of BBC authoritarianism from progressives like Williams was never intended to prepare the way for the domination of media culture by News Corporation, Endemol and the Daily Mail, and the attendant distortion of public and political debate which such domination has produced. This critique was intended, rather, to lead to an institution that never arrived. Instead what happened was this: as in so many other areas of culture, neoliberalism has captured desires which had their origins on the democratic left. Thatcher channeled populist resentment towards institutions like the BBC into a political programme that would seriously weaken them and their creative capacities. But such a programme could only fail to deliver what was originally wanted: a more challenging, more experimental, more daring yet more diverse and inclusive culture. So this failure provides a series of opportunities for a democratic Left if it can develop the confidence to return to those earlier demands.

So here is the position that we find ourselves in: today, everyone acknowledges that bureaucracy is bad while collectivity is indispensable, and there is only one political tradition that has been saying exactly this for half a century. We ask again: isn't it time for this tradition finally to become a serious resource for mainstream politics?

Popular resentment of bureaucracy and managerialism is nothing new. Modern workers - from Ford's assembly lines to today's call centres - have always hated being subject to excessive discipline and regulation. The popular perception that local government and nationalised utilities were impersonal and unresponsive to user demands was a striking feature of British culture in the 60s and 70s. Surely it's clear that without this perception, the key strategic policies of Thatcherism - transfer of social housing stock and major utilities to the private sector, evisceration of local democracy - would have lacked all legitimacy. The demand for more autonomy and participation in decision-making at work became a key demand of the leading edge of the labour movement across Western Europe in late 60s and 1970s, while the critique of the lack of democracy in the public sector was fundamental to the positions taken by tenants' movements, the women's movement, etc. during the same period.

Indeed, the emergence of neoliberalism must be understood in precisely this context. Neoliberalism didn't just impose itself out of nowhere. It was adopted as a strategy by which elite groups and corporations could restore and consolidate their power, threatened as that power was by these democratic demands. Neoliberalism was implemented as a direct response to this democratic challenge. It was a response made by those who had the most to lose from a real extension of popular sovereignty and decision-making across new sectors of the economy, culture and society⁽⁴²⁾.

Neoliberalism proposed 'the market' as the solution to two problems: the bureaucratic inertia of the public sector and the threat of democratic demands emerging in response to that inertia⁽⁴¹⁾. In countries like the UK, the entire political class ultimately bought into this solution. But they bought into something else as well: into a particular story about why it had been necessary. From Thatcher to Brown, our political leaders almost without fail have promoted a narrative which simply occludes this history of democratic struggle, pretending that the only choice has ever been between patrician statism on the one hand (complete with a stuffy old Reithian BBC and sclerotic nationalised industries), and market populism on the other (complete with rampant inequality and a culture dominated by The X Factor). But this was never really the only choice.

It is difficult to reach this conclusion without going further, to the obvious argument that one of the radical agendas of the 1970s - the demand for 'industrial democracy', even for 'workers' self-management' - must now be finally revisited. This is an idea that has never wholly gone away. Its last outing, wearing a respectable disguise which did not fool the City of London for a second (they killed the idea with indifference before it got anywhere in government) was in the late 1990s, when Will Hutton briefly convinced the leaders of New Labour to embrace 'stakeholder capitalism'. Once it became apparent what that meant, neither Brown and Blair nor the captains of industry wanted to hear any more about it. But doesn't the recent, sudden popularity - even with conservatives⁽⁴³⁾ - of mutuals and co-operatives⁽⁴⁴⁾ show that now is finally the time to re-activate the radical and popular potential of ideas like co-operation and democracy at work? The unpopularity of neoliberal managerialism and trivialising bureaucracy, the deep pools of latent resentment towards them across private and public sectors, can ultimately find no other political expression than a real valorisation of workers' rights to be treated as citizens and as creative participants during the 50% of their waking lives that they will spend at work. Above all, the trade unions must finally rediscover their historic political mission: not merely bankrolling Labour or defending sectional privileges, but leading a popular campaign for better and more meaningful work and ways of organising it. Campaigning against ideologically-motivated neoliberal bureaucracy, as the teaching unions have already done with some limited success, would transform the public image of the movement and its capacity to resonate with a broad range of publics.

At the same time we would urge the partisans of the new democratic movements to reflect upon the important lessons and the invaluable legacy of the New Left and its historic demands. Don't believe the ideologues of deliberate ignorance who would tell you that history only began with Twitter, that the defeat of the 60s radicals was inevitable, or that capitalism has delivered to us the diversity and freedom of contemporary culture because that's what capitalism naturally does. Many of your demands have been made before, and some of your predecessors got much closer to achieving them than you have (go read up on the history of Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council, for example, or learn about just how close to revolution the world really came in the early '70s). The radicalism of the 60s was defeated by a more powerful foe (finance capital, using the strategies of

the New Right and neoliberalism), which managed to persuade large sections of the working class that it could protect their interests (it didn't); it was not defeated by its own intrinsic weakness. The gains made by women, youth and many others seeking a more autonomous life in recent decades have been won by struggle, not handed down by the generosity of our masters.

What popular cause could unite the aims of today's radicals with the legacy of the New Left and a much broader public than they were ever able to reach? We suggest very strongly that the answer to this question is: the critique of managerialist bureaucracy and the demand for participation and creative autonomy at work.

Real Radical Ideas 3:

Dan Hind's Blueprint for a Democratic Media System

If neither market forces nor the public service ethos can be trusted to keep us adequately informed it follows that some other mechanism must be tried. In my recent book, *The Return of the Public*, I outlined one approach to media reform that holds out some hope of bringing significant change to the sum of things available for public deliberation. I argue that each of us must be given some control over what is investigated and researched and over the prominence given to the results. The power to commission investigation and the power to publicise what is discovered are currently in the hands of a tiny number of professional editors and owners. These powers can no longer be monopolised by individuals who are unrepresentative, unaccountable to the public, and vulnerable to all manner of private pressure and inducement.

We need to set aside a sum of public money sufficient to support a large and lively culture of investigative reporting and analysis. Journalists and researchers can make open pitches for the money they need to conduct particular investigations or to pursue long-term projects. Those that receive sufficient support from the public will receive the money. Those that produce material that seems important to a fair number of people will be given more resources with which to broadcast their findings to a wider public.

Such a system could be run using the infrastructure of the BBC. Departments in the English regions and the devolved nations would each hold a sum of money in trust and disperse it in line with the expressed wishes of democratic publics. A clear democratic mandate would replace the focus group and the whim of the editor as the driving force in decisions about what reaches the agenda of the mainstream media.

A tiny fraction of the licence fee, 3% say, would provide £100 million every year. This would be enough to pay more than 4000 journalists and researchers a salary of £24,000. At the moment there are fewer than 150 investigative journalists working in Britain. Imagine what 4000 journalists and researchers, beholden only to the voting public, could achieve. Forensic accountants and advocacy groups could pitch for funds. The campaign against offshore finance could marshal the resources needed to put a stop to tax evasion and avoidance. Development NGOs could publicise policies to bring people out of poverty that stand some chance of working. The debate about political economy would no longer be cluttered with the wishful thinking and myth-making of the old, exhausted intellectual consensus. All manner of abuses that currently go unchallenged could be brought into the light of general awareness.

Dan Hind <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/dan-hind/blueprint-for-democratic-media-system>

Part Four: Democracy for People Not the State or the Market

The Reality of Neoliberalism: No Freedom, No Fun

It is understandable that the mainstream left has traditionally been suspicious of anti-bureaucratic politics. The Fabian tradition has always believed - has been defined by its belief - in the development and extension of an enlightened bureaucracy as the main vehicle of social progress. Attacking 'bureaucracy' has been - since at least the 1940s - a means by which the Right has attacked the very idea of public service and collective action. Since the early days of Thatcherism, there has been very good reason to become nervous whenever someone attacks bureaucracy, because such attacks are almost invariably followed by plans not for democratisation, but for privatisation.

Nonetheless, it is precisely this situation that has produced a certain paralysis of the Left in the face of one of its greatest political opportunities, an opportunity which it can only take if it can learn to speak an anti-bureaucratic language with confidence and conviction. On the one hand, this is a simple populist opportunity to unite constituencies within both the public and private sectors: simple, but potentially strategically crucial. As workers in both sectors and as users of public services, the public dislike bureaucracy and apparent over-regulation. The Left misses an enormous opportunity if it fails to capitalise on this dislike and transform it into a set of democratic demands.

On the other hand, anti-bureaucratism marks one of the critical points of failure and contradiction in the entire neoliberal project. For the truth is that neoliberalism has not kept its promise in this regard. It has not reduced the interference of managerial mechanisms and apparently pointless rules and regulations in the working life of public-sector professionals, or of public-service users, or of the vast majority of workers in the private sector. In fact it has led in many cases to an enormous proliferation and intensification of just these processes. Targets, performance indicators, quantitative surveys and managerial algorithms dominate more of life today than ever before, not less. The only people who really

suffer less regulation than they did in the past are the agents of finance capital: banks, traders, speculators and fund managers.

Where de-regulation is a reality for most workers is not in their working lives as such, but in the removal of those regulations which once protected their rights to secure work, and to a decent life outside of work (pensions, holidays, leave entitlements, etc.). The precarious labour market is not a zone of freedom for such workers, but a space in which the fact of precarity itself becomes a mechanism of discipline and regulation. It only becomes a zone of freedom for those who already have enough capital to be able to choose when and where to work, or to benefit from the hyper-mobility and enforced flexibility of contemporary capitalism.

This is why all welfare policies that ultimately focus on compelling participation in the labour market can only reinforce real inequalities of power, freedom and opportunity, and why New Labour's advocacy of 'flexible' (i.e. precarious) labour markets was one of the most viciously regressive dimensions of its programme. The only truly democratic objective with regard to the labour market is to reduce individuals' dependence on it and to encourage participation in it - not through compulsory mechanisms but by exerting upward pressure on wage levels. It is worth reflecting that the introduction of a citizens' income would achieve both of these objectives without the need for further regulation of either workers or employers⁽⁴⁵⁾. More immediately, it is crucial to understand the extent to which this set of experiences can provide the basis for a devastating public critique of the failure of the neoliberal project.

It is crucial both to understand and publicly to expose this fact - the neoliberal failure to reduce bureaucracy - for two reasons. Firstly, it simply marks an inherent failure of neoliberalism on its own terms. Secondly, we learn something very important if we ask why this failure has occurred. Why the need to impose all of these targets and constraints? In most cases, the answer is simple, but devastatingly revealing of neoliberal assumptions. Neoliberalism maintains that all human relationships should be conducted through the medium of commodity-exchange and should be characterised by high levels of individualised competition. Nothing else works, it firmly believes.

The trouble is, people just don't get this. Teachers and students foolishly carry on as if they were engaged in some kind of collaborative exercise, instead of

understanding that their relationship should be merely that between the buyer and the seller of a service. The same is equally true of nurses and their patients. Even in commercial enterprises, co-workers have a pesky habit of co-operating and collaborating when they should be falling over themselves to outdo each other for the meagre available rewards (status, pay, relative security). As such, neoliberalism believes that individuals must be made to compete, to individualise themselves, to reduce their understanding of their relationships to a set of transactions the results of which can be clearly measured, evaluated and compared in market terms.

It was Michel Foucault who first identified this key difference between neoliberalism and classical liberalism: where the latter believes that human beings are naturally competitive, acquisitive and entrepreneurial, neoliberalism is afraid that their annoying tendency to co-operate might be just too ingrained, and so takes upon itself the task of enforcing competitive relations in every imaginable sphere of life⁽⁴⁶⁾. The sense of compulsion produced by such a strategy is experienced as oppressive and intrusive by citizens in all walks of life today, in both the public and the private sectors. The Left will miss a historic opportunity if it allows the resulting anti-bureaucratic sentiment to be captured and exploited by right-wing populists, used as an excuse for further attacks on the principles of the public sector and the welfare state. If we can take a clear, firm, decisive line - both practically and polemically - against this unpopular and unproductive feature of contemporary capitalist culture, then we could control the political agenda for a decade to come. If we do not, then we can say goodbye to the last remnants of the legacy of 1945.

Authority, Democracy and Collective Intelligence... If the state isn't always right, and the market isn't always right, then how do we know what's right?

Our response to neoliberalism's enforcement of a paranoid and individualist culture should therefore be both as simple and as strong as possible. Neoliberalism is right to be afraid, not because human beings are 'naturally' co-operative any more than they are 'naturally' competitive, but because two facts are now quite clear. On the one hand, relations of co-

operation, collaboration and the free circulation of ideas are fundamental to almost all creative processes, whether the outcome is great art or better health for specific populations. On the other hand, participants in those processes exhibit no spontaneous urge to re-model them on commodity transactions. Instead of complying with neoliberalism's monomaniacal insistence that this occur, we should surely be trying to construct institutions which can enable these co-operative relationships to maximise their efficiency and their outputs in their own distinctive ways.

What such institutions would look like would obviously vary from case to case. Examples might be schools wherein staff, parents and students deliberate extensively and make shared decisions over policy, curriculum and programme. Back in 1961, Raymond Williams made the excellent observation that real education for democratic citizenship ought to include extensive practise in the conduct of meetings and the organisation of collective decision-making. Does this sound absurdly utopian? Go look at a Quaker school: they've been doing it for decades, with excellent results⁽⁴⁷⁾. In fact the movement to establish democratic school councils in UK schools is stronger today than it ever has been, as schools look for autonomous ways to resist the external imposition of neoliberal agendas⁽⁴⁸⁾. It's remarkable that this tendency has had so little public attention, although it may be only because of a lack of media interest that government has not yet been motivated to attack it.

This example might bring to mind some of the more notorious examples from the history of progressive schooling. So let us be clear that what we imagine here is not the kind of utopia wherein children alone would be permitted to determine their educational future. As Fielding and Moss propose in their recent book *The Common School*⁽⁴⁹⁾, the school should be understood as a common resource, in which students, and indeed parents, would be only two stake-holding groups (others would include staff and the wider public)⁽⁵⁰⁾.

Of course, this fact was clearly recognised in the pre-Thatcherite system of school governance that brought together elected politicians (through Local Education Authorities) and members of the public (as school governors) in the governance of schools. Thatcherites and Blairites may have been partially correct that parents did not have as much immediate and direct representation in this set-up as they should have done, but their proposal that parents, understood as

customers, should become the sole sovereign constituency, panders to the worst kind of populism while excluding the wider public altogether from the equation. And of course, neither the neoliberals nor their paternalist predecessors have shown much interest in actually empowering either students or staff. What we - closely following Fielding and Moss - would envisage would not be a situation in which any one of these constituencies would be handed sovereign authority, or one in which all authority would be abolished. Instead it would be a situation in which authority emerged collectively from the deliberations of all the constituencies involved.

The question of authority is crucial here. There is a widespread sense today that our society suffers from a lack of sources of authority. While it is sometimes acknowledged that this is a direct result of neoliberal capitalism's tendency to erode and undermine all forms of authority other than wealth and celebrity (so children do not respect teachers because the wider culture teaches them that only the rich and famous are worthy of respect), this acknowledgement normally only comes from conservatives, who hope for the restoration of traditional forms of authority, real or imagined. We argue instead that once traditional forms of authority have been displaced by processes of modernisation, they cannot simply be restored; instead, authority can now only be invested where it is truly legitimate, which is to say where everyone who is expected to submit to it has had a say in determining exactly what it is they will be expected to submit to.

Children should learn to respect teachers not because we tell them to, but because they have a real stake in the institution that the teachers represent: a real stake, not a merely symbolic one. We're talking about students being taught to co-operate and assist in the running of schools here: not just being given uniforms, school sports, and other residual private-school paraphernalia.

Neoliberalism is historically associated with an intensification of certain kinds of authoritarianism, whether its official forms are socially conservative or socially liberal.⁽⁶¹⁾ For example, while it should be no surprise to find governments of the Right such as Thatcher's enacting authoritarian measures, the Blair government was also notorious for its contempt for civil liberties and traditions such as trial-by-jury, even while it enacted liberalising legislation on issues such as gay equality. Neoliberal governance inevitably tries

to substitute new forms of centralised governmental authority, which are generally partially exempt from political accountability, for the traditional sources of authority which its own economic paradigm undermine: hence, for example, the massive rise in prison populations associated with almost all neoliberal governments. But authoritarianism simply can't substitute for the lack of emotional bonds between individuals and between different social groups which result from social breakdown, despite the implicit claim of neoliberal governance that it can: at its worst, this situation sees entire societies trapped in a bad feedback loop, as violence and social dislocation provoke ever-more authoritarian responses from the state, responses which only exacerbate the problems they purport to address.

This discussion of authority brings us back, briefly, to the theme of the role to government in facilitating creative and collaborative relations. Of course it is deeply problematic if paternalism becomes the only way of imagining accumulated collective intelligence and the authority that it should convey. This is true of almost all 'traditional' institutions and practices: they tend to assume that the collective intelligence of the community can only be accumulated and transferred across generations by particular individuals or institutions and through highly prescribed means. But it should not be forgotten that even such traditional forms of knowledge-transfer involve a kind of gift relationship between generations. The current wave of explicitly generational resentment being expressed by people in their 20s⁽⁶²⁾ therefore completely misrecognises the nature of generational conflict and what is always at stake in it. What is always at stake is not some notion of intra-generational 'debt' or 'obligation', but the question of how collective authority can be constituted and re-constituted. The issue is not what the baby-boomers owe to their children or grandchildren. The issue is how we find ways to constitute forms of collective authority that we can all share and all respect.

Neoliberalism often links up with and amplifies the destructive element in anti-traditional tendencies in that it tries to remove authority from established sites (teachers, parents, doctors, the church), while promising to disperse it. In fact what it does is to disperse authority to individuals in such a way that they can only exercise it as consumers, while all strategic decision-making is delegated to managers or to corporate interests (or both). Consumers are offered

choices, but they are not offered the opportunity to participate in real decision-making about long-term goals and priorities. Neoliberalism allows for no other way of thinking about the differing and overlapping sets of interest which might constitute political constituencies than to think about them in terms of the maximisation or narrowing of individual 'choice'; as such, it ultimately removes the possibility of meaningful democracy from the political equation altogether.

Where consumer / user 'feedback' plays a role in the neoliberal administration of services, its role is invariably to discipline workers rather than to empower users in any meaningful way. This is clearly demonstrable in practice, but it is also demonstrable *a priori* given that such feedback processes are invariably located outside of the processes which actually generate service-delivery. In a properly democratic situation, processes of user-feedback would be immanent to the mechanisms of service design and delivery, so that users could play an active and participatory role in shaping their services, rather than simply selecting from a range of pre-determined options.

In fact this is precisely the idea that has been developed by radical economists, who give the name 'co-production' to the practice of collaborative engagement between users and providers in the delivery of public services⁽⁶³⁾. The co-production idea is apparently simple and self-evidently benign, but our analysis here should make clear just how radical its implications are. Co-production is predicated on the recognition that services such as education cannot be understood as commodities which can be bought and sold: rather, education is an inherently collaborative process which requires a high level of co-operative communication between all parties to it. To impose a neoliberal, consumerist model on the process both distorts it and proves ultimately to be radically inefficient, to the extent that it leads to an enormous waste of energy and potential. From a cybernetic perspective, co-production offers an approach which is actually far more efficient, enabling as much of the energy in the system as possible to be converted and re-deployed for the system's own benefit.

What would this mean in concrete terms? Quite simply, it would mean that the time and effort spent by teachers and pupils in passing standardised tests might instead be spent in discussing and experimenting with ways to actually improve the experience of school and its educational outcomes. This sounds unproblematic, but it is crucial to appreciate just how fundamentally it offends

the basic presuppositions of neoliberal theory and practice, and how savagely neoliberal forces are likely to attack any attempts to make co-production a reality. At the same time, because it represents a real instantiation of the idea that authority should be democratically constituted, it also runs against the grain of conservative responses to contemporary social problems. A comparable policy proposal in the field of media production and broadcasting, informed by identical principles, is Dan Hind's concept of an open and democratic system for the public commissioning of investigative journalism: such a system would not simply abandon the public sphere to the logic of the market or impose arbitrary norms and standards from above, but would enable authoritative forms of knowledge to be genuinely and democratically co-produced.

The conservative response to the attack on traditional sources of authority is to want to reconstitute these sources. In recent years this has been the approach of both 'Red Tory' Phillip Blond and 'Blue Labour' Maurice Glasman. But the problem with all such attempts to return to traditional sources of authority is that they completely overlook the question of why those sources have been so easy to dismantle, and where the desire to transcend them came from: this was a desire which neoliberalism tapped into and amplified, but which it did not create. In fact, if we go back to the moment of the 1960s when the challenge to traditional authority passed a critical threshold, it is quite clear that the real force motivating this challenge was not an anarchic desire for the displacement of all authority, but the claim that real authority - both between generations and within institutions - can only be constituted collectively, and democratically. It was the demand to have their voices heard - not, as right-wing parodists always imagined, simply to dismantle all social forms - which motivated the radicals of the 1960s and 70s.

The Function of Management

This observation, along with our persistent references to 'bureaucratism' and 'anti-bureaucracy' raises an important set of questions. Do we imagine that institutions like schools, or an entire health service or the BBC - or, for that matter, commercial enterprises - can be run entirely by their workers and users, without the intervention or assistance of managerial professionals? And do we share the widespread belief that decentralisation is an inherent good, that 'localism' is necessarily the best way to organise all public services?

The answer to both questions is 'no'. This is firstly because the problem of management - of how to execute decisions - does not go away even if those decisions have been arrived at democratically. Democratic institutions desperately need effective, dedicated, innovative managers. But there is all the difference in the world between effective management - or good governance - and managerialism. The latter term we understand to be more-or-less synonymous with 'bureaucracy', and both words designate not just a benign process of organisation, but a situation in which an organisational or technocratic group arrogates authority to itself and begins to govern either in its own narrow interests or in the exclusive interests of its immediate superiors: for example, imposing regulatory processes which serve no purpose other than to weaken the autonomy, without maximising the efficiency, of the regulated⁶⁵. This is precisely what happens when, for example, the business managerial class adopts the ideology of 'shareholder value' according to which the only responsibility of management is to maximise share price, at any cost to workers or customers, while public sector management - largely failing to develop any appropriate professional ideology of its own - simply attempts to imitate and import the habits of the private sector.

What we need instead in the public sector is surely a true class of professional managers with an appropriate vision of their role in the 21st century. Let's look again to music culture for inspiration. What if the ideal that university managers sought to emulate wasn't that of corporate asset-strippers, but of the most effective managers of bands and other recording artists, integral members of a collaborative team whose ultimate output is to be judged in terms of its innovatory potential rather than its market value? In fact, wouldn't this be a more appropriate model? What do we want our academics to resemble more: small groups of creative innovators, or factory workers in a Chinese Special Economic Zone? Which would you rather have teaching you or your children? And wouldn't most managers really prefer think of themselves as the Brian Epsteins and Tony Wilsons of public service, rather than the latter-day Gradgrinds which neoliberalism insist they become⁶⁶?

Of course, the public sector is in fact full of competent, dedicated managers. Many of them take on themselves the often-contradictory roles of simply overseeing competent administration (itself an often

essential, albeit thankless task) while also trying to cope with the demands of the external environment in such a way as to protect spaces of creative innovation and ongoing professionalism for themselves and those they manage. But the pressures placed upon them to conform to a neoliberal ideal are frequently intolerable (literally: we all know how prevalent stress-related illnesses are amongst this group of people).

One of the mechanisms deployed by neoliberal governance in this context is the insistence that management subscribe to a utilitarian and/or entrepreneurial ethos which is quite at odds with the traditions of professionalism which still tend to inform the assumptions of most 'front-line' staff. This is sometimes justified in terms of a set of assumptions derived directly from public-choice theory, which assumes that traditional professional ideologies are in fact entirely hypocritical and self-serving, hiding a culture of conservatism and embedded privilege behind the mask of public service. From this point of view, a key role for management is to discipline and deliberately to disaggregate an otherwise inert and partially incompetent bloc of service 'producers' (i.e. public sector workers) in the interests of their benighted 'consumers' (i.e. service users).

What is entirely prevented from emerging in this scenario is a specific professional ethos appropriate to contemporary public-sector management, which neither apes the techniques of the corporate sector nor expects public-sector management to be a task that can be carried out easily by front-line staff (GPs, former lecturers or teachers, etc.) with minimal training. Arguably, health-service management has emerged as a specific profession in recent decades; which would explain why the current government is intent on dismantling the entire layer of existing managerial and administrative institutions in the NHS, devolving authority to GPs who have neither the skills nor the desire to assume it, thus creating a vacuum at the level of strategic decision-making and resource-deployment which will clearly be filled by private agencies and consultancies. It is worth stressing here that the huge growth in management consultancy - not just as an economic sector but as a specific form of knowledge (which assumes that systemic organisational problems can invariably be solved through the application of a set of abstract principles and transferrable techniques, which can best be applied by those who are not 'encumbered' by any deep knowledge of the organisations involved) - is

both a direct symptom and an ongoing cause of the de-skilling of management itself under neoliberalism.

So we do not subscribe to the fantasy of professionals somehow 'just getting on with the job', free from all interference from management, any more than we acknowledge the sovereignty of management or its legitimacy as the sole representative of the public interest. This fantasy of 'management-free professionalism' is one that is promoted by the Right more than the Left, which is one reason why many on the Left remain suspicious of anti-bureaucratic posturing. What this fantasy does is to occlude and evacuate the terrain wherein negotiations between professionals, managers, service users and other stakeholders should be carried out.

This space of strategic decision-making is precisely the domain of politics as such; but what neoliberal, market populist, centralising and managerialist fantasies all imagine - in slightly different ways - is that the inherent difficulty and inconclusiveness which characterise this domain could somehow be done away with, if some logic other than that of deliberation and political negotiation could be allowed to govern instead. The only effective response to these anti-political and anti-democratic fantasies is to insist that there is simply no substitute for democratic politics (by which we mean collective participation in decision-making, not just the delegation of all authority to elected representatives) as the only legitimate means by which the different interests and opinions in play in such contexts can be negotiated.

The Trouble with Localism

An identical set of remarks could be made with reference to debates around the value of 'localism'. The question of whether decisions should be taken and resources allocated at a local, regional, national or supra-national level is simply never one that can be settled in advance. Democracy is the process by which collectivities determine, challenge and re-determine not just their future actions but also the very limits of their identity; and this includes their spatial identity. As such, it demands that the question of the appropriate level for decisions to be taken about the deployment of resources be itself an open question, subject to deliberation and possible revision. We by no means reject the general imperative to dissolve and disaggregate power wherever appropriate. But we point out once again that democracy is not only about the devolution of existing concentrations of power: at times it must also involve the deliberate constitution of

powerful institutions, capable of executing collective decisions. Any *a priori* preference for 'the local' risks leaving populations entirely at the mercy of those agents with huge, large scale, international concentrations of power at their disposal.

At this stage, it is probably worth making some clarificatory remarks about our attitude to democracy and the state more generally. We have resolutely critiqued any simplistic anti-statism, but we are not naive believers in the power or benevolence of the state either, any more than we believe that the Labour Party or representative politics can be sufficient to for the task of making collective power possible. As Jeremy has argued elsewhere, 'the state' (if such a term is useful at all) is best understood as a complex assemblage of institutions and constituencies. While this complex assemblage will always be subject to very heavy pressure from the most powerful social forces, it can also be used by others to intervene in wider power relations with significant democratising effects⁽⁶⁶⁾.

As Jeremy has also argued, the current crisis of political democracy's⁽⁶⁷⁾ in large part a function of 'Fordist' democratic structures inherited from the moment of mass-manufacturing in the mid-twentieth century - proving unable to function effectively in the era of dynamic 'post-Fordist' capitalism⁽⁶⁸⁾. Under present circumstances, the sluggish and myopic institutions of Westminster democracy struggle to keep up with the fluidity and complexity of contemporary culture. The implication of this is that while democratic reform of the British state - strengthening of local government, proportional representation for the House of Commons, abolition of the Lords, etc. - is desperately needed, any effective democratic renewal would require a far more daring vision of reform. Such a vision would recognise the extent to which democracy's 'long revolution' has been stalled by neoliberalism, and the consequent need to develop a new programme for participatory democracy at many levels, in order to restart it in a form appropriate for the Facebook era.

This would mean apprehending today's social media and popular culture - Facebook and even the now-waning X Factor - as obstructed forms of popular involvement, degraded anticipations of a new, cyberspatially-enabled public space. For, although Facebook and the X Factor are driven by the enjoyment of social interaction, they individualise and commodify this sociality. Perhaps what the success of the X Factor and other 'event TV' demonstrates is the continuing desire for a shared public time: a desire that

has not been eliminated by all the individualising and attention-dispersing tendencies of neoliberal culture. A key task for the modern Left is to make such desire fulfillable.

History makes very clear that no radical reform is ever enacted by governments acting in isolation: only a complex ecology of party politics, 'street level' activism, cultural radicalism and alternative institution-building can ever deliver real social change. This is why we applaud without reservation the actions of the Occupy movement⁽⁶⁹⁾, as well as those anarchist-inspired anti-capitalists who operate entirely outside the political mainstream, insofar as they do work to open up small spaces for creative thought and action. To take the case of education in particular, it will almost certainly be necessary for the current and next generations of progressives to experiment with the creation of autonomous institutions and practices before we can hope to bring public education into the form that we would like. Free schools, open-access and voluntarily run provision at every level (from pre-school to postgraduate) will probably have to be part of our agenda, just as it was for the pioneers of the Workers' Education Associations in the UK and similar institutions elsewhere.

We should not accept, however, that this would be an adequate substitute, in the long-term, for a genuinely democratic public education system. To withdraw from that system entirely, creating our own little worlds of autonomous schools and alternative communities, is exactly what current Conservative policy is designed to encourage us to do, with its 'Free Schools' policy and its 'Big Society' rhetoric. This is no surprise, because such a strategy would leave wider power relations absolutely untouched. An uncritical localism always risks playing into the hands of such a programme.

Real Radical Ideas 4:

Hilary Wainwright's *Reclaim the State* (Verso 2003) shows how democratic initiatives across the world have been experimenting with more participatory and consultative forms for many years now.

For example, the famous participatory budget process pioneered in Porto Alegre has been imitated by municipalities all over the world.

Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright's *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Democracy* (Verso 2003) is another collection of detailed studies of localised experiments in participatory and deliberative democracy, such as the Porto Alegre budgeting process, or the decentralised planning process deployed by the leftist government of Kerala, and important conceptual and practical reflections on the institutionalisation of deliberative democracy, with regard to issues such as environmental management as well as municipal government.

In countries such as Venezuela and Bolivia new forms of neighbourhood-level governance and devolved democracy are carrying forward the egalitarian and democracy spirit of democratic reform.

Is it really unimaginable that the UK, supposedly one of the cradles of modern democracy, could start to catch up such countries in the pursuit of a more genuinely democratic society?

Part Five: Summing up and Moving On Winning the War

We would propose that a political programme informed by the preceding analysis would not only be morally, ethically, and aesthetically desirable - a route to the 'Good Society' - but that it would also have the strategic virtue of being easy to popularise. Because the fact is - and since the crisis of 2008 this has become widely apparent and publicly recognised - that neither neoliberalism nor social conservatism can actually give people what they want. What people want is both security (as the conservatives tend to stress) and the opportunity for creative enjoyment and self-empowerment (which is what neoliberalism promises, in its very narrow and self-limiting form). In fact, only a radically democratic collective politics can properly deliver both of these things, and it is increasingly apparent that many workers' and citizens' experience of neoliberalism makes this clear to them.

Our lines of attack can be several and persuasive here. On the one hand, as we have shown, neoliberal governance does not even meet its own criteria of efficiency in any convincing way. On the other hand, the concrete experience of neoliberal managerialism provokes a visceral moral and aesthetic response in large sections of the public that is almost always negative. Just think about the way that Ofsted demands of teachers a level of lesson planning and powerpoint-focussed didacticism that is simply inimical to the creative, improvisational collaborative dynamic of teaching, in a manner which infantilises and pacifies both teachers and students. This kind of education is inherently boring and it's supposed to be boring. Its precise and deliberate function is to teach students to dislike learning and to mistrust their own creative potential, especially the creative potential of groups, especially cross-generational groups. What else could we possibly get from an education system that is explicitly intended only to meet 'the needs of industry', when it is quite clear that 'industry' cannot offer anything but boring, repetitive and un-creative work to the vast majority of its workforce? This is a situation that nobody wants, except the agents of 'industry' itself.

But there's the rub. The reason that 'moderate', 'mainstream', 'centre-left' politics has been quite unable to mobilise the vast pools of latent hostility to this neoliberal paradigm, is precisely its unwillingness to face this foe. What the great reformers of the past often realised, however - and what most contemporary policy-makers seem unable or unwilling to understand - is that the constitution of democratic institutions, if effective, will inevitably pose a threat to entities which already wield power in those fields, who will invariably seek to neutralise such threats before they can establish themselves. To put this very bluntly - News Corporation, the Daily Mail and financial elites simply will do their best to oppose any serious moves towards effective democratic reform in the UK. Any political project that lacks a plan to circumvent their efforts, or which doesn't have the stomach for a fight, cannot hope to achieve democratic goals. Appeals for 'one nation' just won't cut it in such a fight.

It is understandable that politicians should feel nervous of taking on such forces. In all likelihood, were they to do so, there would be casualties: be sure, for example, that Murdoch would have tried to hound out any effective left leader which the slightest shred of potential scandal in their past, before he was so publicly weakened and humiliated by the phone-hacking scandal. But this is why leadership requires courage, and especially in the face of the crisis of neoliberalism today, we need both. This is also why a crucial task for any progressive government must be to facilitate the development and self-organisation of other sources of power: from local government and trade unions to democratic news media. At the same time, it is absolutely imperative that forces outside parliament - from the unions to the NGOs to local community and civil society groups - be prepared to support and defend any government willing to pursue such an agenda. If we do not create a political movement sufficiently broad-based to offer real support to a besieged government, then we are unlikely to be able to persuade any mainstream political party to pursue a radical agenda. This is a powerful lesson from the experience of the late 1990s. New Labour came to power at the same time that the popular protest movement against car culture, Reclaim the Streets, was at the peak of its popularity and influence. But the latter made no realistic effort to pressure the former, and quickly disintegrated into irrelevance, while the unions sat on their hands for most of the next decade,

praying that Gordon Brown premiership would be different from a Blair one. Is it any wonder that New Labour quickly came to be wholly captured by neoliberal lobbyists and ideologues? If we don't want that to happen again, we must be prepared to engage, critically but constructively.

For the greatest danger facing us right now is not that neoliberalism will simply persist, but that something worse will take its place. In the UK, the coalition is pursuing an agenda which is in some senses no longer neoliberal, but is rather a true revival of Victorian liberalism: an assault on the entire edifice of the welfare state. At the political fringes it is not the radical left but the resurgent far right - as Jon Cruddas and Jonathan Rutherford⁽⁶⁰⁾ rightly warned some time ago - that proves increasingly attractive to Labour's lost voters. Across much of Europe, right-wing populism is already shaping the political agenda. Under these circumstances, a truly democratic populism and a truly popular democracy is the only political response that can be adequate to the times.

Summary

In this paper we have offered a partially speculative analysis of the current political situation and some of the opportunities presented by it for the democratic left. For the sake of clarity, we will close by summarising some of the key programmatic points.

We note:

- The widespread unpopularity of managerialist strategies in both the private and public sectors.
- The latent democratic potential of emergent cultural practices and communications technologies.
- The redundancy of neoliberal, conservative and classical liberal strategies of governance.
- The emergence of a popular protest movement strongly informed by values of democracy, participation and organisational experimentalism.
- The inadequacy of nostalgic communitarianism and cultural conservatism as bases of progressive politics.
- The resource offered in this context by the radical democratic tradition of the New Left.

- The potential for an alternative programme for the public sector, taking participatory democracy and co-responsibility as its key values, already implicit in key policy documents such as the Compass and New Economics Foundation pamphlets on 'co-production' and the Compass pamphlet Dare More Democracy.
- The potential to extend these principles across the private sector through the encouragement of co-operative principles of ownership and working practice.

At the level of strategy, we propose:

- The continued and intensified mobilisation of a popular democratic critique of neoliberal values, which celebrates the creative virtues of collaboration and co-operation implicit both in emergent cultural forms and in the best traditions of the labour and co-operative movements.
- A cautious but courageous acceptance of the threat posed by this agenda to powerful vested interests, and the inevitability of their hostility to it.
- An experimental openness to the possibility of productive relationships between political actors from a range of political traditions and with a range of institutional or counter-institutional commitments.

A political programme informed by our analysis would include:

- Reform of public sector institutions in line with values of radical democracy and co-production (for example, the institution of governance structures for schools characterised by real participation in deliberative decision-making by all stake-holders).
- Abolition of the machinery of neoliberal regulation: for example, league tables and standardised testing.
- Active engagement on the part of government to promote democracy and co-ownership in the private sector.

- Moves away from 'workfare' towards the implementation of a citizens' income.
- Active engagement on the part of government to facilitate and encourage the development of institutions of collective power: beginning but not ending with aggressive moves to raise levels of union density and participation in local government.
- Active engagement by government to promote the development of a creative and supportive professional ethos of public-sector management.
- Active support from government for the development of open-source media and social networking technologies facilitating the development of the non-corporate media sector.

These measures - most of which could feasibly be implemented either immediately or in the medium term - could have a dramatic effect very quickly. Teachers and lecturers would be free to devote their energies towards the enthusiastic delivery of their subjects, while students would no longer be consigned to the role of consumers of pacifying Powerpoint presentations. Public service broadcasters, musicians and other artists would have the resources and the confidence to develop innovative and experimental culture. Instead of fatalistically accepting the idea that things can only get worse, all of these groups would feel, perhaps for the first time in their lives, that history was on their side.

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Afterword: Commerce versus Capital?

We do not imagine this paper to amount to some kind of absolute manifesto for a future Labour government or for the organised Left in general. To a large extent its concerns have been limited to the domain of public-sector administration. We have made suggestive remarks with reference the wider economy however, and have cited Robin Murray's work on the possible futures of the co-operative movement, as well as referring to the general crisis of political representation. We acknowledge also that any political programme at the present time must take account of its ecological implications. We therefore offer here some final reflections on possible implications of our line of thinking for these various policy areas.

In the area of economics, our stress on the importance of collaborative creativity has significant implications. We note recent work in progressive economics such as Mariana Mazzucato's *The Entrepreneurial State* and the ongoing contributions of the New Economics Foundation, and also their interesting resonances with the ideas of radical philosophers such as Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, and the general congruence of all such ideas with our own. The implication of these convergent ideas would be a recognition of the important difference between entrepreneurial, commercial and creative activity on the one hand, and capitalism as such on the other. The latter term is one that is almost never used with any precision by British politicians or commentators. So let us be very clear. Properly speaking, 'capitalism' does not refer to any or all kinds of business, commercial or entrepreneurial activity. Nor does it necessarily refer to a total social system. What it refers to is the process and practice of capital accumulation, which is not only the pursuit of profit, but also the unlimited and unrestrained pursuit of profits sufficiently vast that nobody could merely live from them, however luxurious their lifestyle.

One of the great lies of capitalist ideology is the claim that all commercial and entrepreneurial activity tends towards the logic of capitalism. In fact they tend in quite different directions. This is not a question of the distinction between bad capitalists and good capitalists, between predators and parasites, but between commerce and capitalism conceived as two quite different types of process and activity. The one is innovative, creative, dynamic, promoting - as Adam Smith recognised - peaceful and cosmopolitan relations. The other is monopolistic, inegalitarian,

exploitative, tending towards concentrations of power and the manipulated homogenisation of markets. One is the small business, struggling to promote a new idea. The other is the unscrupulous bank, forcing them to fail so they can strip their assets. Limiting the power of the latter while protecting the autonomy of the former - perhaps through the state provision of loans, credit and investment - would be a key task for any progressive government. Making this distinction would also open the strategic possibility of weakening the alliance between corporations and small businesses that has been so crucial to the success of neoliberalism.

We have mentioned here, and written about elsewhere, the deep crisis of representative democracy. A clear implication of our arguments here would be the need for political leaders finally to accept the limited and declining effectiveness of institutions inherited from the historical moment of the early twentieth century. The institution of something like a permanent democratic commission, tasked with the ongoing investigation of new means of collective deliberation - from local assemblies to online voting - would be an obvious response. At the same time this would require that political leaders begin to take seriously the potential significance of new self-organised deliberative institutions such as the People's Assemblies.

Finally, what would be the implications of our thought here for the politics of the environment? One important implication would be to emphasise the extent to which 'natural' resources form an integral part of the productive matrix out of which all real wealth is produced (and upon which capital preys, parasitically). From such a perspective, the aim of progressive politics would not be merely to conserve the environment in some static state, but would be positively to enhance its long-term productive potential, while also adding to, not subtracting from, the quality of life of the citizenry. On a practical level, resuming and intensifying the German-style move towards a devolved and de-capitalised energy market which Ed Miliband himself pioneered as Energy secretary would be an obvious first step.

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- (1) On these pathologies, see Franco 'Bifo' Berardi (2009); *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation*, London: Minor Compositions.
- (2) See <http://blog.lwbooks.co.uk/?p=90> for further commentary on this event.
- (3) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03srj6m>
- (4) <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/soundings/manifesto.html>
<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/owen-jones-agenda-for-hope-we-want-a-fairer-society--and-heres-how-we-can-achieve-it-9086440.html>
- (5) See Owen Smith & Rachel Reeves (eds) (2013) *One Nation: Power, Hope, Community*, One Nation Register; Jon Cruddas (ed) (2013) *One Nation Labour* (Labour List). Both books can be downloaded free.
- (6) See Graeme Cooke and Rick Muir (2012) *The Relational State* (IPPR).
- (7) Of course, the fact that a transaction is a type of relation rather than something different from a relation problematises the basic conceptual distinctions on which their analysis rests. See Jeremy Gilbert (2013) *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*. Pluto Press.
- (8) <http://www.newstatesman.com/2013/09/can-miliband-speak-england>
- (9) See Tristram Hunt in *One Nation Labour*.
- (10) Graeme Cooke (2011) *Still Partying Like It's 1995*. IPPR.
- (11) See Jeremy Gilbert (2013) *Common Ground*. Pluto.
- (12) We are indebted to Aditya Chakraborty for his explication and critique of the history of this idea. See <http://culturalstudiesresearch.org/?p=386>
- (13) Neal Lawson (2008) *Machines, Markets and Morals: The new politics of a democratic NHS* (Compass) <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/compass-nhs-web-final1.pdf>
- (14) We use the term 'modernity' here in a fairly casual sense, merely to designate 'the contemporary'. Many commentators since the 1970s have suggested that the current historical moment is better understood in terms of its 'post-modernity'. We remain sympathetic to this view, provided that 'post-modernity' is understood as a historical moment and condition that is replete with both problems and possibilities for a progressive politics, rather than as being defined by some simple or inevitable political character. However, we don't want to confuse readers who are not familiar with the debates around this term, and we don't want to involve ourselves with those debates here; for this reason, we have retained the casual usage of the term 'modernity' to designate the current moment, and the experience of contemporaneity in general, through most of the paper.
- (15) We ask any readers who have followed the recent attempts to reclaim Burke for the 'Left' to ask themselves if they really believe that an avowed enemy of democracy can be a useful source for progressive ideas in the 21st century. See <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/sunder-katwala/burke-norman-and-glasman-post-liberalism-in-britain-today>.
- (16) See Ross McKibbin *Parties and People: England 1914-1951*, Oxford University Press 2010.
- (17) See <http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/JG1968.pdf>
- (18) Mark Fisher *Capitalist Realism: Is there No Alternative?*, Zero books, 2009.
- (19) A useful term from Raymond Williams.
- (20) See, for example: Timothy Bewes & Jeremy Gilbert (eds) *Cultural Capitalism: Politics After New Labour*, Lawrence & Wishart, 2000; Jeremy Gilbert (1998) 'The Hard Centre: New Labour's Technocratic Hegemony' <http://www.signsofthetimes.org.uk/pamphlet1/The%20Hard%20Centre.html>; Alan Finlayson *Making Sense of New Labour*, Lawrence & Wishart, 2003; Stuart Hall 'New Labour's Double Shuffle' <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/articles/nov03.html>; Jeremy's reply to Stuart Hall in the same journal <http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/The%20Second%20Wave.pdf>; Gerry Hassan (ed.) *After Blair: Politics after the New Labour Decade*, Lawrence & Wishart, 2006; Jo Littler (2013) 'Meritocracy as Plutocracy: The Marketisation of Equality Under New Labour' http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/newformations/pdfs/nf8081_littler.pdf.
- (21) <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/journals/articles/nov03.html>
- (22) See Daniel Dorling *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists*, Policy Press 2010, for an excellent demolition of all meritocratic thinking.
- (23) <http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/The%20Second%20Wave.pdf>
- (24) See Stewart Player & Colin Leys *The Plot Against the NHS*, The Merlin Press 2010.
- (25) Compare these two speeches from 1999 and 2005: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/460009.stm ; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4287370.stm
- (26) See Graeme Cooke (2011) *Still Partying Like It's 1995*. IPPR.
- (27) See for instance Jodi Dean (2009), *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*. Duke University Press.
- (28) See Christine Harold *Ourspace: Resisting the Corporate Control of Culture*, University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- (29) See <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/jeremy-gilbert/capitalism-creativity-and-crisis-in-music-industry>
- (30) Precisely as Hardt & Negri would have predicted: See their *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000.
- (31) See, for instance, Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to its Own Past*, Faber and Faber, 2011; Mark Fisher, *Ghosts Of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, Zero books, 2014; Adam Curtis, interviewed by Rob Pollard, for *New Statesman*, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/02/adam-curtis-interview>
- (32) See Sean O'Hagan, 'A Working Class Hero Is Something to Be ... But Not in Britain's Posh Culture', <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/jan/26/working-class-hero-posh-britain-public-school>; Adamski interviewed by Actress, <http://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/18657/1/adamski-interviewed>
- (33) Pierre Levy (1999) *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*
- (34) See Graeme Cooke and Rick Muir (2012) *The Relational State* (IPPR).
- (35) See George Leckie and Harvey Goldstein, 'The limitations of using school league tables to inform school choice', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)*, Volume 172, Issue 4, pages 835-851, October 2009, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rssa.2009.172.issue-4/issuetoc>
- (36) See Beck, Lash, Giddens (1994) *Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Polity; Beck, Ulrich (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage.
- (37) Thanks to Will Davies for encouraging us to make this point explicit.

(38) See Alyson Pollock's report into primary care trusts at <http://www.bmj.com/content/322/7292/964.1?sid=12c5cec5-fd63-46d1-9c05-9c985021452f>

(39) Incidentally, this observation problematises Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's polemical distinction between 'the public' and 'the common', by which they seek to differentiate the highly regulated forms of public good which they associate with 'socialism' from the more genuinely democratic forms of shared resource which they call the 'commons' and associate - in their own highly idiosyncratic lexicon - with 'communism' (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/03/communism-capitalism-socialism-property>). While we are in many ways close to, and partially inspired by, Hardt and Negri's general perspective, we would argue that these distinctions are highly problematic - not to mention sectarian in their implications - in that they simply occlude the necessary political work which goes on in the active construction of 'commons': a work which can often only take place in the space of 'the public', through the agency of governmental institutions, as well as other actors.

(40) See, for example, Michael Rustin (2013) 'Lessons of the May Day Manifesto', in *Renewal* Vol. 21, No. 1, Lawrence & Wishart.

(41) <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/author/simon-critchley/>

(42) Raymond Williams *The Long Revolution*, Chatto & Windus, 1961.

(43) For excellent historical analyses of neoliberalism, see Colin Leys *Market Driven Politics: Neoliberal Democracy and the Public Interest*, Verso 2003; David Harvey *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press 2004.

(44) For more detailed discussions of the history of the democratic challenge to which neoliberalism was a response, see Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso 2005; <http://www.faqs.org/periodicals/201007/2145965981.html>; <http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/JG1968.pdf>

(45) http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7084865.stm

(46) Which of course the Right only want to use as weapons against the public sector, rather than against corporate power)

(47) We realise that calls for a basic Citizens Income, a historic objective of both the radical left and the libertarian right, will sound very strange at a moment when resentment of welfare claimants is apparently dominating the public mood. But we note two facts in response. Firstly, recent polling evidence demonstrates very clearly that resentment of welfare claimants is based on a hopeless public misunderstanding of the facts (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-public-wrong-about-nearly-everything-survey-shows-8697821.html>); this misunderstanding is surely exacerbated by an over-complex, and therefore opaque, system of entitlements and tax credits, of which too few members of the public recognise themselves as beneficiaries. A basic income policy would help to overcome this difficulty, and a campaign for it would force the public debate over welfare to address some of the statistical realities which have thus far been obfuscated. Secondly, no other policy we can imagine has the strategic potential completely to transform the long-term political situation in the way that Thatcher's sell-off of social housing in the early 1980s did. Just as Thatcher created an entire class-fraction of working class homeowners with a permanent interest in the speculative economy, a citizens income would have the potential to create an entirely new relationship between citizens, the state and each other in the 21st century.

(48) Michel Foucault *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Palgrave MacMillan 2008.

(49) Or look at education in Alberta. The schools system in this Canadian province is studied by educationalists the world over because of the recurrent finding that it achieves some of the best overall results anywhere in the world. Although it is often cited by Michael Gove (secretary of state for education) as an inspiration for his plans, the fact is that his schemes to promote competition and private provision in the sector in no way resemble

an attempt to implement the Alberta model in the UK: the Alberta model is predicated upon the belief that school selection, streaming, private provision, league tables, and a competitive ethos (at both the school and individual levels) are all thoroughly inimical to the goal of high-quality education: see 1 <http://compassoneducation.org.uk/uncategorized/rhonda-evans-on-albertas-approach-to-education/>

(50) www.schoolcouncils.org

(51) Routledge, 2010.

(52) Of course it is also true that democratic participation would place increasing demands on the free time of parents and others, as would democratic engagement with other spheres of public life. But we take it as read that any political programme which included any of our suggestions here would have to also be addressing the larger fact that the increase in average working hours over recent decades is a direct symptom of the weakness of the labour movement and of the working majority in general, and that any democratic politics worth the name would have to address this problem.

(53) This argument is also made by none other than Philip Blond, both in *Red Tory* (Faber and Faber, 2010) and 'The Ownership State' (<http://www.respublica.org.uk/files/ownership-state>), his report for the ResPublica think-tank.

(54) <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/laurie-penny-rowenna-davies/you-say-you-want-revolution>

(55) See Zoe Gannon and Neal Lawson *Co-Production*, Compass, 2008. <http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/compass/documents/CO-PRODUCTION.pdf>

(56) For the classic analysis of the emergence of neoliberal managerialism in the UK, see John Clarke & Janet Newman *The Managerial State*, Sage 1997.

(57) See also David Armstrong and Michael Rustin (2011) 'What Happened to Democratic Leadership?' <http://www.tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/What%20Happened%20to%20Democratic%20Leadership%2010-11-2011.pdf>

(58) Jeremy Gilbert, *Anticapitalism and Culture: Radical Theory and Popular Politics*, Berg 2008.

(59) See Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Polity 2005.

(60) <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jul/01/labour-patriotism-immigration-identity>

(61) <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/opendemocracy-theme/postmodernity-and-the-crisis-of-democracy>

(62) See <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/ourkingdom/fight-back-reader-on-winter-of-protest>

(63) <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/co-production>; <http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/compass/documents/CO-PRODUCTION.pdf>

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