

## 11. DISPLACING NEOLIBERALISM

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The project of the Kilburn Manifesto grew out of earlier work by *Soundings* writers to understand what we called (following Gramsci) the ‘conjuncture’, in the light of the financial crisis of 2007-8. We were trying to work out what had brought about this crisis of the system of neoliberalism, or unrestrained globalised capitalism, which had come to dominate the western world during the previous three decades. Might there be an opportunity, arising from the damage caused by the crisis, and the discrediting of the institutions – banks and governments in particular – that were responsible for it, for the development of some significant forces for change? Was there a chance for some revival of the progressive projects that had been greatly weakened by the neoliberal ascendancy, and by the determined assault by capital and its political agents on labour and its collective forms of representation and self-defence?

Some of us had considered that a degree of recognition of failure by the dominant elites might be forthcoming, and there might indeed be some concession by them to more enlightened kinds of regulation of the market economy. But such hopes were short-lived. Across Europe, the remedy very quickly adopted for the failure of the neoliberal system was to insist that it be imposed with even greater rigour on economies and societies already ruined by the crisis.<sup>1</sup> The ‘structural adjustment programmes’ (lowering of wages, programmes of privatisation, reductions in public spending) which had in the 1980s been imposed with disastrous effects by the IMF and the ‘Washington Consensus’ on debt-burdened economies in Latin America and Africa were now to be visited on Europe itself. The ‘solution’ to the debt problems imposed by the banking crisis on nations such as Greece, Spain, Iceland, Portugal, Ireland and Italy was to be the restoration of

competitiveness to their economies, even though, in a context of general austerity, and with a single European currency valued by reference to Germany's superior competitive advantage, this was always going to be impossible to achieve.

The fact is that the causes of the 2007-8 financial crisis have been deliberately misrepresented, and with considerable political effect. Its underlying causes were a state of growing inequality and the weakening of the relative position of labour over a long period. (The average real incomes of the American 'middle class' – i.e. working population – have been stagnant for decades, while the wealth and income of the rich have soared.) And the decisive 'symptom' of this situation, which led to the near-breakdown of the financial system, was the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the USA, based as it was on the packaging of unaffordable loans for house-purchase. 'Globalisation' – in the form of the exposure of western labour markets to competition from lower-cost producers – and the assault on the protective institutions of the working population (trade unions, welfare provision) were the means by which this change in the balance of economic power had been brought about during the 1980s and 1990s.

This crisis of 2007-8 was in fact the second major destabilisation of the post-war period. In the first decades after the second world war governments had acquired, through pressure from below and the emergence of a progressive consensus, the power to regulate and stabilise the market economy, and to maintain some balance of power between social classes. This settlement broke down at the end of the 1970s, and neoliberalism was installed as its conservative remedy. But the breakdown of 2007-8 represented the failure of neoliberalism itself. However this crisis was misrepresented just as the first one had been, as essentially a crisis of governmental profligacy and excessive social protection. Despite 'bleeding the patient' having failed to achieve stability over the three decades of neoliberalism, it was decided that the remedy for the second crisis must be further bleeding.<sup>2</sup> The consequences of this continuing disaster are still unfolding, though in relatively slow motion. There is no prospect of success for these policies because without increased demand for goods and services, there can be no enhanced production or investment. The dominant economic policies are indeed nothing but a recipe for a never-ending recession.

So far, the political consequences of this crisis have been scarcely

more positive than the economic. There have indeed been significant upsurges of radical protest, for example in movements in the USA and Britain such as Occupy, and in the rise of new radical political parties such as Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece. Should either of these two parties come to power in general elections, they may indeed be the catalyst for a new stage of the crisis, and for recognition that solutions are needed in which financial capital can no longer call the shots. But more potent than the rise of these new formations of the left has been the upsurge of nationalist and xenophobic movements of the right in many countries, which systematically misidentify structural problems – which are essentially those of impoverishment and class relations – as issues of national and ethnic identity. The control of migration, and the suppression of the cultures of migrant communities, has been widely presented as the central issue to which governments must respond, although migration has only a peripheral relation to the economic problems of European nations. We take strong issue with this definition of the problem in the Manifesto's chapter on race. Although migration has adverse consequences for some sections of the population (for example in competition for jobs), its overall consequences when judged in terms of economic growth and development are probably positive.

The economic situation that currently prevails across all of Europe needs to be understood in its larger international context. The broader condition which this situation of stagnation and political regression reflects is that of the decline in the relative power and wealth of the west, and especially of Europe. For a brief moment, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and of East European Communism, the situation seemed quite the opposite. Never, it seemed, had the west been stronger. We draw attention in our chapter on the international context of this crisis to the catastrophic outcomes of the moment of western triumphalism. We chart the resurgence of a new form of so-called liberal imperialism (so 'liberal' that it restored systematic torture as an instrument of policy), and the contribution this has made to reducing a whole series of states and former states (much of the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine) to disorder and barbarism. This has been a politics of misunderstanding and delusion parallel to the failures of economic governance described above. The repeated error of western governments has been to believe that if dictatorial governments could be undermined or overthrown,

sometimes by direct invasion (Iraq, Afghanistan), sometimes through overt or covert support to dissidents and rebels (Syria, Libya, Ukraine – whose first insurgents were the ‘pro-Europeans’ of western Ukraine), the consequence could be expected to be their replacement by pro-western capitalist democracies. In reality, the major principal outcome of policies based on this belief has been states of civil war, the breakdown of peace and order, and the rise of fundamentalist theocratic movements, deeply hostile to the west and its supposed values. In the Middle East, the west has in fact become an ignorant and unwitting agent in a conflict between branches of Islam that in some ways resembles the Thirty Years War between Protestant and Catholic powers of seventeenth century Europe.

This pattern of military and paramilitary interventions by the west or its proxies in regions of its former imperial influence or domination shares some features with the interventions which took place during the 1980s to overthrow or subvert radical governments in Latin America (Chile, Nicaragua, Argentina, Brazil) and in Africa (Angola, Mozambique). But it is different in one significant respect. These earlier neo-imperial interventions, for the most part, in their own reactionary terms, succeeded at the time in either defeating and replacing progressive governments or at least in holding back their advance, for example in Africa (though many of these changes have now finally been once more reversed, after having caused decades of suffering to the citizens of the countries concerned). The west’s military interventions of the period since 1989 have, however, almost uniformly failed to achieve their objectives. What is being disclosed, over and over again, in this sequence of disasters, are the limitations of the west’s power. What was trumpeted by the United States after 1990 as ‘full spectrum dominance’ turns out to be a continuing failure of military and para-military interventions to achieve their intended goals.<sup>3</sup>

This situation must surely be understood in the context of the rise of new economic powers, in particular but not only that of China, and the loss of the west’s comparative economic advantage over its competitors. The prolonged European, and Japanese, economic recessions must be seen against the contrast of much higher rates of economic growth in the ‘emerging markets’ of the former ‘Third World’. What we see in the flailing adventurisms of neo-imperial policy, and in the imposition of ‘structural adjustment’ programmes on its own peoples, is a system in decline. This is indeed the sign of the unravelling of the

current settlement and a reshaping of relations of power across the world.<sup>4</sup> The political movements to the right that have taken place in many nations are in response to people seeing their economic well-being under threat, their former sense of status, superiority and power diminished, and their governments largely powerless to influence the situation for the better. This has some alarming similarities to the developments which took place in Europe in the 1930s, following the disaster of the First World War and the crisis of the existing social order which followed upon it.

One may wish to reflect on the changing subjective relationships to the institutions of government that are being brought about by this situation – to which each of our own personal responses may be some kind of witness. One can perhaps identify periods prior to the 2007-8 financial crisis in which the dominant system seemed to be solidly based and even in its own terms effective – certainly in comparison with the current era. But in virtually every nation of Europe there currently seems to be a general disenchantment and loss of belief in governmental capacity, and a major symptom of this has been disaffection with what were formerly the major political parties. One factor that has contributed to this state of affairs is the evident immunity of financial institutions, corporations, and the very rich, from the jurisdiction of states.

Indeed we made an assessment in our earlier writing about the conjuncture (see *The Neoliberal Crisis*) that the current situation was likely in reality to be beyond the capacity of any elected government to contain or regulate.<sup>5</sup> In *Policing the Crisis*, Stuart Hall and his co-authors described the governmental situation of the 1970s in just these terms, documenting the disintegration of the post-war settlement just as it was happening.<sup>6</sup> During this decade, weak governments – of different nominal hues but attempting similar remedies – succeeded each other, until in 1979 the right found its opportunity to embark on a radically different path, which, after its second election victory in 1983, enabled it to decisively change the political and economic landscape in Britain. At the time of writing we face a general election whose outcome could well be as indecisive as those of the earlier 1970s. This is not merely because it is possible that no single party will obtain a decisive majority; it is because there will be no clear alternative proposed to present policies. Even if the Labour Party manages by default to find itself in a position to form a government,

there is little indication that it holds within its still closely-guarded locker of policies any remedies adequate to the problems we now confront.

To develop such an agenda of feasible alternatives to the misguided and destructive politics of the last thirty years is now the project which faces us. The connected account which this Manifesto has been able to provide of the shape of the dominant neoliberal system can only be the beginning of this. In this conclusion, we try to identify ideas and themes which suggest a way forward, and a new progressive course.

### WHAT WE HAVE TRIED TO DO

We have now come to the end of the sequence of planned instalments of the Kilburn Manifesto, though not of our project to think, discuss and seek to engage broader publics. What we have been attempting here is an exploration of the current moment, primarily within the UK, but set also within an international context, in an analysis that resists both the demand for immediate policies that simply respond to electoral pressures and the temptation to read the present situation merely as a symptom of long-held first theoretical principles. We need both a full recognition of the specificity of these times and a wielding of 'theory' that does not collapse into reductionism. We also need to be able both to engage current popular and political debate in its own terms, and when appropriate to challenge those terms of debate as precisely part of the problem.

*Soundings*, the journal from which this Manifesto sprang, has always been committed to analysis informed by such considerations, and there are a number of reasons for this. Most immediately we believe it is necessary to engage with both wider publics and potentially sympathetic political parties. Both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics are vital in any future process of change. A political party that has any intention of being bold needs to know that there is support 'out there'. Although it should certainly show political leadership and not be a slave to already-constituted 'public opinion', it equally needs to feel that there is some possibility of purchase among the wider public for its challenges to received wisdom, and that there is extra-parliamentary pressure to buttress it against the conservative forces it has to operate within when 'in power'. It is as a result of this understanding that we have stressed so

much the importance of addressing issues of common sense, hegemony, culture, language. The debate about economic policy, for instance, is hemmed into its current narrow and unquestioning terms both by the vocabularies and understandings of the economy itself, and by the shape of wider society – the way we think about issues of ‘fairness’, or of gender, or the state, or the environment, to mention but a few examples from the foregoing chapters.

Moreover, even insofar as we are addressing potentially progressive political parties, it is also the case that even the most immediate and ‘practical’ of policies on particular issues necessarily entails, and should explicitly be set within, a broader debate and vision for society. Drawing out these underlying principles can make possible a different kind of appeal to people, interpellating them in ways that a technical policy discussion fails to do. (Thomas Frank, in *Pity the Billionaire*, makes the same point in critique of the Democrats in the USA.) Individual policies can be used to raise bigger issues of principle and to establish genuine political frontiers. Likewise a scattergun array of individual policies will neither add up to much nor make much gut appeal (or sense) to the general public without a framing political project.

Tom Crompton wrote about this in *Soundings* 54. Starting from the famous quotation from Thatcher that the object was to change the approach, and that in turn meant it was necessary to touch ‘the heart and soul of the nation’, he explores the ‘expressive function’ of policies, their ‘affect’.<sup>7</sup> This is crucial. Even individual policies need not only to address practical, material, issues but also to touch on and help shape underlying values and identities. This is part of the struggle over common sense. It recognises that political constituencies do not just exist, out there, ready-made; they have actively to be constructed. As Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea write in Chapter 3, here in specific reference to the Labour Party: ‘Labour must use every policy issue as an opportunity, not only to examine the pragmatics, but to highlight the underlying principle, slowly building an alternative consensus or “popular philosophy”’. This is an injunction that applies to policy discussion among the extra-parliamentary left as well, and in so far as the chapters in this book have addressed particular policies they have tried to do so precisely in this manner.

All of this meshes with the kind of analysis we have tried to produce here: the moment presented itself to us – or at least the question we

asked of it did – in conjunctural terms. It concerned the articulation of the different instances of the social formation; how they provide (or do not provide) the conditions of existence for each other. The glaring fact in the aftermath of the 2007-8 financial crisis was not just that the political right was using the economic crisis to reinforce a neoliberal political agenda (this was common currency on the left), but rather that, while there had been this extraordinary crisis in the economic sphere there were no major political fractures, no serious unsettling (after the first few moments) of the established (neoliberal) ideological hegemony, no significant ruptures in popular discourse. Our aim has been to ask what enabled that to be possible; to argue that what is necessary is a thoroughgoing change in the terms of debate (i.e. an ideological rupture), and perhaps to begin to suggest ways of changing those terms of debate.

Two things are immediately evident from this framing. First, it is clear that there is no place here for assumptions of a simple economic determinism. Of course the economy is utterly crucial, but it is equally the case that the current politically engineered economic trajectory, which is doing so much damage to so many people and to so many aspects of society, could not possibly be pursued without support (ideological cover, cultural assumptions, political discourses ...) from other instances of the social formation. Second, and in consequence, serious attention must be paid *to* those other instances and to the structuring role that they play. We have, inevitably, only begun that analysis here, but it is in recognition of its significance that the first chapters of the Manifesto after the opening salvo in various ways take on these questions.

‘Vocabularies of the economy’ (Chapter 1) challenges the very language we use to talk about the economy, which itself settles our understanding of it, and sets the terms of the debate about economic policy. (This is then carried into the chapter on economic policy, Chapter 7.)

‘A relational society’ (Chapter 2) takes on a conceptual centrepiece of the whole neoliberal world view – the ‘idea of an autonomous, self-seeking individual as the foundational “atom” of the human world’ – and demonstrates that it is ill-conceived. Rather, the chapter argues, there must be more recognition of our inevitable relatedness and interdependence, and of the fact that these relations each have their own specificities. There needs to be a proper recognition, and a politics, of



relations. This would not only challenge a central tenet of neoliberalism, but begin to point – as the chapter does – to alternative ways forward. (The building of a sustainable system of care must be central to economic strategy. And the argument for a dialogic state, in the chapter ‘States of the imagination’, also puts this question of human relationships centre-stage, arguing for the recognition of the affective dimensions of our different relationships with state institutions and practices: ‘the complex clusters of relationships through which the state (that strange abstract idea) is brought to life. Each cluster of relationships ... is highly political’. Likewise ‘States of imagination’ picks up the question of language and ‘the need to renew and remake public discourse in order to constitute new forms of public solidarity’, in order to work towards creating a state that can contribute to the reinvention and expansion of public culture.)

The third of this opening cluster, ‘Common-sense neoliberalism’, explores the nature of common sense, pointing to the fact that it is always contradictory and contested, and argues that challenging the currently hegemonic, neoliberal, common sense must be central to our project. Questions of language (discourse), of human relationships other than the market-based commercial transactions of the isolated individual, and the significance of understanding and contesting the ruling common sense, run throughout the contributions to the Manifesto.

Conjunctural analysis is also partly about periodisation (see Stuart Hall, ‘The neoliberal revolution’ in *The Neoliberal Crisis*). Yet it is a periodisation of society as a whole that takes its shape out of the interweaving of different elements (social, cultural, economic), which often individually have different temporalities. This is evident in the current moment (see John Clarke, ‘What crisis is this?’, *Soundings* 43, reprinted in *The Neoliberal Crisis*).

Thus it was over decades preceding the neoliberal conjuncture that the *economic* and *social* changes began that undermined and fragmented what had been thought of as the natural (in other words taken-for-granted) base of the Labour Party. The intersection of that long-term erosion with a more immediate dynamic within the *political* sphere – in which Blair and New Labour chose to interpret those shifts in a manner which actively disconnected the party from those traditional political roots (indeed on occasions set those roots up as the other to be opposed) – was also absolutely crucial. It transformed the

political terrain. It did so not only by shifting the centre of that terrain to the right, but also by erasing the possibility of alternatives to neoliberalism and by reducing the political field to questions of technical competence, of who could manage the system better. Each of these threads in the weave (economic, social and political) had its own dynamic and its own temporality (and indeed its own spatiality – the economic being inherently global for instance), but each provided conditions for the other. Their articulation, and the nature of their articulation, was crucial.

Likewise, the explosion of impatience and frustration with the social-democratic settlement, an explosion that erupted over half a century ago, in the 1960s, set off a host of challenges and changes especially in the cultural field very broadly defined. Their intended dynamic was progressive and broadly to the left, but they were taken up with delight by the right and incorporated into their ascendancy from the 1980s onwards.<sup>8</sup> So what had been in the 1960s a claim for the recognition of diversity and a challenge to the tendency in social democracy towards monolithic structures was (and this is not in any way to deny the genuine gains that were made by means of these claims and challenges) slowly transmuted towards its endpoint of individualism. The claim for greater flexibility was likewise co-opted into being primarily a labour-market principle whose effects would be borne by workers. And so on.

Some of the atmosphere and tenor of the cultural movements of the 1960s even contributes, in the same distorted fashion, to the success of the hegemony of finance today. The sector's apparent lightness and fleetness of foot, its (again apparent) ease of flow, mesh comfortably with the cultural feel of the present moment (see Doreen Massey, 'Ideology and economics in the present moment', *Soundings* 48, p33, reprinted in *The Neoliberal Crisis*).

These longer, differentiated, and intersecting temporalities and spatialities are crucial to understanding the character and dynamics of the current conjunctural moment. If there is a particular articulation that is a fulcrum of the present balance of forces it is surely that of financial interests with those in land and property. Both have long histories, both have been and continue today to be central pillars of the class-structuring of UK society, both have changed in form over the centuries and both have persisted. Financial interests have for long been internationalised, from the days of empire through to the

finance-dominated globalisation of today. Though located in the UK, and dominant in its economy, society and geography, the relation of finance to the productive economy of the country has often been semi-detached. The landed interest has been, historically, more home-based; the battles over its power and the elite ownership of vast parts of the country are part of national history. The past forty years have seen the coming together to dramatic effect of these two class interests. On the one hand the structural dominance of finance has gone along with the invention of a new mode of financial imperialism. On the other, land and property have become the perfect vehicle for storing financial flows (a recent report on London house-price data writes that ‘properties in the capital [are] seen as a “global reserve currency” for overseas investors as well as wealthy locals’).<sup>9</sup> And, as the quotation indicates, ‘the landed interest’ is now itself an element in a thoroughly globalised economic sector. The intermeshing of these two class interests, along with the transformation of each, and of both together, is a central thread in the story of the current moment.

And added to that are the interests of big oil, long globalised and now a significant part, not only of the FTSE, but also of people’s pension holdings – in other words big oil is also integral to the power of finance (see Chapter 9). Indeed, in the case of energy, the articulation of contrasting temporalities and spatialities is even more marked. The alliance between energy corporations and finance, much strengthened over recent decades under neoliberalism, has worked to its immense advantage an inheritance of global reach built on a centuries-long imperial history. Neoliberal measures, including privatisations, the backing-off of governments from big decisions over energy policy, and a favourable tax regime, have further strengthened the power of big oil; and the dominant vocabulary of ‘customers’ positions us as dependent, able only to influence the final market (if indeed that), rather than challenge the structures of production – and of power over the continued extraction of strata deposited hundreds of millions of years ago (and irreplaceable) – that are at the heart of the issue. It is, as Chapter 9 demonstrates, a deadly constellation.

There are good reasons for taking seriously the nature of these intersecting histories and geographies. Doing so helps unpack the structure of what can seem like an overwhelmingly monolithic situation. It aids recognition of the significance of different strands, both in their relatively independent development and in the way they do or do

not provide the conditions of existence for other threads in the weave. Such a process of conceptual disentanglement helps to clarify the different forces we are up against, and to set particular individual conflicts into a longer historical context. A battle over the 'redevelopment' of a housing estate, for instance, stands in a long line of confrontations going back to the enclosures and the clearances and beyond, over who is to own and have control over 'the nation's' land. Maybe it helps – politically, intellectually, emotionally – when struggling in an occupied building, or standing for hours with one's protesting poster, to do so in the knowledge of that longer lineage of contestation. What's more, an analysis of the articulation of these different histories, how they work together today, could be a basis for the recognition of common interests between forces opposing the dominant order, and for possible alliance.

So what kind of a moment is this? Since 2007/8 there has clearly been a crisis of the economy which is as yet unresolved. This applies to the UK, the EU, and globally. But could there be crises in other aspects of society that could bring this to a head, to 'fuse in a ruptural unity' as Althusser once put it? As Stuart wrote in 'The neoliberal revolution': 'Crises are moments of potential change, but the nature of their resolution is not given. It may be that society moves on to another version of the same thing (Thatcher to Major?), or to a somewhat transformed version (Thatcher to Blair?); or relations can be radically transformed' (pp60-1). The present moment would seem to be different from either of those two transitions within neoliberalism. Firstly, there has been a major economic implosion, brought about internally to the system rather than by political opposition, and, even though ideological and political hegemony have been restored, the waters have certainly been disturbed. The hostility towards banks, and to a whole range of big corporations, remains. Tax, and its various forms of non-payment, is a toxic issue. There is more talk of posh boys running the country. The word 'privatisation' now widely comes trailing clouds of negativity and suspicion. Any and all of these could provide a way in to deeper issues. And there is, of course, austerity. Things *are* different from before the financial crisis. And second, the economic crisis and the lack of an alternative response have been seized upon politically by the LibDem-Tory Coalition to unleash what Stuart called 'the most radical, far-reaching and irreversible social revolution since the war' ('The neoliberal revolution', p27). And yet he argued, in the same

piece, that ‘the present situation *is* a crisis, another unresolved rupture of that conjuncture which we can define as “the long march of the Neoliberal Revolution” (p13). A crisis is always also a moment of opportunity. One can ask of this moment in particular if the trajectory is sustainable. Economically the basic issue of sustaining sufficient demand, given such a shift from labour to capital, is clearly evident. Ecologically, as Platform write in Chapter 9, ‘sooner or later climate change is going to force a collapse in the current social settlement’. And if those moments of potential difficulty for the neoliberal system are successfully staved-off, will that be by increasing degrees of inequality and authoritarianism, which might provoke a serious political challenge? The impressive rise of left-wing social movements and parties in Greece and Spain (to restrict ourselves here to Europe) gives cause for hope, just as the rise of right-wing parties points to a failure of what have been perceived as ‘mainstream’ electoral politics, one that is much more serious than a mere decline in voting levels. In the ambivalent responses to these moments of difficulty is there an emerging crisis of the political? Maybe a return to ‘business as usual’ is actually no longer possible.

### **A NECESSARY SENSE OF CRISIS, AND A WAR OF POSITION**

Crisis can be an over-used term. Nevertheless, the essence of the analysis of the Kilburn Manifesto is that a continuing crisis *is* what we are living through. It needs to be insisted on that the programmes and discourses which now dominate the politics and policy making of Britain, and more generally of the west, are inadequate to the situations to which they purport to respond. Thus, austerity is *not* a solution to the problems of economic instability, inequity and lack of growth. Thus, the expansion of NATO and the institution of a neo Cold War against capitalist Russia is not a solution to the problems of the west’s security. Thus, neo-imperial military and paramilitary interventions in the Middle East, to bring about regime change, and to guarantee the west’s energy supplies, merely make worse virtually all of the problems (whether of terrorism, or energy security, or the protection of human rights and democracy) which they seek to remedy.

It will be seen even in the time frame of the next five years that the opposite strategy – of reconciliation and open exchange, such as is

now being pursued by the United States in relation to Cuba – has far more beneficial consequences than the ostracism, sanctions and siege of the previous five decades. A similar redirection of policy needs to take place in relation to both Iran and Russia.

It is thus necessary for voices to be heard, however unwelcome they may be, which insist on this fundamental mismatch between the ‘official’ parameters of policy-making and the realities of the situation. Only then can pathological political symptoms (such as the resentment mobilised against migrants from Europe, or of ‘Islam’ in general) be recognised as the epiphenomena they are.

Gramsci memorably differentiated the preconditions respectively of a ‘war of manoeuvre’ and a ‘war of position’. The former were those circumstances in which a decisive change in the balance of social and political power could be achieved, at one stroke, so to speak. He had in mind conditions of revolution, but one could also describe in those terms the coming to power of Labour in 1945, or of Thatcher in 1979 (even though in the first case momentum was lost during the years of governmental office, whereas in the latter it picked up). A ‘war of position’ is one in which no sudden or rapid changes in the balance of power are feasible, but where nevertheless gains over the long term can be made.

We believe we are presently in a situation where a ‘war of position’ needs to be prepared for. The value of the victory of a Labour or a Labour-led coalition government in May 2015 is not that it will by itself transform politics or society, but that it can establish a situation in which new thinking and new kinds of political action may again become possible. The creeping individualisation, privatisation, and consumerisation of society which has taken place over the past three decades and more will not be reversed by five years, or even ten years, of the compromising and hyper-cautious social democratic rule that we are most likely – at best – to see. But, in that context, at least it should become a little more possible to develop forms of agency, new centres of power, different kinds of identity, and resistances to the market, from which a better social order can emerge. We think that in the current political conjuncture, it is emphatically necessary to take a long view.

## EMERGING THEMES

### *What has gone*

The process of producing the Manifesto has brought home just how thoroughly social democracy is over. This is not so much in terms of formal structures – there will still remain in place, though much transformed, mechanisms of redistribution and elements of the welfare state. Rather we mean it in terms of ethos and spirit; how the ‘common sense’ of social democracy has been fractured and fragmented. How our language has been transformed. Stuart wrote in 2010 (in ‘Interpreting the crisis’, *Soundings* 44, reprinted in *The Neoliberal Crisis*) of ‘the cleansing of political discourse’, of the erasure of the language of class, of the substitution of ‘market forces’ for ‘capitalism’, of ‘community’ for ‘society’. For many, the very temporal structure of our self-positioning in the world has been imploded. Where once there was a feeling of living in a longer history in which there would be progress, to which we might contribute (whatever our background reservations of this awkward double belief, and our subsequent critiques of deterministic Grand Narratives), now there is constant change, especially technological, but it is small change.

Big change, historical change, seems too difficult to imagine. And although the previous imaginary most certainly had its downsides (its often monolithic nature, the very constraint of living within an assumed trajectory), it did have a feeling of historical locatedness, and of optimism (however misplaced). Today, as many have observed, the very notion of a future seems to have been cancelled.

All that atmosphere of social democracy, it seems to us, has gone. Beatrix Campbell’s exploration of the changing contexts of feminism (Chapter 4) provides a vivid example. This could be read simply as loss, and as depressing, but what it brings home to us in the Manifesto is rather different. Firstly, it forbids nostalgia: we must address the radically changed here-and-now. We can’t go back. And secondly we must reinvigorate a sense of prospective time, a grounded sense that things could really be different (as opposed to a rather deracinated invocation that another world is possible). And for that, we must shift the terms of debate, redesign the political terrain. These are insights that permeate the Manifesto.

*Financialisation: an alliance against finance*

Central to that here-and-now, we would argue, is ‘financialisation’. This has been a thread in many of the chapters here, and its importance is evident, not only in the obvious economic sense but also in the manner in which it has weaselled its way inside our heads, our imaginations, and structured the culture more widely. It is arguable indeed that it is the crucial fulcrum of articulation of the different instances in the current, neoliberal, hegemony. It is part of what holds the thing together. By the very same token it is consequently a possible basis for recognising common themes among a myriad different struggles in UK society today; it is the ‘common enemy’ of a host of apparently rather different skirmishes. Could opposition to financialisation be the key to constructing chains of equivalence that link at least some of these struggles together, constructing a common political frontier, an ‘alliance against finance’? Such an alliance is in fact proposed in the Green New Deal, and as well as supporting this we would suggest broadening the scope of what is proposed there.<sup>10</sup> The aim of such alliances is to maintain the specificity of the different struggles, and their grassroots constituencies, while linking them in demands that question the deeper power structures of the social formation, opposition to which they share. Of course, the ‘deepest’ such power structures are even bigger things – imperialism, capitalism. But, as Chantal Mouffe has argued, in constructing practical on-the-ground analyses one needs recognisable points of power, ones that are conjurable in the imagination.<sup>11</sup> We would suggest that financialisation is one such in the current conjuncture.

*Tapping into ‘good sense’*

However, if finance/financialisation is one of the ‘enemies’ a challenge to which might help undo some of the worst aspects of the present settlement, it is also necessary to identify some of the good things we have got going for us. There are indeed many specific struggles, though somewhat disconnected in their particularities – hence the need for alliances as argued above. But there are also potential feelings and attitudes, sentiments perhaps barely recognised still less openly aired, which are – we believe – quite widespread. In Chapter 3 Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea explored the notion of common sense – a concept



key to conjunctural analysis. As well as stressing the internally composite and often contradictory nature of common sense, and the fact that it is a site of political contestation, the authors point also to the fact that common sense always contains “the healthy nucleus” which deserves to be made more unitary and coherent’ (p54, citing Gramsci). This is Gramsci’s ‘good sense’: ‘Good sense provides a basis on which the left could develop a popular strategy for radical change – if it takes on board the idea that common sense is a site of political struggle’ (p54). There are many potential elements in the current good sense that could be appealed to, and, once drawn out, woven into a wider and more explicit narrative.

We might pick up on that widespread dislike of being constantly called, and therefore positioned as, a ‘customer’ or a ‘client’. Students hate being called clients; passengers on trains comment with scorn on being addressed as customers; fans of the football team one of us supports have a banner asserting their identity as ‘supporters not customers’. What is going on here is a popular rejection of the reduction of all identities and relations to those based on commercial transactions (Chapter 1). Could not this be drawn upon, and a political discourse developed which recognises the specificity of relations and the crucial importance of having a politics of relations (see especially Chapters 2 and 6)?

In their chapter, Stuart and Alan explore the element of ‘fairness’ in all its complex and contradictory articulations and conclude that ‘while neoliberal discourse is increasingly hegemonic and setting the agenda for debate, there are other currents in play – empathy for others, a liking for co-operation rather than competition, or a sense of injustice, for example’ (p65). Likewise, in Chapter 6, Janet Newman and John Clarke document ‘how attached people remain to their identities as members of a wider public’. And Platform, in Chapter 9, point to questions that might be asked of energy policy that would touch on and potentially draw out that ‘healthy nucleus within our common sense that opposes injustice’.

One of the clearest examples of such a possibility, where a sense of fairness could be drawn out and integrated into a progressive politics, concerns the oft-invoked notion of ‘the something-for-nothing society’. This is particularly significant because debate over its meaning gets right to the crux of the neoliberal settlement.

*The something-for-nothing society*

There is no doubt that the Coalition government is very aware that people are susceptible to notions of fairness. They touch upon it constantly in ways that are designed to foment antagonisms among those who might otherwise oppose them. Cameron works himself up into a manufactured rage against what he calls 'the something-for-nothing' society. He is usually referring to people without jobs. He knows he can trigger people's sense of (un)fairness. Why should I work when others lounge around on 'benefits'?

An immediate and easy response is to enquire as to precisely what it was that *he* did to earn all the wealth he was born into. But there is an even more structural response, for he and the Coalition government of Tories and Liberal Democrats have presided over the formation of an economy and society in the United Kingdom that is *precisely* about getting something for nothing. Much of the economy today is not about the production of new things, it's about buying and selling assets (land, art, property, derivatives of various sorts, commodity futures) in order to extract rent and/or to make a profit on sale. Money is 'made' simply out of the ability to *own*. As was argued in Chapter 7, this is wealth extraction not wealth production, and its immediate economic effect is redistribution towards the owners of assets. In shorthand it is often called a rentier society. It is also a something-for-nothing society. And in the chapter 'Energy beyond neoliberalism', the mechanisms, and the 'unfair' appropriations, that this involves are seen through a wider geographical lens, in the private monopolisation of parts of the earth and its resources. What is at issue here is *unearned* income and wealth. Is this not also an issue of 'fairness', and can it be drawn upon? Can it be triggered in directions very different from those pointed to by Cameron et al?

There are clearly difficulties. For one thing, people have bought into it, both imaginatively and materially. What are rises in house-prices or in the shares in one's pension but the private appropriation of socially-produced value? Yet the right, and the rich owners of assets, are also aware of the potential precariousness of what they are up to. As Andrew Sayer has pointed out, the very distinction between earned and unearned income went curiously out of use just as unearned income rose to its new prominence, and he writes of how the history of finance has seen continual struggles over the use of favourable and

unfavourable terms for its practices: ‘... “investment”, “speculation”, “gambling”, “fraud” ...’<sup>12</sup>

There is clearly a contest to be ignited here, just as Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea argue, over how that component of ‘good sense’ that is appealed to in the idea of fairness is to be articulated and understood politically.

At the time of writing, the battle over the New Era estate in London has been in the news (it is in truth one of many such battles). The sale of the estate, which previously provided homes at affordable rents, to an international investment group that proposed huge increases in rents, can be seen as an ‘event’ that crystallises much about the current conjuncture. The buildings and the land the estate stands upon have been transformed from being thought of as primarily use-values making a modest return to being regarded as purely financial assets. And this transformation is a product of that new articulation of landed capital and finance, and the globalisation of the land/property sector under the neoliberal hegemony, that was discussed in the opening chapter: a particular event that emerges from the constellation of long, and more recent, histories, and changing geographies. However, the point here is that it has become a cause célèbre, and ideas about fairness have been central to the battle.

Indeed the campaign has touched such a nerve that even London’s Tory mayor Boris Johnson has offered support – in spite of the fact that as this particular confrontation was already brewing he was welcoming to London ‘Le marché international des professionnels de l’immobilier’ (MIPIM), the world’s biggest property fair – precisely the kind of force through which the estate’s tenants stand to lose their homes (the fair itself also attracted considerable grassroots opposition). It was a perfect moment for entering the contest over what we mean by ‘fairness’, for raising challenges over gains from ownership of land and property, for bringing into mainstream political debate the whole issue of unearned income. That the goal was open for such an intervention is evident in the very fact that Johnson felt he had to say something: he – if not opposition politicians – was all too aware that this touched painfully upon that healthy nucleus of ‘good sense’ that is waiting, not to be smothered by platitudes and sympathy for the individual, but to be drawn out in order to raise more structural, political, arguments; to be mobilised as part of the contest against the hegemonic common sense, in order to help a challenge to the material

interests and structures that promulgate it. As the book was going to press it was announced that the owners had sold out to a foundation providing affordable homes. A round in the battle heroically won; a bigger case to be made.

What's more, this is an arena which is ripe for perfectly possible and potentially extremely effective 'policies'. In Chapter 7 on 'reframing the debate' on the economy we wrote about the necessity for a land value tax – a policy that would not only work (among other things) to dampen the frenzies that result in profiteering on housing estates such as New Era, but would also be the perfect vehicle for raising the bigger political issues of (un)fairness and unearned income. A policy, in other words, that is more than a policy, one that could be part of an alternative narrative and the drawing of political frontiers.

### *Lines of social division*

There is one other element in this rise of the new rentier society which is rarely mentioned but that is important to the left. This is that it changes class relations.<sup>13</sup> The main mechanisms of exploitation and of appropriation of the surplus are no longer so clearly located in relations between capital on the one hand and workers on the other. Value is also appropriated through rent, capital gains and interest. This means that the locations of expropriation have multiplied, often to places that are less transparent and less easily contestable than the places of production to which we are accustomed (or where contest does not have an established history). This is another important shift, one that is more recent than the decline of manufacturing and mining that is so frequently referred to, but which has also contributed significantly to the fragmentation of working-class forces.

Moreover, other lines of social division are also important to the structuring of the current moment. Lines of division around gender/sexuality and race/ethnicity, for instance, structure social relations in distinctive ways. As we argued in the framing statement that opens this volume: 'When these social divisions operate within a capitalist system, they are, of course, profoundly shaped by it and articulated to it. But they retain their "relative autonomy"'. What has been important to our kind of analysis in the Manifesto, therefore, has not been the documentation of the inequalities, discriminations and exclusions that follow these lines of divide (though these are important), but

rather trying to understand how these relatively autonomous systems of division and subordination articulate with those of neoliberalism. We have addressed just three such lines of division in the Manifesto so far. And each, as it turns out, is distinct in the nature of its entanglement in the current settlement.

Attention to the divide along generational lines is a response to the immediate political and economic characteristics of the post-crisis situation itself. There are both clear material deprivations of young people and a political discourse that aims to set the generations against each other. In part, this latter has been constructed in order to divert attention from class divides. But it would not have had any political purchase if it had been entirely untrue. Like many a diversionary political narrative, it reaches in, and touches on, a felt reality. Chapter 5 resets this understanding. What is manifested as intergenerational inequality is in fact integral to the construction of a new class settlement, of inequality and insecurity. A 'new' generation is emerging, with the potential for a collective identity, precisely as a marker of shifts in the social settlement. The younger generation can be understood in part as a crucible within which post-social-democratic norms can be experimented with and embedded. It might be seen as a temporal equivalent of the 'crucible' that, on the spatial dimension, is Greece.<sup>14</sup> Both are forcing grounds for the sharpening of neoliberal principles. Understanding the intersection of class and generation in this way gives us new tools for understanding the current conjuncture, reorientates the political frontier away from being a simple intergenerational conflict, and points towards the potential for new political agency.

As well as there being parallels with Greece, the 'generation' question is set within discourses and movements that span much of Europe and North Africa. The line of social division that runs along gender and sexuality, however, is shown in Chapter 4 to have global dimensions. It also has a longer structural history, and the nature of its articulation with the dominant economic order has changed over time. As the chapter argues, in Europe, the social-democratic sexual contract, centred on the progressive movement towards, for instance, equal pay, is dead. It had its own limitations, being overwhelmingly concerned with redistribution rather than with the transformation of human relations and hegemonic identities, but it did produce progress. In the matter of gender equality the chapter confirms the argument that we have reached

the end of that social-democratic narrative of improvement. It was a historic defeat. In its place we have a new articulation of neoliberalism and patriarchy. Both capitalism and patriarchy have their (relatively) independent dynamics; there is no logical or necessary association between them. Rather they feed off each other in their conjunctural association, further transforming and enabling each other. Under neoliberalism this mutual enabling and moulding is startling. From the attacks on the welfare state in the west (and in China), to the 'new wars' and militarised masculinities that are no longer confined to war zones, to the impunity which protects sexual violence, to the male-dominated sexual settlements that structure capitalism in Asia (and, we might add, the hyper-masculinities of the so-called 'advanced' economic sectors in the west – finance and technology) ... all these are utterly imbricated into the character and functioning of neoliberalism. 'The new global settlement is nothing if not a new sexual settlement.' What this means is that a strong feminist movement not only 'intersects' with other struggles against the current order (the need for the social solidarity of some kind of welfare state, the need to address complex social relations, the need to address this within an internationalist frame, the need to confront violent sexualities ...); it is also crucial in *undermining* that order. Neoliberalism has constructed itself in such a way that it *depends* on forms of male domination. Maybe that could be, given a strong feminist movement, also a fault line along which it can be attacked.

Chapter 10 analyses some of the – rather different – mechanisms through which racialised discourses and practices have been articulated with neoliberalism. Indeed, as it argues, race was at the heart of many of the shifts, and the political battles, that marked the initial transition to the new settlement. Since then racialised forms of common sense have been key to the functioning and the sustaining of neoliberalism, whether in the maintenance of unequal trade relations or in the construction of cross-class alliances.

What the chapter also highlights, however, are contradictions at the heart of these articulations. 'Neoliberalism' has long relied for ideological support upon conservative discourses which in formal logical terms are contradictory with it – for example Margaret Thatcher deployed family and nation. Such contradictory combinations are integral to the functioning of hegemonic common sense. They can be seen clearly today in the co-functioning of neoliberalism and racism. One question is therefore whether the contradictions can be prised

open to enable a way in for alternative formulations that could refigure the political frontier, away from racial lines to those lying between an alliance that can 'encompass class and other forms of inequality' on the one hand and 'the unaccountable power of the elite' on the other.

## SITES OF RESISTANCE

We have argued since the inception of *Soundings* that politics is, and needs to be, far more than 'politics' alone. (Indeed this is even one of the lessons which needs to be drawn from the rise of neoliberalism, which is not merely a political programme of governments, but has involved the conquest of an entire society and the 'common sense' of its age.) It was this conception of politics that inspired the New Left from its beginnings in 1956, and which we sought to renew when *Soundings* was founded in 1995. Thus the struggle over how society is organised, how its members are to relate to each other, and what will emerge as its central values and symbolic representations, needs to take place in a multiplicity of locations.

Nevertheless, there are certain key domains on which political argument must be concentrated.

### *Inequality and poverty*

One of these concerns the deepening inequalities brought about by the regime of neoliberal capitalism, and the poverty which accompanies that. Growing inequalities are not merely a matter of incomes and the differential abilities to spend that are its most conspicuous features; they are also about the distribution of wealth and power. The grossly unequal distribution of wealth in societies such as Britain signifies that a small minority has control over investment, and the allocation of capital. The financialisation and over-investment in landed property which we have characterised as the misdirection of the British economy is integral to this inequality of power. Even where capital is ostensibly owned by large numbers of citizens, through pension funds and the like, there is no effective mechanism to ensure that such resources are allocated to socially responsible purposes.<sup>15</sup> In the context of the distribution of capital and its growing inequality, programmes of privatisation (endorsed by New Labour in office) have been highly significant, since they have transferred resources hitherto in common

ownership (however indirectly and remotely managed) to individuals possessing significant private wealth, who are in fact a small minority of the population. The distribution of economic power in this society is becoming almost feudal.<sup>16</sup>

A consequence of the neoliberal pattern of economic development is not only deindustrialisation in Britain and many other nations, but more widely the diminution of the demand for skilled employment. This is the result in part of the substitution of capital for labour, now reshaping clerical and administrative work too, and also of the export of investment to low-wage regions of the world. Its effect is to weaken the power of those who must live by their labour, which is the majority of the adult population. This itself brings about a further redistribution of power in favour of the propertied. This phenomenon of the 'squeezed middle' is manifest in the USA in the stagnation of 'middle class' (as we have seen, a Marx-phobic euphemism for working class) incomes, over two decades. A similar phenomenon is evident in Britain. It is given a hypocritical political expression in Tory appeals to 'hard-working families', which appear to identify with them even as they are being damaged by neoliberal economic policies. Labour's 'squeezed middle' is its rhetorical counter-slogan, which is weakly linked to the idea that the super-rich and tax-avoiding corporations should make a larger contribution to the well-being of the majority.

There are many reasons why an economic strategy distinct from the finance- and property-led model of neoliberalism is needed. For one thing, maintaining living standards and avoiding another financial crisis depends on this. But for another, the balance of power between classes – between that of labour and property – depends on the availability of productive and creative forms of work. A renewed public sector has a crucial part to play in such a development, both in stimulating and guiding new productive investment, as Mariana Mazzucato, has argued, and in providing contexts for humanly rewarding work.<sup>17</sup>

In political terms, the crucial issues of poverty, growing inequality, and the irresponsibility and misuse of corporate power, call for a politics of witness, critique and attack. Injustice to the poor, indefensible privileges and impunities for the rich, the escape of financial and corporate institutions from the effective jurisdiction of governments – all these need to be exposed as, in Edward Heath's words, 'the unacceptable face of capitalism'; and political mandates must be won for moves towards more equitable economic arrangements. Where egre-



gious misconduct occurs (rule-breaking or cheating by banks or by outsourcing companies, evasion of liabilities to taxation), advantage must be taken of what should be seen as political opportunities.

It has been demonstrated in recent years, by among others Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, that high levels of inequality are destructive of social well-being, not only for the poorest in society, but for the quality of life of society as a whole.<sup>18</sup> It seems that the steeper the gradient of material inequality in society, the more numerous the 'morbid symptoms' and social unease that arise from widespread experiences of disrespect, humiliation and anxiety – or, in an earlier formulation, 'relative deprivation'.

### *Democracy and democratisation*

Similar in its fundamental importance is the issue of democracy, and the goal of achieving a more democratic form of society. Enforcing the narrowest interpretation and restricted meaning of the idea of democracy has always been one of the principal means by which capital and property has retained its power, in the historical context of a long process of democratisation which led to the achievement of a universal franchise only in the 1920s, less than a century ago. Casting a vote in national, local, and European elections every so often, and having the opportunity (in fact exercised by only a diminishing minority of the population) to participate actively in electoral politics, is a minimal form of exercise of democratic power, usually amounting to little more than a right of popular veto over really unpopular policies and decisions.

Under the sway of neoliberalism, the cause of democracy has for the most part lost ground. Colin Crouch has described its 'hollowing out', through the increased influence of corporations and financial institutions on government, through lobbying, and through their financing of political parties and opinion-forming more generally.<sup>19</sup> The shrinkage and diminished power of trade unions, and of elected local governments, have been a further cause of the weakening of popular democratic agency in our age.

In fact, democratic power and responsibility is most effectively exercised in circumstances close to people's experience, where they have most knowledge and understanding of what is at stake for them in decisions. The most important area of people's lives which is excluded from formal, and often from informal democratic processes too, is the

workplace. A precondition of a deeper democratisation of society is the instituting of democratic rights and responsibilities in the economic sphere, through the representation of employees on company boards, and in decision-making procedures, and through the countervailing powers of trade unions and professional associations. Not only would such a development deepen the culture of democracy in society, and people's experience of democratic practice, but it would also make many corporate and governmental organisations more efficient and competitive, through enabling them to mobilise greater initiative, responsibility and commitment from their members.

The referendum on Scottish independence has been a momentous event in British political life, in showing what intense levels of commitment and activity are possible when citizens feel that something important is at stake for them. This debate has led to a fresh consideration of issues of devolved power in the rest of the United Kingdom, including England. The reality is that the United Kingdom, prior to Scottish and Welsh devolution, has the most centralised apparatus of government in Europe. The de-industrialisation of much of Britain, and the reduction of power of its local authorities, have contributed to increasing inequalities by region, compounding the inequalities of class and ownership which have grown under neoliberalism. Without responding to a romantic localism, a significant devolution of powers within a framework of norms and of redistribution would offer a possibility of redressing this balance, and of creating new centres of democratic agency, such as have emerged from devolution in Scotland. It is necessary also to revisit the issue of the electoral system, whose first-past-the-post system for Parliamentary elections seriously inhibits the democratic process.

The issues of inequality and democratic empowerment are central to any contestation of the power and legitimacy of neoliberalism as a system. Whatever constraints an alternative government may face on coming into office, a crucial measure of its effectiveness will be the progress that is made by those two measures – the direction achieved towards the lessening of inequality, and towards the enhancement of democratic power and practice.

### *Environmental issues*

In *Soundings* 51 Guy Shrubsole recalled that Robin Cook once said that environmentalism was the 'sleeping giant of British politics'.<sup>20</sup> As

an immediate issue, it has had its ups and downs, bursts of activity around roads protests, GM foods, climate change and the selling-off of public forests being separated by periods of relative quiescence. But his article also points to a distinction between opinions, attitudes and values. The first refers to the immediacy of policy issues, attitudes to the currents below the surface, and values to the deep tides of public mood. It is at the level of attitudes and values that the Manifesto has been wishing to argue. One of the approaches to addressing this, as Guy Shrubsole argues, is to take on our estrangement from the natural world – recognising and valuing our relationship to it. This too, is absolutely of a piece with our approach here.

One of the crucial things that our chapter on energy makes clear is that environmental issues are not part of some separate sphere but are utterly connected with all the other political struggles we have been addressing. Its relevance to debates about democracy is central to that chapter: it argues the need for both social movements and state intervention, and a more diversified and flexible set of arrangements in which local specificity and initiative is crucial without relapsing into a facile or exclusivist localism. The issue of land ownership, too, is important to changing our energy system, both to enable the necessary changes of use and to prevent gains and grants going to rich landowners. The furore which greeted the proposed sell-off of public forests is an indication that there are progressive feelings to be tapped into here. And the question of energy is also utterly tied up with that of finance, and with the development of London especially, which is not just a financial hub but also an energy city. This raises in turn huge questions of the UK's historical and global responsibility. Could there not be a politics which specifically addressed this role of London within the global world? To ask what London stands for? It is not so long ago that London was a radical city.

So issues of 'environmentalism' are not only basic to our very survival; they are also integral to the rest of our politics, an arena in which a myriad of different political frontiers can be opened up.

### **MULTIPLE SPHERES OF ACTION: FINDING UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

The nature of conjunctural politics is that one cannot predict the locations of antagonism and potentiality which might prove most

significant in the struggles to supplant neoliberalism from its current position of ideological dominance. We have argued in this Manifesto that neoliberalism has become a shared common-sense, indeed has been deliberately constructed to have this force, by many different agencies. We have pointed in this Manifesto to existing sites of resistance. For example our argument against individualism, in support of a relational concept of human nature (in Chapter 2), is rooted in most people's experience of dependency and connectedness as a condition for development through the life-cycle. Against the pressures to interpret relationships in market terms, doctors, nurses and teachers go on seeing those for whose well-being and development they work as patients or pupils or students, and not as mere customers. The resistance to market and corporate definitions of these spheres of work is thus central to a different concept of a good society. The revealing commitment by the Conservatives to reduce the role of the state and of public services to a residual minimum, something not seen since the 1930s, now exposes the full meaning of neoliberalism, but perhaps lays out a terrain on which it can be successfully fought.

But there are many other spheres of life in which the values of neoliberalism, and the forms of power which it mobilises, need to be contested. In Chapter 9 we discussed the significance of environmental issues, and the mobilisations around them, as a crucial instance of this. These questions involve the future well-being of the entire human community, and demand a perspective that is not merely individual and short-termist, as in the dominant neoliberal kind. Developing responsible programmes to respond to the dangers of climate change entails a fundamental shift in values, which may even now be taking place, even if too slowly.

Or consider the more specific field of post-school education. It has been reported that half a million young people entered their first year of university in 2014, the largest number ever. The experiences they have, the curricula they follow, what and how they learn, must in their own way be formative for the social order which is inevitably re-made by every generation. There are questions to be asked concerning what it is to be 'political' in this context? How can university teachers and 'support staff', and their students, give to their work a meaning which resists its reduction to the mere achievement of credentials and competitive advantage, whether for themselves or their increasingly

‘corporate’ organisations? Here is a location where the invention of a ‘prefigurative’ form of politics, in which learning and social relations take the form one would wish them to have in the future, may be as important as more regular forms of political action. These desirable relations are rather far from the present state of affairs, of universities dominated by managerialism, competitive grading, and an underlying awareness that many graduates will not find work which makes good use of their education and capabilities. But for such a prefigurative approach to become possible, there needs to be a critical analysis of what are now the widespread disappointments of this sector.

One cannot predict where, even engaging in the most joined-up and multi-faceted political analysis, the need and opportunity for political contestation and debate may open up. For example, leading sports organisations like to claim that they have ‘nothing to do with politics’, when in fact sports provide society with some of its most influential representations of its meanings and values. Thus it would make some difference to society’s sense of itself if followers of football, the dominant British national game, claimed some stake of ownership and decision-making powers in the teams they support. Or if international sporting federations, like FIFA or the IOC, were freed from oligarchic control and corruption.

Or, to take another apparently minor instance, we have seen that the setting of history syllabuses in schools has serious political meaning, in so far as they construct and impose one version of national and social identity – most recently that of Michael Gove – rather than another. We need to remember the addition to the vocabulary of socialism which was accomplished through the writings of Raymond Williams among others – the recognition that cultural practices and institutions (for example the press) are crucial in defining the limits of possibility, and are themselves a crucial field of conflict.<sup>21</sup>

The argument we are making, by reference to these various instances, is that a politics which seeks at least to contain capitalism within a limited, accountable and democratic space needs to have many dimensions, some of which may not seem recognisably political in the usual senses of that term. There are, as Deleuze and Guattari have put it in their different idiom, ‘a thousand plateaus’, that is to say an almost infinite number of sites of multiple intersection within which a society’s future can be imagined, fought over, and determined.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in a good society there would be many co-existing

and contending forms of power, and not exclusively those of property and capital on the one hand, nor of governments and political organisations on the other.

The challenge, after these years of neoliberal ascendancy, is to develop ways of thinking and feeling which can bring about connections between different kinds of action, and identifications between those engaged in them. There needs to be both respect for diversity, for the specificities of each sphere of life, and a recognition of what need to be fundamental guiding conceptions of fairness, equality, and ‘deep democracy’. The task is to create and sustain a new consensus around such values, which elected governments would over time find the confidence to give force to through their decisions.

We in *Soundings* will continue, now the Kilburn Manifesto is concluded, to develop this analysis and these arguments.

## NOTES

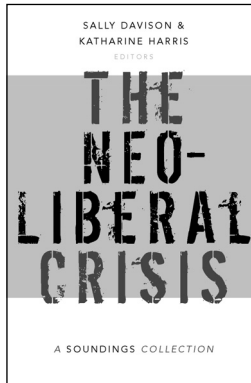
1. In the immediate aftermath of the banking crisis Gordon Brown played a positive role in staving off a financial collapse, but this is now largely forgotten.
2. Martin Wolf has memorably pointed out (‘Reform alone is no solution for the Eurozone’, *Financial Times* 2.10.2014) that the effects of the weakening of social protection in European economies have not been to enhance competitiveness, but merely to extend poverty more widely. His Keynesian analysis is fully set out in *The Shifts and the Shocks: What we’ve learned – and have still to learn – from the financial crisis*, Allen Lane 2014.
3. The shallowness and underlying weakness of the American imperial project has been noted, from different political perspectives, by Niall Ferguson (in *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*, Allen Lane 2004); and Michael Mann (*Incoherent Empire*, Verso 2005).
4. We acknowledge here Justin Rosenberg’s contribution to the development of the ideas we set out in Chapter 9.
5. Sally Davison and Katharine Harris (eds), *The Neoliberal Crisis*, published online in 2012, and as an L&W paperback in 2015, as a companion volume to this one.
6. S. Hall, C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke, B. Roberts, *Policing the Crisis* [1978], republished by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013.
7. Tom Crompton, ‘Thatcher’s spiral and a citizen renaissance’, p37, *Soundings* 54, summer 2013. Quote cited from *The Sunday Times*, 3.5.1981.
8. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso 2005.

9. H. Osborne, 'Round the bend: the crescent where house prices average £16.9m', *The Guardian*, 12.12.2014, p21.
10. See [www.greennewdealgroup.org](http://www.greennewdealgroup.org).
11. See, for example, Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political (Thinking in Action)*, Routledge 2005.
12. A. Sayer, 'Facing the challenge of the return of the rich', in W. Atkinson, S. Roberts and M. Savage (eds), *Class inequality in austerity Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan 2012, p107. See also M. de Goede, *Virtue, Fortune, and Faith: A Genealogy of Finance*, University of Minnesota Press 2005; and Chapter 7 of this volume.
13. Sayer, op cit.
14. See Christos Laskos and Euclid Tsakalotos, *Crucible of Resistance*, Pluto, 2103; and, by the same authors, 'Out of the mire: arguments from the Greek left', *Soundings* 57, summer 2014.
15. Robin Blackburn has proposed that a democratic transfer of power could be achieved if the nominal popular ownership of pension fund assets could become a substantive one. See his *Age Shock: How Finance is Failing Us*, Verso 2011.
16. The crucial text on patterns of unequal ownership and their significance is Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, published in 2014. The best-selling impact of this book suggests that this problem is becoming recognised by a significant body of opinion, beyond the left.
17. M. Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*, Anthem Press 2013.
18. R. Wilkinson and K. Pickett, *The Spirit Level*. Penguin 2010.
19. See Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Polity 2004; and *The Strange Non-Death of Neo-Liberalism*, Polity 2011
20. Guy Shrubsole, 'Waking the sleeping green giant', *Soundings* 51, summer 2012.
21. R. Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Chatto and Windus 1961.
22. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum 1987.

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Eds Sally Davison and Katharine Harris



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