



# **‘The Very Modern Prince’: the 21st century political party and the political formation**

Ken Spours

A publication by Compass

Published November 2016 by Compass  
By Ken Spours

© **Compass**

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism or review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrievable system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Compass.

**Compass**

11-12 The Oval  
Bethnal Green  
London E2 9DT

**Compass is a home for those who want to build and be a part of a Good Society**; one where equality, sustainability and democracy are not mere aspirations, but a living reality.

We are founded on the belief that no single issue, organisation or political party can make a Good Society a reality by themselves so we have to work together to make it happen. Compass is a place where people come together to create the visions, alliances and actions to be the change we wish to see in the world.

# CONTENTS

- 4 About the author**
  - 4 Acknowledgements
- 6 Glossary of Gramscian theoretical terms**
- 7 Part 1: 'The Very Modern Prince' as a 21st-century political party and political formation**
  - 7 From the singular political party to The Very Modern Prince
  - 7 The context of New Times and 21st-century modernity
  - 8 Gramsci and a Marxist theory of politics
  - 9 The Modern Prince – its origins and meanings
  - 10 Introducing the 21st-century integral political party and The Very Modern Prince
- 12 Part 2: The wider context of neoliberalism and realignment of the blocs**
  - 12 Neoliberalism 2.0 – fragmentation and innovation
  - 12 The crises of the traditional left – historical, systemic and conjunctura
  - 12 The shifting hegemonies of the right
  - 13 Radical civil society –left visions, activisms, networks and cyber parties
  - 15 The New Left – emergent but not yet hegemonic in a politically realigned world
- 16 Part 3: Building shared integral and hegemonic capacities**
  - 16 The meanings of 'integral' and 'hegemony' in the 21st century
  - 16 Five integral capacities shared by the 21st-century political party and radical civil society
  - 23 Internal and external development of the five integral capacities
- 24 Part 4: The integral political party and the political formation in practice**
  - 24 Big tent or campsite?
  - 24 Overcoming fragmentation of the progressive bloc
  - 25 Left turns in practice – Labour, the Scottish National Party, Alternativet and Podemos
  - 27 Developing the progressive political formation
  - 27 Compass – becoming a 'Very Modern Princeling'?
  - 27 Final reflections – a civil society future
- 29 Endnotes**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Spours is Professor of Post-Compulsory Education at ULC Institute of Education. A committed Gramscian, Ken was a Eurocommunist in the 1970s and 1980s and now is a member of the Labour Party. He was Compass Education Organiser (2010-2015) and is a Compass Associate. He was the author of the Compass report [The Osborne Supremacy](#).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

He would like to acknowledge the input of Neal Lawson, Michael Young and David Guile. Sue Goss read the draft to check it from a feminist perspective.

## ABOUT COMPASS AND THIS PROJECT

Compass is the pressure group for a good society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movement to help make systematic political change happen. To change society we believe we have to change the political system. It is clear that despite a growth in members, our political parties are not working as vehicles for the transformation we need to see. They are essentially the same constructs as 100 years ago. Given our analysis in [New Times](#), [The Bridge](#), the [Open Tribe](#) and elsewhere, we need to rethink the purpose, culture and structure of the party in the 21st century. This is one of two papers that attempts do just that – the other being 20C Politics: Is the party over? Between the horizontal movements and the more vertical parties we see a rich terrain that could fuel change that we call 45 Degree Politics. We hope to develop this thinking and begin to encourage progressive parties national and locally to experiment with the kind of ideas set out here.

# Glossary

# GLOSSARY OF GRAMSCIAN THEORETICAL

**Caesarism and Third Force politics** – a 'static equilibrium' or 'catastrophic tie' occurs where the two opposing fundamental class forces are deadlocked, which provides the space for the entry of a Third Force (often an authoritarian figure and force) that tips the scales towards either of the fundamental classes (see p13).

**Common sense and good sense** – common sense refers to the historical accumulation of ideas that form popular philosophy, whereas good sense is a more reasoned form of thinking that has at its centre a rational and progressive kernel (see p17).

**Conjunctural and organic developments** – 'conjunctural' developments are the accumulation of system contradictions that erupt on the 'surface' of politics, whereas 'organic' developments concern deeper and longer-term economic and political trends (see endnote 12).

**General intellect** – Gramsci's version of this Marxist concept refers to general social knowledge or the collective intelligence of a society at any given historical moment (see endnote 40).

**Hegemony** – the way in which dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political, ideological and economic consensus, which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups (see p16).

**Historical bloc** – the degree of historical congruence between material forces, institutions and ideologies, and more specifically the alliance of different class forces politically organised around a set of hegemonic ideas and structures that give strategic direction and coherence to its constituent elements (see p26).

**Integral political party** – Gramsci's 'Modern Prince' was a mythical organisation yet to exist, that demonstrated 'completeness' and fostered and connected within it all the elements required for the new society (integral) (see p17).

**Passive revolution** – the way in which transformational aspirations of the subordinate bloc are absorbed or neutralised by the dominant bloc, creating a new and unstable settlement (see endnote 20).

**Permanent passion** – how the feelings and aspirations of The People can become embodied in particular practices and structures that give them greater permanence. Gramsci saw the political party having a key role in directing and educating the passions of The People (see p19).

**State and civil society** – Gramsci believed the capitalist state comprised two overlapping spheres – a 'political or governmental state' (which rules through force) and a 'civil society' (which rules through consent) where bourgeois 'hegemony' was reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions to 'manufacture consent' and legitimacy. Civil society has also been viewed as a public sphere where trade unions and political parties gained concessions from the bourgeois state, and the sphere in which alternative ideas and beliefs could be shaped.

**Traditional and organic intellectuals** – a progressive 'organic intellectual' was defined by Gramsci as a constructor, organiser and permanent persuader providing leadership to connect different cultural, social and political and groups and to link with economic life the ways in which lives of The People are led (their organic role). Traditional intellectuals are people of 'letters' who see themselves as 'neutral' but who may function as part of the dominant bloc (see p18).

**War of position and war of manoeuvre** – Gramsci contrasted a prolonged ideological and political 'war of position', likened to the trench warfare of World War 1, with the 'war of manoeuvre' reflected, for example, in the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.



# PART 1: 'THE VERY MODERN PRINCE' AS A 21ST-CENTURY POLITICAL PARTY AND POLITICAL FORMATION

## FROM THE SINGULAR POLITICAL PARTY TO THE VERY MODERN PRINCE

Is the traditional progressive political party dying?<sup>1</sup> There are certainly signs that the social democratic party, possibly with the exception of the Scottish National Party (SNP), appears to be in terminal decline in Western Europe, unable to command widespread support and to form sustainable governments. New radical forces are challenging, but cannot yet break through. This paper argues that the left parties – both social democratic and more explicitly socialist – are proving incapable of confronting and overcoming right political blocs because they are not keeping pace with dramatic social and technological changes, do not yet offer credible visions of the future and do not organise on a sufficiently broad basis. As a consequence, the right continues to extend the life of neoliberalism while new 'global revolt networks' arise beyond the boundaries of mainstream political parties. The result is the fragmentation of the forces that might form the basis of the progressive political bloc.

The terminal decline of the progressive political party (afterwards referred to as the 'party') is not, in fact, inevitable. We already see counter-trends within the UK as existing parties of the left increase their membership, although this is not presently improving their electoral reach. To be able to do both, a new type of political party is needed with a range of hegemonic or integral capabilities. But these qualities cannot be nurtured by any existing party acting on its own.

Given the diversity and strength of the dominant bloc, the nature of the networked era and fragmentation of progressive forces across Western European societies, there is a fundamental need for a new type of 'party'. This new political force has to be willing to engage in dialogue and exchange with other political parties and more networked radical civil society forces. The central idea explored throughout this paper concerns the formation of a new type of political party whose 'vertical' characteristics are infused with horizontal ones coming from the dialogue with radical civil society. Conversely, the new political party imparts some features of 'verticality' to the radical civil society movements through the development of a number of 'hegemonic integral capabilities'. The outcome of this educative process and exchange is the development of the 'new progressive political formation'. This can be viewed as a deep version of the political alliance, referred to in Gramscian terms as 'The Very Modern Prince'.

The Very Modern Prince can also be conceptualised as a process, captured in the following formulation:

**INTEGRAL POLITICAL PARTIES +  
RADICAL CIVIL SOCIETY  
(EXCHANGE OF INTEGRAL HEGEMONIC CAPACITIES)**



**THE NEW PROGRESSIVE  
POLITICAL FORMATION**

As we will see, there is a critical role for 'connective political intellectuals' to facilitate the processes of 'exchange' and help build the progressive political formation or 'deep alliance'.

## THE CONTEXT OF NEW TIMES AND 21ST-CENTURY MODERNITY

The modern progressive political party has to live and thrive in New Times. This involves recognising that many of the alternative ways of thinking about and developing the future have taken place outside the ambit of existing social democratic parties and that there are new organisational and technological terrains to navigate. Over the past decade, theoretical contributors of Compass have made a number of interventions, which collectively constitute a new coherent progressive body of thinking. Central to this has been the argument made by Indra Adnan and Neal Lawson that, through the contradictory processes of neoliberalism, we are entering a flatter, more networked and relational world known as 'New Times'.<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Gilbert proceeds to argue that a central task, therefore, is to develop 'potent collectivities' as a way of realising a 'Radical Modernity' – a progressive interpretation of the new political, cultural and technological trends.<sup>3</sup> The contours of this new era pose fundamental challenges for existing parties of the left and Uffe Elbæk and Neal Lawson assert the need for a 'Bridge' between the old vertical and the newer horizontal developments in political life or what has been termed '45-degree politics'.<sup>4</sup> A driving force in radical modernity has been a pluralism of radical movements leading to what Sue Goss suggests is the challenge of 'combining the values of solidarity and belonging with a curiosity and openness towards difference'. She goes on to argue that a new political formation could be understood as 'an Open Tribe'.<sup>5</sup> The most recent expression of an Open Tribe is the assembling of various political forces through the Progressive Alliance, which seeks to overcome the

political fragmentation of the progressive left in the UK.<sup>6</sup> All of these understandings and developments are seeking to build a new '21st-century hegemony' to replace dominant neoliberal rule (see p 17). The role of an integral political party and political formation for the 21st century can therefore be seen as an 'complex organism' that seeks to work with these trends in a fundamentally democratic and collaborative way to build a post-capitalist economic, social and political order.

The supreme challenge, however, is finding the means to organise this more open politics in the context of the dominant bloc and the political spaces that are afforded or created. To understand how a counter-hegemony might be built, the progressive left needs a dynamic theory of politics and transformation that leaves behind a reliance on either political idealism or economic determinism. For such a politics, which combines the head and the heart, the rational and the passionate, this paper suggests that we can turn to Gramsci's theoretical legacy applied to and elaborated in the conditions of the 21st century.

***The modern prince, the myth prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form. History has already provided this organism, and it is the political party – the first cell in which there come together germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total.***<sup>7</sup>

## **GRAMSCI AND A MARXIST THEORY OF POLITICS**

Why should the work of a Marxist revolutionary and political theorist who wrote in the early 20th century at the beginning of the era of mass production be relevant to the world of the 21st century and the dawning of a networked age? Antonio Gramsci's most powerful analysis and reflections – the Prison Notebooks – were undertaken following the defeat of Italian socialism and communism

by Mussolini's fascism. He was a Marxist who came to understand the conditions of Western societies with their highly developed productive forces, civil structures and emergent democracies. In 'Gramsci and us' Stuart Hall observed that he was Marxist who, through his reflections, appreciated the shaping role of politics and thus the 'importance of an analysis of the specificity of a historical conjuncture; how different forces come together conjuncturally, to create the new terrain, on which a different politics must form up'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The Very Modern Prince': the 21st-century political party and the political formation



Gramsci has bequeathed to us elements of a political theory that can be applied to the complexities of the modern age:

***One of the most important things that Gramsci has done for us is to give us is a profoundly expanded conception of what politics itself is like... that, especially in societies of our kind, the sites on which power is constituted will be enormously varied... that puts directly on the political agenda the questions of moral and intellectual leadership, the educative and formative role of the state, the 'trenches and fortifications' of civil society, the crucial issue of the consent of the masses and the creation of a new type or level of civilisation, a new culture.<sup>9</sup>***

He could thus be seen to be elaborating a Marxist theory of politics and ideology that helps us understand why economic and political crises have not automatically favoured progressive change and how the political and ideological terrains can be made and reshaped by the right as well as the left. But Gramsci also understood how the respective historical blocs intertwined and how socialism had to be built not only in response to the weaknesses of capitalism, but also on its achievements. In surveying the 'ditches and ramparts' of the hegemony of the dominant bloc he accorded a fundamental role to political and ideological construction (war of position) and the painstaking building of a progressive hegemony – the role of organic intellectuals in this process: the transformative role of civil society and not just the governmental state, the problem of transforming popular common sense, and above all developing a superior 'conception of the world' to replace that of capitalism. He was the Marxist of the 'long haul' and central to this process of political construction was the political party as the 'Modern Prince'; a future looking organism and societal organiser that could bring the new civilisation into being. These concepts are as relevant today as the moments they were penned in a fascist jail in the early 1930s.

#### **THE MODERN PRINCE – ITS ORIGINS AND MEANINGS**

Gramsci came to realise that a new type of political construction was needed in advanced capitalist societies to build a progressive hegemony. He referred to this as the 'Modern Prince'. In his Prison Notebooks he recalled the work of Niccolò Machiavelli who, as a diplomat in Renaissance Italy, wrote his seminal work *The Prince*. In this Machiavelli created a myth figure – The Prince – who would create a unified Italian state through a mixture of coercion and consensus; by fair means and foul. While the term 'Machiavellian' is today often understood pejoratively to suggest a scheming and manipulative approach, Gramsci regarded The Prince as a republican, moderniser and Jacobin because the myth figure sought to usher in a new order.

In creating the concept of the 'Modern Prince', Gramsci conceived of such leadership being offered in the 20th century by an 'integral' political party that sought to bring together and mobilise a diverse set of social, political and intellectual forces to build a progressive historical bloc and to operate as a space or site in which a new civilisation of values are developed. Thus the Modern

Prince marked a break with the Leninist concept of a vanguard party of the proletariat, replacing it with party as a complex organism capable of building a new hegemonic within both state and civil society. It would also surpass what would become the traditional social democratic party model that has largely confined itself to parliamentary contestation and the organisation of the governmental state.

## **INTRODUCING THE 21ST-CENTURY INTEGRAL POLITICAL PARTY AND THE VERY MODERN PRINCE**

As a consequence, and drawing on the central concepts of Gramsci's Modern Prince, the central argument of this paper concerns two related political development in the conditions of the 21st-century.

### **Argument 1 Evolving integral capacities to challenge the dominant bloc**

The first argument begins by recognising the need to radically evolve an 'integral' political form with multiple capacities to challenge and ultimately replace the dominant and constantly adapting Conservative Bloc (see part 3 for detail of the different dimensions of integral development). In order to understand how a political party embedded in radical civil society can build these

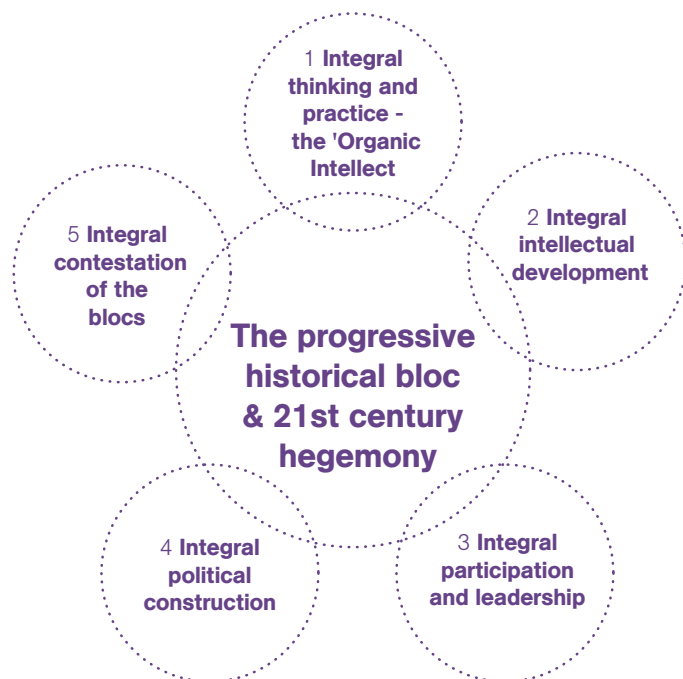
capacities in the current context, the paper uses a number of related Gramscian concepts – hegemony, historical bloc, good sense and common sense, and the political party (see glossary) – and in doing so attempts to bring them into the modern age.

These five integral capacities suggest a development of a number connective dimensions (see Figure 1). Each of these capacities involves dynamic combinational thinking and practice underpinned by a new set of values that seek to represent and prefigure the 'new civilisation' – referred to here as the 'Organic Intellect'. The dimensions, which are explained in more detail in part 3, constitute a theory of the political party and civil society, and can also be used as criteria by which to assess how far a political party is developing 21st-century hegemonic capabilities.

### **Argument 2 Sharing capacities across a progressive political formation**

The second argument concerns the limits of a singular new integral political party in New Times. Such is the power and diversity of the dominant bloc that one political force – no matter how visionary, expert and representative – will not be able to challenge and potentially replace it. Moreover, the pluralism of existing progressive political forces, reflected in the possibility of a 'radical civil society', requires interdependent and exchange relationships with

**FIGURE 1 THE FIVE SHARED CAPACITIES OF THE INTEGRAL POLITICAL PARTY AND POLITICAL FORMATION**



the political party. These include not only the nurturing of forms of strategic activism and 'global revolts' against neoliberalism, but also forms of connectivity and alliance building at all levels – political and economic – and across all scales – local to global. That is why later in the paper there is a stated preference for the metaphor of the 'Campsite', comprising many tents of different sizes and functions that represents the concept of the progressive alliance over that of the 'Big Tent' and single political party domination.

Thus we arrive at the concept of 'The Very Modern Prince' in which the political party of a new type works in a reciprocal relationship with radical civil society partners. This involves a dynamic inter-relationship between party and networks in which the integral political party takes on features of networks and movements to become more responsive and dynamic, and movements and networks take on features of the integral political party that help them become more permanent and transformative. The Very Modern Prince could thus be conceived as a progressive political formation, combining both vertical and horizontal features, expressed through what Srnicek and Williams refer to an 'organisational ecology'.<sup>10</sup>

## PART 2: THE WIDER CONTEXT OF NEOLIBERALISM AND REALIGNMENT OF THE BLOCS

### NEOLIBERALISM 2.0 – FRAGMENTATION AND INNOVATION

Over the past decade it has become increasingly clear that the 30-year 'optimistic' phase of neoliberalism came to an end with the 2008 banking crash, ushering in an era of crisis, fracture, anxiety and cynicism. This is now being referred to as Neoliberalism 2.0.<sup>11</sup> As the period since 2008 unfolds so do its key features. The dominant underlying feature is chronic economic crisis. The events of 2008 are not proving to be convulsion followed by a recovery, but the beginning of a long process marked by deep aftershocks resulting from the austerity measures used in response to the crash and deepening inequalities.

The second feature is conjunctural<sup>12</sup> – the movement of the economic crisis to the political terrain. Following 2008, the political crisis has comprised two phases. The first involved the formation of austerity-leading right blocs that resulted in both a defeat for the social democratic left and the road to the current destabilisation. The second political crisis is the one we are entering – the flow of the economic crisis onto the political terrain exemplified by Brexit and the reconfiguration of the dominant bloc that tacitly embraces populist forms.

The third feature of this phase of neoliberalism is systemic and evolutionary. This concerns continued technological innovation, leading to the rise of monopolistic 'platforms' (e.g. Google, Facebook, Amazon and Uber) and further attempts to create even more 'pure' forms of 'sharing capitalism' in which more people can turn private assets (their homes and cars) into services aided by the platforms.<sup>13</sup> Neoliberal innovation, however, has little ambition regarding the mega-global problems or fundamental innovation and, instead, confines itself to generating marginal technological improvement.<sup>14</sup> Its political intellectuals will nevertheless make great claims to be creating the future while, in reality, what they are doing is simply 'expanding the present'.<sup>15</sup>

### THE CRISES OF THE TRADITIONAL LEFT – HISTORICAL, SYSTEMIC AND CONJECTURAL

The opposing progressive bloc has faced a much deeper crisis as the left struggles to respond to the increasing diversification of society and the deepening of social divisions. Its first failure is historical. The neoliberal surge in the 1980s and 1990s exposed the failings of both the social democratic and state socialist conceptions of progressive politics by removing three tenets of the future, that:

- capitalism could be tamed and modified (the social

democratic dream)

- socialism would inevitably emerge from advanced capitalism (the state socialist dream)
- capitalism would collapse as a consequence of its own contradictions (the ultra-leftist dream).

As a result, over the past 25 years the left has been struggling to piece together a vision from the fragments of progressive politics. In the UK, for example, these have divided into six distinct strands – the residues of social democracy, a re-emergence of traditional forms of socialism, the new struggles around democracy and civic participation, environmentalism, feminism and anti-racism.

The second failure is systemic – the inability of existing left forces to function on the expanded and diversified political, social and economic terrains that have been largely shaped by neoliberal forces over the last three decades. These include greater social diversification and fragmentation known as 'super diversity';<sup>16</sup> the internationalisation of modes of production; the growth of different forms of media (especially social media), changes to the state and civil society and the impact of migration. Despite the greater use of online communication, traditional left parties still appear to operate culturally and organisationally in a previous age and even more so when they restrict their functions to that of parliamentary and local government representation or see themselves as a revolutionary vanguard at the head of the masses. Put another way, we have Fordist or industrial parties operating in a post-post-fordist age.

### THE SHIFTING HEGEMONIES OF THE RIGHT

#### Conservative hegemony – nearer to the Modern Prince than the Left

The result is that across Europe and North America the right, in various guises, continues to hold sway. In the UK, the Conservative Party in 2015 achieved a new degree of political hegemony that threatens to marginalise the Labour Party for years to come: an achievement that was discussed in the recent Compass publication *The Osborne Supremacy*.<sup>17</sup> Parties of the right, and particularly our own UK Conservative Party, have proved more adaptable and more effective than the left in operating on the complex, expanded 'post-democratic' terrain.<sup>18</sup>

They work this landscape in highly skilled and organised ways. The Conservatives have over the years built effective national and international networks of think tanks,<sup>19</sup> lobbying organisations, cultural attack formations and have a grip on and ownership of much of the mass media. Steeped in the world of marketing and public relations, they are particularly skilled at 'political story telling', being able to call on deep-seated sentiments and practise emotional politics. They have proved particularly

adept at using 'commonsense' ideas to define, for example, how economic life should be viewed. Moreover, and very conscious of the fact that they represent social and economic elites, they have made concerted attempts to make and remake social alliances to extend their electoral reach. At the same time, they are also quite prepared to 'play dirty'. In true Machiavellian style, Conservatives mix innovation, reform and consent-making with highly coercive actions through a process that has been described as 'passive revolution'.<sup>20</sup>

While this political version of neoliberalism is now under severe pressure because of its increasing economic failures (it has not yet failed politically) it is, nevertheless, capable of considerable adaptability. Conservative political hegemony, while having been threatened by divisions over Europe, is recovering very quickly as these divisions adapt to the new post-referendum situation. They have coalesced under the leadership of Theresa May who is in the process of producing a new version of Conservative political hegemony firmly planted under the flag of One Nation Toryism. She has combined socially liberal rhetoric while appointing a rightwing cabinet with the immediate aim of uniting the Conservative Party following a bruising referendum campaign. This political adaptiveness comes at a time of deep crisis for the Labour Party as it convulses over how best to respond to the Brexit vote and determines what kind of left party it wants to be. The Conservatives seem comfortable in consolidating their hold on the Midlands, South and South West while tacitly welcoming and benefitting electorally from the attack on Labour's traditional northern strongholds by the UK Independent Party (UKIP). Their rapid political recovery would suggest that the right are generally more united in their mission to preserve the dominant order than the left is to create a new one. They also appear to think in a Gramscian hegemonic style without really understanding his political project.

### **Third Force politics – the rise of the populist New Right**

Nevertheless, even the political adaptability of the dominant Conservative dominant bloc has its limits. As Gramsci famously stated, 'The old is dying but the new is yet to be born.'<sup>21</sup> The twin crises of neoliberalism and the left is giving rise to a 'catastrophic tie'<sup>22</sup> that is producing 'morbid symptoms'. In 2016 these are not just worsening global crises, but the resurgence of rightwing populism. Conceived as 'Third Force politics' that purports to rise above the established class antagonism, the New Right populism is being used by the dominant bloc to extend neoliberal hegemony albeit in highly unstable forms.

'Third force' politics, or what Gramsci referred to as 'Caesarism', occurs where the two opposing fundamental forces are deadlocked. A 'Caesar' is not necessarily a great personality (although Gramsci's was primarily

thinking about Mussolini and Italian fascism); it can be a party, faction or alliance, representing some form of compromise between the historical blocs. Caesarism as 'third force' can play a progressive or regressive role in relation to tipping the stalemate between the fundamental classes. Donald Trump, UKIP, the Brexit campaigns and European anti-immigration parties are manifestations of regressive Third Force politics that seek to bring disillusioned working-class voters into a newly rebalanced right bloc that displays features of 'Fascism Lite'.<sup>23</sup> Within the UK, the future composition of the far right may also be changing with Aaron Banks (a multi-millionaire and major UKIP donor) aiming to reshape UKIP in a post-Farage era to take voters from Labour as well as the Conservatives. The left, therefore, is not only up against a traditional hegemonic right that contests in a Gramscian political and ideological style; it is also faced with New Right populist forces that seek to promote a reactionary anti-elitism, anti-immigration discourse and through this eat into Labour's and the left's social and political base.

### **RADICAL CIVIL SOCIETY – LEFT VISIONS, ACTIVISMS, NETWORKS AND CYBER PARTIES**

The world is polarising. Alongside a resurgent populist right and challenging the social democratic left is a New Left, together with what might be termed a 'radicalizing civil society'. The new political forces are diverse, comprising new parties (e.g. Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, the Pirate Parties of Iceland and Germany, Alternativet in Denmark and the 5 Star Movement in Italy) and surges taking place within traditional social democratic parties (e.g. Bernie Sanders' US Democrats and Corbyn's Labour Party). In response to the deepening crises, these forces tend to adopt clearer anti-capitalist positions than incumbent social democratic parties. Beyond the old and new political parties is a vast array of radical civil society organisations that form part of the 'global revolt networks' and municipal activism, which suggest that the intellectual and cultural tide may be moving away from neoliberalism. However, while introducing more dynamic participation and new parameters into political debates, these emergent forces still function as 'radical outriders'. They are still far from finding ways to develop politics capable of forming sustainable alliances leading ultimately to functioning governments.

### **The radical futurists – the new socio-technical hegemony**

Neoliberalism 2.0 and its contradictions has opened up space for a surge of radical analysis. Following in the tradition of the Post-Fordism and New Times analysis of the late 1980s,<sup>24</sup> there is the new wave of 'radical futurists' envisioning beyond neoliberal capitalism. These include a revisiting and critiquing the traditional Marxist analysis that has suggested that the end of capitalism will come

from its own innovations and contradictions, as well as progressive management theorists who are charting other routes to a post-capitalist future.

Prominent among the former is the work of Jeremy Rifkin and Paul Mason. Rifkin argues that global competition is 'forcing ever more efficient technologies that accelerate productivity to the point where the marginal cost of production approaches zero, putting an end to profit and rendering the market exchange economy obsolete' through creating what he terms 'the internet of things'.<sup>25</sup> Paul Mason works with the grain of this logic to argue that post-capitalism will come with the abundance of information and sharing forms of production,<sup>26</sup> what has been referred to the 'collaborative commons'.<sup>27</sup> Allied to this is the work of Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams who argue that neoliberalism has a limited approach to technological change.

Companies such as Apple focus on the speed of marginal change in gadgetry in order to retain the margin of profit. Srnicek and Williams contrast this to the potential 'accelerationism' of technology that extends beyond capitalist development and promises a future of less work and greater abundance. Accordingly they argue for 'socio-technical hegemony' involving the development of 'material platforms of production, finance, logistics, and consumption capable of being reprogrammed and reformatted towards post-capitalist ends'.<sup>28</sup> Mason, Srnicek and Williams are unsympathetic to what is termed 'folk politics' of local lateral collaborations and, instead, argue for a forward looking technological modernity and to prepare for a workless world with measures such as the universal basic income.<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Gilbert in his work on radical modernity and 21st century socialism appears to try to bridge the gap between a socio-technical hegemony and local collaborative actions by arguing for the development of 'potent collectivities' on which 'the principles of network logic, self-organisation and distributed decision-making which would inform 21st-century socialism and could inform policy agendas across a range of different domains'.<sup>30</sup>

### Organisational futures – teal

Allied to the concept of socio-technical hegemony is the idea of organisational futurism. Frederick Laloux, in his work *Re-inventing Organizations*,<sup>31</sup> analyses the evolution of different states of stages of organisational development over the last 10,000 years since the birth of agriculture. Each stage is symbolised by a colour and metaphor:

- red (leader/tribe/fear/chaotic – wolfpack)
- amber (formal/hierarchical/stable – army)
- orange (competitive/innovative/rigid – The Machine)
- green (top down/empowerment culture – family)
- teal (self-management/trust/organic – ecosystem).

He suggests that each of these exists in current society,

but that teal (a blue–green colour) is the future necessary state of consciousness based on sharing ideas and self-management for evolutionary purposes.

Laloux's work is significant in several respects. It shines a lens on work organisation, both private and public, thus providing a way of thinking about the evolution from neoliberalism into a more socialised form of capitalism and beyond to post-capitalist forms. It can also inform the development of new types of ethical political behaviour and the development of radical civil society and this is this contribution that is explored in the final part of the think piece. *Re-inventing Organizations* does not discuss the relationship between the evolution of different stages of organisational development and changes in the mode of production, however. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see a broad correspondence between each of his organisational stages and evolving economies – red/ slave; amber/feudalism; orange/capitalism; green/ socialised capitalism and teal/post-capitalism. The work is also intensely practical and looks at different types of organisation that exist today in what could be understood as 'prefigurative' forms.

### The new civil society activisms

Rooted in the anti-globalisation protests of the 1990s and 2000s, the new activisms are setting the pace for the emergence of a New Left. Many of these are now international (e.g. Occupy and Avaaz); others are national (e.g. 38 Degrees) and web-based (e.g. Open Democracy). Anti-austerity protests such as the Indignados (15-M Movement) in Spain have given rise to new political parties such as Podemos. In the UK, some of this energy and innovation has been channelled into the Corbyn's Labour Party, although most finds its form through radical civil society campaigns such as UK Uncut, East London housing campaigns, the struggle for disability rights and Take Back the City. The new activisms manifest not only a hopeful militancy, but also use of new forms of digital media with which to communicate. Responding to the multiple oppressions of neoliberalism and setting in motion alternative ways of thinking and practice (a new ethical politics), they have become new and vibrant sites of political participation with a devolutionary logic focusing on creating new political formations and forms of governance at the local and regional levels. They could be viewed, therefore, as a dimension of a democratic revolution helping build radical civil society.

The key characteristics of these movements and networks are responsiveness to emergent issues; very rapid formation; the ability to articulate anti-neoliberal values, feelings and new practices; and the use of digital communication as a means of promoting social and political participation and association. They are the ethical outriders of the left and could be regarded as 'warm', whereas traditional political parties might be seen as



'cold'. They are also astonishingly diverse, relating to many different aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life. Some operate as social movements, others as think tanks and networks of information exchange mainly, but not exclusively, through small organisations.

### **Cyber parties**

Alongside the rise of the new activisms and arising out of them has come an array of new political parties. Described as digital parties, internet parties or network parties, they use digital communication technologies as means to construct new forms of political participation and organisation. Their emergence may be understood not only in the context of the growing crisis of neoliberalism, but also in response to widespread political disaffection with mainstream politics, particularly on the traditional social democratic left.

Representing what has been termed 'peoples' politics in a digital era' or even 'techno populism', the new cyber parties are diverse politically and ideologically, ranging from the 5 Star Movement in Italy, to Podemos in Spain, and the Pirate Party in Iceland, Sweden and Germany, Alternativet in Denmark and the municipalist formations that recently won the mayoralities of Barcelona, Madrid and Rome. While there is no single cyber party model, these new political organisations use the tools and practices that typify the present digital era, from Twitter channels and Facebook pages to WhatsApp groups and decision-making platforms. They also embody the new demands that reflect the ways of life, fears and desires of an era of mass digital connectivity: demands for free information, privacy, connectivity and a universal basic income. At the same time, traditional political parties are also incorporating 'networked repertoires' and engaging in various forms of organisational experimentation that might provide them with a new lease of life.

### **Radical evolution?**

These movements and networks also appear to be evolving, taking on the educative functions of an integral political party. For example one leading UK network, New Economy Organisers Network (NEON), is developing progressive concepts of the economy in order to frame popular thinking on this crucial issue in a progressive direction. It is also training activists and connecting with activists across Europe. Compass – the pressure group for a good society – is evolving into a hybrid organisation – pressure group, network, think tank, movement and political alliance. It is accumulating functions of the integral political party, but stops short of becoming one. Seen overall, the new activisms and networks can be viewed as constituting a vital part of progressive civil society and, because they have a clear ethical appeal and more open forms of communication, thus becoming prime vehicles for transformation beyond that of the political party.

## **THE NEW LEFT – EMERGENT BUT NOT YET HEGEMONIC IN A POLITICALLY REALIGNED WORLD**

Apart from the SNP, which exercises political hegemony north of the Border (see final section for a more detailed analysis of the SNP), the picture is very different in England and Wales and across much of Europe. The New Left in Greece, Spain, the US and the UK has been described as new oppositions.<sup>33</sup> They are precisely that – new energetic oppositionist socialist political forces that currently lack hegemonic capacity. While the predictive capacity of socio-technical hegemony helps to see a future beyond neoliberalism it does not yet adequately connect with the present, everyday common sense and popular belief. In that sense it still looks abstract and remote. Similarly, despite its future promise, Laloux's teal organisations in 2016 represent only a tiny fraction of private companies or public bodies. The new cyber parties have yet to make electoral breakthroughs in political contestation. History shows that single issue and protest movements can ebb and flow; they are not able to maintain their mobilisation and can have their original demands diluted and absorbed into the dominant order by forces determined to restore a non-progressive equilibrium or settlement (passive revolution).

So the challenge is to construct a situation where the new ways of thinking, new activisms, networks and emergent parties achieve an expansive political form able to confront and overcome the dominant economic, political and ideological bloc. This contest is not a static struggle, but a highly mobile one in which New Right political forces are working to expand their political and ideological space to take advantage of the popular disillusionments caused by neoliberalism's previous failures. Confronting and overcoming the dominant bloc will require a highly intelligent, outward facing and agile formation that has at its centre the integral political party of the 21st century.

## PART 3: BUILDING SHARED INTEGRAL CAPACITIES

### THE MEANINGS OF 'INTEGRAL' AND 'HEGEMONY' IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By the term 'integral' Gramsci was referring to a political party, a 'mythical' organisation yet to exist but with historical possibilities, that demonstrated 'completeness' and that fostered within it all the elements required for the new society including a future vision and its essential constructors – organic and connective intellectuals. Here I attempt to develop further the concept of 'integral' by arguing that it comprises five fundamental dimensions of thinking and activity by both the political party and the organisations of radical civil society applied to challenging 21st-century conditions.

When people think of the term 'hegemony' they often think of domination: the combination of passive consent and coercion that reflects the strategy of the dominant bloc. In the current context this could be termed neoliberal hegemony. Building a new 21st-century hegemony is meant to connote a different quality – more active, participatory, democratic, pluralistic and dialogistic.

### FIVE INTEGRAL CAPACITIES TO BE EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE POLITICAL PARTY AND RADICAL CIVIL SOCIETY

There are five fundamental actions that need to be undertaken to build an integral political party (as part of a wider political formation) capable of creating a new historical bloc and exercising 21st-century hegemony. While Gramsci, reflecting on the catastrophe of the First World War, employed military metaphors (wars of position and manoeuvre), here I begin to move away from the suggestive language of warfare and towards concepts of modernity – space, development, construction and ecosystem – expressed through five related hegemonic capabilities to build an effective 45-degree politics:

- **integral thinking** – linking visions and practices of the future and the conjunctural terrains of popular belief and common sense; this will be referred to as the 'Organic Intellect', a modernisation of the classical Marxist term the 'General Intellect'
- **integral intellectual development** – developing organic intellectuals as the connective force between different layers and dimensions of the progressive historical bloc
- **integral participation and leadership** – developing political participation and progressive leadership in the conditions of the 21st century
- **integral political construction** – creating different forms of alliances, building civil society and democratising the state to form the foundations of a new historical bloc
- **integral bloc struggle** – contestation between a dominant A bloc and subordinate B bloc (we are B).

### Integral thinking – imagined futures and transforming common sense

Hegemony, understood as the combination of coercion and consent, in the era of mass democracies is ultimately about the generation of consent and it is in this ideological sphere that neoliberalism enjoys huge advantage. This is the result of the command of much of the media, and two related ideological abilities. The first is fundamental and systemic – to assert that capitalism is natural and that alternatives have been aberrations and historical failures. The second is more conjunctural – the ability to mobilise 'common sense' and craft an 'emotional' view of politics. In order to combat this twin ideological domination, the integral political party has to hold in creative tension two apparent opposites – imagined futures and present popular belief or common sense that incorporates rather than rejects the emotional dimension.

### Imagined futures and prefigurative practices

In the absence of a functioning national or societal post-capitalist model, the left needs to project a future capable of capturing the tide of current and projected technological and organisational change – what some refer to as a 'new socio-technical hegemony' that can lie at the core of a vision of a future society in order to counter the notion that neoliberalism is the best it is going to get. The left in the West has only ever succeeded when it was able to articulate a future (e.g. democratic socialism at the end of the 19th century and the post-1945 welfare state and Keynesian economy in the early-mid 20th century). The left now needs imagined futures for the 21st century functioning as a 'progressive myth' – that such a future society is possible if we extrapolate and shape trends from the present.

But futures are also created now, insofar as fragments of this are to be found in present everyday life. Popular experiences of neoliberalism, notably turbo consumerism and its futilities, are leading more people to seek different kinds of lives that allow them not only to enjoy the present, but also to grow capabilities that can shape a wider future through what Unger describes as 'deep freedom'.<sup>34</sup> While these necessarily take place in highly constrained circumstances, they become sources of struggle, social protection and hope. The idea of 'everyday utopias' has a long history and can be traced back, for example to syndicalism or co-operatives. Today these are being supplemented by an explosion of alternatives, often occurring in networked forms that provide a means by which people can act out progressive dreams in their lives and experience something different. One of the real strengths of these prefigurative practices is their ethical dimension, 'being the change you want to see in the world', which raises a fundamental question of what kind of human beings we want to be. In a political sense, this can also be understood as a 'democratic commitment'

in which a future society has to be built on a 'democratic apprenticeship', practising on a small scale new ways of decision-making and behaviour that also make it easier for people to progress from 'common sense' to 'good sense' views of the world.

### **The political conjuncture, political storytelling and common sense**

Much of the stuff of politics is enacted through existing popular consciousness, functioning as 'common sense'. This popular thinking not only arises from current events, but is inherited from the past and it is these thoughts that are the prime ideological terrains of the right. Gramsci recognised that hegemonic thinking can be 'historical', with ideas from the past overlaid on ideas from the present. He thus understood 'common sense' as bits and pieces of ideas, 'stratified deposits', that slowly settle into an unconscious popular philosophy, providing a fragmentary and inchoate conceptualisation of one's life experience and often giving rise to contradictory behaviours. He found unconvincing the idea of false consciousness as self-deception and focused instead on the specific forms of philosophy which he believed existed among ordinary people that inhibited individuals from thinking outside the 'ideological terrain' predisposed by the powers of hegemony. Rather than 'thinking through' an issue, there would be a tendency towards 'feeling', which become expressed in the vernacular, the familiar language of the street and the home.<sup>35</sup> In sum, common sense, a fragmented world view coupled with the lack of an alternative language with which to vent political contention, generates consent for the status quo.

Conservative political intellectuals are particularly skilled at mining the deposits of common sense, because they can more easily invoke ideas from the past – patriotism and national identity are key features of their 'political storytelling'. They also aggressively attempt to reframe the 'healthy nucleus' or kernels of common sense – 'good sense' by reducing, for example, ideas of fairness and justice. Nevertheless, while the forces of neoliberalism seek ideological control, their growing economic failings mean that the dominant messages often jar with the experience of everyday life. Crises and failings can disrupt common sense, but even here dominant forces may seek to pass the blame elsewhere by generating cynicism. It is not uncommon to hear the popular sentiment that you cannot believe anyone these days, particularly politicians or experts.

Transforming common sense is, therefore, a supreme challenge for the left. It is also one of its key crises because of a lack of agreement as how it should be done. The traditional social democratic reliance on policy explanation and facts fails to engage with the emotional terrain on which much conservatism works. In a similar vein, but of more radical and wider intent, is the argument

for an ideological confrontation between the realities of everyday life under neoliberalism and the coercive deceptions spun by multinational corporations.<sup>36</sup> Gramsci was highly supportive of rational explanation, but also insisted that that it had to be distilled into a common form and repeated time and again so that it stuck in the popular imagination. Exploring the anatomy of ideological hegemony suggests that common sense cannot be transformed by cold explanation alone; the battle needs to be taken to the emotional terrains where passions are felt. This is a central argument behind what has been termed 'left populism', which is practised by some New Left forces such as Podemos.<sup>37</sup> However, the left cannot resort purely at the emotional level because it has an overriding educative function. It has to combine rationality and the emotive in the form of 'progressive passions'.

This combinational approach to the transformation of common sense suggests a number of areas of ideological and cultural innovation. The first is a contest between the types of 'language' that straddle the cultures of both blocs. These include the terms – freedom, the individual, patriotism, choice, democracy, responsibility, fairness, inclusion, society and innovation – that each side seeks to fill with its own meaning. These words and the thinking behind them have the potential to represent the kernels of 'good sense' within a wider and more dispersed common sense in which different social groups can sense a future. They can also be used to create a progressive form of 'storytelling' in which there is both new and established language.

But the political emotional battle to transform common sense also suggests forays into the territory of the opposite bloc and potentially uncomfortable surroundings. There are some on the left who argue that a political party has to be able to appeal to and mobilise the 'little conservativisms' and take them in a progressive direction. This Gramscian concern of relating to common sense and popular belief and how people see the world is reflected, for example, in 'Blue Labour' and the work of Jon Cruddas and Jonathan Rutherford, who are particularly interested in how the complexities of economics and politics are manifest in particular conjunctures that form a vital plane of politics.<sup>38</sup> One of the most recent reflection of this concern is the question of 'Labour and England' and an approach to politics and discourse that aims to offer a progressive concept of Englishness and patriotism and symbolism linked to social justice, fairness and democracy as it attempts to win sections of the working class to the progressive political bloc and away from the Conservatives and UKIP.<sup>39</sup>

### **The role of the political party in developing integral thinking**

Left political parties in the UK have a relatively poor record in the act of imagining or relating to common

sense in a progressive way. The determinist revolutionary Marxist reliance on the 'hidden hand of history' and social democratic reliance on the distributive state and parliament as the main political arena have led to a reduced ethical politics in which alternative and better ways of behaving and imagining have been at best a secondary consideration. With the exception of the greens, ideas of living alternatives through reformed social relations have become largely the preserve of radical networks and movements.

So the key challenge for the progressive political party is as follows – how can it combine visions of radical modernity and a post-capitalist future with the transformation of everyday 'common sense' that will involve the progressive mobilisation of the 'little conservatisms'? Put another way, how can it bring together the building of a future socio-technical hegemony and the transformation of everyday life in the present? It is the combination of these vertical and horizontal features of thinking and activity that together can be considered the 'Organic Intellect'.

If the logic of the analysis is followed it becomes clear that the political party has to integrate three actions:

- provide a crucible in which the array of progressive visions and imaginings can be related and played out in an open and democratic way and made more concrete through exemplification in everyday alternative practices
- mobilise the 'little conservatisms' lodged at the level of popular belief to bring them into a progressive logic
- provide a bridge between both these positions by systematically developing political language, policy and strategy and focus these on the competitive democratic terrain in which it faces the political leadership of the dominant bloc.

Combining these three functions, in what will be termed the 'contestation of the blocs', involves a range of political and ideological engagements that may only be undertaken by a political party working in alliance with academic research and civil society activist forces.

### **Integral intellectual development – organic intellectuals as a connective force in the historical bloc**

#### **What is an intellectual?**

For Gramsci the term 'intellectual' did not simply mean a person of letters; for him an intellectual was also an 'organiser' who combined both specialist knowledge and skill that is referred to in classical Marxist literature as 'the general intellect' but has here been termed the 'organic intellect'. This latter type of knowledge comprises not only a shared social knowledge, but also

contains within it the kernel of a vision of a future order. A progressive 'organic or connective intellectual' is a person with these capacities who also forms a concrete relationship to different layers of the historical bloc and particularly its economic base, and thus a relationship with the subordinate classes. These intellectuals are also intended to represent the progressive bloc in its most advanced condition, hence the importance of developing activists who are the best professionals, skilled workers, technicians and academics in society.

Srnicek and Williams go further and demand the deliberate development of a whole new cadre of technical-political intellectuals capable of steering the financial and digital developments in a progressive direction that currently constitutes the frontier of neoliberal innovation. Allied to this, Gramsci was insistent that the working class and its allies, who today we should call 'The People', had to develop their own 'organic intellectuals' in order to articulate a coherent philosophy and an awareness of its social interests. This was in addition to the process of winning over 'traditional intellectuals' – people of letters and other groups such as technicians – who might regard themselves as 'neutral', but who were nevertheless under the ideological sway of the dominant bloc. Developing and organising organic intellectuals is, therefore, one of the prime functions of the integral political party.

#### **The diversification of organic intellectuals**

The complexifying effects of neoliberalism suggests that we have to re-examine the nature and role of progressive 'organic intellectuals'. The number of 'technical intellectuals' have multiplied exponentially in number and function, not only the result of changes in the world of production, but also due to the massive expansion of education.

In traditional left politics, focused on the workplace and arenas of representative democracy, progressive organic intellectuals would have been seen as the trade union shop steward, the party activist, the MP or local councillor. These accorded to the world of mass production and governmental state. But that world has been transformed and so too has the development of 'intellectuals' in the Gramscian sense. To these traditional actors we now have to add many others who work on the different planes of an increasingly complex state and civil society, including a diverse range of intellectual workers from the private, public and voluntary sectors; those working in an increasingly digitised media such as journalists and bloggers; campaigners national, local and global; as well as those in traditional academia and think tanks. It is this very diversity of intellectual forces that neoliberalism seeks to draw into its orbit.

The development of a new type of political and economic intellectuals (defined as politically aware organisers and specialists in all walks of life) has been poorly understood on the British left because of the combined shortcomings of Fabianism, Labourism, Stalinism and Trotskyism. Neither, for their own historical reasons, has invested heavily in intellectual political life. The result is that progressive political intellectuals remain highly fragmented and scattered and are not well organised in the productive, technological and scientific spheres. It is not that the left entirely lacks political intellectual resources, but they tend to be concentrated in certain areas of state and civil society, continue to lack common purpose, do not communicate well and have a poor articulation with the leading political party (the Labour Party). This is in marked contrast to the Conservative Party, which over the last decade has organised a close relationship between its think tanks, policy networks, political attack organisations and the parliamentary party and has a close relationship with the financial and services sectors.

#### Linking progressive political intellectuals

The task of the integral political party, therefore, is to bring an increasingly diverse range of progressive and connective intellectuals into dialogue in order to build and share a more common view of a progressive future and to harness their activism and participation. However, the highly connective networks, such as NEON or Compass, beyond the political party have a head start in this respect. Intellectual life within Labour, for example, remains relatively instrumental and insular.

What is now needed is the recognition that developing a new order involves both activism and education – a reciprocal developmental project. For the networks, activist training would involve, for example, developing analytical capacities with radical theorists being drawn into activist networks that also involve the development of radical and strategic trade unionism. The political party, on the other hand, has to develop an energetic intellectual political life in all its activities and notably through its journals, conferences and ‘political universities’. Given diversification of technical intellectuals, the fragmentation of the intellectual political left and the explosive development of new political intellectuals in the networks and movements, a great effort is required to ‘map’ and conceptualise these disparate formations in order to produce an overview and better understand its features, connections, energies and disarticulations. Understanding the role of connective intellectuals in building 21st-century hegemony itself demands a great intellectual effort and, therefore, must be very much seen as work in progress.

#### Integral participation and leadership – making political passions permanent

For Gramsci a leader was an organiser and a connector who sought to build the socialist order according to a holistic conception of the world – the new necessary civilisation. While drawing on the historical example of Machiavelli as a progenitor of the Italian state, he was clear that the Modern Prince was not a person but an organism – the political party.

#### The political party and the creation of ‘permanent passion’

But Gramsci also understood the role of leader as myth maker – the ability to project a future that does not yet exist in reality, but connects with the passions and anxieties of The People. Referring to Machiavelli’s ‘The Prince’ he stated,

***He represented this process in terms of the qualities, characteristics, duties and requirements of a concrete individual. Such a procedure stimulates the artistic imagination of those who have to be convinced, and gives political passions a more concrete form.***

Gramsci thus understood the role of popular feelings and how the role of a leadership figure might arise, particularly at certain times of danger when social forces were in a state of static equilibrium (the old is dying yet the new struggles to be born).



While he saw the role of the political party as making this passion 'permanent', and to bring to spontaneity a more conscious sense of direction, Gramsci's work on the Modern Prince indicated that he also saw a progressive role popular expression of feelings and why it was important for the political party to function at the level of emotions and not just rationality (what he referred to as cold utopianism). Reflecting on Italian fascism, he recognised that if the left did not function on this terrain the demagogic parties of the right certainly would.

The raw experience of the oppressed had to be brought into the political party and the emotions of the masses educated and directed towards transformative actions (making passions permanent). In this Gramsci understood the distinction between leaders and led in terms of the relationship between what he referred to as a cold rationalism and emotional spontaneity. He also understood that the internal relations between them corresponded to particular historical conditions. In the conditions and culture of the 1930s and still using military metaphors, he saw the political parties as comprising a 'theorem of proportions' – the balance between the troops, generals and the intermediate forces, the non-commissioned officers. However, because everyone is capable of thinking and in that sense everyone is an intellectual, the distinction between leaders and led was not a natural relationship and the long-term historical aim should be that the distinction be eliminated.

### **Participation and progressive leadership in the 21st century**

While Gramsci's ideas about leadership look rooted in their time they are, on closer analysis, very relevant to today if we understand them as a dynamic dualism. On the one hand, the new party needs to be able to relate to The People emotionally in order to understand and articulate their experience of injustice and to hold out the prospect of a post-capitalist future (the progressive myth). On the other, it needs to take The People through a profound educative experience to understand how that future might be created. Gramsci summed up this dualism in his famous dictum 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'.

The world of 2016, in contrast to 100 years ago, presents new opportunities and challenges that are due in good part to the successes and limitations of neoliberalism. People are far more educated and have a greater sense of agency, albeit individual rather than collective. Democratic experimentation is taking place globally within and beyond political parties with new forms of political participation and deliberation, aided by new digital communication technologies. There is simply far greater opportunity for educative activity to be undertaken today than in the past.

But great challenges remain. Despite higher levels of education, neoliberalism and turbo consumerism has depoliticised people and they can be just as vulnerable to a dominant and hostile media and to demagogic politics as in the past. Furthermore, many people are 'time starved' and struggle to find the opportunities for participation. This has been recognised, for example, by the leaders of Podemos, who passionately believe in political participation, but realise that ordinary people sooner or later have to 'go home' to normal living that sustains them.

While the necessity of returning home might be in part compensated by developing everyday progressive prefigurative practices, it raises starkly the issue of the relationship between leaders and led. Here we are back to fundamental binaries – between feeling and knowing and between 'everyday normal' participation and political specialisation. If everyone is an intellectual (everyone is able to think), then everyone can exercise leadership capacities, known these days as 'distributed leadership'. At the same time, not everyone has the time or inclination to specialise and, recognising this, they are prepared to invest their hopes in leaders who are meant both to articulate their thoughts and feelings and to create the conditions for their democratic participation.

This brings us to the necessary character of progressive leadership, of individuals who specialise in political life and do not lead an entirely normal existence. The pressure of the contemporary political conjuncture demands figureheads who can reflect the essence of the political party – its persona. When seeking leadership in The Very Modern Prince, we may be looking for a set of apparent opposites – a charismatic figure who is also a reluctant leader; someone who gives clear ideological and political leadership and who also stimulates democratic development with the desire that one day their charisma will no longer be needed. This points to concepts of 'anti-hero leadership'<sup>44</sup> – the development of an internal pluralism in political party life based on openness and deliberation combined with an external pluralism in which the aim is to foster alliances.

### **Integral political construction – building the progressive historical bloc**

#### **Challenges in progressive historical bloc construction**

The task of political construction poses a number of challenges – developing independent thinking and action when neoliberalism tries to deny this space; the gradual winning of political, economic and cultural ground on more diverse landscapes, local, national, international; and creatively working with a vast increase in the range of civil society actors and their identities. Moreover, this complex process of political construction has to take place in constant competition with the dominant bloc (A). What are the challenges facing the political party and elements of radical



civil society as they attempt progressive construction along terrains also occupied by neoliberal forces? Further light may be cast on this by a brief discussion of three areas of political construction – economic, political and international.

The politics of the economy – the most serious challenge is to be found at the 'base' of the historical bloc, the organisation of economic life and how it is understood. The economic crisis is deepening and capital itself is becoming more fractured – finance and industrial capital; corporates and small and medium enterprises, and development of different national or global models, some more socialised than others. These changes are also being reflected in the workforce in advanced economies through the emergence of a new 'precariat' of zero hour contracts, the gig economy and 'crowd or click workers'.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, however, the inner workings of neoliberalism are Janus-headed: one direction points to a precarious future and the other to more social economy with increased lateral and co-operative relations, a possibility captured by the social economist Robin Murray.<sup>46</sup> It is within this turbulent and contradictory context that radical ideas on the economy and production can be projected and ways found to connect these groups with other sections of labour to build a new collaborative logic of production.

The response of the left to these changes has been slow and fragmented, however, although this is beginning to change. The New Economics Foundation, for example, has numerous projects on economic alternatives and how to develop a new economic common sense and John McDonnell (Shadow Chancellor) has initiated a 'New Economics' series of lectures involving internationally recognised economists.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, an even greater effort is required to bring together the multitude of alternative voices on the economy and society that are currently scattered beyond the boundaries of the political party.

The democratic expansion of political life – the growing complexity of the political terrain under neoliberalism could be viewed as 'non-democratic expansion'. Until recently, in the UK (particularly England) we have witnessed the increasing centralisation of governance, the decline of the role of local government, the lack of progress towards a fairer voting system, or the reform of the House of Lords. The process of a counter political construction could be seen as a quest for the 'democratic expansion' of political spaces and political life. This, however, requires a comprehensive democratic strategy including a new relationship between national and local government (e.g. a radical version of the 'Northern Powerhouse'),<sup>48</sup> a fairer type of voting system, the development of federalist concepts of the UK, and the development of democratic institutions such as schools as well as workplaces. But it also involves a change of culture and mindset in which people are able

to see the everyday benefits of democratic involvement and activism, whether this be in volunteering and charity work, becoming a democratic representative or joining a social movement or network. Seen from the perspective of building democratic civil society, the ill-fated notion of the Big Society possessed more than a grain of truth. The Labour Party, on the other hand, has been slow to develop a comprehensive democratic political and governance agenda.

International organisation and connectivity – the historical bloc and therefore the existence of hegemony is not only constituted within a particular nation state, but also projected globally in a new world order.<sup>49</sup> The very terminology 'the global race' frames the debate and tells us all we need to know – life is competition of all against all. In the neoliberal era this is reflected not only by multinational companies, but also by transnational organisations, such as the OECD, the World Bank as well as the European Commission, which promote neoliberal economics, target driven health policies and performative approaches to education.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, there are international organisations that could reflect the views of democratically elected national governments, such as the UN or the EU. Even here, however, we can see both US hegemony or that of powerful economies such as Germany and China. Nevertheless, these international organisations can travel in more progressive directions. Across the world there are signs of peoples and movements stirring in response to the new crisis. Myriads of networks are being formed and processes of mutual learning are flourishing, that are being assisted by new digital technologies. What we thus understand as a progressive historical bloc needs to work on two planes simultaneously and increasingly in a reciprocal manner – building the progressive bloc nationally and building its international dimensions.

Across these three dimensions of political construction we can see an important role for the integral political party, particularly in relation to the expansion of the democratic representative terrain. But viewed overall it becomes clear that the process of political construction is being undertaken by a range of social, economic and political forces and it is their relationship to each other and the national and international elements in the political party that remains critical.

## **Integral struggle – contestation of the blocs**

### **Alignments and crises in the historical bloc**

The significance of the expansion of terrains can be viewed through Gramsci's concept of historical blocs. While these might be understood as a set of political, social and economic alliances, he was suggesting something broader and deeper – the assemblages of economic, social forces, institutions and ideologies that

are organised around a set of hegemonic ideas and structures that align and cohere to provide strategic direction. The historical bloc is thus the vehicle for the exercise of hegemony.

For historical reasons, however, the historical bloc is never fully aligned; there is never a simple correspondence between economic base and political and ideological superstructure but, as we have seen, always a complicated conjuncture. At the same time, the dominant class or class fraction is always trying to align the bloc to create greater coherence and a sense of strategic direction. Acts of alignment include trying to free itself from intellectual dependence on older social forces (e.g. the aristocracy or church) and, in the 20th and 21st centuries; incorporating the newer social forces to their conception of the world while simultaneously seeking to open up new lines of economic and political development. This complex process of reform can be understood as 'passive revolution' and has been precisely the path of neoliberalism as a global strategy – to build a new capitalist order by marketising all forms of life and for this arrangement to be accepted as natural and historically inevitable. Nevertheless, the alignment of the dominant bloc has never been fully completed because of different national contexts, constant crises and new forms of contestation at the level of the nation state and globally.

Furthermore, there is no such thing as an independent or autonomous subordinate bloc in advanced capitalist societies and democracies. This lack of autonomy is a consequence of the dominant strategy of passive revolution and the democratic advancement of the subordinate forces. Both blocs thus co-exist, intertwine and compete along different dimensions of common economic, social, political and ideological terrains. Understanding the relationship between 'conjunctural' and 'organic' developments and being able to comprehend the multiple terrains on which to contest the dominant bloc would seem to be one of the prime functions of an integral political party.

### Growing the subordinate bloc – We are B and we Occupy

In analysing the interaction of dominant and subordinate historical blocs in the UK context, this section focuses on a narrower political terrain – the ideological and political bloc, and involves its leading proponents, the Conservative and Labour parties.

The contestation of the blocs might be understood as the relationship between dominant A and subordinate B (see Figures 2 and 3). Dominant A attempts to absorb B, a hegemonic process known as 'passive revolution'. Stuart Hall referred to a moment of passive revolution in his concept of the 'double shuffle' when analysing policy under New Labour.<sup>51</sup> He argued that New Labour policy

contained within it a dominant new public managerialism and a subordinate social democratic discourse. It was governing, but subscribing mainly to the logic supplied by neoliberalism in order to remain electable. Applying the 'double shuffle' to modern Conservatism recalls the combining of neoconservative economic strategy (austerity) with mild social liberalism (e.g. extending civil marriage) as the Conservative Party tried to leave behind three successive election defeats in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>52</sup> In both cases, the double shuffle was intended to expand the social and political appeal of the respective political parties and, indirectly, to perpetuate neoliberal policies in adaptive forms. This remains the strategy of the Conservative Party under Theresa May.

In response to the absorption of New Labour into the neoliberal bloc, Corbynism now seeks ideological distance to find the space for alternative thinking and

FIGURE 2 SUBORDINATE POLITICAL FORMATION

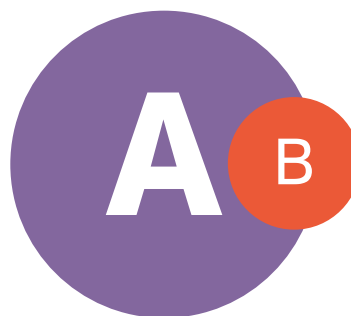
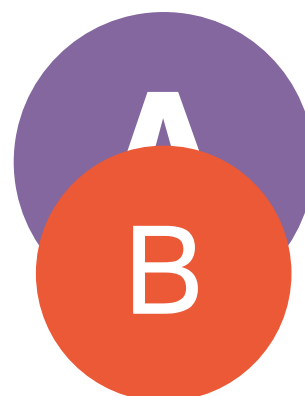


FIGURE 3 EXPANDED B



action (represented by the autonomous crescent of B beyond the boundary of A). However, given that A occupies much of the complex terrain of the state and civil society, the historical aim of B has to be expansion into it in order to effect its democratic transformation and exercise the new hegemony (see Figure 3). Autonomy, therefore, must be regarded as only the first stage, whereas creating hegemony means gaining ground in all parts of state and civil society (e.g. communities, places of work, civil society and the state), of which critical moments include the winning of parliamentary political majorities that open up greater political space for further change.

The role of the political entity B, therefore, is to develop independent thinking and action and, at the same time, to contest all the terrains within A. This could be interpreted as a wider interpretation of the Occupy Movement in which it becomes a permanent occupation of state and civil society. Podemos puts very clearly this combinational task linked to the vertical and horizontal modes of the political party:

***To build a new hegemony requires a dialogue between a variety of struggles and institutional forms that includes a synergy between electoral competition and the wide range of struggles that take place in the social arena.<sup>53</sup>***

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIVE INTEGRAL CAPACITIES**

The five integral functions or capacities – integral thinking, intellectual development, participation and leadership, political construction and bloc contestation (integral struggle) – need to be developed both internally and externally. Their internal development is focused within the political party in order to grow its leadership and hegemonic capacities in order to be able to think coherently, to act in an innovative way and to represent and integrate different sections of society. An integral political party is at any moment an internal alliance. At the same time, owing to the processes we have referred to earlier as 'super diversity', these integral capacities also need to be developed across a range of organisations, movements and networks that comprise radical civil society. The combined outcomes of the internal and external development of integral capacities could, therefore, be seen as nurturing a political ecosystem in which the political party and wider civil society are bound together in a relationship of inter-dependence and exchange. This constitutes the progressive political formation or The Very Modern Prince. The final section of this paper explores and illustrates the role of the political party in relation to the progressive political formation in the contexts of England, Scotland, Denmark and Spain.

## PART 4: THE INTEGRAL PARTY AND THE POLITICAL FORMATION IN PRACTICE

### BIG TENT OR CAMPSITE?<sup>54</sup>

The immediate response to any pluralism of purpose and action is to pose the question of leadership and inclusion. One solution is for the political party to attempt to bring all these forces into its internal life – the idea of the Big Tent or internal alliance. There is a strong case for a Big Tent approach in order to develop and give coherence to diversity and appeal of the progressive political party to represent as much of society as possible. There are, nevertheless, limits to this expansive and singular concept as progressive politics in the UK and elsewhere is manifested through not one but several different traditions and tendencies. The alternative or complement to the 'big tent' is the 'campsite' metaphor – a field of tents of different sizes and types, united by the common purposes of equality, democracy, sustainability and peace. Here there can be a leading large tent but, as Figure 4 illustrates, it coexists and finds its meaning in relation to others. A key question is whether the leading fraction views this pluralism in a positive or negative way.

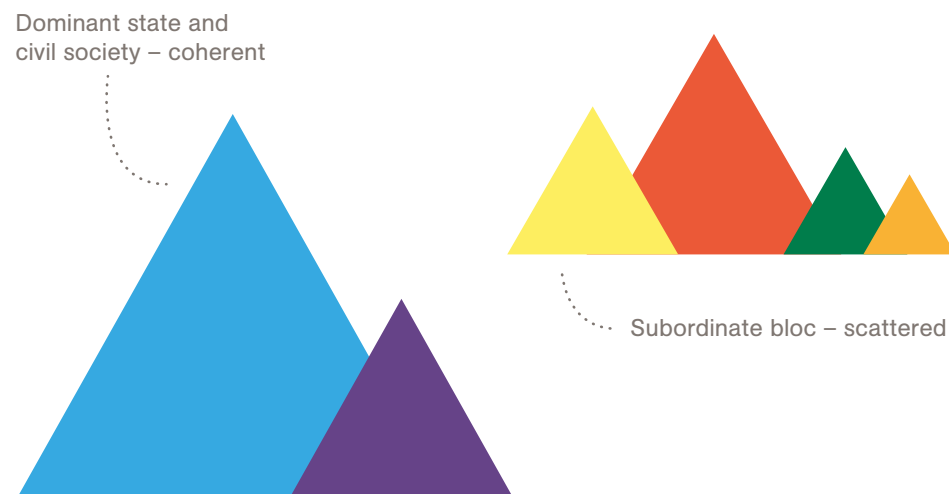
### OVERCOMING FRAGMENTATION OF THE PROGRESSIVE BLOC

While participants in the subordinate bloc have to understand the contours of Conservative hegemony, they can only outcompete it with superior purpose and even broader organisation.

The dominant bloc comprises the Conservatives + UKIP integrated into a relatively cohesive state and civil society. The statecraft of the right aims to keep this bloc aligned under the leadership of the Conservatives. The subordinate bloc, on the other hand, is politically scattered, but with a growing radical civil society. It currently comprises in political party terms the Labour Party, SNP, the Liberal Democrats and arguably some One Nation Conservatives, who could become detached from the Conservative political bloc if it drifts further to the right. The fundamental contours of the subordinate bloc would be shaped by a Labour split if this were to happen.

The nature of the progressive movement and its diversity (possibly fracture) means that any counter-hegemony will necessarily have to be built on cultural and political alliances comprising a variety of parties, networks, think tanks, civil society organisations of different hues both national and international that are drawn together by the increasingly compelling vision of a future order. Working with the grain of 'progressive pluralism' would also suggest that The Very Modern Prince does not define itself as exclusively socialist, but seeks to redraw the 'frontiers' of political struggle to mobilise the heterogeneous forces of The People against that of the elites.<sup>55</sup> The incipient Very Modern Prince will therefore need to understand the new meaning of democratic hegemonic leadership. This will involve a belief that a leading force at any moment is not the centre of the political universe, but a vital contributor to larger and more connective order – the collective brain that shares and exchanges the integral capacities. The Very Modern Prince may thus turn out to be a less egocentric organism than Gramsci's Modern Prince that was envisaged growing into a totalising entity containing within it all the elements of a future order.

FIGURE 4 THE TWO BLOCS COMPARED



## LEFT TURNS IN PRACTICE – LABOUR, THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY, ALTERNATIVET AND PODEMOS

The challenge of creating leadership and the alliances can be illustrated by a brief international comparison. Constructing the progressive historical bloc involves alliance building in all cases, but the role of the political party and its relationship to civil society will depend on the context of renewal. In the UK, the left surge happened initially through the SNP in Scotland, partly through the greens and latterly within the Labour Party in England, while in Spain, where the equivalent of the UK Labour Party was significantly weaker, it has occurred through entirely new political forces – Podemos as a new political party and the municipal movements in Madrid and Catalonia, and in Denmark through a new political and cultural party Alternativet.

### Labour and Corbynism

Corbyn's Labour Party has shifted decisively, but is split over what kind of left party it wants to be. In the final part of *The Osborne Supremacy* there was a recognition that while 'Corbynism' had refreshed the Labour Party following a catastrophic election defeat in 2015, its political approach is leading to the formation of a 'primitive political bloc'. This emergent condition is reflected in the quest for ideological autonomy from neoliberalism rather than hegemony of it, a focus on core support rather than building social and political alliances and a priority of developing the Labour Party as a social movement over that of being an effective electoral force.

Corbynism has certainly prevented an 'external Pasokification' of Labour by drawing in new members, many of them young and willing to be activists, and has thus become a major focus of progressive renewal. Corbyn's Labour Party, however, currently reflects a paradox. It is becoming a mass party with nearly 600,000 members (an all-time record and four times that of the Conservatives). At the same time, it appears firmly stuck at under 30 per cent in the opinion polls and is threatened in its northern and Welsh strongholds by an insurgent UKIP. In terms of bloc politics, what we are witnessing is a misalignment of different layers of the Labour sub-bloc, between its parliamentary leadership and activist membership and between the latter and its voter blocs. This misalignment threatens what might be seen as an 'internal Pasokification', a split that would seriously reduce its political presence.

The most immediate challenge facing the Labour Party as the basis of the New Left involves ways of combining social activism and effective parliamentary representation and thus aligning the different components of the Labour sub-bloc.<sup>56</sup> This suggests at least three required developments:

- whether Momentum becomes an integrative political movement that promotes new types of activism to provide the Labour Party with a sense of moral and political purpose that reaches across different social groups
- whether a new and young leadership emerges with the capability to articulate the new social movements and make the Labour Party electorally competitive
- more difficult still, whether Labour recognises that because of social and demographic shifts, along with boundary changes and developments in Scotland, it will probably never exercise power alone in the foreseeable future.

Moving from a 'primitive' to a mature political bloc requires developing a triple alliance culture – within the Labour Party itself, between Labour and other political parties, and between these parties and social and civil society organisations. This is the direction of *The Very Modern Prince* and progressive 21st-century politics. Given the sectionalist historical politics of both social democrats and the hard left, however, it will not be an easy realisation nor a comfortable journey. But the other path is far worse – narrowness, sectarianism, division, further defeat and a collapse into political irrelevance.

### SNP

The SNP currently exercises political hegemony across Scotland and has achieved this through a mixture of centralism and political competence, deeply attuned to national popular sentiment. The SNP has been in power for nine years and its rise is in marked contrast to the current fate of social democratic parties across Europe.

The successes of the SNP have resulted from a blend of its nationalism and social democracy in which a simple but effective political narrative has been created – Scotland can be a prosperous and fair society as an independent nation. Now there is an additional theme; it may have to exercise that independence to remain part of the EU. This blend of nationalism, social democracy and political competence has been emerging gradually, but has accelerated in recent years. A critical moment was the Scottish Independence Referendum; while leading to a rejection of Independence, it stimulated a new political culture to which the SNP was able to give political voice. The result was that under the charismatic leadership of Nicola Sturgeon it swept the board in the 2015 General Election, leaving Labour a severely reduced political force in Scotland.

In the subsequent Holyrood elections, the SNP fared less well and did not gain an overall majority. This has promoted speculation that it may have peaked as a political force and has led to renewed scrutiny of its political style and the relationship between its political rhetoric and policy practice. Seen from the left, the SNP

is not viewed as a particularly socialist force because its policies have tended to benefit those on average rather than lower incomes. It has also earned a reputation for being highly politically centralist and disciplined rather than open and democratic.

Apart from a cautious approach to the post-Brexit situation (e.g. not assuming that Brexit automatically means that Scotland will now vote for independence from the UK), the SNP faces a new set of challenges. If 50 per cent of the vote may now be an unobtainable upper limit, the SNP may be pushed towards a new political style. This could involve creating a new set of alliances to cement its political hegemony, bringing its membership more into the policy-making process and engaging more with Scottish radical civil society that was given such a boost by the Scottish Independence campaign.

### **Alternativet (The Alternative)**

This green Danish political party is the 'flattest', most networked and cyber-oriented of the four cases. Launched in 2013 and in the 2015 general election, Alternativet received nearly 5 per cent of the vote, electing nine deputies to the Danish parliament. It describes itself as 'a generous, action-oriented international party' with a special focus on serious sustainable transition, a new political culture and the entrepreneurial creative power of society and individuals to imagine a radically different future. As an international party it also invites people from different countries to join it.

At the centre of its political and cultural vision are six values or attributes:

- **Courage** – Courage to look problems in the eye, but also courage about the future we share.
- **Generosity** – Everything which can be shared will be shared with anyone interested.
- **Transparency** – Everybody should be able to look over our shoulders, on good days and on bad.
- **Humility** – To the task. To those on whose shoulders we stand. And to those who will follow us.
- **Humour** – Without humour there can be no creativity. Without creativity there can be no good ideas. Without good ideas there can be no creative power. Without creative power there can be no results.
- **Empathy** – Putting yourself in other people's shoes. Looking at the world from that point of view. And creating win-win solutions for everyone.

As a recently formed political force, Alternativet sees as its first task the creation of a socially open, diverse and network-based online platform to share knowledge, contacts and alternative political role models. Using these platforms it seeks to generate policies directly with citizens through events and workshops that are gathered into solid political proposals and serious sustainable scenarios for the future.

Therefore the aims and espoused modes of working of Alternativet are such that the party could be regarded as another type of Very Modern Princeling, albeit at the more networked end of the vertical–horizontal continuum. Given this initial orientation it may be too early to tell whether Alternativet will be able to develop the required range of integral capacities and establish itself as a major force in Danish politics.

### **Podemos**

Of the four cases, Podemos is by far the most ideologically and politically committed to developing the hegemonic integral capabilities discussed at the core of this paper.

The Spanish context is very different from that of the UK – there is a more federalist state structure; a voting system based on proportional representation and multi-membered districts; the economic crisis has been far more severe; and the left surge has taken place outside that of the traditional social democratic party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español; PSOE). Podemos (meaning 'We Can') is still a very young left political force. Having emerged since 2014, it has swiftly become a major electoral player and is in the process of constructing a distinctive political structure and culture. Rooted in the Indignados protests of 2011, its democracy is organised around a state-wide Citizens' Council, local and specialist 'circles' and has, at its head, the ponytailed charismatic leader Pablo Iglesias. While Podemos has a very active and participative base, it has also adopted a united and solid party structure, a war room mentality, with which to fight elections. It is in this combinational approach (centralism and decentralism) that we can see the political and theoretical inspiration of Gramsci (Iglesias would go on Spanish TV with a Gramsci sticker covering the Apple symbol on his Mac laptop), with the works of Laclau and Mouffe having been particularly influential.<sup>60</sup>

Podemos might, therefore, be regarded as a 'Modern Princeling'. It is certainly experiencing growing pains. There are tensions between its centralising approach and the activist base and the circles, and between its distinctive identity and an alliance-based approach that includes the anti-capitalist left and other progressive forces organised into open platforms. In response, there have been repeated calls from activists for a more open platform approach (Confluencia), although this has thus far been rebuffed by the leadership.

However, in the wake of lack of electoral progress in June 2016, Podemos may be compelled to think more about wider alliances and connecting with activist bases rather than thinking that a formal pact with the far left would be sufficient to carry it past the PSOE. There has been speculation that Podemos 1 will be compelled to undergo radical evolution into Podemos 2, a more pluralist



formation capable of building on the current activism, in order to reach beyond the traditional ways that political boundaries are described (termed the 'political frontier') to build alliances that could lead to the establishment of a progressive government.<sup>61</sup> This will involve a struggle within the democratic spaces of Podemos (the Primaries and in accordance with its agreed Statutes) between these competing visions.<sup>62</sup> It is possible to see the vision of Podemos 2 in accordance with the conception of The Very Modern Prince.

## **DEVELOPING THE PROGRESSIVE POLITICAL FORMATION**

This brief study of the Labour Party, the SNP, Alternativet and Podemos suggest that left turns have taken very different forms in Europe. Despite their very different contexts, stages of development and challenges there emerges, nevertheless, a common message. The era of single party politics and top down leadership is over as a galvanising progressive force. It was never particularly successful and is even less so in the conditions of the 21st-century and right hegemony. The need for an open, collaborative and deeply radical and socially just politics is the clear lesson emerging from these cases if the left is to move beyond its self-imposed political frontiers and those that the right seeks to impose on it.

If we look at the roots of renewal it is to be found in radical activism (progressive activity purposefully directed). But against activism, which is in itself educational, has to be arranged a careful study of organisation politics and the balance of forces of those involved in various struggles that suggests the need for an expansive political party that balances a number of dualities in a form of 'radical additionality' – activist as well as representative; visionary yet rooted in the everyday; internally pluralist yet integrationist; with a distinct identity but also outward looking and alliance seeking; participative yet disciplined. This can be understood as the world of 'and' rather than the world of 'versus'.

But even this is insufficient for New Times. The concept of The Very Modern Prince suggests the integral political party working as a contributor to a much larger and more diffuse organism, network or ecosystem – the creation of a radical and democratic civil society – in which the expansive or integral political party in order to be truly hegemonic acts with modesty and humility by deliberately nurturing other forces and accepting their cultures into itself. This is the starting orientation of Alternativet and may well be the direction of Podemos 2; it should also be the ultimate direction of Labour's development and renewal and similarly for the SNP to continue to exercise progressive leadership in Scotland

## **COMPASS – BECOMING A 'VERY MODERN PRINCEING'?**

This paper concludes with some brief reflections on Compass. Lying both within and beyond the Labour Party; promoting an alliance between socialists, greens, social liberals and the non-aligned; and providing spaces for the articulation of new forms of activism, Compass could be seen as a super connector, boundary crosser, networker and multi-disciplinary constructor. Its latest campaign, creating a progressive alliance in the post-Brexit context, is the most important it has undertaken in its ten-year existence. In functioning as a progressive connective force it not only demonstrates elements of the integral political party but, critically, seeks to develop The Very Modern Prince.

It follows that Compass has to continue to accumulate its connective functions by becoming more systematic in the generation of radical ideas; more connected with different forms of activism; more democratic in its own life; more able to nurture leadership capacities; more influential in assisting Labour in its path(s) of renewal; and, most fundamentally, connecting the scattered progressive political forces into the Progressive Alliance.

## **FINAL REFLECTIONS – A CIVIL SOCIETY FUTURE**

It is important to return to the theoretical enquiry that opened this paper – the interaction of the increasingly integral political party and a networked radical civil society, which is accumulating integral capacities. This suggests that The Very Modern Prince is both the ship and the sea – that the political party has to create the confluences in which it also sails. If so, then the historical mission is more profound still. It is about imagining beyond the immediate and important task of bloc building and through the processes of policy and political learning to be able to peer beyond the prow of the ship.<sup>64</sup> This imagining foresees a future in which both ship and the sea one day merge on the horizon, that in the 19th-century writings of Marx and Engels was conceived as self-government and the 'withering away of the state'.<sup>65</sup> It is the dynamic of this democratic dualism that may begin to define the very nature of a progressive post-capitalist 21st-century hegemony as networked radical civil society.

### **Building the progressive political formation – some key questions**

The final questions have to concern the dimensions of integral development and the shared responsibility of the integral political party and integral radical civil society in building a progressive political formation:

- How can the political party combine visions of radical modernity and a post-capitalist future with the transformation of everyday 'common sense'?
- Who and where are the new organic constructors?  
How do we understand and co-ordinate the increasingly diverse formations of modern progressive organic intellectuals who are emerging in new and uncharted forms?
- How do we develop 'campsite-style leadership' that embodies the culture of the future – democratic, pluralist, collective and distributed?
- How might local democratic experimentation and innovation help build radical civil society and what role should the central state play?
- How should networked organisations evolve to develop integral capacities?
- What form should the Progressive Alliance take?

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> An analysis the death process of the political party comes from Peter Mair's book *Ruling the Void*, which charts the decline of voter participation and party membership in recent decades as political elites retreat into the agencies of the state. See Peter Mair, *Ruling the Void: the Hollowing of Western Democracy*, Verso, 2013.
- <sup>2</sup> Indra Adnan and Neal Lawson, *New Times: How the Politics of Networks and Relationship Can Deliver a Good Society*, 2014, [www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/New-Times-Compass-November-2014.pdf](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/New-Times-Compass-November-2014.pdf) (accessed 29 July 2016).
- <sup>3</sup> Jeremy Gilbert, *The Case For Radical Modernity*, 2016, [www.compassonline.org.uk/the-case-for-radical-modernity-2/](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/the-case-for-radical-modernity-2/) (accessed 29 July 2016).
- <sup>4</sup> Uffae Elbaek and Neal Lawson, *The Bridge: How the Politics of the Future Will Link the Vertical to the Horizontal, Compass and Alternativit*, 2015, [www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Compass-The-Bridge2.pdf](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Compass-The-Bridge2.pdf) (accessed 29 July 2016).
- <sup>5</sup> Sue Goss, *The Open Tribe*, Lawrence and Wishart, 2014.
- <sup>6</sup> The idea of a progressive alliance in British Politics is explored in an upcoming book by Lisa Nandy, Caroline Lucas and Chris Bowers in *The Alternative: Towards a New Progressive Politics*, 2016, [www.compassonline.org.uk/events/book-launch-the-alternative-towards-a-new-progressive-politics/](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/events/book-launch-the-alternative-towards-a-new-progressive-politics/) (accessed 29 July 2016).
- <sup>7</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971, p 129.
- <sup>8</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and us', derived from his original publication in *Marxism Today*, June 1987, [www.hegemonics.co.uk/docs/Gramsci-and-us.pdf](http://www.hegemonics.co.uk/docs/Gramsci-and-us.pdf) (accessed 1 September 2016).
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*, Verso Books, 2015.
- <sup>11</sup> Neoliberalism 2.0 is a term used by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams.
- <sup>12</sup> Gramsci made a distinction between 'conjunctural' and 'organic' developments. Conjunctural developments could be seen as the result of the accumulation of system complications that erupt on the 'surface' of politics. It is on this immediate terrain that ideology and politics is fought out between the dominant and subordinate forces. Organic developments, on the other hand, were regarded as far deeper, to do with the totality of economic and political relations, that would have significance in the long run. It was understanding the relationship between the conjunctural and organic developments and crises that Gramsci saw as one of the prime functions of the Modern Prince.
- <sup>13</sup> Evgeny Morozov explains the logic of the new 'platform capitalism' in 'Where Uber and Amazon rule: welcome to the world of the platform', *Observer*, 7 June 2015.
- <sup>14</sup> This is one of the key arguments of Williams and Srnicek in advocating a progressive technological acceleration; see Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams '#ACCELERATE MANIFESTO for an Accelerationist Politics', *Critical Legal Thinking*, 14 May 2013, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/> (accessed 29 February 2016).
- <sup>15</sup> The concept of the 'expanded present' was developed by Christopher Pollitt in his reflections on the problem of 'institutional amnesia' under new public management; see Christopher Pollitt, *Time, Policy, Management: Governing With The Past*, Oxford University Press, 2008. I will suggest that the concept of the 'expanded present' can be elaborated further to explain how neoliberalism, while claiming the idea of a future, instead seeks to expand the present by the processes of 'Passive Revolution'.
- <sup>16</sup> 'Super diversity' has been used to denote increasing ethnic diversity in contemporary British and European societies. However, I use the term more generally to describe a society that is becoming more diverse socially, economically, ethnically and politically and this is linked to the argument for more ambitious alliance-based politics.
- <sup>17</sup> Ken Spours, *The Osborne Supremacy*, Compass, 2015, [www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Osborne-Supremacy-Compass.pdf](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Osborne-Supremacy-Compass.pdf) (accessed 1 September 2016); this Compass publication focused on the roots and nature of contemporary Conservative political hegemony.
- <sup>18</sup> See for example Colin Crouch, *Post Democracy*, 2004; Crouch links problems of democratic development to the rise of globalised capitalism.
- <sup>19</sup> There was a concerted attempt at international collaboration to establish neoliberalism through the Mont Pelerin Society (1947) that brought together the neoliberal intellectual pioneers, leading eventually to the creation of an international network of think tanks, the occupation of university economics departments by classical economists, and the enrolment of key right wing political figures across western democracies and the emergent economies of Eastern Europe to forge the neoliberal age.
- <sup>20</sup> 'Passive revolution' describes the way in which a political party can absorb popular aspirations, neutralise their specifically oppositional or class-antagonistic character, and re-articulate them in the politics of the pro-capitalist centre'. See 'Transformism', <http://wiki.theriomorphous.co.uk/doku.php?id=glossary:transformism:start> (accessed 4 September 2015).
- <sup>21</sup> Gramsci's actual words are 'the new cannot be born'. I prefer, however, the interpretation 'the new struggles to be born' because it suggests a process of effort to ensure that the new birth takes place.
- <sup>22</sup> The term 'catastrophic tie' refers to Gramsci's concept of the 'static equilibrium' in which the two fundamental classes

- capital and labour – cannot overcome one another and thus provide the context for the intervention of a ‘third force’ that reconciles the ‘tie’ in a progressive or regressive direction.
- <sup>23</sup> ‘Fascism Lite’ is a term used to describe political phenomena such as UKIP and the politics of Donald Trump – contemporary extreme right politics – that comprise some features of historical fascism but not all.
- <sup>24</sup> An excellent overview of the historical legacy of *Marxism Today* and the concept of New Times is provided by John Harris in ‘Marxism Today: the forgotten visionaries whose ideas could save Labour’, *Guardian*, 29 September 2015, [www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/sep/29/marxism-today-forgotten-visionaries-whose-ideas-could-save-labour](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/sep/29/marxism-today-forgotten-visionaries-whose-ideas-could-save-labour) (accessed 1 September 2016).
- <sup>25</sup> Jeremy Rifkin, ‘Capitalism is making way for the age of free’, *Guardian*, 31 March 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/31/capitalism-age-of-free-internet-of-things-economic-shift> (accessed 1 September 2016).
- <sup>26</sup> Paul Mason, *Post-Capitalism: A Guide to our Future*, Penguin Books, 2015.
- <sup>27</sup> Christopher J. Dew, ‘Post capitalism: rise of the collaborative commons’, 2015, <https://medium.com/basic-income/post-capitalism-rise-of-the-collaborative-commons-62b0160a7048> (accessed 14 September 2015).
- <sup>28</sup> See Srnicek and Williams 2015.
- <sup>29</sup> A universal basic income is an unconditional basic income (also called basic income, basic income guarantee or citizen’s income) in which all citizens or residents of a country regularly receive an unconditional sum of money, either from a government or some other public institution, in addition to any income received from elsewhere.
- <sup>30</sup> Jeremy Gilbert ‘The case for radical modernity’, *Red Pepper*, January 2016, [www.redpepper.org.uk/the-case-for-radical-modernity/](http://www.redpepper.org.uk/the-case-for-radical-modernity/) (accessed 29 February 2016).
- <sup>31</sup> Fredrick Laloux, *Re-inventing Organizations*, Nelson Parker, 2014.
- <sup>32</sup> See Andrew Chadwick and Jennifer Stromer-Galley, ‘Digital media, power, and democracy in parties and election campaigns party decline or party renewal?’ *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 2016.
- <sup>33</sup> The New Left oppositions are analysed by Susan Watkins in ‘Oppositions’, *New Left Review* 98, March 2016.
- <sup>34</sup> Roberto Unger, *Deep Freedom: Why the Left Should Abandon Equality*, IPPR, 2013.
- <sup>35</sup> Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea, ‘Common-sense neoliberalism’, *Soundings* 5, 2013, 9–25.
- <sup>36</sup> For example, Eliane Glaser, *Get Real: How to See Through the Hype, Spin and Lies of Modern Life*, Fourth Estate, 2013.
- <sup>37</sup> An interesting discussion about emotions, passions and forms of populism can be found in the Inigo Errejon and Chantal Mouffe, *Podemos: in the Name of the People*, 2015, particularly Section 10, ‘Understanding populism and populist situations’.
- <sup>38</sup> See for example Alan Finlayson and John Rutherford, ‘What is Blue Labour? An Interview with Jonathan Rutherford’, *Open Democracy*, 18 July 2011, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/alan-finlayson-john-rutherford/what-is-blue-labour-interview-with-jonathan-rutherford> (accessed 1 September 2016).
- <sup>39</sup> The project on Labour and England is being headed by Professor John Denham from Winchester University; see [www.theoptimisticpatriot.co.uk](http://www.theoptimisticpatriot.co.uk) (accessed 29 February 2016).
- <sup>40</sup> The Marxist concept of the General Intellect might be understood as the general social knowledge or collective intelligence of a society at a given historical period. Here I refer to this as the Organic Intellect – a Gramscian interpretation of General Intellect that is defined as the processes of exchange between specialist knowledge + broader political awareness, producing what Srnicek and Williams refer to as ‘self-mastery’. The concept of the Organic Intellect is explored in an upcoming book chapter – ‘Three models of the general intellect: reflections on the concepts of connective specialization and the curriculum of the future’.
- <sup>41</sup> This is one of the key arguments of *The Osborne Supremacy* – the ability of the Conservatives to achieve a high degree of political and intellectual integration.
- <sup>42</sup> Gramsci, Selections from the *Prison Notebooks*, p 125.
- <sup>43</sup> See Errejon and Mouffe, *Podemos*, particularly section 11, ‘Charismatic leadership and the nature of representation’.
- <sup>44</sup> The concept of ‘anti-hero leadership’ has been explored by the Clore Social Leadership Programme [www.cloresocialleadership.org.uk/Richard-Wilson](http://www.cloresocialleadership.org.uk/Richard-Wilson) (accessed 29 February 2016).
- <sup>45</sup> The appearance of crowd or click workers is discussed by Larry Elliott in ‘Each generation should be better off than their parents? Think again’, *Guardian* 14 February 2016, [www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/14/economics-viewpoint-baby-boomers-generation-x-generation-rent-gig-economy](http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/14/economics-viewpoint-baby-boomers-generation-x-generation-rent-gig-economy) (accessed 29 February 2016).
- <sup>46</sup> See Robin Murray, *Danger and Opportunity: Crisis and the New Social Economy*, NESTA, 2009, and Robin Murray, ‘A different way of doing things: co-operatives and the alternative economy’, *Red Pepper*, May 2012.
- <sup>47</sup> See John McDonnell, ‘The new economics’, 14 January 2016, [www.labour.org.uk/blog/entry/the-new-economics](http://www.labour.org.uk/blog/entry/the-new-economics) (accessed 1 September 2016) and New Economics Foundation, *The Great Transition Project*, nd, [www.neweconomics.org/teams/entry/the-great-transition](http://www.neweconomics.org/teams/entry/the-great-transition) (accessed 29 February 2016).
- <sup>48</sup> An excellent critique of Labour’s current confusions about localism, devolution and democracy can be found in a blog by Craig Berry, ‘xxxxxxx’, Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute, xx month year, <http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/author/craig-berry/> (accessed 16 March 2016).

- 49 The understanding of how hegemony operates in an era of globalization has been explored by what have been termed 'neo-Gramscians'. These include Peter Burnham, 'Neo-Gramscian Hegemony and the International Order', 1990, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.514.4169&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (accessed 1 September 2016) and Adam David Morton, *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy*, Pluto Press, 2007.
- 50 The role of the OECD and its impact on global educational performativity has been critiqued; see S. Seller and B. Lingard, 'The OECD and the global governance of education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 28 (5), 2013, pp 710–25.
- 51 Stuart Hall, 'New Labour's double shuffle', *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Culture*, 27 (4), 2005, 319–35.
- 52 For a brief description of the 'Conservative double shuffle' see Spours, *The Osborne Supremacy*.
- 53 See Errejon and Mouffe, *Podemos*, p 125.
- 54 The campsite or Glastonbury metaphor was first coined by Neal Lawson and Neil Sherlock in their book *The Progressive Century: The Future of the Centre Left in Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.
- 55 See Errejon and Mouffe, *Podemos*, for a novel discussion of the development of shifting 'frontiers' of political engagement.
- 56 Owen Jones argues for both functions in 'Mass membership alone doesn't make a social movement', *Guardian*, 27 July 2016.
- 57 Gerry Hassan reflects on the SNP and its political policy and culture in 'Nine years into office, what does the SNP actually stand for?', *Scottish Review*, 8 June 2016.
- 58 This is the directions advocated for the SNP by one of its MPs – Tommy Shephard – who is currently campaigning of the position of deputy leader of the SNP.
- 59 More information about *Alternativet* can be found at <http://alternativet.dk/english/>.
- 60 An interesting article on the intellectual influence of Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle Mouffe is a piece by Dan Hancox, 'Why Ernesto Laclau is the intellectual figurehead for Syriza and Podemos', *Guardian*, 9 February 2015.
- 61 In *Podemos*, Errejon and Mouffe discuss the concept of the 'political frontier' as a way of redefining ideological and political boundaries (e.g. moving from a left–right distinction to that of the 'casta' (elites) and The People).
- 62 An excellent discussion of the evolution of Podemos is a piece by Antonio Martínez-Arboleda, 'Podemos 2.0: the accelerated evolution of the Spanish radical left', 2015, <http://leftunity.org/podemos-2-0-the-accelerated-evolution-of-the-spanish-radical-left/> (accessed 29 February 2016).
- 63 The concept of the world of 'and' is explored in the Compass education publication The Bloomsbury Paper: *The Interim Report of the Inquiry into a 21st Century Education System*, 2014, [www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/78fe8b157df89dc89b\\_9em6b4j8f.pdf](http://www.compassonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/78fe8b157df89dc89b_9em6b4j8f.pdf) (accessed 29 February 2016).
- 64 Christopher Pollitt eloquently summarized the relationship between the past, present and future by stating 'we can make things much easier for ourselves if we actively learn to live with the past, and with the way many of the important actions we take now may carry both consequences and requirements which stretch far into the future... we can recognize the reality of long linkages over time, and adapt our policies and institutions to allow for them, or we can blunder forwards without either rearview mirrors or forward vision much beyond the end of the ship's prow.' See Pollitt, *Time, Policy, Management*, p 181).
- 65 *Critique of the Gotha Programme Marx/Engels Selected Works*, vol 3, Progress, 1970, pp 13–30.

