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new times:

How a politics of networks and relationship can deliver a Good Society

Indra Adnan & Neal Lawson

Compass
together for a good society

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How a politics of networks and relationship can deliver a Good Society

In memory of **Stuart Hall (1932-2014)**

Stuart Hall, one of the most brilliant thinkers who shone the brightest light in dark times. He was was one of the key people behind the 1989 Manifesto for New Times. Stuart died earlier this year. The loss is huge, but his legacy is greater.

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HE'D been feeling depressed for several days. The newspapers were headlining the dire situation in the Middle East and he'd caught sight of an image on the front page of the Standard he could not get out of his head. The feeling of wanting to hide was overwhelming and worst of all, he could sense his resistance to the call for military intervention shrinking. Bomb them, he could hear himself thinking, there's no other way to deal with barbarians. He clicked on his Facebook page hoping for escape, and true enough, there on the front was the latest viral video from Chris which transported him in an instant to a vox pop on an Egyptian high street. Just a young lad of 12 talking about Islam, women, government - but in the most astute, compassionate way, full of clarity and conviction. The tears came as his heart opened to this boy: what a gem in the midst of the rubble, what a candle in the dark. His walls began to tumble - watching the boy with his wide eyed, calm exchange with the journalist - herself, moved, amazed. A deep sense of shame lapped upon his shore: how could he lose trust in a people so easily, how was he so ready to dismiss a religion he knew had provided untold riches to our world, how could he wish a region oblivion?

WE can hardly believe it. Tuesday we'd had been siting with our heads in our hands, not wanting to look up, even at each other. Heating had been cut off - savage: just the latest trick to turn us out of our house. Then comes a knock on the door, the lad from over the way was looking for his dog - the only warm body on our couch. He sussed us in an instant and just told us to sit tight - whatever that meant. Now it's only Friday and our house is like campaign central for The Battle to Save Local Home From Developers. Youngsters are popping in and out all day bringing food, blankets, even a bit of carpet to save our feet from freezing. What's amazing us is that some of them aren't even local - they've read about our situation on an email list and "tweeted their network" - apparently - for ideas. Someone's come and done an interview, live - like, on the lad's phone - and now we're on bloody Youtube, explaining stuff like how we never had a chance to find the money before the notice had been slapped on the door. Tomorrow the local MP's coming down to see us - us! He's made a promise to stop the court order - says it's happened before with this lot. He's got an election coming up soon so the lad's hopeful.

SHE'D been sitting at her computer all day – part writing her magnum opus, part organising a holiday with four friends in-boxing on Facebook, part keeping up with the events in Ferguson St Louis, where a young black man had seemingly been casually shot by the police, as they unfolded almost live on her screen. There were at least six more windows up but she had stopped engaging with them as more compelling tasks loomed into view. Looking out the window for a moment, an idea came to her about what the young terror merchants of ISIS might have in common with the Miley Cyrus hate club which took her all of two minutes to capture in 140 characters and tweet. She hit the button a fraction of a second before she realised her mistake: what an idiot! Sweat broke out over her neck and back as she imagined her tweet #IS popping up in a carefully monitored website somewhere in Iraq. Nowhere to hide. She opened her Facebook and sure enough, there was a friend request from a name she didn't recognise. A moment of lapsed concentration and she was in the battle real time.

I didn't know where to start. It had taken me long enough to figure out I wanted to play but now what? None of my friends or family were interested and I couldn't find an affordable course on line. I picked up my iPad and added a column to tweet deck #harpsichord and smiled as names, events, schools tumbled into view. Three days later I was sitting in the back room of a pub I'd walked past a million times, my hands moving over the keys for the first time

1. New Times - a Chance to Make History?

On this day a quarter of century ago the Berlin Wall was breached, and then brick-by-brick torn down by citizens who saw no future for them coming from the East. Eight months earlier in March 1989 Tim Berners Lee established the first protocols for what was to become the World Wide Web. In the same year Francis Fukuyama penned his now infamous essay The End of History. The Berlin citizens were right, Berners-Lee was inspired and Fukuyama was wrong.

Twenty-five years on, the consequences of those acts and views are only now transforming the rules about how we live, think and act. Society is going through one of its irregular but profound moments of revolutionary change. It is every bit as comprehensive and far reaching as the industrial revolution that ripped its way through the Victorian era and led to huge economic, social and political ruptures, like then, for good and bad.

But today it is not so much a spectre that haunts Europe, as Marx and Engels described in their manifesto of that time, but a spectrum. It's not Communism that is sweeping all before it but Communication. Because it is the digital revolution that now melts everything that is solid into air. Technology never determines the future but, then and now, it has a profound impact on it. We think and act differently because a world that is digital and networked gives us millions, yes millions of new options.

"Today it is not so much a spectre that haunts Europe.. but a spectrum"

As such, the Berlin citizens created the perfect metaphor for this revolution that unfolds before our eyes – the destruction of barriers and walls, the vertical and the hierarchical. And in the rubble, 25 years later, has been created the terrain of opportunity to mix, move, know, share and shape. Fukuyama saw this as the apparent triumph of free market democracy but did not see either the essential contradiction between free markets and democracy, or the impact on that critical contradiction of the new singular global order – a world in which nothing could now stop capitalism from undermining itself. This of course it did less than two decades after 1989 and will do again and again until markets start to serve society and the planet. It is that possibility, of people and planet coming before profit and property, that the dawn of New Times heralds.

It was slow in the coming, as all revolutions are; they build imperceptibly in our ways of doing and being until they burst into life. And like all revolutions, New Times is shaping us for good and bad. It is bringing out the best in us and the worst. It can isolate us, confuse us and make some new elites more powerful than ever. And it is also empowering us, enabling us, connecting us and accelerating the development of humanity to a higher stage.

They key argument in this text is simple but profound – it is that in a networked society the possibilities for human progress have become greater than ever. This is not to confuse optimism with wishful thinking. Nor is it to be techno-utopian or deterministic. But it is to realise that these flat, pervasive networks naturally lend themselves to more egalitarian and democratic behaviour.

Increasingly we all have a voice and say, we can know anything anywhere and connect to whoever we want. But the nature of those networks, and the inter-connectedness they generate, demand that we listen to each other and respect each other. Yes, power and wealth is being accrued by some – it always was – but the predominant possibility is progressive.

Compare and contrast now to the last big moment of collective hope – 1945. The state and labour movement hierarchies and elites of old times were well-meaning but were all about doing things to people, and not for them. A Good Society, one that is much more equal, democratic and sustainable, was never possible through such elite top-down institutions, trying to command and control a better society into being. The people were either left out or just viewed as cogs in their machines - but means always shape ends.

Today, in historically unique circumstances, there is the chance to unite means and ends – to create a democratic and equal society through democratic and egalitarian means. And in so doing, we can bend modernity to our values – rather than allow our values to be bent and disfigured by modernity.

The threat is not that we underestimate the dangers of New Times – but that we underestimate the potential of this moment.

The good life is one that we construct ourselves working with others, and the way we get there is by exactly that – working with others. This could be a moment in which the forces of optimism, hope, compassion, love and humanity triumph.

But only if we get the politics of it right.

This publication is not directly about austerity, dealing with UKIP, saving the environment or winning elections – it's about how we live, think and act in a world that is changing so much and so fast. Primarily it is about why and how we and our politics have to change, if we want to make the most of this historic moment. Because if we don't change then it will be more authoritarian and elitist forces that adapt more effectively to the moment.

In particular, New Times is about how politics must change from making policy to building platforms. From a politics that wants to be in charge to a politics that enables people to take collective charge of their destiny.

Karl Marx wrote that "we make history but not in conditions of our choosing". We have agency - but agency only enabled by the times we live in. On the 25th Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, 9.12.14, we find ourselves living in extraordinary times when technology and the culture it spawns is driving a revolution. There exists today the possibility of aligning our ways of governing and doing with the deepest and fullest sense of our humanity. And because of it – we can make history.

"The threat is not that we underestimate the dangers of New Times - but that we underestimate the potential of the moment"

2. What's New about New Times?

There are two stories we understand about ourselves and the times we live in. The first story we are all familiar with. Recent history is a disappointment. The promise of each new era - first of the post-'45 settlement, and later, the wildly idealistic '60s, the greed is good '80s, the 'New Labour New Britain' '90s, and recently compassionate Conservatism - have all fallen flat. From extreme inequality of wealth to drone warfare, from banks who do whatever they want to teachers who must do only as they are told, we feel we have been robbed of our agency, our hope and our moral compass.

"What can security mean when we have to trade our privacy for protection?"

Rapid globalisation has freed finance and corporations from national limits and democratic accountability. Rampant individualism has left psychological depression as the biggest single cause of disability in our country, and installed a culture of turbo-consumption in which enough is never enough. Government cannot control the economy - or help the casualties. The future - especially with respect to the environment - is something to be feared.

Anxiety is pervasive, and 'security' has become a weasel word: what can it mean when we have to trade our privacy for protection against global terrorism, intrusive corporations and even more intrusive governments? These are the same governments who are also prepared to see us homeless if we cannot earn enough to pay the rocketing rents, mortgages and other bills, in a world increasingly steered according to the interests of just a few super-wealthy people.

If we worked hard and played by the rules then (we were promised) life would be at least tolerable. Hardly anyone believes that now. There can be no 'end of history' when there is no end of suffering, anxiety and humiliation. Neo-liberalism, the idea that what's good for big corporations is good for all of us, still has us in its economic and political grip, even when we know it does us more harm than good. If we continue on this path our children will hate us.

The second story is less familiar but gaining ground fast as a 'positive alternative' to the mainstream. It is an alternative rooted in the consequences of the technological revolution going on all around us. We call it New Times.

It's a term that was last meaningfully introduced to us in the late 1980s, perhaps surprisingly by a band of Communists and fellow travellers at the influential journal Marxism Today. Displaying remarkable prescience they presented us with what we judge to be the fourth key event of 1989 – the publication of their Manifesto for New Times. Its political focus was the dawn of what they termed post-Fordism. To understand Fordism, just think of a car manufacturer's mechanical production line, as the dominant form of making things happen. People were just components in a machine. They knew their place, did what they were told and enjoyed secure if not exciting and fulfilling lives. The same model worked in every form of administration – whether in the public or private sector. Big top-down bureaucracies ruled through elite command and control. Production and politics were both driven by hierarchies.

The Marxism Today thinkers had spotted that such vertical and top down forms of production and politics were breaking down. The upsides of Fordism, the order and certainty of making things this way, were being challenged by its downside; a lack of creativity, flexibility and innovation. Japanese car production in particular was a direct challenge to Fordism. Its factory innovations, such as just-in-time production, relied on a flexible network of suppliers from the outside, and quality circles on the inside - small groups of employees with real autonomy, that allowed for greater responsiveness to demand, and better quality control.

"For consumers in new times: the travel industry, rigorously protected and regulated for so many years, can only watch as AirBnb, HomeSwap and the Uber taxi service throw out the rule book and offer ad hoc, personal, quality-uncontrolled services - at a fraction of the price".

With an uncanny sense of timing, the MT'ers published their Manifesto for New Times months before the fall of the Berlin Wall – the dramatic symbol of the end of Old Times, in which Fordism found its highest form in the shape of the Soviet Union. Car manufacturers wanted the flexibility, innovation and quality of post-Fordism; the people of the East wanted to be free of Leninism and the bureaucratic state. All over, everyone wanted new times.

Of course, what our new or post-Marxist visionaries could not see was the slow burn – and eventually the rocket-fuelled impact – of the internet, whose rudiments were being designed at exactly the point they were predicting New Times. In those intervening 25 years the combination of internet ubiquity and Moore's Law, which states that computing power doubles every two years, has kicked in – and then some.

The internet and wifi; the rise of social media and the information and predictive power of algorithms; GPS, big data and the use of radio frequency sensors (soon to be embedded in most products, even the clothes we wear) - all these are combining to change everything about how we live and experience our daily lives.

Old, traditional hierarchies can't keep up. Information, innovation, interconnection, diversity, globalisation and hyper-localism, openness and more than anything flatness and the end of hierarchy, define an era that only now really can be described as New Times. Because of this technological revolution traditional power hierarchies are being bypassed. People are not waiting any more for permission to act - they are initiating their own projects and causes, setting up their own enterprises (whether commercial or social) and answering their own problems. Critically, a tangible, everyday sense of social and individual agency is being restored.

We state again – just to be crystal clear – this does not make a Good Society or anything inevitable. The Chinese invented both paper and gunpowder but their culture didn't allow them to be used effectively. But these inventions revolutionised Europe. The point is that technology could allow now, within these New Times, the creation of a Good Society.

This massive migration of agency from the vertical to the horizontal is already having transformative consequences. This is just a taste of what is emerging in the early days of our New Times.

For work in new times: We've known, since the first New Times analysis, that enterprises who embrace horizontal network structures benefit in many ways. Autonomous workers, collaborating and creating together, result in better performing organisations, in terms of retaining talented staff and the flow of ideas. Open innovating, net-era titans like Google and Valve are great proof. Digitally-based, zero-marginal-cost models of production and distribution mean we will all be able to work less in the future, because goods and services will come to us from super-efficient platforms. 3D printing will enable every local community to create their own medical tools, even usable joints and limbs. Meanwhile, the ability of managers to conceal their pay and bonus deals, or to hide from their tax responsibilities, has never been more difficult and workers have the opportunity to forge new forms of solidarity through social media – at the hyper-local or even global level.

For citizens in new times: The opportunity to know, think, talk and act has never been greater – we sign online petitions, we join, volunteer and participate as never before. Software that allows us to find people interested in the same small or large issues (like global21.net, Facebook, Twitter) means we need never be alone with our passions. Massive open on-line courses (moocs) are giving everybody the chance to get access to some of the best education for free. Watching one 15 minute TEDx talk, from anywhere in the world, can change how we see the world or our own lives.

For friends and family members in new times: Facebook, Skype, What'sApp etc mean it's almost impossible to lose connection with those we hold dear. We can chat on line, using both words and images, from just about anywhere in the world. We can read minute-by-minute updates of each other's thoughts, feelings and activities. We can care remotely, sending help or shopping to those we cannot visit. It's not a substitution for physical presence - but it's a great improvement on total absence. All of these developments come at a price – to old industries, services and organisations. But the technological genie will not be put back in the bottle. And we shouldn't try to do so, when the democratic and inclusive potential of new times is so apparent. This is not to say, of course, that those whose lives are based around dying technologies shouldn't be fully assisted to move into the future – but that, as we will see, comes down to politics. As Mark Fisher and Jeremy Gilbert state in Reclaim Modernity[1]:

> *We are living through the moment when the internet finally moves from being a secondary transmitter of information produced elsewhere, to becoming the main nexus of human culture. Any form of politics which does not reflect upon the nature of this shift and respond to it creatively to it is going to be left behind.*

If yesterday's solidarity was forged in the factory, today and tomorrow it will be forged through mediums such as Facebook, Twitter and the other zero-charge means by which we connect virtually and enable ourselves to meet physically. But to meet that potential, we need a politics that allows us to pool risk, share value and jointly produce a future in which we all have a voice and say.

Yet given the complete mismatch of the two versions of reality offered above, it is not surprising that few people find it easy to completely accept or deny either. No one wants to be overly pessimistic about the present. But with recent evidence of the spectacular gap between rich and poor being presented as essential to our warped economic system[2], and formal party politics attracting less and less voters, it's understandably hard not to be. On the other hand, technology is clearly moving the goal posts and giving rise to a new culture of enterprise and activism to which we all have at least some access, in terms of the huge opportunities and possibilities being created.

The problem is that while the future may be here, it is very poorly distributed. What good are new network opportunities to people who can't get out of the house due to care issues or simple poverty? What will people do with flexible working if they can't make a living? How will a thousand Facebook friends or even 30 million Avaaz members stop the ice melting?

A closer look at the two stories about the present confirm that there is really very little grounds on which to compare them - they are not good or bad versions of a similar model, but two different conversations happening at the same time. Even as the old ways are following a self-destructive path, the new ways are emerging - but the path is not linear or clear. The Arab Spring, or democratic uprisings in Scotland or Hong Kong - all give us insights into what is now possible. New Times gives us the Tea Party just as it gives us Occupy. We recognise and feel elements of insecurity and fear in the upheavals caused by these processes. Technology alone is not the answer.

But nothing good comes from pessimism. Having hope and making hope possible is the only way to build a better future – a hope based on the reality of what is emerging around us.

But the digital revolution offers more than tools with which to achieve the same goals, within the same culture as before. If all it could bring was more goods, more opportunity to earn, more distraction - well, what's so transformative about that? No, these New Times offer significantly more: they offer everyone new ways of being and operating in the world, which can lead to a new economy and a new society. The networked society holds the promise of the rapid development of human capacity.

The Elements of New Times

To recap: Over the past ten years we have witnessed:

1. **a revolution in connection:** we can reach a million people with an image, a message or an offer in an instant. More than that, we can enter into networks of information as big as any library and access it by asking simple questions.

2. **a revolution in mobilisation:** through platforms like Avaaz or 38 degrees we can find people of like minds and register our opinions by a click of the mouse. If we see a gap in governance, we can begin a social enterprise, crowdsource funds and find our constituency without ever knocking on a single door.

3. **a revolution in collaboration:** no more waiting for the boss to call a meeting - we can reach out to our peers horizontally without waiting for an introduction. With a hashtag on twitter, we can find a global community of potential partners.

4. **a revolution in mediation:** we can speak directly to power – whether elites or masses - with a tweet, email, blog, video or podcast.

5. **a revolution in location:** we are no longer tied by time and place, we can appear anywhere in the world without getting on a plane. No longer defined by our geographical community, we can now act and share purpose with people we may never meet. But at the same time we can connect much more easily to the people in our geographic location – the politics of hyper-localism are being opened up.

6. **a revolution in identity:** we can create a persona online and be capable of interacting with others, making contributions to projects without ever appearing in person.

7. **a revolution in consciousness:** we can create our experience, what Manuel Castells refers to as real virtuality, rather than simply be on the receiving end of it. The closest thing we will get to dreaming with our eyes open.

These changes on their own, revolutionary as they may be, are no guarantee of solutions to our problems – the only guarantee is that change will happen.

How can we engage properly with this moment to give ourselves the best chance to harness the new technology for the good – by which we mean, for the enrichment of the whole of society and the sustainability of the planet? As much as any new political vision would like to simply replace the old one, history tells us, from New Labour to the Arab Spring, that real, lasting change happens organically, not instrumentally. It has to be embedded in everyday social relations, built from the bottom up, and in-tune with the culture and technology of the day.

But it needs structure too. The recent and rather wonderful flowering of debate and democracy in Scotland would not have been possible without a political party that won an election and proposed a referendum. The state provided the hook - indeed, put a date in the calendar - for people to express their agency. The vertical gave life to the horizontal. But only because a new idea took hold: what sort of country did Scotland want to be? So, elements of old times are still necessary - but only by reaching people where they are, engaging with their current desires, logic and capacities. And then, by identifying new practices and relationships arising, by giving social movements meaning and a shared narrative. That is when the transformative change we need happens.

Compare and contrast this example of new politics with how other governments behave - Labour and Conservative – as they endlessly, furiously and repeatedly try to impose change on us, to us and for us. They do it through the state machine or the free market – but what the machine and the market have in common is a profound mistrust of us, the people. They try to force us to do what we would not otherwise do - and then wonder why they are not feted in the manner they expect. We know that neither Serco nor the Soviet Union hold out the answer to how we can be more human in the digital and networked context of the 21st century. Anything that doesn't start and end with "us, the people" is now almost doomed to fail.

Binary choices fail to match the complexities of a world in which some things continue and others are transformed – but the essence of much of New Times can be distilled:

Old Times	New Times
Hierarchical	Horizontal
Elites	Communities
Closed	Open
Private	Public
Competition	Collaboration
Consuming	Creating
Top down	Bottom up
Markets	Networks
Capitalism	Humanism
Hard power	Smart power
Macho	Feminine

3. New Times: Reclaiming Our Humanity

'Economics are the method: the object is to change the heart and soul[3]'.

Margaret Thatcher

When talking about the problems of our economic culture, we often invoke the term neoliberalism, meaning a modified form of liberalism that not only favours free market capitalism but recognizes there is nothing inevitable or natural about people's embrace of such a system. What is particular about *neoliberalism* is its recognition that people must be encouraged to embrace the market, ironically through the state – directly via privatisation but also through welfare coercion and other means. It preaches a culture of competition and the maximization of a dry and material source of satisfaction: to simply earn and own. It is an incredibly individualistic and narrow form of what it is to be human. And part of its trick is to tell us this is 'the natural way of things', while at the same time trying through privatisation and other cultural devices to rule out any alternative.

We are pitched into a war of all against all, a global race we are told we must win, despite the fact there is never a finishing line. That which can't easily be assigned a market price - love, public spaces, the air that we breathe - are either exploited or ignored. As William Davies describes it *"Neoliberalism is the pursuit of the disenchantment of politics by economics[4]".*

There are now obvious problems with a market fundamentalism that tends towards crisis after crisis, driven by the risk-taking inherent in its structure, as well as the contraction in overall demand that results from the social inequality it generates. In other words, who buys all the new stuff when wages are flat? Without limits or boundaries and in the absence of a global alternative, lost in 1989, capitalism, in its old form, becomes its own worst enemy. It stumbles on, zombie like, because of its lack of development into something new and more relevant to the 21st century.

Because the problem of capitalism is not just that it undermines itself – but that it cannot adapt to New Times. Capitalism, as it currently exists, fails to offer us a space to be fully human. It requires us to marginalise, even cut off, every other form of human exchange other than that which is measurable in monetary terms – just when so much more is possible.

Our media upholds the narratives of success and failure based on financial reward and punishment at every level: a good leader is not a good person but a good manager of the economy. Education is valuable for how well it fits you into the economy not whether it prepares you for life. How often have we fought an election on a few pence tax cut rather than on the crisis of the environment?

What is astounding – and sobering given that society came under its spell for so long – is that the key intellectual underpinnings of neoliberal capitalism cannot, on closer inspection, stand up. It doesn't set us free and isn't designed to. It can only deliver even the faltering outcomes we are witnessing with constant and massive intervention from vested interests – most notably big business using the state as its handmaiden. Mrs. Thatcher knew that a strong state was necessary to force into being 'free' markets. Indeed, post-crash, it is now public money that underpins this so-called 'free' market.

The human and social drives behind the emerging economy: a developmental view

While clearly something different needs to emerge, there is no off-the-shelf alternative we can simply enact. But change – imperceptible at first – is now taking shape. We can perhaps see it better if we take a view about the progress of our societies and ourselves in a developmental framework - about us growing and evolving into more complex and self-aware ways of living and being.

Latter-day psychology, neurology, sociology and biology have all come together to show us that, rather than being creatures of simple material needs first, we are at all times driven, shaped and motivated by our emotional needs as well. As Ivan Tyrell and Joe Griffin have described in the Human Givens project[5], human survival - our need for attention, status, meaning, community, autonomy, privacy and intimacy are expressed from birth. They are not luxuries added onto the physical needs of food, shelter and security – as in Maslow's hierarchy - but original, basic needs. Without them, we cannot go on developing and ensuring our viability.

The need for attention, in particular, is a *human given* without which adults become isolated and depressed. Children deprived of attention are not able to activate the neural circuitry required to become empathetic, responsible, autonomous – in other words, fully human. The tragedy is that the constant availability of things to buy or screens to entrance us are only short-term fixes which never deliver healthy human development, largely because they cannot be reciprocal, or deliver relationship.

At the same time, new understanding is arising about our essential resources for getting those needs met. Until recently the argument for the irresistible force of the selfish gene has held sway in economic political discussion: but more and more, the biological and ethological evidence is building up that we are as much collaborators as we are competitors[6].

Tyrell and Griffin point to our imaginations - our ability to make relationship and have rapport with others, our empathy and our ability to dream - as the key resources for the creativity that can shape society and the economy. Over-emphasising the ‘dignities’ of labour as putting in the physical hours in exchange for financial rewards - however small - does little to maximise our potential human resources.

All this is echoed by Margaret Heffernan in her book A Bigger Prize: Why Competition Isn't Everything And How We Do Better - a brave study which demonstrates how the competitive instinct can be bad for us when its benefits are over-played. From sport to finance, the ascendancy of competition has left us impoverished. Think about the importance of collaboration in highly rated Finnish schools, in contrast to the red-in-tooth-and-claw league tables of Anglo-American education, the benefits of which soon peter out.

Being more fully human in a networked world

While markets oblige us to compete, networks encourage us to collaborate - a way of being together that will help us get our needs met more effectively. So, the arrival of New Times, the networked and interconnected world that taking shape around us, seems to have coincided with a profound revolution in our understanding of human nature, both in our minds and our needs. Might there be deeper corollaries and compatibilities here: indeed, is one driving the other?

What is happening now is that, without any political intervention, citizens are developing the capabilities for change – not by going to classes or doing activists retreats – but simply by exercising the new technology available to them, much of it simply by having fun. On the surface, Facebook is just friends chatting. But the by-products of their communications include:

- **Creating an individualised media resource:** looking at the world through inputs not directly programmed by Rupert Murdoch or the BBC. This world view may include conspiracy theories and exclude serious analysis. However it might also add global perspectives, good news stories rarely covered by the mainstream and a human lens on the world that allows for diverse responses to events – psychological, spiritual and philosophical rather than simply business or fiscally oriented. Turning from the Facebook input back to the mainstream media helps develop a critical relationship to news.

- **Developing multiple identities on line:** something that requires us to activate what psychologists call 'the observer' in our heads. We watch ourselves behave and manipulate reactions in others. Over time we become conscious of others doing that too – often with us as the intended audience. It's an important developmental moment, giving us a new awareness of the contexts within which we are operating and a new literacy about power. For example, witness today our acute awareness - expressed in all our social media - of how consent is being manufactured for military intervention in Iraq. Compare this to how we never saw it coming in Kosovo, and only belatedly in Iraq war of 2003.

- **Building our social muscles:** precisely because of how easy it is, liking people, pictures, behaviours and news items exercises and enables us socially. Active appreciation triggers reciprocity, a skill we can transfer off line. Trolling, on the other hand, receives opprobrium – and lots of it. Within our collective disdain, the psychology of the troll is much discussed and observers come to conclusions together. The internet is not a teacher but a mirror and an amplifier: our inner computer – the data-collecting, pattern-matching brain - watches and learns.

Human development and our improved ability to act is not a new factor in social dynamics, but the acceleration we are witnessing now is occasionally alarming – as any parent of a Gen Y or Z child will know. Their expertise in finding music, research, deals on line; their ease in the virtual global arena (eg teenagers easily comparing footballers from multiple national leagues); their willingness to step in and out of games with total strangers - these are all behaviours baby boomers and early X-ers could not have imagined in their youth.

More surprising perhaps is that capability for the New Times is not directly linked to economic privilege any more: witness young entrepreneurs in India and Africa, starting nationwide businesses with only a rudimentary mobile phone[7]. Or digital political activists in Indonesia that have helped elect the world's first tweeting President, now crowdsourcing his cabinet[8].

On the other hand, there are people in our own immediate locality that have no access to these powerful and pervasive networks. Worse, and consequently, they have no interest in increasing their own agency – which is what this era offers more than anything else. Old times tells us we have no choice but to accept their isolation and make provision for their care, increasingly at arms length.

But in a network society, we proceed on the basis of relational welfare[9]. We never just settle for a cash equivalent of care: instead, we surround the excluded with opportunities for connection, intent on drawing them in.

An excellent source of this new 'neuro-social' thinking is Matthew Lieberman's new book, Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect[10]. Lieberman, a social neuroscientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, outlines the fascinating neurological evidence for the primacy of social connections in our lives, and presents guidelines for how we can use this information to improve our workplaces, schools, and personal well-being. All of this research leads Lieberman to one conclusion: "To the extent that we can characterise evolution as designing our modern brains, this is what our brains were wired for: reaching out to and interacting with others". Lieberman says "These social adaptations are central to making us the most successful species on earth"[11].

New networks for new times

The market is seductive because it appears to function as a natural human network: we move towards it, expecting to fulfill our need for relationships, belonging and status. We buy what psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott would call a transitional object, allowing us to rehearse belonging and status with an imagined world of satisfaction, that doesn't really exist. Unfortunately, the market does not remain static, the goal posts move continually and consumers are obliged to keep buying to stay abreast. For all of us, that rush of accomplishment that accompanies acquisition - often called retail therapy - has diminishing returns, as repeated behaviours without any real life benefits generally do. But just like addicts, we continue to buy, in the belief that, eventually this or the next object, will deliver on its promise that, eventually, this or the next object will deliver on its promise.

"Through all this..runs an anxiety that the threads that bind a society.. have snapped"

Where are the networks that mirror our deeper and broader human nature - our capacity for reciprocity, relationship, commonality? Those social networks that seem to be extensions of the ways our own mind-bodies work, the root of our collaborations and mutual interests? Are they simply memories of a pre-industrial past, before work was separated from home and rampant individualism became the defining way of being in the late 20th century?

The debate about the history of networks is rich and wide. Robert Putnam's exposition of 'social capital' for example[12], defined as "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust to which those networks give rise" - has exercised many a politician, without leading yet to meaningful change. Manuel Castells, in Communication Power, describes how networks have been operating since antiquity, "transcending the limits of their locality for their livelihood, resources and power.[13]"

We haven't been able to see how networks have constituted history because it is easier to identify top-down hierarchies run by elites, monarchs, presidents, CEOs, legitimated by religions or value systems. Or possibly because most of the discussion has been conducted by those in public life already – largely men - more interested in order and clear modes of power distribution, than the natural networks of our public and private spaces. Here is Wendy Wheeler[14], describing in more feeling language what we may have lost from the public space:

> *Through all this [radical protest politics], more finely, runs an anxiety that the threads which are needful to bind a society - threads which must constantly tingle and vibrate with the million small and large signals through which a human culture remains in touch with itself - have snapped. These threads, when meaningful, bear the life of a culture's enchantments. For more than two hundred years, many people in the industrialised and industrialising nations have felt the lines go silent, and become fewer and fewer - the sounds of alienation becoming the unheard scream which Munch painted. But with There Is No Alternative, we learn that the Big*

> *people have decided that the threads can be cut entirely. All sane people know instinctively that this cutting spells the end of society. They know there must be threads that bind, that the planet must be husbanded and that things which live and grow must not be peremptorily interfered with.*

Yet, while the loss of connection and networks has been felt in public life, certain kinds of networks never went away – although they may have been driven underground. Families and friends have stretched across neighbourhoods, countries and the globe. Clubs and hobbies, religious groups and diasporas – these continue unabated, if squeezed onto the margins of our daily lives.

But there are also other places to look. Social workers, for example, point to the networks of mothers who watch out for each other on housing estates. Civil society, located below the level of government, depends upon networks to work and thrive. Crime, of course, operates extensively through networks – the strongest ones offering much more than simply guns and money, but loyalty, belonging, status and respect as their currencies. Networks are strong when the ties are meaningful: they are weak when the ties are fleeting and transactional.

Castells' point - that networks' power is limited to the technology at its disposal - expresses some of the truth but not the whole of it. Witness the enduring nature of private networks, irrespective of the technology serving it. Not just families who are able to maintain relationship in the face of separation, but friends able to reconnect in a minute, despite having no contact in years; or religious practitioners, networked by faith, who give each other instant credence.

Let's also consider some of the networks forged by technology that have no power at all. Witness Cameron's dream of a Big Society. As a policy it drew much attention and gathered cross party support. However, in the implementation, Cameron cut the existing subsidies of natural civil networks - the home-grown ones that had sprung up in response to need, populated by those whose lives were deeply implicated in their success. He then redirected them to pay for a series of "Nexters", largely new social entrepreneurs who would create new *cutting edge* networks. To their cost, they learned that social networks cannot be made artificially - or prescribed and designed from some HQ. To date, the Big Society has yet to deliver a single project[15].

Today, in New Times, without question, we have massive resources of technology at our fingertips. The possibility of building vast new networks that have the potential to transform society lies tantalisingly before us[16]. How can we distinguish the superficial networks of neoliberal capitalist markets, which - like any other drug - enslave but deplete us, from the more reciprocal and thus rewarding networks of human relationship? Only by becoming more conscious of our thinking and acting, learning how to notice what is really happening when we reach out.

But not only is connectivity an essential party of what it is to be human, there is a political pay off for progressives who welcome and encourage horizontal network systems:

> *Political psychology has shown that people who align with conservatism tend to have high anxiety about change, and embrace authoritarian structures as a way to preserve external stability and control. In today's turbulent times, this means conservatives are having a hard time coping. They hunker down and cling to ideas that applied to a different era, or lash out against changes that they aren't equipped to handle. Conversely, the psychology of liberals aligns more with tolerance of ambiguity and a greater ability to consider alternative perspectives*[17].

To realise the potential of networks, we have, above all, to reclaim them from a crude form of capitalism. We need to re-humanise - or re-embed - them with multiple currencies of emotion and trust, and re-locate them in a bigger realm that is neither simply public nor private[18]. And that may be exactly what is happening right now.

4. The Economics of New Times

"There is simply no way to build tomorrow's essential organisational capabilities – reliance, innovation, and employee engagement - atop the scaffolding of 20th century management principles"

Gary Hamel[19]

Economics like people

So New Times is a product not just of new technology but new ways of seeing ourselves and our development: the technology amplifying and accelerating our need for connections to others. Whether we call it socialism, humanism or networkism, there is something in Manuel Castells' vision that has the seeds of a new ideology, the bones of which - if extrapolated - might look like this:

> *Society, understood as a rich, multitudinous network, is capable through its institutions and infrastructure, both human and virtual, of answering society's needs. We are networkers, at home and from home, developing the relationships we need for nurturing ourselves and others, from cradle to grave. We are networkers outside the home, working and playing with a collaborative mindset as a default mode, though capable of competition as it arises, and trying to create a sustainable, inclusive society. We connect with others in numerous ways, using multiple currencies including love, care, time, skill, energy as well as money. The network economy describes the flow of these multiple currencies through society, paying attention to its surpluses and deficits. Its intent is to deliver care, creativity, productivity, joy. Growth in capital is matched by the increasing depth of society – its capacity to care for itself, physically, mentally, spiritually – because the network is both means and ends, a way of being and acting together, as well as the Good Society itself. Any government arising from the network principle serves to resource, enhance and amplify its networks, principally through a constantly evolving relationship with civil society and multiple forms of enterprise.*

For some of us, trapped in the neoliberal capitalist nightmare, this can read like mere fantasy: but for others, it is already a reality – not because they are internet evangelists, but because they have never strayed too far from a model of human collectivity and connectivity. You might count amongst them not all but many environmentalists, mothers, social workers, civil society activists – but also gang leaders and cultists.

From this starting point, we can begin to assess the era of technology we have embarked upon, not simply as a startling phenomenon we have to harness for our purposes, but as a natural enhancement and the potential acceleration of our natural capacity as networkers. Reclaiming this ideological framework will give us the energy and tools to re-humanise society. The revolutionary behaviours described at the opening of this paper – connecting, mobilising, collaborating, creating, participating, petitioning - are nothing less than rehearsals for a Good Society.

Possibly the most transformative development of these early New Times are the peer-to-peer (P2P) networks arising from this new horizontal connectivity. Instead of the old reliance on vertical connections – those in authority deciding who works, with whom and how – the internet makes everyone visible, even if not always available.

This has led to an explosion of collaboration amongst like-minded people who previously did not even know of each other's existence, let alone have the ability to find each other. With a simple hashtag and a twitter account, we can now connect with local, national and global communities of interest - whether mass movements or quirky hobbies.

Whereas for now, people may still see themselves on the continuum of a linear and usually top down distribution of power, increasingly they will see themselves as nodes in a network, able to generate new ideas, contribute to others, but always somehow related to the outcome of the projects - work or play - they are involved in.

An Emerging Economy

The revolution in access to information coupled with our ability to collaborate easily with others is leading to changes in economic behaviours that we are only beginning to understand. For many of us it started with music: after a childhood transfixed with the charts, saving up to buy singles and LPs and feeling guilty about borrowing albums to make tapes - our children are now listening to most of what they want to hear for free. Then it was newspapers: not only full colour tabloids handed out morning and evening at railway stations, but many broadsheets too becoming completely accessible on-line for nothing.

On the flip side, journalists, musicians, consultants, activists - anyone who wants to make a mark on the world without being invited to - increasingly have to find new, clever ways to realise money from their daily activities. Pop stars, even successful ones, now whet the fans' appetites with free downloads, hoping to overcharge for live concerts once they are hooked. Newspapers establish themselves as their readers' voice for nothing, then reel their customers in with book clubs, masterclasses and dating sites. Businessmen and women do their best to game the revolution, but the next generation don't question it. Instead they ask - why should I pay for my music, news, information, connectivity, I don't expect anyone to pay me for mine?

Some see this youthful attitude as naiveté - not understanding the machinery of industry and believing the riches earned by successful artists are simply an adjunct to celebrity, a reward for good self promotion and being in the right place at the right time. However, as Guy Standing outlines in his theses on the Precariat, they are not far off the mark on the network-era relationship between productivity and reward. For creatives in particular, there is often more money in the repetitive labour of getting jobs done for industry (whether it is cleaning or entertainment), than in contributing their skills and learning to society.

Add to this increased automation and the replacement in some cases of unskilled workers with robots - not just in alienated production lines, but at every level all the way up to the professions - and the aggregation of work appears to be under fire at both ends of the skill spectrum. By 2030, according to the Oxford Martin School, 47 per cent of all US jobs, mainly in retail and services, will be automated[22].

So our children and young adults are becoming habituated to a world in which access to resources and services, increasingly via networks both paid and free, is much more important than possession of property or objects. Nevertheless, the flip side is much increased productivity of an informal kind. Not only are those same young people spending hours on blogging, creating YouTube videos, mixing and making music on whatever piece of technology they can access, but their friends and relatives are using the same access to information, connectivity, collaboration, crowd sourcing and funding to find new solutions to problems they could not previously pay to have fixed.

"Our children are becoming habituated to a world in which access to resources and services... is more important than possession of property or objects."

Enabled by a network a society, sharing or renting tools, cars, even beds is fast becoming the mark of the flexible, resourceful and green lifestyle. But much more is bubbling underneath as creative entrepreneurs increasingly shun the old trajectories of selling their ideas to established corporates who they consider part of the problem of our unequal society. Instead they preferr to reserve some of their rights to a creative commons where more people have open access.

The real game-changer, as Jeremy Rifkin details in The Third Industrial Revolution, comes when these same entrepreneurs[23] link customers of the major power companies to their own sources of energy. Not simply solar panels on your roof, but whole building conversions, where the pathways, bricks and windows store energy and even the backpack you are wearing as you walk is capturing wattage.

If given enough patient but determined attention, our current problems with energy will be greatly eased through collaborative consumption in the future. What seems to have escaped the headlines is the level at which major industrial nations are buying into Rifkin's vision of radically redistributed access: maybe because the UK is lagging behind.

Rifkin's follow up book The Zero Marginal Cost Society, takes us a step further in his startling vision of a transforming society, bringing together this democratisation of energy, the collaborative commons and what is now being called the 'internet of things' - the field in which everyday objects bearing sensors of their own are communicating between themselves, potentially bringing great benefits to the communities.

It's a vision which includes 3D printers owned at community level so that vital machinery, desired objects and even body parts can be generated in situ. It's a world in which jobs as we know them have been scaled down to create time for a more creative, social society that Rifkin optimistically describes as post-capitalist. We are blinking our way into the light of a sharing, caring, collaborative economy. Let's roll this forward to the world of work.

New work: fewer jobs, more livelihood

Like the bigger conflicting narratives discussed at the start, at the present moment of socio-economic change, there are two clearly conflicting stories about work. One is a story about job losses: not only as a result of the global economic crisis and ensuing austerity, but as the price of automation and rationalisation. Mostly women are being forced into part time low paid work, with zero hours contracts all adding up to a crisis of need. In modern Britain, you can be living below the poverty line despite being fully employed. So one story is: *people want to work more.*

However, in the world of full time work the story is about growing disillusion with the practices, cultures and rewards of work. People are tired of living to labour, simply to consume. Many long to be at home, or have the time to pursue other interests – daydream even. So another story is: people want to work less. It's a conflicting story: not all part time or even zero hours contract workers are unhappy[26]. We have to be able to separate these phenomena out in order to identify the real developments that have been occurring in our society.

The context for this, as we began to describe above, is the emerging discussion and practice which suggests that we are in for very New Times when it comes to the structure and purpose of the economy – capitalism in its old endlessly accumulative form will either have to dramatically adapt or be replaced. Let's take work and the economy in turn, starting with the changing relationship between wants and needs in employment culture.

More than 1 in 10 workers want shorter working hours – despite the potential loss of wages - but can't get them, according to the TUC[24]. Across UK industry, wherever flexible working is offered, there is 75% uptake. Working part time is not exclusive to lower income jobs. The Timewise Foundation's Part Times Power List names annually 50 of the most powerful executives in the UK who work part time including executives of FTSE 100 companies and CEOs of city businesses, 86% of them women.

This growing desire for flexible working is in part a result of women refusing to choose between family and work – preferring to find ways to do reduced versions of both. More and more men want to be fathers and not just providers. Another part is the disillusion with the rewards of work and career, for both young and old. Although it is not easy to cut back on income, it is an increasingly informed choice. According to the National Office of Statistics, in 2012 there were 5.4 million people in part time work by choice, compared to the 1.4 million who had been forced into that position by employers reluctance to provide security for those fulfilling the company's ad hoc requirements – part of Guy Standing's 'precariat'[25].

This is not a simple issue of people needing better jobs with more money – that remains primary and is already well documented. This is an issue of the whole culture of work that is failing to serve our greater individual and social needs. While consuming and the linked-in notion of 'hard-working families' are systematically drilled into us, we might also be at a moment which questions the dominance of labour as central to ourselves as social beings. With full time work becoming more elusive and a growing recognition that 48 hour weeks can be inefficient as well as de-humanising, the 'false consciousness' of a strict work ethic, as Karl Marx described it all that time ago, may well give way to a more balanced life.

Here the distinction between work and labour is essential. Work is all our productive effort – paid and unpaid. Labour is what we do to earn the money to live. For many there is no dignity in labour, rather it is a means to an end – how to support what you do with the rest of your life.

But if paid labour is becoming more precarious and we are more able to create and work outside of the labour market – then how are we to put bread on the table? You can't eat a TEDx talk! We can and must ensure that labour pays – through a decent and enforced minimum wage and wherever feasible a living wage. But that is unlikely to be enough. Nor is it likely to be sustainable to tie social security payments to taxes paid through labour - particularly if part time, zero-hours and precarious jobs are to become more prevalent.

These are just some of the reason why a Citizens Income should be more fully examined and discussed. A social payment to all, as of right, would help provide an underpinning to life in which we all have sufficient security to ensure maximum freedom. If work cannot offer us material security then we have to find a way of ensuring it socially. But until we build the consensus for such a radical change, work and labour still have to be meaningful.

For over a decade Dr Sandi Mann of Lancaster University has been studying the 'waste of life' associated with being captive in a work place, delivering predictable outcomes each day, in exchange for the right to simply survive and consume. According to her research, boredom at work is the single biggest factor, ahead of overwork, for stress, anger and depression. Her subjects were not the alienated workers of Marx's factories but highly qualified, highly paid workers. A third of Britons claim to be bored at work for most of the day[26].

Patrick Laloux, a corporate consultant, formerly a partner at McKinsey's, claims it is not the nature of the work necessarily, but the shape and culture of our organisations that is to blame. In his recently published book Reinventing Organisation he says[26]:

Many people sense that the current way we run organisations has been stretched to the limit...For people who toil away at the bottom of the pyramid...surveys report it is dread and drudgery, not passion and purpose. (That's why Dilbert and The Office hit home). In the 15 years I have spent consulting at the top of the pyramid, it isn't much more fulfilling. Behind the facade and the bravado, the lives of corporate leaders are ones of quiet suffering. Their frantic activity is a cover for emptiness. The power games, the politics, the infighting end up taking their toll - on everybody. This is rarely different in government agencies or even professions of calling.... teachers, doctors and nurses are leaving their fields of vocation in droves. Our schools are soulless machines.. our hospitals cold, bureaucratic institutions that dispossess doctors and nurses of their capacity to care from the heart.

"A Citizens Income.. would help to provide an underpinning to life in which we all have sufficient security to ensure freedom"

Counterpoise this existence as worker ants to our lives beyond work - whether as professionals, amateurs, a mix of the two (Pro-Ams), carers or citizens - where we are active, engaged, imaginative and influential. A full sense of ourselves, our worth and our wellbeing will be better sustained in a world where connections and knowledge are multiplying rapidly. The prizes will go to those who can find connections between the rewards of each. Even the CBI are now arguing that the effective workforce of the future will be adaptive, emotional and relational and not mere worker ants[27].

Laloux identifies key resource factors, not just external ones of structure and leadership but internal ones of culture, human potential, meaning, emotional need and sets them within a bigger picture of change. Linking stages of socio-economic development and consciousness – how we see the world, what motivates us - with organisational form, he concludes that the mainstream business world is getting ready for a shift.

Against his own expectations, Laloux manages to find 12 pioneering firms who appear to be doing organisation in a new way with very concrete results. The key developments they have in common, very simplified here, arise from allowing organisations to run like living systems - flexible, fluid and integrated enough to be constantly reinventing themselves. It's a high bar, but through studying these companies over a period of time, he finds they have the following in common:

- Self management principles, which don't require hierarchies
- A culture of wholeness: being able to bring the whole self to work. This cannot be achieved without breaking down the strict boundary between work and rest of life, allowing the success of both to be the legitimate goal of them all
- An evolutionary purpose: all employees take part in forging a vision and purpose with meaning for the company

This may sound, once again, like fantasyland for most of us: yet the 12 companies are real. At one end of the spectrum is US company AES, founded in 1982, quickly growing into one of the world's largest electricity production and distribution companies, with over 40,000 employees. At the other, Dutch non-profit Buurtzorg[28], founded in 2006 by a team of nurses and now the biggest neighbourhood-nursing organisation in the Netherlands with 7,000 employees and a waiting list.

If boredom, inefficiency and waste are not enough to explain the shift in work culture, then the threat of runaway climate change might do more. At the New Economic Foundation (nef) Anna Coote and her team have been equating environmental health and shorter working weeks since 2010. It would make instant sense to any of us walking through the city at night, looking at all the empty glass cathedrals, lights blazing. Add to that, carbon saved on journeys to and from work and the doubling up of amenities that are needed to 'live' in two places every day.

Taking the emphasis off labour as the only thing we live to do, would cause a bigger investment in family, relationships, care - all of which are less carbon intensive pursuits. Countries with shorter working weeks have smaller carbon footprints than workaholic countries like ours. Shorter working weeks could answer many of our biggest political and social problems – those of work poverty, care and democracy – providing the opportunity to redistribute time and money.

And why not allow the problem of work scarcity to answer the problems of an overly demanding work ethic through job sharing? MPs themselves are considering the idea for Parliament: a recent Early Day Motion tabled by Mark Williams, Lib Dem MP for Ceredigion, gathered 24 cross party signatures, 18 of whom were men.

While job sharing is not simple to achieve - requiring some imagination, will and transitional support – the long term desire for less work and more time, evidenced above, should provide government with the impetus to offer it as a funded option. In return, it may get some of the answers to today's care deficits, for both old and young, as well as an increase in civic participation, the only way forward for a democracy that works.

Carers, volunteers and social activists have always suffered from a loss of social influence, as well as a lack of financial compensation, from not being acknowledged as fundamental to society's health and prosperity. Parenting, not being seen as work, means that it gets squeezed into ever smaller corners of the day for those 'hard working families'. Yet these elements of livelihood, the means of securing the necessities of life, will always make their call upon people because they arise from and are suffused with the bonds of relationship we need to be happy and fully human. As robots build the cars - and increasingly drive the cars – then the space will be left for the mentors, the carers, the teachers and the coachers.

If we are to champion the new forms of activity arising from our much increased access to resources we must find new ways to respect work of all kinds and give it the same status, at least, as labour - a 'proper' job - even if it has less or no money attached. Or another way to put it would be: we must stop editing out livelihood from our concept of work and economy. If Nike and the USA Marine corps are both teaching mindfulness and DAVOS is discussing mental illness then these are undoubtedly New Times.

"Shorter working weeks would answer many of our biggest political and social problems - work poverty, care and democracy"

5. The Politics of New Times

If one were to add up all the evidence of activism in the world today, we would find it hard to claim that interest in politics – activity associated with governance - has waned. If anything it seems to have increased significantly. Personally, locally, nationally and globally, people connect, relate, organise, influence and cause change to happen. There is, it seems, a burgeoning desire for autonomy – defined as our ability to create and recreate our world as we see fit – something we can only successfully do by working together.

What has dropped is interest in party politics and representative democracy: joining or voting for an organisation over which you have little if any influence. The system is particularly weak in the UK, as our first-past-the-post way of voting - favouring two-party politics - is creating a chasm between parliament and the people. As identities and affiliations splinter, the big two parties lumber on, trying to create (or more accurately, feign) clear water between themselves, without any effective means of engaging with the people on the ground.

There are of course big caveats. Scotland demonstrated a widespread and deep interest in formal politics because it gave its people a meaningful vote. The SNP lost the referendum but 'in defeat' have quadrupled their membership. In England UKIP has grown rapidly and the Greens are enjoying an upturn in membership. Meanwhile new parties spring up around particular interests and concerns such as Yorkshire First and Save the NHS.

But formal, 'official' politics is dominated by a culture that is all about the people at the top – what they will do to us and for us. What they want is not our participation but our gratitude. The two old tribes slug it out to win our exclusive thanks. In the context of an economic culture dominated by free markets this creates the bizarre sight of huge disputes over small differences – how we will win the global economic race, consume more and work harder. The offer is instrumental – how we will be marginally better off under party X or Y. The appeal is material not moral.

To reconnect, politicians have to find a new language that speaks to people's hearts and minds. It's not enough to "speak human", as Ed Miliband once fatefully claimed was his forte, simply by eschewing jargon or abstract ideas as in the Nigel Farage school of politics. What's needed now is a politics that makes human and planetary wellbeing the very point of politics, rather than the more abstract accumulation of money. Humans and the environment in which they thrive must be the means and the ends - in a politics that answers their needs but also helps them to fulfill their potential.

Already the 20th century model of supplication - expecting those with power to make the decisions and get things done for us - is fading fast. Everywhere other than Westminster, hands-on and self-created forms of governance are co-created by the stakeholders in the enterprise themselves. In this emerging world we say, talk, fail, learn, fail again, coalesce, join, support, innovate and create.

Yes, there are more meetings to go to – but one problem with both the bureaucratic state and the free market is that there are no meetings to go to in which a vote might affect outcomes directly. And meetings can be fun once we do away with the top table that talks down to us and instead sit in circles or smaller groups to discuss, listen, learn and decide together. An empowering, respectful political culture such as this can even be more fun and rewarding than shopping!

Can these two great vehicles of public agency – civic association and political parties - get re-acquainted with each other? Because without politicians, the more intractable, macro-level and systemic problems of poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, efficient public services, adequate health provision (the list is long) will take much longer, or may even be impossible to tackle. We need systemic change; a different style of politics appropriate to the new landscape. But we also need a new kind of politician - or mix of politicians - to get the most out of the emerging realities of New Times.

Our democratic system needs an overhaul. Its representative functions need to be made both more local and more global. All elections should be run on the basis of PR: this is the electoral culture that fits New Times best, as it embodies the qualities of listening, negotiating and building consensus. Our parties need to open out and give members democratic rights and real accountability over leaders. Manifestos should be devised through open source policy processes and candidates selected through open primaries. Debate and not conformity should be encouraged - the system of whipping in parliament is patently absurd and should be ended.

And parties must become just part of the political architecture and not the sole point, taking their place alongside social movements in coalitions that build sustainable cultural and structural change. They must become what Sue Goss has described in her book Open Tribe: less interested in the lines between Us and Them, more attentive to the networks arising from their shared interests and concerns, irrespective of traditional divides.

"Already the 20C model of supplication.. is fading fast"

What is key is the relationship between these still necessary vertical party structures and the new horizontal movement and campaigns. We need an architecture and a culture that allows them to collaborate and when necessary compete. Part of that can be created through new deliberative forums, conventions and citizens juries that become a formal part of the democratic process – so that citizens don't just vote once every five years but are part of an everyday democracy. This can and should be supplemented by opportunities for direct democracy, as we saw so spectacularly developed in Scotland.

It is the interaction of the vertical and the horizontal axes of political action that will help usher in New Times. To enable that to happen, the politicians are going to have to open up and accept that it's the wave of movements that matters most – not just them, the surfers. They are going to have to lean towards the new horizontal movements. But those movements are themselves going to have to accept and welcome the need to formalise politics. It's hard if not impossible to imagine a politics without a national programme and candidates to run the state effectively. As such we need *politics at an angle* – the critical space being the link between the vertical and the horizontal.

Part of this will be the move towards what has been called liquid democracy – a more fluid and everyday form of governance in which we all have a vote which we can cast for a representative, but a vote we can also take back and cast ourselves, or lend to others. This mash-up of representative, deliberative and direct democracy would provide a much richer and complex notion of democracy to meet the rich and complex challenges society faces.

What is still missing are the layers of connecting tissue that will allow the politicians to do their job at the national/international level, without losing touch with or closing down the shape-shifting, pluralistic nature of the citizens they serve. These connectors have their neurons in civil society, the collaborative commons, local government, the arts, local communities, families - but they must mediate and forge relationships between the constituent parts, including local government.

Sometimes they will be temporary, transitional entities around a specific notion, described by Pat Kane as a "constitute" - a form of organisation more transient and mobile than an institute, but more rigorous and resourced than the brief agreements and enthusiasms that occasionally flower amidst our social-media usage. Other times they will be membership groups like Compass, who test the ground, integrate old and new socio-political ideas, shape narratives and create policy for the future.

The task is not an easy one and most of us will not limit ourselves to choosing one area of engagement but move around, playing different roles according to the stake we have in the subject under discussion. But there is no bureaucratic shortcut or outsourced route that will save us from growing up and taking ownership of our futures. Indeed, it is something we might find we enjoy. After all, infantilisation never had much to commend it.

If 'we are the people we have been waiting for', as the old American civil rights movement axiom has it, then the role of the politician must be to create spaces and platforms in which we can all share and use power. This is a very different form of leadership, explored by the Anti-Hero[29] project: a humbler leadership, focused on bringing people together to form shifting coalitions around key issues. These leaders are at once capable of admitting vulnerability, willing to learn with us - yet they are still capable of taking action in the eye of the storm. More than conviction politicians, we now need capacious, empathetic, courageous politicians. As poet Maya Angelou wrote "a leader sees greatness in other people. You can't be much of a leader if all you see is yourself". And given that it is hard to find all the qualities we need in one kind of person, diversity and balance in political parties becomes all the more important.

This cultural shift from politics being done to people to politics being done by people is one of the biggest factors that will facilitate the potential of our New Times. Only then are we likely to enjoy a politics which is about us and the complicated nature of our lives – while standing any hope of addressing the big challenges we all face in terms of falling equality and rising temperatures.

In the age of Facebook, people create and re-create their identities, join a multiplicity of groups, cross-fertilize and, more than anything, have their voice heard. But the citizens of the UK are treated by the Westminster model as only important once every five years - that is, if they happen to be one of the small number who are swing voters in swing seats. The rest of us don't count. Is it any wonder that people are joining more NGOs, charities, social networking sites and online campaign organisations like 38 Degrees, where they can see themselves, their empathy, care, creativity, enjoyment – their humanity – more truly reflected?

In New Times it is the citizen and not the party activist who will be the carrier of radical politics. The role of the party activist will be to help create the spaces and places for us to be fully citizens. Only that way will politics reflect the people it serves – complex, good, empathetic and just.

It is only through the systematic re-wiring of our democracy – devolving power down to the lowest possible level, while transferring sovereignty up to deal with global issues, while casting new forms of deliberative and direct powers - that we can ever hope to deal with the income and wealth inequalities that scar our nation. What New Times offers us is a vision of the more equal society we crave: a project not simply done to people – but done and created by them.

"It is the interaction of the vertical and horizontal axes of political action that will usher in New Times"

6. The Transition to New Times

In Malcolm Gladwell's book The Tipping Point, he describes how the single biggest predictor of change is context: when the time is right, when the call is loud enough, when the key factors and characters seem to emerge, change is already happening and will become apparent imminently.

As we go to print, our world is showing multiple signs of breakdown of the old and emergence of the new. But how can we accelerate the move from one to the other? Our first key lies in our new understanding and exercise of power. How we increasingly make things happen today, and will do in the future, will be very different from the past.

"If power is to be negotiated we must learn to be relational, empathetic, adaptive and active"

From messiahs to monarchs and then managers – most of us have been required to live our lives as subjects and not citizens. Power was used to ensure domination and control, giving rise to countless activist movements that challenged the injustices perpetrated by such inequality.

But in a networked society power gets more distributed and diffuse. In this world power isn't just inherited or accrued by a person or a corporation - it starts as the province of many and has to be built and maintained through negotiation and consensus. Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms in an unpublished paper on the paradigm shift to a flatter world, have written about old exercises of power working like a currency. "It is held by a few. It is closed, inaccessible, and leader-driven. It downloads and commends". Today, they contend power works more like a current: "it is made by many. It is open, participatory, and peer driven. It uploads. It shares". The contours of this new world are still fuzzy but the direction of travel is clear. Gary Hamel, one of the world's most influential business thinkers has written "I believe we are on the verge of a 'post-managerial' society, perhaps even a 'post-organisational' society".

To make things happen in the future will require new skills and new architecture. If power is to be negotiated then we must learn how to be relational, empathetic, adaptive and active. The winners will be the ones who build the biggest coalitions and then rebuild them around the next issue. And the very nature of winning will be challenged – to win will be to persuade others to go along with you – not to beat them. Otherwise we just perpetuate animosities and waste time and resources. Power will stop being zero sum but instead be about mutually beneficial outcomes.

At the same time, our individual relationship to power as agency has also changed radically. Once upon a time we sat in front of a keyboard to write a letter, or looked at data we had stored on the closed machine we had access to. Both texts were marooned on their screens. Today we move towards our computers with much enhanced expectations: a few seconds of finger tapping can purchase goods, get answers to almost any difficult questions (and all the trivial ones), transport us to a global virtual meeting space or display our talents (or lack of them) to millions people. Our interface with the world has gone live – giving us instant access to resources and results we hardly knew were on offer. Children finding birth parents lost in the folds of time and place. Buying a kangaroo. Joining 20,000 people to save a woman from being stoned to death. Designing a business by downloading free courses, templates and marketing lists. Instead of waiting for life to come and get us, we are now in a position to go and create a life, often by the simply act of just imagining it.

The Changing Nature of Power

"Hard power tools are muscle and money; soft power vehicles are rapport, empathy and openness"

Up until now this broad shift from passive to active has not resulted in a grassroots revolution of society: decent broadband and working technology is still poorly distributed, while we are only just reaching a critical mass of connectivity and the processing power to utilise it. But we have seen rehearsals all over the world in the form of the Arab Spring, Occupy's impact in 82 countries worldwide, Indonesia's recent political transformation and the protests against the World Cup by Brazilian citizens.

Smaller yet concrete examples are beginning to appear here too, through the work of Citizens UK and Movement for Change's multiple Living Wage campaigns. Or the inspiring Spartacus network of disabled people affected by the welfare cuts who have used social media to reach out and engage. Having previously felt invisible in the political arena, their virtual activism led to Labour adopting their call for a cumulative impact assessment of social security cuts. Over on London's Southbank a handful of young skateboarders took on and beat the multi-million-pound Southbank Centre over the threat to relocate their cherished and widely loved skate area.

This is the era of asymmetries of power – in which imagination combined with determination and access to the internet and social media creates a much more level playing field.

At the other end of the spectrum of power, global players have experienced a profound shift too. Soon after the US lost the war against the tiny country of Vietnam, Harvard's Joseph Nye came up with a new distinction between hard and soft power that has helped to shape US foreign policy for the past 20 years. For those unfamiliar, hard power is force – generally applied through guns and money. That includes sanctions and armies, carrots and sticks. Soft power is attraction – a certain set of behaviours and cultures that causes relationship to arise between countries into which influence can flow. If we were talking about a person, hard power tools would be muscle and money; soft power vehicles would be rapport, empathy and openness.

Even so, because soft power is generally cheaper, less destructive and therefore has a better image than hard power, emerging countries like China, Brazil and India are heavily investing in a soft power strategy to help them ease their way into global dominance. Not all of them are successful, largely because they are confusing soft power with propaganda. Witness the 440 Confucius Institutes that have been opened around the world to help people understand the Chinese culture and philosophy or Brazil's focus on the World Cup and Olympics to boost their football and carnival credentials. In both cases, their attempts to control their global image has had less impact than the human rights abuses or civil unrest in their countries.

While this new slant in the direction of foreign policy may not convince many yet, there is a logic in operation which is beyond the control of superpower governments - a logic that will redefine international relations in the future. The growing constituency of transnational public opinion - captured only minimally so far by sites like Avaaz and Twitter – increasingly influences governments, who have learnt to equate popularity with votes. The vote on Syria in the UK was exactly such a moment, when the general public – both in the here and the US - had a chance to sign on-line petitions and make their overwhelming objections to intervention known before the elected representatives met. In both countries, the governments listened and Russia experienced a rare - and short lived - moment of media popularity for spearheading the move to decommission chemical weapons.

Power, through new technology and the loosening grip of the centre, is finding its centripetal moment – as if it is being flung out to the edges, the margins and the periphery. "When the wheel spins" Margaret Atwood wrote in

her tribute to Doris Lessing, “it’s on the edges that the sparks fly”. The sparks of power being unleashed can, once again, be beautiful or brutish. That is all down to us. But this great dispersing of control has the potential for great good – if we can recognise it and respond to it. We must ensure it must not be caught only by those who are already powerfully connected and confident. If the momentum of these New Times is to be accelerated, it must find itself at the feet of those who are least powerful so that they can use it to help create the conditions in which much greater equality can flourish.

“Is it any wonder that more people are joining NGOs, charities, social networking sites..where they can see their humanity reflected?”

Mediating New Times

Access to technology has turned the idea of media on its head in the past five years and the impacts are being felt differently on an almost daily basis. Whereas once news distribution was concentrated in the hands of a very few, today it is the province of anyone with a computer and access to the internet. That has not made it any more reliable as a source of truth – on the contrary. But the sheer multiplicity of versions one can read of a story is making us increasingly capable of spotting the frames and agendas of the mediator – an important skill for life in a network society.

For example, it's not that long ago that we accepted uncritically the BBC's claim that it only reported the facts. At the time, the British view of world affairs was considered neutral by the many millions who subscribed to the World Service across the globe. But as BBC world affairs correspondent Paul Reynolds explains[20], framing is now acknowledged as a contributing factor in any report.

Globally this has been amplified by the proliferation of news organisations doing what, in the very recent past, only the BBC World service could do - that is, offer world news in English. Al Jazeera was first, offering global news to an Arabic audience, but now China Central News (CCTV) and Russia Today are very popular, not least because they challenge Western global hegemony in its own tongue. Again, this kind of media literacy becoming mainstream is often described by commentators as a 'loss', this time a loss of trust. But see this 2012 poll[21] in which 87% expressed their disbelief in mainstream media to judge whose side history is on.

But these developments look small compared to the game changing ability of individuals and groups to mediate the world themselves, completely bypassing the mainstream media – for bad as much as for good. It's early days, but examine the media strategy of a group like ISIS. It has proven it can outstrip any media corporation in its ability to get inside the heads of readers and viewers across the globe. With the use of horror images - traditionally censored by the regulated media – distributed on popular networks such as Twitter and Facebook, using hashtags associated with popular events like the World Cup to get into people's news streams, ISIS has hijacked our networks and injected a climate of fear few governments can compete with.

Learning how to manage our own exposure to the net - and more than that, regaining control of what we give our attention to - will be an increasingly vital skill for mental health in the 21st century.

The Personal Challenge of New Times

Too often we hear public figures – politicians, civil society leaders, well meaning citizens like ourselves – quote Gandhi's recommendation that if you want to see progress, you must be the change you wish to see in society. But other than treat others as you would be treated, be conscious of the environment and resist greed – a good start! - what does that mean? For all his failings, Gandhi was a political and spiritual radical: his campaign for non-cooperation, based on the simple precept of refusing to comply with the British administration in India, created the conditions for Indian independence. What does it take to "be the change" if our goal is a Good Society?

Like everything else in this paper, that question is only the beginning of a discussion that needs to be taken up widely. If we want a revolution – or a {r}evolution as many are beginning to call it[30] – out there, maybe we need a similar process "in here" a personal revolution, so that we can become not only capable of transition, but of sustaining it into the future. Some starting points might be:

- If we are calling for a more effective, people's democracy, what are the characteristics we have to develop individually to take on that responsibility? What are the key qualities of the democratic character? What does openness, inclusion, post-egotistical leadership really entail: can it be taught or only modelled?
- What might be the personal capacities required to realise the potential of a network society? As we are slowly emerging from hierarchical, patriarchal societies, how can we reclaim and build our internal resources for being in the net?
- How can we develop the resilience to be able to hold steady with our vision of a Good Society while the forces for stagnation – narratives of scarcity, danger, powerlessness – rage around us?

Compass' recent publications Open Tribe by Sue Goss, R(evolutionary) Road by Veena Vasista, and the soon to be released Education for New Times Paper explore each of these questions, looking at how schools, public service institutions, businesses, civil society – alongside the new institutions from Facebook to Tinder - can all be part of becoming the change we wish to see. The exponential growth of well-being practices such as mindfulness (not only those with time on their hands, but MPs too[31]!), transcendental meditation, martial arts - these are also important signs of individuals recognising the role of mental and spiritual, alongside physical, health. Not simply to combat stress, but to calm and expand the mind, increase awareness of our own actions and the impact on others, and develop tools for self-empowerment.

However, at what point will we collectively accept that we don't just need more space in our heads - but more time in our day? Without seizing the time question how can we change the nature of our society from one enslaved to growth through profit and all the inequality that brings, to one more focussed on developing a Good Society? Without extra hours, how can we become more active citizens and be democratic? Without time to go walking in our neighbourhood, noticing who lives there, what does and doesn't grow there, how can we even begin to care about it? Allow that thought in and we can start to harness all the arguments for a better work-life balance, including the energy saved and other benefits to our environment. With a 21 hour working week, there would never be a need for a career break.

Discussions such as these themselves need time. Not so much the 90 minutes with key people we can just about tolerate in the early evening of a working day. But more ongoing discussions at the pubs and shops we no longer visit, at the parks in danger of closing, around dinner tables reserved for the middle classes at leisure. Everyone needs a social life – not just with best friends but out in the broader net – and finding that we are allowing that naturally is part of being the change. With a 21 hour working week, there would never be a need for a career break.

This is not a leisure call - although leisure may result - but a way of resourcing the fuel for the growth of a Good Society. As Anna Coote has long documented, shorter working weeks benefit the environment, the economy and public services, as well as offer radical new vistas for feminism(31).

What will be needed, from all of us who can see this as a promising future, is a willingness to work together with others in the service of change for the better. New Times is only properly new if it benefits everyone. Meeting everyone where they are, irrespective of their politics, to focus on the enrichment of human society and the environment it depends upon. Determinedly sharing the benefits of the new connectivity, relationship and access to resources with everyone, but especially those that have been isolated and powerless for too long.

In his speech to the RSA this year Jon Cruddas MP, quoted Luke 17 Verse 20-21 "The kingdom of god - the power to change our lives - lies within you" and each one of us. While the political theorist Roberto Unger makes this point: "The institutions and structures we build make us who we are. But they are finite, and we are not. There is always more in us, more capability of insight, of production, of emotion, of association, than there is in them(32)."

The Architecture of Change

The task of formal politics in New Times is not to act like a vending machine but to create the platforms and spaces that enable people to make their world together. Matthew Taylor at the RSA calls it "politics beyond policy". This paper is only a starting point for discussions to come on what a Good Society might look like in New Times. From our own explorations, some of the key architectural features are likely to include:

1. New property and intellectual rights:
What is inherited from the commons or socially created will be publicly owned and shared. Workplaces will become more democratic to unlock innovation and more fairly distribute what is socially produced. Community Land Trusts should be extended so that people own key spaces in their community and have the power, right and responsibility to determine how they are developed.

2. A Citizens Income:
If labour cannot offer security, then society must. By consuming less, enjoying the fruits of an era of zero marginal cost and taxing wealth and environmental damage, every citizen will receive a non-conditional income to provide them with the space to live more creative, free and secure lives. And here we have to accept that we cannot be both turbo-consumers, and genuinely free citizens at the same time.

3. Thirty Hour Week:
We need time to be citizens and families, we need to consume less and create more and we need to better share the labour that is available. Rich people have always had more choice to do what they want with their time - even if they often choose to be time-poor. Advocating for an equality of time would seriously challenge the framework of discussion about employment, consumption and the creation of a social security net.

4. Everyday Democracy:
The shared and democratic control of our lives, communities and society is an essential cornerstone of any Good Society. That requires Proportional Representation for all elections, the end of the party whip system, the devolution of power to localities in ways that empowers and resources to the most excluded, and pools necessary sovereignty at a global and international level. Local schemes for change and 'development' should be proactively led by local people, who shouldn't have to just respond to schemes from well-funded developers. In addition we would create a public fund for citizens journalism – to ensure there is an adequate ability to question and investigate the powerful(33).

5. Access to Technology:
The technical and resource ability to access a networked society is now a human right – society must provide the hardware, software and the availability of free wifi so that New Times is for everyone(34). The net must be protected as a public good and data must be open to all(35).

6. Education for Life:
Education needs to be reconfigured so that its prime purpose is not to enable us to compete and therefore defeat others more successfully – but to learn how we live together, each of us finding our unique and fulfilling way to participate and contribute. This is the key and abiding trait of a networked society. Education should help each of us search for our own understanding of 'the big picture' of history and ecology that our lives are lived inside. Schools would collaborate locally and practice democracy internally.

7. Human Rights Enshrined:
The centrality of our joint, shared and equal humanity must be protected at all costs - protected against tyrants, corporations, governments and the tyranny of the majority. Diversity will be increasingly understood as a prerequisite for a healthy society. The idea of a society and a polis that starts with people has to be underpinned by a legal regime that cannot be distorted, ignored or overruled.

8. De-commissioning of Trident and the gradual re-purposing of the military:
In recent polls only 24% of people were in favour or military intervention in Syria and 79% of people in did not think the UK should replace Trident.(36) Much work is being done now on how the military institution, 'our' men and women, can be redirected towards conflict prevention, transformation and emergency humanitarian work rather than violent interventions. Central to the conversation is a bigger picture understanding of the UK as a soft rather than hard global power.

9. A New Social Economy:
As much as anything New Times needs a more plural, diverse and better balanced economy. Just like the spread of neoliberalism, this is going to require public money and intervention. At the behest of the people, the government should do everything in its powers in terms of finances, tax-breaks, regulation and other incentives and support systems to encourage the flourishing of peer-to-peer enterprises, the social economy, mutual, cooperatives and worker-owned, run and influenced enterprises.

10. Putting the environment at the centre of our politics:
Politicians sidelining environmental issues is like not bothering to put water in the fish tank. One of the greatest promises of a network society - and the humanising effect of more and better connectivity - is a re-enchantment with our environment, combined with the tools and structures to make our feelings heard. This is vital in an increasingly urbanised world, in which it's easy to lose sight of the basics which sustain our lives. People persuading their own institutions to divest from fossil fuels, new society-wide rules such as limits on driving (not determined by wealth) and game-changing subsidies for community energy initiatives are amongst the ways to bring people together to meet the challenges already upon us.

7. Final Comments

It's clear that the opening story of battle weariness in the fight with the opposing forces of reductive neoliberalism is true enough, but not hopeful enough. 'One more heave' does not generate energy but merely threaten exhaustion. Our story is that in these New Times our values can only be realized within a context that is changing radically. The possibilities for greater collaboration and organisation across society, both locally and globally, are genuinely new. There are threats here of course, but more importantly opportunities that we can seize with enthusiasm. This is the beginning of something we have long been waiting for.

All that was good about the last century was built on the emerging alternative culture and society that was bubbling up through the cracks and fissures of late Victorian and then Edwardian Britain – the unions, the co-operative movement, the friendly societies, the great book and cycling clubs. All that will be good about the 21st century will be built from the sharing, collaborative and networked society we see bubbling up around us. It is the ability to bend these trends and emerging practices to a set of Good Society values that will determine how much of the future we enjoy.

The Good Society, as Zygmunt Bauman says, is simply one that knows it's not good enough. There is no destination; no end point. Just a way of being and a set of values about how we behave together. If we start with a fundamental belief in the equal right of all of us to make the most of our amazing and unique talents then politics becomes, in this scheme, not a war - but a journey.

We know that means shape ends and that a Good Society cannot be created by doing bad things. As the saying goes "if you want to be a rebel, be kind". We want to be rebels. In this paper we have argued that change is coming, whether we consent to it or not, largely as a consequence of both human and technological development. Having said that, politics has lagged far behind, creating the kind of gaps between the voters and their representatives that only Occupy, Russell Brand or UKIP can fill. This is not good enough. A politics that is in tune with New Times will look radical, simply because it is relevant in a way that politics has not been for too long. Those who consent to it, will need to focus on bringing others along, not leaving them behind.

Change in this era will come when the vast majority are ready to take responsibility for creating their own lives and the society they depend upon: it will not come, in any meaningful or sustained way, when someone offers to make it happen for us.

The new landscape is being revealed to us as it is being created by us. The way we travel through it together is becoming ever more apparent and important. The way we travel will determine how far we get – how far we progress. Optimism should never be confused with wishful thinking but these truly are New Times – and we welcome them.

Further reading from Compass:

Good Society – Programme for Renewal
Dare More Democracy – Neal Lawson
The Bridge – Uffe Elbeak & Neal Lawson
Reclaim Modernity – Mark Fisher and Jeremy Gilbert
Open Tribe – Sue Goss
R(evolutionary) Road - Veena Vasista

Other key texts:

The Precariat: the New Dangerous Class, Guy Standing
The Zero Marginal Cost Society, Jeremy Rifkin
The Age of Empathy, Jeremy Rifkin
Marxism Today: A Manifesto for New Times 1989
Everyday Democracy, Tom Bentley
Re-inventing organisations, Frederic Laloux
The Rise of the Network Society. Manuel Castells
The Return of the Public, Dan Hind
Wiser Politics, Jean Hardy

So what happens next?

New Times represents a major piece of thinking for Compass – it is big step forward – but only on a journey we have been on since day one,10 years ago. Now we want to develop the idea of New Times in all the ways it needs to be developed. So New Times for party politics, the trade unions, localism, the economy, the environment and civil society. But also for the family, care, gender, religion and spirituality, health and well-being: the arena is vast. We will soon publish the final report of our Education Inquiry which sets at its context the emergence of New Times.

And Compass itself must ensure it becomes as 'New Times' as possible by networking itself and its members and supporters.

If you want to work with us on any of this, we are just an email, hashtag, like or tweet away.

- www.compassonline.org.uk
- info@compassonline.org.uk
- #newtimes
- @compassonline

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"Our central claim is that the richness of human potential in today's society requires both pluralism and egalitarianism to be embraced and combined in radical, distinctive ways by democratic left politics. If each person has equal worth, the limitations on their achievement and contribution must be systematically broken down. This requires public action and investment. But the uniqueness of this potential makes social diversity, openness and freedom equally important. The major implication of this position is that capitalism should be directed in ways that align it with human need, rather than managed as an unstoppable force".

Quote from cover of Compass launch pamphlet a decade ago

new times:

new times: How a politics of networks and relationship can deliver a Good Society

Indra Adnan
& Neal Lawson

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