

THINK PIECE
#94

Beyond monopoly socialism: why Labour needs to learn to live with complexity and seek power with others, not over them

Neal Lawson

March 2018

THINK PIECE

#94

Published March 2018 by Compass
By Neal Lawson

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

Compass
81a Endell Street
London
WC2H 9DX
info@compassonline.org.uk
www.compassonline.org.uk

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

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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neal Lawson is the Chair of Compass.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This paper was written to help the Labour Party think through its approach to power so it can build relationships with other parties and forces it is bound to require if it is not just to gain office but have and use power for transformative effect.

Equally it was written so that Green, Liberals, feminists and all other progressives can find a place and voice in a politics that values and welcomes difference.

Neal would like to thank Frances Foley, Francesca Klug, Rebecca Gibbs, Remco Van der Stoep, Nick Mahony and Ken Spours for their comments on early drafts, although, as ever, the final version and all its faults are down to him.

Compass is keen to keep exploring these key issues and would welcome any comments or ideas about how.

Compass **Think Pieces** are shorter, sharper and more immediate responses to key issues. The ideas and the thoughts are always those of the author, not Compass. They can cover any topic that helps us understand better what a good society should or could look like and how we might get there. We welcome suggestions for future publications, especially from women and any groups or people in society who are under-represented in the field of political thought and action.

Please contact
frances@compassonline.org.uk in
the first instance.

With many people feeling a desperate material and moral need for change, the thought of a Labour government, especially a more left-wing one, in any circumstances is understandably compelling. But it isn't just different policies our country needs, but a very different form of politics, based not on competition and control but cooperation and collaboration. Otherwise the benefits of any change in government will be slim and short-lived. A new government must not build a cage from any future electoral victory, but the foundations for a very new politics and therefore a very different kind of society.

One of three local councillors for the Highgate ward in Camden, North London, brims with radicalism. She is an astute campaigner, media operator and thinker who is hard-wired with the values of social and environmental justice. In many ways she is more Momentum than Momentum. And yet Labour is out to oust her in the local elections in May.

This is Siân Berry and Siân is a Green. Ipso facto, for Labour, she is the enemy of the Party and therefore the people, and must be removed and replaced with one of their own. Missing out on the seat by only 75 votes last time, the Labour juggernaut is now well-placed to get its way this time. Siân is the only Green on Camden Council and one of only four across the whole of the capital. The first-past-the-post voting system eventually and necessarily smashes the smaller parties, but why does Labour believe in the obliteration of all political competition and its own monopoly control, when variety is not just the spice of life, but makes for better political outcomes?

In Camden Siân has been a constructively critical friend of Labour on issues such as the Community Investment Programme,

asking all the difficult questions about the extent of new council house builds and the impact of overrunning construction projects on housing and community facilities. Another 'me too' payroll Labour councillor would not have the motivation and may not even be allowed to ask the difficult questions and get the best out of these projects for the community.

Here is the disclaimer: Siân is on the Management Committee of Compass – the progressive cross-party organisation that I chair. But as a long-time Labour member I see only the immense value that people like Siân bring to radical politics, and the danger of extinguishing their voices.

In neighbouring Islington, Caroline Russell plays a similar role as the only Green councillor in that borough. Indeed, Caroline is currently the only non-Labour councillor on the whole authority. But her seat will also be remorselessly and relentlessly targeted come May, leaving Labour with absolute monopoly control and the zero levels of accountability that goes with it. This is not just bad for democracy, but bad for Labour.

What makes Siân and Caroline necessary to Labour is precisely the fact that they are different to Labour, starting, as they do, from a different foundational philosophy. The cause that got them into politics was not ending inequality, but saving the planet, which they happen to know is now key to ending the very inequalities that Labour supporters tend to start from. Indeed, the environment and equality are so interlinked it is now impossible to do red politics without green politics, and vice versa, as air pollution, flooding, droughts and rising food and energy prices hit the poorest first and hardest. But the fact that Siân and Caroline start from the green end of the telescope, and not the red, means they bring a whole different perspective, set of values, ideas and behaviours to the table. We need both

traditions - and more - to enter into dialogue, if we are to deal with the scale and complexity of the challenges we face. This variety makes the broader left stronger - not weaker.

Back to Islington and Camden, where as early as 2011, first Caroline in Islington and then Siân in Camden introduced the idea of 'citizen science' projects to their boroughs to get local communities monitoring their own deadly air pollution. Now every council in London and beyond is looking at air quality seriously, but it needed innovators from outside of Labour to break ranks, mobilise communities and challenge the status quo. Labour politicians will of course claim to be green too, and of course many do care about the environment. But one of the central problems with social democrats is that they don't have planetary limits built into their DNA, as Greens do. The environment was not a systemic issue at the start of the last century, when social democracy was developed. Rather the opposite - social democrats still carry with them the DNA of redistribution through growth. Climate change, environment and species depletion can't be add-on issues, luxuries to think about after resources have been redistributed via a growing economy. Greens therefore confront social democrats with a central contradiction at the heart of their own politics. Labour can embrace this contradiction, working with Greens like Siân and Caroline - and thereby develop the Party in crucial ways - or ignore it, at its peril.

For now, Labour is out to defeat Siân and Caroline, just as they will any progressive competition across the capital and the country. Just as they will Caroline Lucas in Brighton Pavilion at the next election - a sparkling jewel in the diminished crown of Parliament. The competitive dynamic of the party political system seems to dictate this. If the seat is there to be contested, then there will always be someone who wants to win it in Labour's ranks. But this

is just another example of market failure - in which competition trumps cooperation to the detriment of the common good. Innovation, critique, accountability, challenge all go out of the window in a competitive, winner-takes-all-system that delivers acquiescence, conformity and monopoly control. But Labour is against competition and monopolies, right?

Labour's struggle with pluralism

Of course, not everyone in Labour is a monopolist. Some, like Clive Lewis, Lisa Nandy, Jon Cruddas, Jonathan Reynolds and others, have an instinct for pluralism. But the predominant sentiment of Labour, from left to right, is the electoral extermination of anyone and everyone who isn't a card-carrying member of the Party. This is the logic of the market.

This isn't, of course, just about the Greens - it's about Labour's actions, beliefs and attitude to everyone outside the Party - and indeed everyone inside it too. Labour's attitude towards others operates on a spectrum from suspicion to hostility - in business, the community, other fields and other parties. Internally, as we are seeing, it is not good enough to be just a member of Labour: you have to be the 'right' type of member - you have to be in the faction within the faction, the tribe within the tribe. The Blairites and Progress outmanoeuvre the left, and then in turn the Corbynites and Momentum outmanoeuvre them for the all-important control of the machine. In this world, control of the party means control of the state, which in turn means control of the country. With such brutal competitive simplicity, it is easy to see how ends justify means. It is a politics of 'by any means possible'.

It is a world in which failure, when history is judged subjectively and objectively 'to be on our side', that can only be explained by betrayal at the hands of others, often those close by, and everything is about replacing 'the wrong people' with 'the right

people' – inside and outside of the party - to gain the purity of monopoly control. In this mechanical world everything is instrumental – it's about how it helps the party or a particular faction in the party. With this perspective, as Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, "a politician divides mankind into two classes: tools and enemies".

This instrumental approach to politics and governance will be Labour's undoing. Such a closed tribalism is the product of a particular time and place that is now receding in the rear view mirror as the 21st century, with all its complexity and ambiguity, kicks in and increasingly dominates our everyday culture – as well as our political culture.

Seen exclusively in electoral terms, challenging this monopoly socialism is important in order to gain a parliamentary majority. Jeremy Corbyn might now be Prime Minister if Labour had given even an inch to the possibility of a Progressive Alliance last June. In over 60 seats the progressive vote was bigger than the regressive vote, but division on the left meant that purity was preferred to power. While Labour cleaves to the myth of one more heave, the reality is that such an alliance is likely to be needed again. Labour's support, as Matthew Sowemimo sets out in the report [Big But Brittle](#), is much more fragile than many in the Party want to believe.

But the real challenge is not electoral but cultural - indeed getting the cultural politics right is the only way to win the electoral battle in meaningful way. So the question is not how to amass enough votes to control the machinery of the state, but how do progressives make things happen effectively in a 21st century defined by complexity? It's about being on the side of the Zeitgeist and bending modernity to the goals of much greater equality, sustainability and democracy. Labour might just gain office through a monopoly

socialism approach, but it will be fleeting and further from real power than ever – because power is now about complex networks, not pushing the buttons of simple machines. To change society, Labour must first change the way it does politics in a very fundamental way.

Jeremy Corbyn already does some politics differently. His call for a kinder, gentler politics is as important as his more radical policies, acting as an antidote to the timid centrism that preceded it. And his frontbench team aren't subject to the same mind-numbing controls as their New Labour era counterparts. But the lurking danger is that the cultural and governmental essence of Labour under Corbyn is too similar to that of Labour under Blair, Brown and Miliband. The metaphor that links them is essentially mechanical. Like interlocking cogs, you control the party, which controls the state, which in turn controls the country. The sentiment is one of predictability, linearity, elites and hierarchies. Of course 'the right' people pulling the levers in more socialist ways is preferable to 'the wrong' people pulling them in the wrong ways. But the problem is not just one of intentions but outcomes; more than ever, we all live in a world where means shape ends. Indeed, it is a huge fallacy of some on the left to believe the British state can simply be inhabited and used for radical purpose. It can't. It has to be democratised, pluralised and localised if it is to be a vehicle for transformative purpose.

Because none of this would really matter if the old levers still worked in the way they once did. The mechanical metaphor is no accident. In a world defined by the Ford car plant – where everyone knew their particular place on the long production line – business, like politics and public service, mirrored this factory model of top-down control. It was how profits were made, states were run and wars were won. Everyone knew their place in a system of command and control. But we are now

way beyond even post-Fordism. Instead of the factory being the metaphor of the age, it is now, like it or not, Facebook.

In a networked world we co-produce outcomes, we share, we join, we leave and we have multiple and shifting identities. In these [new times](#) allegiances are fleeting, nothing is total or forever. It is a world of multi-channel, on-demand, on-the-go Technicolor, not two channels in black and white. Change today is episodic, non-linear and unpredictable. In this fast-emerging world, deference and the idea of being in control are decaying memories as new horizontal networks challenge the supremacy of old vertical hierarchies. It is a world where diversity and the embrace of complexity are tough, but are the only ways you get things done. If modernity was defined by being solid, the networked world, in the phraseology of the late sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, is liquid.

While this fluid complexity is the abiding sentiment of our age, binary and polarised politics still exists with success, witness Brexit and Trump. All eras are contradictory and paradoxical. What matters is what constitutes the dominant form of governance at any one moment. Populism, of the left or the right, are reactionary ways to paper over the cracks of our complex society. Gramsci warned us that when the old is not yet dead, and the new is not yet born, morbid symptoms would appear. Infuriatingly, Gramsci never told us how long this interregnum between the old and new would last. But there is no mistaking or avoiding the shift from centralism to complexity, from monopoly to variety, from the vertical to the horizontal. We can and must fight many things - injustice, climate change and bigotry to name just three - but what we cannot fight is the spirit of the age – which is defined by our interconnectedness, the flatness and complexity of our society. We have to embrace it.

In such a world, the idea that any one party, or any one faction within it, led in turn by a very small group of mostly men, be it Blairite or Corbynite, can somehow master global finance, the bond markets, climate change, post carbon energy supply, artificial intelligence, the rise of identity politics and much else, is quaint to say to the least.

But Labour's reaction to the inevitable loss of control in a complex world is not to let go but to hold on tighter. One more heave and all will be righted - as long as the right people make the right choices. The psychology is one of purity and order. Labour's backs are forever to the wall - the enemy is all around and the potential of betrayal of the right people with the right ideas lurks around every corner. This Labourism is a creed that has a profound belief in the singularity of its right to govern; reformist rather than revolutionary vanguardism.

Still unwilling to face up to this complex reality, Labour dreams endlessly of recreating the '1945 moment' – but in so doing misreads history. Yes, it was Labour that won the seats and pulled the then-functioning levers of the state to re-make a post-war society, but the reality was far from the simplicity of monopoly control. It was the Conservative Quentin Hogg, later Lord Hailsham, who coined the term social security, just as it was William Beveridge and John Maynard Keynes, both Liberals, who invented the new system of social security and the new economic order to pay for it. Labour itself was a rich, diverse movement of culture and practice: of guilds, cycling clubs and book groups, vibrant trade unions, cooperatives, mutual and friendly societies. David Marquand called this long intellectual debate between the Marxists, the Methodists and the rest a "100-year conversation". Today all that is remembered is Clement Attlee and a cabinet that seemed to do socialism to people and not with them. Ever since,

Labour's analysis and practice has got simpler while the world has grown more complex. It is worth recalling the words of Attlee here: "if you begin to consider yourself solely responsible to a political party, you're halfway to a dictatorship." And then this: "the foundation of democratic liberty is a willingness to believe that other people may perhaps be wiser than oneself."

The problem with monopolies

Why is it that a party that dislikes monopolies elsewhere wants one for itself? There is no doubt that, given the chance, Labour would take every seat in every council, assembly and parliament across the land – believing that it and it alone is the legitimate voice of the nation – and therefore all other voices must be annihilated. Indeed, Tony Blair once claimed that New Labour was 'the political wing of the British people', as if there could be no other choice - a tent so big it was the home for literally everyone.

But we know monopolies corrupt and corrode. They are brittle and they ossify precisely because there is no challenge and no alternative viewpoints. A 2015 report by the [Electoral Reform Society](#) found that the first past the post electoral system, and the winner takes all outcomes it encourages, led to a lack of accountability and public procurement corruption in local government. Monopolies exist to preserve their own dominance, not to take on the real challenges of the day or act for the common good. The board game Monopoly was of course famously invented to show why monopolies are inherently bad things – life is dull and meaningless without others to play with.

The problems of Monopoly Socialism become more pressing as the Zeitgeist shifts inexorably away from 20th century models of command and control. The system of production, governance and

communication of the 21st century is the platform. Depending on how they are owned, controlled and regulated, the platform can be the basis for either variety or conformity, dominance or diversity, equality or inequality. Platforms, because they aggregate people and information so quickly, exaggerate shifts, but encourage them to happen very quickly. At the last election, when the overriding issue was to stop a Tory landslide, Labour benefited enormously from the monopolising tendency of Facebook, Twitter and other social platforms to maximise anti-Tory voting. But that doesn't mean the return to the old two party system. Instead it simply proves how fluid and fast things now change. Party allegiances are weaker than ever. What we tend to see today is a politics of surges or swarms, as people shift from one party, idea or movement to the next, in broad and fast-moving blocs. Since 2010 we have seen such surges to the Lib Dems, the SNP, the Greens and now Labour. Eventually the distorting electoral system crushes smaller parties, but this simply acts as a pressure cooker lid that temporarily seals in grievances; as we saw at the time of the EU referendum, eventually the pressure explodes. The fluidity, openness and anger at inequality in the real world will eventually challenge the claustrophobia of Westminster. As the blog site [Public Policy and the Past](#) says "you have a First Past the Post 'balance' that looks like a Buckaroo pony made of Jenga". Old politics cannot hold off new politics indefinitely - something has to give.

A different conception of power

If Labour is to shift from a 20th century mechanical view of politics to a 21st century embrace of complexity and fluidity, then it has to change its view of power. It should start by embracing Mary Parker Follett's distinction between 'power over' and 'power with'. 'Power over' is power as domination: the ability through the state to make people do what they would

otherwise not do. This can of course be necessary to ensure, for example, we pay our taxes and fasten our seat belts. But in a non-deferential and complex world, 'power over' has limitations and always fails to unlock and unleash the full potential of people, as they remain unwilling cogs in a machine of limited creative and productive capacity.

'Power with', along with its accompanying 'power to', is transformatory precisely because it means that politicians and people work together in the co-creation of a better society. At every point the future is negotiated, rather than imposed. In such a world, knowledge is dispersed and therefore any project is going to be better informed and more adaptable, and the people engaged in it are likely to be more committed precisely because it is 'their project'. In a world of 'power with', no one view dominates, meaning politics can become much more creative and meet all the changes of the complex world we now live in.

But of course this means ceding the myth of control and moving on from the belief that the party alone must sort everything, for everyone, all of the time. This is a tough challenge for Labour when it has an 'all-or-nothing' approach to power. Look back at the 2010 and 2017 elections: in both cases the Party chose to be in opposition rather than share power with others. This puts it dangerously out of step with the collaborative Zeitgeist. And just to re-emphasise, the point about collaboration isn't just to gain power, but to exercise it both morally and effectively. As the author Terry Pratchett has written: "You can't go around building a better world for people. Only people can build a better world for people. Otherwise it's just a cage". This does not make the politics of complexity easy or straightforward – clearly it isn't. But if it is the governance culture of the 21st century, then we must get with it - and do so faster and better than the Right.

Living with complexity

Scientists and engineers have seen this complex world coming for some time. Back in the 1950s, Ross Ashby, an early cyberneticist, wrote the *Law of Requisite Variety*, which simply states that any complex entity can only be governed by an entity equally or more complex than itself. If a system is to be stable, the number of states in its control mechanism must be greater than or equal to the number of states in the system being controlled. Thus we see a clunking old binary politics trying to control a world of wonderful variety that has escaped its mechanical clutches. We are not going to take back control in the old way.

In all this emerging complexity, the biggest word in politics becomes one of the smallest. It is the word 'and'. As soon as you stop seeing everything as binary – black or white, right or wrong - a whole new world of combinational thinking and action is opened up. Back to Gramsci who said that "there is always a grain of truth in your opponent's argument". *Andism* is a term I first heard uttered in the private sector by Karen Rivoire, ex-head of human resources at the enlightened global corporate Unilever. As ever, politics lags behind culture and entrepreneurial spirits who get that the Zeitgeist is collaborative, a new spirit we might want to call the 'Andvant-garde'.

Ricken Patel, the founder of Avaaz, once said in an *Observer* interview "I think that across the world there is a politics of community and connection that is in tension with a politics of fear and division....the former takes us to a more deliberative politics in which we engage with each other in a conversation about the common good and democracy and is less like a boxing ring with one person left standing and more like a dinner table where you have the conversation about what to do together". In her Ted Talk, [The](#)

[Revolutionary Power of Diverse Thought](#), Turkish author Elif Shafak says “So from populist demagogues, we will learn the indispensability of democracy. And from isolationists, we will learn the need for global solidarity. And from tribalists, we will learn the beauty of cosmopolitanism and the beauty of diversity”.

Compass champions the idea of what Sue Goss calls the [‘open tribe’](#). We need to recognise and welcome our sense of identity and belonging that comes from tribal loyalties, like the membership of one party over another. But it is the open tribe that adapts and thrives, not the closed gene pool. To be open means to know how to relate to and have empathy with others. David Bohm, in the belief that creativity is always new combinations of old ideas, has written that: “Real dialogue is where two or more people become willing to suspend their certainty in each other’s presence”. And here is the trick Labour has to pull off: how do we suspend certainty in what we believe, still be authentic to our values and be open to others? We have to become comfortable embracing uncertainty, doubt and ambiguity – to head into the grey and difficult areas and avoid simply trying to show that we are right.

In particular we have to do this in ways that don’t lead to a soggy centrist conformity, but to new radical notions of majoritarian consent. This is not easy, but is the only way of building and maintaining ever-shifting majorities for the transformative politics our society needs. To avoid the trap of the lowest common denominator demands we start with a clear set of values and a mission: the pursuit of a good society, one defined as much more equal, sustainable and democratic than the society we live in now. That future has to be negotiated by all of us, not imposed by anyone of us. In the process of negotiation we not only learn, adapt and grow, we also

demonstrate that the best change happens when almost everyone is directly involved in the process.

The process of collaboration means we allow ourselves to be vulnerable with others, to say ‘we don’t know’, to rely and be dependent on others. Dealing with complexity requires the courage to be imperfect – to know we don’t have all the answers, to let go and to take chances. [Brené Brown](#), the hugely popular American academic who studies vulnerability tells us that being vulnerable is “the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change”. It translates into a political practice where tenderness trumps toughness and through which every voice is regarded and respected. In such a place our enemies, surprisingly, turn out to be our teachers. We will need them for because in the spirit of Raymond Williams, there is only a [‘long revolution’](#), where if you want to be rebel, you have to be kind.

During the last election, so many Greens like Siân Berry reached out and backed Labour and looked for solidarity in return. As Green candidates stood aside and Green, Liberal Democrat and Labour members and supporters voted and campaigned tactically, they saw something bigger than their single party interest. Yes, they wanted to stop the Tories but they wanted something else much more: to work together to practise a new collaborative politics. This was politics at its most generous. Some in Labour reciprocated, but others were punished for doing so. In South West Surrey, three Labour members, who backed a National Health Action Party Candidate as the best-placed and most appropriate to take on Jeremy Hunt, were summarily expelled from the party – one, Steve Williams, after 46 years of activism.

Like the border patrols on the Berlin Wall, the guards of the old machine politics will do their duty right up to the moment the walls crash down and people joyously spill

into the open terrain from which they had previously been banned. It is then that the guards will shed their outfits and claim the new world was what they wanted all along.

Can Labour change?

The question is: can Labour change? Can it make this cultural shift and give up on the illusion of monopoly power – something that in electoral terms still looks unfeasible and, in terms of a transformative agenda, is undoubtedly undesirable? W.H. Auden in *The Age of Anxiety* wrote:

*We would rather be ruined than changed
We would rather die in our dread
Than climb the cross of the moment
And let our illusions die.*

Labour was strong in the binary age, the age of two classes and two geopolitical powers, when wars were cold and governing was easy. Today, the age of big majorities seems to be over and parliamentary power no longer translates easily into actual power. Many in the Party want to hold on to this empty promise of ‘power over’ but growing numbers know there needs to be a cultural shift – to ‘power with’.

Today, this embrace of pluralism and complexity spans the Party; it’s not a right-left issue. It is best symbolised through support for proportional representation, the electoral system of choice for those who know we must negotiate the future, rather than try to impose it. From John McDonnell to Chuka Umunna, there is a rising tide of electoral reformers in Labour’s ranks. It must be extended further and fast, not least by supporting a Constitutional Convention that disperses power and begins to question arcane practices like the whip system in parliament.

But much hope rests with [Momentum](#), the Praetorian Guard of Corbyn’s leadership.

The question now, with Corbyn secure in the leadership, is can Momentum become a vanguard for a new plural politics that, ironically, makes vanguardism obsolete? The organisation seems to hold two cultures at the same time – old school command and control and an openness to pluralism. A generational divide represents this schism, with younger members not having the same tribal loyalty to Labour as older comrades who endured the Blairite years and want ‘their’ party back. But when Jon Lansman, the Chair of Momentum [says](#) “I want a inclusive pluralist Labour Party”, there could be hope. Indeed the shift to embed community organising within Labour, publications such as [Alternative Models of Ownership](#), ideas like [Corbyism from below](#), and the democratic review of the party currently taking place are all opportunities for a cultural shift – but they must be taken in full faith and fast.

The danger is that Labour locks itself in a spiral of endless retribution. The left do to the right what the right did to them. The Blairites forlornly now complain, in their marginalisation, about being treated exactly the way they treated the Corbynites. They fail to see that the left is now both inspiring and better organised than them and therefore more relevant. But across both wings of the Party there is too little empathy or recognition that different voices make Labour stronger, that the Party must be diverse internally and externally. Control of the NEC is not the end game; our goal must be a vibrant and plural democracy that lets our society help itself. Meanwhile, the pursuit of factional dominance simply stokes the fires of the next internal counter-revolution - and could have a severe electoral impact.

And control within Labour is usually exercised by a small clique of mainly men around the leader. From Blair to Brown and now Miliband to Corbyn, it’s always the same: usually Five Guys take all the

decisions and, as a consequence, even if they do get the decisions right, can't command and control it into being, for the world is too complex for that, and no one else has been part of deciding the direction of travel – especially women.

There is an irony here: both Blairism and Corbynism benefited from pluralism and collaboration. New Labour, at least in its formative years, sponsored new think tanks and aligned with big thinkers outside of Labour's narrow ranks. Blair would meet regularly with Paddy Ashdown, Robin Cook with Robert McLennan. At the time, New Labour was at its most vital, but soon lost its way as arrogance and hubris took over. The Corbyn wave was born of movements like UK Uncut, Occupy, Climate Camp and Stop the War. It borrowed people, inspiration and ideas from the spirit of the Scottish independence campaigns, from the Greens and even from the young Liberal Democrats. In one crucial respect Corbyn's whole leadership was founded on the pluralism and generosity of MPs who disagreed with him but nominated him because they valued a wider debate in the first leadership contest. But the pluralism Jeremy Corbyn demonstrates by working across campaigns, like peace and anti-war, isn't yet being translated to attempts to reach across different parties or even across different groups inside Labour. Now, from a position of almost supreme strength, can Jeremy reach out and express solidarity with those who aren't Corbynites but who share many of his beliefs - both within Labour but in different parties too, like Caroline Lucas or the plural socialist Leanne Wood of Plaid Cymru? Can a new progressive bloc be forged with these people and more?

It will be essential if the Corbyn project is to succeed. Taking on the City, house builders and privatised industries, to name just three obvious and powerful sectors in the context of Brexit will be hard enough. To believe it can be done without broad

alliances is simply reckless. Back in 1982, the newly elected Socialist President François Mitterrand sought to roll out an anti-austerity programme in France. Within months he was forced into a huge U-turn because his government lacked broad-based support. As the grip of global financial markets has only tightened since then, any incoming and radical Labour government has to build the popular will to back its programme. This requires so much more than just Labour. In more recent memory, Syriza in Greece shows that failure awaits a party that fails to transfer power and resources to new and dispersed centres of power – to movement and institutions it cannot control.

Labour can learn much from the Greens about pluralism, but also from the [Women's Equality Party](#) (WEP), possibly the only truly 21st century national party in the UK. Founded in 2015 by Sandi Toksvig and Catherine Mayer, it was born of this century and therefore carries deep within it the collaborative DNA of the modern era. It is plural to its bones. It purposefully asks the other parties to steal its policy ideas and encourages joint membership of other parties. Of course while this is not reciprocated, many young people don't know you can't belong to more than one party and innocently and excitedly join several, which is precisely in-tune with the multi-identity and collaborative spirit of the age in which they live. The aim of the WEP is not one-party dominance, but embedding a set of ideas and values in our political culture – a goal bigger than any single party.

For Labour there are two great prizes on offer in making this cultural leap to pluralism. First, a politics of 'andism' that synthesises the best of Corbynism, even some aspects of Blairism and other Labour traditions such as the democratic Labour and elements of Blue Labour. This would combine the organisational capability and professionalism of New Labour, the authenticity and radicalism of Corbynism, the democratic impulse of the

soft left and the need to respect where many people are rooted in their community. After all, 'for the many, not the few', was first a Blairite phrase.

Second, Labour must move from the politics of the Big Tent, with everyone under its suffocating roof, to the politics of the campsite, where progressive parties, movements and organisations keep their identity but share and help others whenever and wherever progressive politics can be advanced. If Labour were to let go in this way, the party could be the biggest tent in a new ecosystem, and gain the power to transform our country. It would be the end of all or nothing politics for Labour – especially when the 'all' bit turns out to be a infrequent and often hollow promise. Such huge political potential could be unleashed if Labour aligns the ends of a more democratic and egalitarian society with the means to build it. As Martin Luther King remarked: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that".

Conclusions

Every star burns most brightly just before it implodes. It is crucial for the country that this isn't the case for Labour. Labour might win a more welcome left-wing victory through old command and control methods – a monopoly socialism based on its divine wisdom. Many in the country are hungry for change – real change – but it needs to be change done with them and not too them if it is to really matter and change our society.

In her new book [*A New Politics from the Left*](#) (Feb 2018, Polity), Hilary Wainwright, an astute outrider for the Corbyn project says "The development of a new politics, rooted in a new economics, will often be independent of any one political party, and expressed in municipal alliances and in different left and green parties at different levels". Or as Raymond Williams, the

Welsh cultural theorist once said: "It seems to me that the break towards socialism can only be to an unimaginably greater complexity".

From the best elements of Momentum and its sister organisation The World Transformed, from the Flatpack Democracy movement and Transition Towns across the UK, to the Fearless Cities across Europe, from the burgeoning Commons movement to the emerging sharing and peer-to-peer economy – the Zeitgeist puts cooperation above competition and the plural above the monopoly. Adopting this culture of collaborative politics is not just electorally and organisationally necessary, it is morally the right thing to do. A collaborative and egalitarian society will only ever be achieved through behaviour which reflects it. As such, Labour, in a more emotionally aware state of vulnerability, must become less Gordon Brown, more Brené Brown.

In reality Labour just has to look around - outside of the committee rooms, the Shadow Cabinet and the NEC - and see what is happening everywhere; the self-organisation of the people by the people, for the people. Its job is to recognise that transformative change happens when bottom-up, horizontal radicalism is sustained and supported by the state. The diagonal meeting point of the two is called 45-degree politics – the fault-line through which a new society will be born. The moment is ripe for a new politics in which we learn how to learn and exponentially increase our capacity for change through joined-up, collective action.

The cold war is long over. It is time for cold politics to be over too. It is time for warmth, generosity and - dare I say it - love. For Labour, like all of us, it's only when you let go and trust other people that meaningful and lasting change is

possible. Maybe Labour could start by trusting the likes of Siân Berry?