



What We Assume

Transforming society is complex and demands we work constructively with others. To do that we must appreciate the assumptions that drive their thinking and behaviour. So said David Bohm in his seminal treatise *On Dialogue*. In the quest to build alliances for radical change, perspective is everything.

Compass must therefore set out the assumptions that underpin our political approach to effect more constructive relationships with those both inside and outside of our organisation.

The Ends

We want a Good Society; much more equal, sustainable, democratic. We have more faith than ever that the creative and transformative talents of humanity can deliver this. We know our economy must serve this Good Society; more just, innovative and green.

The Means

Both a Good Society and its economy need a new way of 'deciding and doing' in sync with the participatory spirit of this epochal moment - the dawn of the networked age. But our democracy and its tribal party structures lock power up and play to caution and the already powerful. We must change our political system to change our society. Pluralism, in all its complexity, must be embraced to meet the difficult challenges and opportunities for transformation, not restoration, we face. Power must be given away, taken and realised.

This is as much about culture as it is about structure. A Good Society can only be created by practising respect, generosity, boldness, humility and compromise. We must be the change we wish to see in the world. Only an Age of Humanity, driven by our global interconnectedness, our equal worth and shared interest in a sustainable and just future can counter the emerging narrow and divisive political populism.

Participatory change is already coming, through civil society and purpose driven business, in the emerging gaps between the old state and the free market. The new being born shows us what the Good Society looks like and how it can be achieved. But these emerging projects for change flourish despite the democratic and economic system – not because of them - they are isolated, partial and fragile. The paradigm only shifts when nurtured and accelerated by a new state and new democracy. Compass, with others, will bring the state and civil society together, meeting at the [45° Change](#) fault line to effect transformation.

Because the earth is burning and poverty's scars are deepening, the politics of the least bad option no longer suffice. The test of our decisions and actions must be not what they ameliorate but what they transform.

The Context

Both Brexit and the rise of political populism are symptoms of this deep economic and democratic malaise that have to be addressed regardless of whether or not we leave the European Union. On this Compass stands for a [Citizens' Assembly](#) as the only real way to build connections that will sustain across the Brexit divide.

A pre-Brexit general election, with progressive forces split across the Remain/Brexit divide, could see the emergence of Regressive Alliance led by Johnson and Farage. It is crucial not to confuse a Remain Alliance, many of whose leading lights want to restore the conditions that helped get us into this mess, with a Progressive Alliance to transform society. The emphasis for Compass must be on democratic and economic renewal, the very causes of Brexit - otherwise the cycle of decline continues and deepens.

Labour has made the essential leap away from the party's accommodation of neoliberalism, but it will fail unless it becomes much more radical on democracy, pluralism, strategic internationalism and sustainability. There is an uncertainty that Labour can adapt culturally to this participatory age. With social democracy in an existential crisis globally, any variant of 'one more heave' will fail.

The Liberal Democrats have revived in the polls because of their strong but divisive Remain position. While Compass welcomes and values the contribution of social liberalism, the party seems too content to restore centrism rather than opt for transformative change.

The surging Green parties across Europe often look closest to Compass' analysis and agenda - with their focus on climate change, sustainable growth, decarbonisation and citizen action. As they enjoy European success, our FPTP system unjustly inhibits the Green Party and therefore demands new thinking and action about alliances and democratic change.

We see the SNP and Plaid Cymru as making important contributions to alliance-based politics, while recognising the tensions of separatist approaches and their own transformation/restoration divides. We likewise welcome the innovative role of the Women's Equality Party.

The Progressive Alliance, the act we are most recently associated with, provided a glimmer of what a radical and generous politics looks like, but was sadly thwarted by narrow tribalism. New formulations of political cooperation for the common good, not least around a new democratic settlement, must be urgently trialled, developed and accelerated.

Conclusion

The problems we face and the Good Society we seek demand deep intellectual, cultural and organisational foundations. We will act in the here and now, whenever and wherever necessary, but only to bring about the systems' change our moral, political and environmental compass demands.

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