

Common Platforms: A New Stage of Alliance-Based and Participatory Politics

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Published April 2019 by Compass

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About Compass and this project

Compass is the pressure group for a good society, a world that is much more equal, sustainable and democratic. We build alliances of ideas, parties and movements to help make systemic change happen. Our strategic focus, through the [Common Platform](#), is to understand, build, support and accelerate new forms of democratic practice and collaborative action that are taking place in civil society and the economy, and to link that up with top-down/state reforms and policy. The question we are trying to help solve, which we explore in the recent document [45 Degree Change](#), is not just what sort of society we want, but, increasingly, how to make it happen?

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Introduction

This Compass thinkpiece discusses ‘Common Platforms’ (CP) as a new stage of a progressive, collaborative, participatory and alliance-based politics. Common Platforms extend the strategy of the ‘Progressive Alliance’, which found expression as an anti-Tory electoral pact in the 2017 General Election, by developing the concept of active forms of alliance, collaborative and participatory activity across a number of dimensions, including beyond electoral politics.

The rationale for CP is both short and long-term. First and most immediate, the Common Platforms strategy is seen as a response to key features of the current conjuncture: a Brexit-dominated political crisis, electoral deadlock and the ways in which these have highlighted both the strengths and limitations of the Labour Left Bloc. The CP approach is also seen as a long-term societal transformational strategy, by suggesting that what is termed ‘The Good Society’ (a pluralist post-capitalist vision) is based on a continuous dialogue and coming-together of a range of progressive traditions; some established and others emergent. These include socialism, social democracy, green politics and ecological sustainability, feminism and gender politics, race equality, new economic and technological innovation and a range of liberation movements which have arisen to confront global neoliberalism and Right populism.

This paper makes the following arguments. First, the concept of Common Platforms is rooted in a dual concern – overcoming the conjunctural crisis of stalemate between Right and Left forces, not least in the polls, that requires the building of an expanded Progressive Bloc and laying the basis of a post-neoliberal/post-capitalist society referred to as the Good Society. Second, in building the Progressive Bloc, it is important to engage with the ‘networked’ end of the Left Bloc (defined within the UK as Corbyn pluralists) to develop a more open and broad-based socialism. Third, the Common Platform approach is not conceived as a single initiative, but as a plurality of platforms of collaboration that both embrace electoral alliance-making and reach far beyond this. Finally, the deep challenges facing this project will require a form of ‘leadership’ from the Left based not on organisational privileges, but on a compelling moral and societal vision that brings together socialist, radical and democratic ideas into a new forward-looking unity.

The publication comprises five parts:

- Part 1.** *The conjunctural crisis* – the Brexit crisis and the current electoral/political stalemate.
- Part 2.** *Common Platforms and the evolution of Compass alliance-based politics* – the CP strategy is viewed as the fourth phase of Compass politics since its foundation in 2004.
- Part 3.** *From the Left Bloc to a Progressive Bloc* – an analysis of the strengths and limitations of the Labour Left Bloc and the challenges in creating a Progressive Bloc.
- Part 4.** *The concept of Common Platforms* as a progressive bloc-building approach based on a multiplicity of interlocking platform activities.
- Part 5.** *Building Common Platforms* – some key considerations.

Part 1. The conjunctural crisis and beyond

Brexit divisions and electoral stalemate

The immediate context concerns the Brexit crisis and deep political divisions within England and across the UK more generally. Brexit, as a Right nationalist project, has deeply divided England and has placed the relationships between the other nations of the UK – Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – and Westminster under growing strain. These divisions, unprecedented in living memory, have been exploited by the role of a populist Right: they have been able to mobilise the sentiments of disadvantaged populations whose lives have been made worse by austerity and who feel they have little control over forces affecting their future¹.

Brexit has been feeding into wider political life. In electoral politics, it has so far succeeded in coalescing a Right Bloc that in other times might have disintegrated under the weight of its own political incompetence. It has also shaped the current political and electoral stalemate. Since the 2017 General Election the Conservative Government has lacked a political majority in Parliament and is dependent on the support of the DUP. The Labour Party, on the other hand, has so far not broken through and it is difficult to see how a General Election can be triggered without significant defections within the Tory Party around Brexit and the collapse of the Tory/DUP pact. The parliamentary stalemate has been underpinned by an electoral deadlock between the Conservative-led Right Bloc (Conservative Party + DUP + Brexit promoting bodies + the electoral base of UKIP) and a Labour-dominated Left Bloc (Labour Party leadership supported by its left-leaning membership, trade unions and radical civil society organisations including new movements such as Momentum).

The current Left Bloc does not include other non-Conservative political parties - the Liberal Democrats, Greens, Scottish Nationalist Party, Plaid Cymru and the new Independent Group. Both blocs, measured in terms of voting intentions for the Labour and Conservative Parties, have since the last election had the support of about 40 percent of the electorate respectively². The conjunctural argument for the development of Common Platforms activities is that they are necessary to find ways through the Brexit divisions and the electoral stalemate.

1. The complex factors behind the Brexit vote are articulated in a Compass publication [The Causes and Cures of Brexit](#)

2. In early 2019 the electoral stalemate looks increasingly unstable with opinion poll swings either side of 40 per cent for both parties.

However, the rationale for Common Platforms can also be found beyond the current crisis. Given the diversity of neoliberal societies, progressive transformations cannot be realised without developing broad political and cultural alliances for change, which involve as many people as possible in exercising greater individual and collective control of their own lives and futures. This alliance-based and pluralist approach to political, economic and cultural life can also be seen as key foundation of a future post-capitalist society. Within Compass this is referred to as the Good Society: an increasingly socialised economy; a deeper participative democracy and a society committed to an ecologically sustainable future³. Such a strategy can be counterpoised to a traditional Leninist/Fabian strategy of top-down and singular or monopoly-inspired change⁴.

3. These broad transformatory aims are embodied in the [Common Platforms Inquiry Prospectus](#).

4. See Neal Lawson's [Beyond Monopoly Socialism](#).

Part 2. Common Platforms and the evolution of Compass alliance-based politics

The Common Platforms framework needs to be seen not only in the contexts of the current conjunctural crisis, but also as the latest stage in the evolution of Compass politics since its inception in 2004. It is possible to identify four phases of political development.

Phase 1 2004-2011 – A left-reformist wing of Labour. Compass was established to bring together a number of forces and to help radicalise the Labour Party in the period of high Blairism following the Iraq War. The concept of the Good Society was intended to embrace not only the Labour and socialist traditions, but also other radical tendencies. Membership of Compass was, however, confined to Labour Party members.

Phase 2 2011-2016 – Opening out. In 2011, following the defeat of the Labour Party in the 2010 General Election, a decision was taken to open up Compass membership to everyone, including members of political parties other than Labour, a move that saw the birth of the Progressive Alliance concept.

Phase 3 2016-2017 – the **Progressive Alliance (PA) as an anti-Tory pact.** While always intended as a deeper intellectual and cultural project, following the 2016 EU Referendum and the formation of the 'Regressive Alliance' (Tory – UKIP political/electoral relationship), the calling of the June 2017 General Election and the surge in support for the Conservatives, the PA coalesced into an anti-Tory electoral pact. This played a significant role in restricting the electoral reach of the Tories and bringing together progressive actors at the grassroots to support particular candidates. However, the PA concept both contributed to and was overwhelmed by the 'Corbyn Surge' and the unexpected performance of Labour in the election, reaching nearly 40 per cent of the vote.

Phase 4 – 2017 and beyond: a multi-dimensional approach to alliance-based politics. The new context in 2019 requires some fresh multi-layered thinking that goes beyond electoral pacts. The current conjuncture also suggests the need to establish a relationship with the more 'networked' and plural end of the Corbyn Project - being supportive of a broad socialist and democratic policy agenda, but also calling for its expansion into a more open political style and a range of policies and politics that can underpin the expansion of the Left Bloc into a Progressive Bloc.

This would mean promoting different forms of alliance-building and engaging with creative participation and cooperation within and between parties, and with movements and activists on the ground. It may be the case that the political stalemate situation will also require political collaboration between Labour and other parties electorally and in Parliament; something that Labour is not willing to countenance presently.

The fourth phase, therefore, calls for a radical extension of the Compass alliance-based project to promote a variety of collaborative, democratic and participatory politics capable of breaking the political logjam, creating the possibility of a sustainable Left government based on the ethics and vision of a Good Society that we can build, collectively, now and for the future. This is the vision that gives the Common Platforms framework its sense of purpose.

Part 3. From the Left Bloc to the Progressive Bloc

The crisis of the Left and Right Blocs

The fact that we now have an identifiable Left Bloc in the UK is a significant achievement. Led by Jeremy Corbyn, it can be credited with achieving nearly 40 per cent in the 2017 General Election and having increased Labour Party membership to 540,000 as of December 2018. A corollary of this, however, is that the Progressive Alliance and tactical voting contribution to Labour's electoral achievement has not been recognised by Labour nationally. On the other hand, we may now be witnessing the plateauing of the Left Bloc when it should be growing – Labour's electoral tally has regularly dipped below 40 per cent during 2018; its membership has declined compared with 2017 although the numbers are contested; and Corbyn has experienced deteriorating approval ratings⁵.

By early 2019, however, the Brexit crisis was beginning to fray both the Left and Right blocs. On the Left, strains within the Parliamentary Labour Party that have existed since the election of Corbyn as leader were fuelled by Labour's response to the Brexit crisis and the anti-semitism row. The result was the first significant split since the 1980s – as of mid-February, a total of eight Labour MPs resigned from the party with possibly more to follow. The defections are very significant for Labour. Based on historical evidence, a new centrist political party that could evolve from the emergent Independent Group, is more likely to inflict more damage its electoral standing than on the Conservatives.

At the same time, however, the Right Bloc is also under strain. It too is experiencing defections of 'moderate' Tories in response to what they see as a drift to the far Right – the risk of a Hard Brexit, the role of the European Research Group in the Conservative Parliamentary Party and the infiltration of UKIP members into Tory constituency parties. At the time of publication, it is possible to see two trajectories for the Right Bloc, both unstable. The first is that it sheds a few MPs but holds together around the Right Brexit project even at the risk of crashing out of the EU, making appeals both to working class and middle-class social forces around concepts of national independence, community and cohesion and against what is perceived to be a neoliberal cosmopolitanism and uncontrollable change⁶.

5. As of early 2019, Jeremy Corbyn had [approval ratings of about 25 per cent](#).

6. The case of the French New Right is explored on in an essay by Mark Lilla *Two Roads for the New French Right* in the *New York Review of Books*, 20 December, 2018. This provocative piece looks at how issues of community, change and stability are interpreted from a Right perspective; issues that should also be of interest to the Left.

The second is the May Government is compelled to reconcile itself with Capital (that is anti-Brexit) and adopt a softer Brexit position to avoid a no-deal. That could shatter the relationship with the far Right and to lead to a more explicit split between nationalist and economically neoliberal conservatisms.

Labour's response to the crisis of the Blocs thus far has been to ignore the fact that political blocs actually exist. Instead, it persists in taking a largely party-based organisational approach to political competition, focused on political discipline, organisation and mobilisation of a 40 per cent section of the electorate. However, the plateauing and even erosion of a Labour-led Left Bloc marks a crisis that may prevent it from gaining power and certainly from achieving a sustainable majority in Parliament.

Beyond the unstable stalemate - extending the Left Bloc

The current unstable political stalemate, the crises of both Blocs and the ideological innovations of Right populism, point to the need for a step change in Left politics if it is to break the current logjam in a progressive direction. Rather than simply depending on adherence to the Manifesto, 'one more heave' and grassroots mobilisation of the Labour membership, the demands of the conjuncture and the pluralist longer-term vision both require that the party explore a more explicit alliance-based, pluralistic, multi-dimensional and participatory politics.

In other words, the Left Bloc needs to evolve into a much broader and more diverse Progressive Bloc that should aim to command the near-permanent support of more than 50 per cent of the population. This is not simply about forming a new progressive government; it is also about recognising and emboldening existing and emerging forms of progressive hegemony beyond the Westminster context. This will involve stitching together social alliances of forces including local government, civil society organisations and progressive business organisations. Crucially, much of this formation needs to be driven from the grassroots, bringing often small organisations and campaigns into a much more equal and mutually beneficial relationship with progressive parties and institutions. But there are huge challenges ahead for such an ambitious project.

Divisions within Labour – an important challenge lies within the Labour Party itself, brought to crisis proportions by the defections. Some sections of Corbyn's Labour are either amenable to, or already engaged in working more closely with other factions, but most still appear wedded to a 'go it alone' approach. And this tribalism spreads beyond the Left Bloc, also affecting mainstream Labour social democracy. These fractious relationships suggest the need for Common Platform activity within the Labour Party to build relationships between socialism and social democracy, particularly around transformative economic strategy and how the Labour Party can develop a more open 21st-century political culture.

The fragmentation of radical civil society - a second challenge concerns the fragmentation of the diverse political and social forces currently located outside of the Left Bloc - the vast array of civil society organisations, campaigns and movements which have a pivotal role in wider societal transformation. Changes of attitude are not only required within the Labour Party, but also in the sphere of radical civil society. At the grassroots there are still many activists and organisations that continue to regard parties and institutions with considerable suspicion. It will be important, therefore, to bring these forces into dialogue. Only a gradual process that leads to more equal relationships between social and political partners being established through co-creation will help forge a broader and deeper alliance of progressive forces and demonstrate the possibility of mutual aid.

Achieving a progressive Parliamentary majority - winning democratic ground remains a fundamental goal and the fact remains that the Labour Party may need progressive allies in Parliament in order both to govern and to deliver long-term transformation. And this pluralism may be a good thing for the future because it points to required changes in Left political behaviour and outlook that has been historically dominated by sectionalism and sectarianism. While the concept of Common Platforms goes beyond that of electoral pacts, this does not remove the need for electoral agreements to serve a sustainable progressive cause. The Progressive Alliance (PA) as an electoral alliance found expression in the 2017 General Election and played an invaluable role in maximising the impact of the non-Tory vote⁷. Electoral collaboration will certainly be required again (hopefully this time with more Labour Party reciprocation) to win and to govern against the forces that will be ranged against it. But in the Brexit crisis that criss-crosses political boundaries, this will mean collaborations beyond Labour boundaries with other political forces that, for example, reject an English nationalist siege mentality. Put another way, as each bloc fractures the one that eventually wins will be led by a political force capable of collaborating internally and externally to mould the broadest and most coherent alliance. Such collaborations form a vital part of the Common Platforms conception.

The problems of mutual political learning - as a result of Labour Party tribalism and the suspicions of some civil society actors, the knowledge and power of other progressive forces still remains relatively untapped, meaning that many bold and important transformatory ideas generated at the grassroots in diverse radical civil society are not filtering through. Moreover, the civil society organisations and campaigns

7. The electoral role of the Progressive Alliance (PA) was captured in Barry Langford's [All Together Now: The Progressive Alliance and the 2017 General Election London](#).

themselves remain dispersed, producing a self-perpetuating situation, for without strong relationships between the wider progressive forces, the Left Bloc is likely to continue to undervalue, or even reject the prospect of forging stronger alliances with other progressive organisations. The occupants of ‘radical civil society’, need to be brought into dialogue with one another in a range of arenas beyond that of electoral pacts so that its collaborative, democratic and participatory politics becomes infused into all aspects of political, economic and cultural life, thereby shaping a new ‘common will’ based on greater equality, democracy and ecological sustainability.

The deep challenges of neoliberal political culture – any form of transformatory ambition will have to face deeper material and cultural barriers, including ingrained assumptions (e.g. consumerist “common sense”) about the nature of current life, the dynamics of a dominant neoliberal economy, an elitist representative democracy and narrow approaches to culture and the ways in which tech developments can reinforce regressive popular belief. Confronting and overcoming these is clearly a long-term project that has to bring together two forces in a reciprocal movement - progressive government committed to undertaking long-term structural changes, particularly related to ownership and power, and a perpetual dynamic impulse from participative and radical civil society where many if not most of the transformatory ideas and practices will be generated.

Can Common Platforms and Progressive Bloc building be led from the Left?

The concept of the Progressive Bloc, defined as a multi-level assemblage of collaborative relations, can be seen as a historic response to the challenges of social and political division; the political and electoral limitations of the Left Bloc; the dispersal of progressive or radical civil society and the need for mutual learning to support transformational change. The highly varied nature of these challenges suggests that the concept of the Common Platform is not one platform, but a *multiplicity of connected platforms of collaboration and connection* – within and between political parties and civil society and between an array of social forces. In this sense, the concept of a Progressive Bloc might be seen less as a tightly-defined economic and political structure and more as a political ecosystem.

But should this formation be led by the Left? The Left may fear that Common Platforms, due to their aim of engaging with a wide range of forces in the context of neoliberal cultural domination, will inevitably lead to the dilution of socialist aims and a reaffirmation of centrism. From this comes the argument that Left leadership of alliance activity is essential. Here, we need to be very clear about what is meant by leadership. If leading refers to automatic organisational leadership, the answer has to be a firm ‘no’. There are no privileged positions on Common Platforms. In fact, as the final section discusses,

organisational leadership has to come from those committed to pluralism, dialogue and connectivity. If, however, leadership refers to the leading role of transformative 'moral' and 'intellectual' activity then the answer is a qualified 'yes'. The Left has a compelling case around materiality and the collective ownership of the means of production. A Good Society is impossible unless wealth and the means of producing wealth is more equally shared. On the other hand, other radical forces have better historical records on issues of the environment, gender and race equality, democratic participation and reform and international/global relations. So the issue of Left leadership of Common Platforms would be connected with those who could assemble the most holistic and future-oriented narrative and agenda and whose ethico-political behaviour was an example to others. Already there are visions of Common Platforms activity that point leftwards. As can be seen on page 14, the Compass-inspired Common Platform Prospectus has as its main premise the aim of a Good Society based on greater equality, democracy and sustainability. In seeking a democratic organising principle that goes beyond the market and bureaucratic state, the Common Platforms conception is clearly looking beyond the neoliberal paradigm, if not capitalism more generally.

Part 4. Varieties of Common Platform

From Open Platforms to Common Platforms

The concept of 'platform' has been derived from digital developments; defined as a group of technologies operating as a base upon which other applications, processes or technologies are developed⁸. This digital definition has been broadened to now include represent larger economic/technological formations in which there are dominant and subordinate versions. The dominant version is articulated through 'monopoly platforms' representing a new type of digital capitalism that has been driven by global companies such as Google, Facebook, AirBnB, Amazon and Uber⁹ that also generate a new form of 'popular bad sense' due to algorithms feeding back to people more opportunities to engage in existing compulsive consumer behaviour¹⁰.

The subordinate and insurgent version is the Open or Cooperative Platform: rooted in an open digital approach in which software is accessible in open formats, powered by freely available technologies which are also interoperable with other forms of software, driven by collaboration and an open attitude to change, with the political horizon of 'the commons' and the 'creative commons' in mind. The concept of Open Platform - flexible, generative and deeply public in character - has been transferred to the world of politics, most notably in the Spanish context, where electoral alliances and other forms of political collaboration have been forged at the municipal level (e.g. Barcelona, Madrid) involving co-operation between a range of left and activist forces¹¹.

Open and Cooperative Platform political thinking can, however, be translated into a variety of settings. These include strategic electoral alliances at national and local levels, collaborative problem-solving, collective planning, platforms of popular participation tied closely to digital platforms in cities and municipalities, and experimental approaches to sustainable living. The concept of a Common Platforms can thus be regarded as a particularly collaborative version of the Open Platform in which the aim is to seek levels of common or public agreement which addresses the fragmentary nature of current political life and builds collaboration between the Left and wider progressive partners. Common Platforms might, therefore, be defined as follows:

8. This platform definition can be found on [Tecopedia](#).

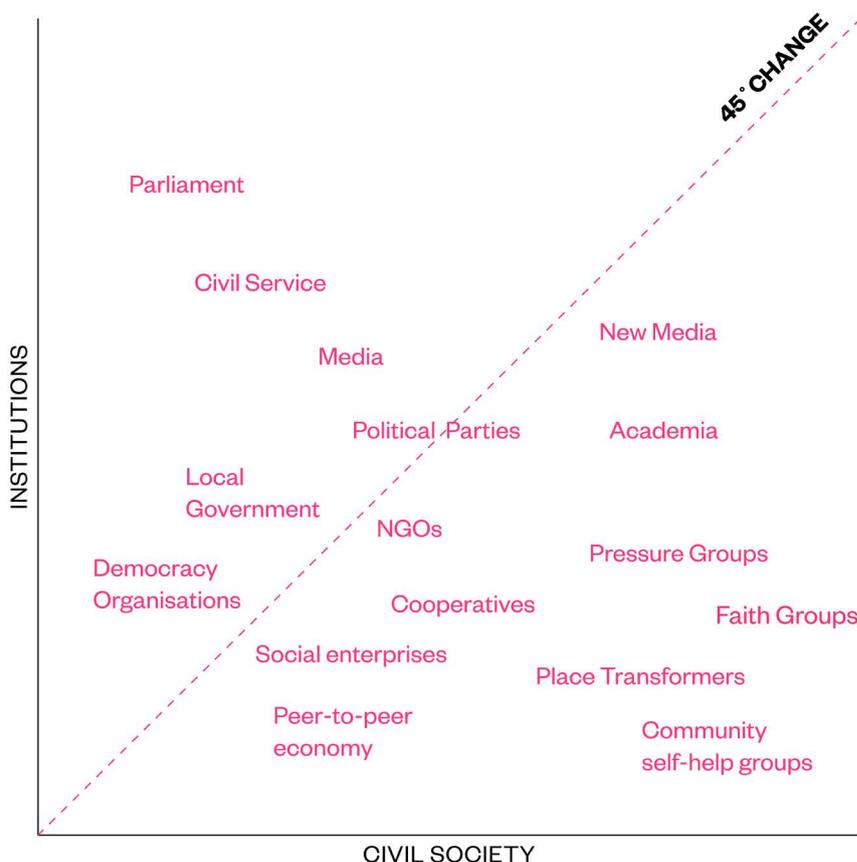
9. Nick Srnicek explores these in [Platform Capitalism](#).

10. The ideological dysfunctions of digital communication technologies and big data is eloquently captured by James Bridle in his book [New Dark Age: Technology and the End of Future](#).

11. The role of Spanish Left platforms is explored in Antonio Lvarez-Benavides' '[15M's social and political effects in Spain](#)'.

Open political-intellectual-digital-activist spaces onto/into which a range of political/cultural actors are invited or seek to be involved in order to collaborate, democratically deliberate, experiment with and co-construct progressive ideas, practices, strategies and structures beyond the current order. The commonality of the platform is derived from its agreed purposes and ethos of co-working towards progressive ends, the increasingly shared identity of the participants as a result of collaboration, and the multiplicity of activities and cultural processes of invention and co-construction that evolve over time.

The Common Platforms framework has thus far been understood as a response to the crises of conjuncture - a means of building a Progressive Bloc whilst, at the same time, opening up collaborative sites to forge the ideas, practices and structures for building a progressive future. The framework could also be understood as an expression of '45-degree politics' that is both horizontal and vertical and recognising that transformative ideas and practices are now increasingly being generated outside of political parties and viewed as a very active form of alliance and collaborative politics operating along a number of dimensions. In the medium-to long-term, however, Common Platforms strategies will require reinforcement from a progressive state through regulation and institution-building.



Collaborative problem-solving and horizontal co-working - across political parties and different social, political and economic forces to bring together the different progressive traditions that have emerged or been reformed over the past 50 years (e.g. socialist/social democratic; green/environmental; gender equality; race equality; sexual equality; radical liberal; progressive nationalist; global, local and social justice activism).

A pluralist and experimental culture - the emphasis is not on 'best practice', but rather on encouraging the most responsive, contextually and culturally engaging kinds of 'practice': developmental, exploratory and aimed at challenging underlying assumptions, opening out, being playful, provocative and questioning; discovering and curating a new form of political culture and style: more collegiate, participatory, generous, open, curious, self-critical, humble, humourous and pluralist. At the same time, it will be important for participation in the Common Platforms to be 'values-led' by support for a range of broad progressive principles including greater economic and social fairness, deepening democratic life, creativity and innovation and the enhancement of ecological sustainability.

Combinational politics for 45-degree change – Common Platform activity is not only associated with horizontal terrains, but also within vertical structures in order to promote radical reform of the governmental state, political parties and civil society institutions. Common Platform activity can also be conceived as operating at the multiple intersecting points between the horizontal and the vertical; known as [45-degree change](#). This progressive 'combinational' approach could include:

- A participatory democratic strategy that seeks to build new collaborative practices from below – at community level, local government level, as well as putting in place a radical plan for a [Constitutional Convention](#).
- Deliberations within progressive political parties on how to develop a 21st-century political character.
- Progressive articulations of place, identity, nation in an increasingly globalised and connected world that cut across Brexit divides. The proposal, for example, for a [Citizen Assembly to deliberate ways through the Brexit](#) crisis could be seen as a Common Platforms activity¹².

¹². Citizens Assembly are seen as a form of collective deliberation to lead to more informed political decisions.

- A transformatory public and social strategy (represented for example by Labour's Manifesto and its key document [Alternative Models of Ownership](#)).
- A progressive view of international relations: the reduction of conflict and increase in collaboration to address fundamental global issues.

Over time, Common Platforms would aim to bring these strands together into a 'progressive collective will' that is expressed in a sense of common purpose and demands led by the desire for a different type of post-capitalist society – understood within Compass as the 'Good Society'.

Part 5. Practices of building Common Platforms

In this final section we consider some practical implications of the functions and activities of the Common Platforms approach. It is possible to see Common Platforms as a political framework having both retrospective and prospective functions. Used retrospectively, it can aid reflection on previous alliance-based activities (e.g. the Progressive Alliance) in order to understand how these functioned as part of a wider alliance-based conception of politics and their potential in new situations. But the main use of the Common Platforms framework is prospective, to conceive of a range of new or anticipated activities that contribute to the building of the Progressive Bloc.

A key Compass initiative is the Common Platform: An inquiry into a good society an overarching project framework that aims to bring together thousands of people and hundreds of organisations to produce a tangible vision of a Good Society, enabling models of the economy and democracy and the exploration of a 'democratic organising principle' to replace the market and bureaucratic state. The Inquiry is intended to provide a framework within which a range of collaborative activities can take place according to an agreed ethos and way of working. Through a range of collaborative initiatives, the Inquiry framework seeks to create alliances between civil society movements with its new productive forces and the state through a process understood as 45-degree change. Within this framework, one of the most promising sites of development is 'radical municipalism', where different social forces can be brought together to support local civic transformation. The range of potential Common Platform activities between the horizontal and the vertical are virtually endless. The issue will be choosing which ones to initiate and how to join up existing collaborative activities, so they can have greater progressive impact.

Building Common Platforms, therefore, involves a number of strategic considerations:

1. What defines a Common Platform activity – is the key criterion that it involves bringing different forces together to deliberate and collaborate to produce a new outcome?
2. How should the Platform to be led/facilitated and how far should it be shaped by its participants? How should participants enter the respective platforms and should there be pre-conditions?
3. What kind of ethical code should be suggested to participants (e.g. for example, a commitment to mutual learning and seeking common outcomes)?
4. How far is a platform viewed as a longer-term or open-ended project? And how far should it be seen as an instrumental vehicle for addressing specific, immediate and bounded problems? Does the potential multiplicity of platforms also suggest a staged approach?

5. Should it follow the idea of First-Stage Platforms (e.g. collaborative problem-solving around a pressing issue for the Left), with beyond that the possibility of other types of Common Platforms – campaigning, participative, deliberative and electoral?
6. How do platforms need to be materially supported and by whom: what infrastructure, financial support for participants, or other conditions are required to maintain the common, public and equitable operating environment and for the platform to function in a fair and progressive way?

The initial focus for platforms could be invitations to collaborate around key issues that will shape the coming decade (e.g. new economy and inclusive/sustainable growth; new models of radical municipalism/local civic socialism; political life and overcoming divisions; technologies and transformations; new forms of democracy). As was stated in one of the contributory notes to the discussion, platform activity should possibly, at least initially, be located ‘where the energy is’.

The focus of platform activity could also be conceived as closer or more distant from the Left Bloc. There is, nevertheless, a strong argument that some platform activity should now deliberately seek to engage with the more pluralist and open end of the Left Bloc as a step in alliance-building activity with the main political leading force. Moreover, the idea of the Common Platform cannot and will not exist in isolation. There are potential collaborations with other forces within the Left Bloc that are seeking new ideas and solutions (e.g. [The World Transformed](#), [Labour Together Inquiry](#)), although these may not be as broad as the Common Platform proposal.

The role of Compass could be conceived as Common Platform initiator, contributor facilitator, connector and mediator in order to support a new phase of alliance-based and collaborative activity locally, nationally and internationally.

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