Editorial

In this issue we begin our new series, *Soundings Futures*, which explores positive and programmatic alternatives to neoliberalism. In introducing the series Michael Rustin points to the links between this project and our *Soundings* manifesto, the main focus of which was to analyse and expose the workings of neoliberalism. The emphasis of the new project is to think through alternatives, within a framework that is based on the earlier analysis. This is not say that the *Manifesto* had no programmatic content: an alternative is always implicit in useful critique, and many contributions to the Manifesto made programmatic suggestions; but this was not its main emphasis. Contributors are being invited to write in the recognition that we need to contest what Michael describes as 'an intentional redesign of the entire social system'; to propose what policies might flow from a clearly conceptualised alternative design - thereby challenging common sense about what is possible and desirable; and to think about how we might move things in that strategic direction - which may involve compromise, but will also be informed by an understanding of how individual measures contribute to an accumulating direction of change. In short, our aim is 'to describe the institutional architecture that needs to be imagined if the epoch of neoliberal hegemony is to be brought to an end, and an alternative system to emerge'.

Michael Edwards begins the series with his article on housing, an area where neoliberalism has been triumphant in shifting attitudes away from the notion that it is the business of the state to make provision for adequate homes for all, and towards the idea that housing should be seen as a market: the state has no business in subsidising the poor with such luxuries as a spare room or security of tenure, and there is no need to regulate the private sector. As he points out, underlying financial relationships and financial institutions underpin this process, in particular the shift in the economy towards profit-taking from assets, including property, and away from investing in the productive economy. The alliance of financial interests with the ancient landowning aristocracy is nowhere more evident in Britain than in the field of property. It was Thatcher who started the initiative to 'democratically' extend the ranks of property owners, and thereby to simultaneously extend the numbers of those with a material interest in property-owning and financial concerns - as evinced, for example, in popular enthusiasm for rising asset prices and easy credit.

As Michael Edwards also points out, widespread home ownership, and the material interests of home-owners, can make it difficult to forge alliances for change: 'housing is not a field in which the 99 per cent confront the 1 per cent'. This makes it all the more important to frame the issues and put forward solutions in ways that facilitate the making of a common cause; this is something the article goes on to address, with many useful suggestions for policy in the short and long term.

Basing a political strategy in the real world on left theorising has not always been the surest strategy for success, but recent initiatives across Europe, especially the rise of the new parties Podemos and Syriza, have shown that political projects drawing on the work of Gramsci, especially as interpreted by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, can be the source of amazing growth in support for the left. In a book published in Spain last year that can be seen as a celebration of both the growing popularity of Podemos and the contribution made by Laclau and Mouffe, leading Podemos strategist Íñigo Errejón engaged in an extended dialogue with Chantal Mouffe, which ranged over the many ways in which theoretical concepts such as hegemony and left populism have driven the party's campaigning, helping them to answer such questions as: how do we put together our thinking about populism, leadership and representation?; how do we 'construct the people' by starting from the discontents of ordinary people which at first sight might seem to have little in common?; how do we go about defining political frontiers? In this issue we publish two translated extracts. The first looks at the dominance of the centrist consensus, and the response to that of right-wing populism, as well as stressing the need for a shift away from the centre in an equivalent act of boldness on the left. The second extract, which looks at the relationship between the 15 May movement and the emergence of Podemos, offers an insightful analysis that has interesting implications for our understanding of social movements and political parties.

Roshi Naidoo reasserts the importance of identity politics at a time when some argue that global issues are so pressing that our common humanity needs to take priority - to which her response, in a nutshell, is: 'There is no neutral conception of humanity in circulation in the popular media or in political culture for us all to belong to'. In looking at other arguments that have been made about why we should move away from 'identity politics' - including that it is based on individualism, it is a form of censorship, it is old hat, and it detracts from both the collective and the economic struggle - Roshi makes an eloquent case for the important ways

in which so many people involved in this field have tried to make connections between disparate forms of struggle, and to find common languages to make sense of different but related exclusions. In doing so she also clearly distinguishes between the kinds of stories about individuals that dominate the mainstream media - outrage that [celebrity name] is a racist/woman-hater/homophobe etc - and accounts that analyse the structural causes of inequality based on difference, and look for ways of making alliances across difference. Looking at recent films centring on the miners' strike of 1984, she argues that the stories they tell illustrate that difference can be an impetus, rather than an obstacle, to making common cause with others, even - or perhaps especially - when they also generate fierce argument.

Adrienne Roberts makes an intervention here that sheds further light on the way in which neoliberalism seeks to co-opt social movements to its own ends. She has written elsewhere about the kind of liberal feminism that sees the expansion of capitalism as something that can be harnessed for progressive social change and women's empowerment, which she has described as 'Transnational Business Feminism'. Here she writes specifically about gender lens investing - attempts to promote 'women-centred' investment and address gender-based inequalities in finance. Most of these kinds of initiatives originate in the US and the UK, and they tend to lack structural awareness on two (at least) fronts - first, they are usually oblivious to the problems of women without money, and, second, they are often unaware of the structural causes of women's inequality. Adrienne argues that such funds also work to reproduce particular assumptions about the commensurability of gender equality and finance-led neoliberalism, assumptions rooted within a neoliberal common sense that assumes that 'greater access to the financial market, like other markets, will automatically lead to the erosion of discrimination - undermining gender inequality while simultaneously improving profitability'. They also reinforce the assumption that there is no alternative to neoliberal finance-led capitalism: feminism must self-evidently, therefore, operate within the terms of its assumptions. This is the kind of 'identity politics' that gives it bad name on the left!

John Grahl looks at the strange embrace by European neoliberals of laws and regulations restricting macro-economic policy. He argues that this is particularly German habit, and that Germany's current EU dominance is entrenching this approach. John also argues that it is precisely their faith in the market that makes the German government and its allies believe that it will adapt to the numerical rules it

lays down (about the ratio of GDP to debt, etc). But this is not part of a Hayek legacy, as is often argued, since Hayek was in favour of abstract rules of operation rather than legislation. As John also points out, ordo-liberals were more committed to rules, but they were also distrustful of big business. This market fundamentalist embrace of rules-based austerity needs to be challenged, but it should not be seen as a reason to leave the European Union. On the contrary, John argues that if Britain were more engaged in Europe its influence could act as a counter to this growing trend.

Sukhdev Johal, Adam Leaver, Mick Moran and Karel Williams of CRESC have a much more interesting approach to government intervention in the economy. Taking their cue from Adolf Berle, who argued that business derives its right to exist from a social contract that means it also has to assume certain responsibilities, they argue that such responsibilities apply all the more to businesses in the foundational economy - the sheltered part of the economy that supplies, on the ground, the mundane but essential goods and services which are the infrastructure of civilised life: utilities, food distribution, retail banking, as well as health, education and welfare services. On the demand side, consumption and therefore revenue streams are secure for businesses that operate in this area, while, on the supply side, many of these activities are natural (local) monopolies and are usually sheltered from international competition. Instead of acknowledging this protected position, however, companies that operate in these fields often behave without responsibility and combine low risk with high profits. The authors suggest that, in return for such privilege, businesses in this sector should be required to play their part in the social contract through a social licensing system. Such a system would also have implications for regional policy since there is interesting potential here to think about the level at which such a licence would be negotiated. This is exactly the kind of imaginative thinking that we hope to introduce to readers in our Futures series - ideas for policy change that open up a whole new area of political thinking.

Sophia Drakopoulou, Wendy Grossman and Phoebe Moore take up the challenge of rethinking digital politics. Their organisation, Cybersalon, has long been arguing for a digital bill of rights and they set out here the reasons why. They argue that recent reports and proposed bills by the US and UK governments to regulate the internet tend to focus on users as consumers rather than citizens, and to prioritise commercial and security interests over individual rights. They also argue that we need better laws on copyright that take more account of the way digital media

works: the new ways of collaborating and creating opened up by the web and internet should be celebrated rather than closed down. As internet users at the beginning of the digital age, we all have responsibility as citizens to participate in the shaping of the future.

David Wearing looks at the history of recent British foreign policy, and argues that it is heading for a crisis of legitimacy. The justifications made for liberal interventionism look increasingly threadbare as the number of failed states brought into being as a consequence of recent western military adventures steadily increases. The language of civilisational conflict instituted during the 'war on terror' has been incapable of containing the contradictions between the narrative offered and the facts on the ground. David argues that this opens up a great opportunity for putting forward an alternative and genuinely progressive international policy, and sets out some measures that could point in the right direction - including joining the international fight against global warming, which is already killing people in many parts of the world, and drawing on the experiences of the UK's multicultural citizenry to help promote an internationalism based on dialogue and negotiation. Again there are some very good pointers here towards the kinds of programmatic alternative that Michael Rustin argues for in his introduction to the new series.

Malcolm James offers a complementary argument in his analysis of the ways that the reception of the 'Jihadi John' videos reinforced the idea of a civilised 'us' confronting a barbaric 'them': this was mobilised to suggest that we in the civilised world are fighting an enemy that is savage and inhuman - a setting up of civilisational oppositions that is happily embraced on the other side by Isis. He also shows how the videos tap into anxieties about the enemy within, and are used to reinforce a view of all British Muslims as potentially dangerous - an almost inevitable consequence of the crude civilisational oppositions that circulate in mainstream discourse. The symbiotic relationships between the internet and broadcast news exponentially multiplied the numbers of viewers of the videos; and at the same time internet viewing made the experience more intimate, more immediate and more frightening, while the absence of context allowed for the creation of a wide range of meanings and interpretations both in the mainstream media and on the net. In contrast to the use of the videos as propaganda - by both 'sides' - the article makes a case '*for* the valuing all human life and *against* the kinds of colonial representation that work to dehumanise some people so that their death (or oppression) becomes possible'.

A tribute to Doreen Massey

Ben Little

As we were going to press, we received the terrible news that Doreen Massey, our great friend and fellow editor, had died on 11 March. It was a devastating shock to us all. We could not have imagined, even for a moment, that Doreen might be leaving us so soon. So much is unfinished - the projects in mid-collaboration, the conversations and advice that will never happen. We were not prepared for this and it will be difficult to let her go.

To meet Doreen was to know, instantly, you were in the company of brilliance. She was special. She had presence. You remember your first encounter with Doreen and, chances are, how it changed what you thought about something important. Doreen didn't hold back and didn't waste words. She held opinions on everything: they were intricately thought through and often went against the grain. She was rigorous in her everyday conversations and she wouldn't permit lazy thinking or easy answers. She would never shy away from a challenge - politically, intellectually, personally. But this critical independence of thought was matched only by her loyalty to her friends and collaborators, and to socialism and the radical left.

And this commitment, and her generosity of spirit, meant that Doreen was always responding to invitations from across the radical left. When Occupy LSX was in full swing, Doreen would be down at St Paul's far more often than younger members of our board. More recently she would be found working with young working-class Londoners on Take Back the City. She had a commitment to an intellectual politics in the real world, not just theory in universities. In retirement she gave at least one talk a week it seemed, travelling far and wide to teach, motivate and debate with fellow radicals across the UK and indeed the world. She was inspirational. When you heard Doreen speak, it was like looking at cut crystal: precise, clear and often dazzling. She made complex ideas accessible and unknotted the complexities of the age. She made transparent the murk of ideology in our culture and offered us all optimism that things could be different.

And she knew that things could change. She'd been an instrumental part of successful left movements the world over: from Nicaragua to the GLC, from Chavez's Venezuela to Syriza in Greece; Doreen's views and advice were sought by people who would use it to transform the real world. Theory was never abstract for Doreen Massey.

Doreen was central to *Soundings*. She founded it, with Michael Rustin and Stuart Hall, and was an active member of the board for twenty years. Her energy and enthusiasm for the journal's project has motivated all of us for as long as we have been involved. More than that, though, Doreen was our friend. Not just a brilliant thinker, she was a kind and compassionate person, who would always come out for a drink after board meetings, and give time, thought and energy to her friends as well as her politics. She will be sorely missed.

We will include more lengthy tributes in the next issue.