

From the Big Society to the Good Society

Patrick Diamond



The argument of this paper is that social democracy has to be re-civilised if it is once again to become a serious force for change in British society. The civic domain characterised by norms of trust, community, reciprocity and solidarity ought to be returned to the core of social democratic thought. Political analysis on the centre-left has not yet come to terms with the twin crisis of market and state which is at the core of the contemporary dilemmas of British politics. Moreover, most debate is still framed around the idea of an intractable dichotomy between market and state, without acknowledging that the most profound ideological weakness on right and left is to be too heavy-handed in using the state, and too light-touch in regulating markets.

In the context of the 2008-9 global financial crisis, the left across the industrialised world sensed an opportunity to unleash the power of the state in order to contain neo-liberal market forces: in particular, taming and regulating market institutions, from banks to sovereign wealth funds, in the public interest. Free-market Conservatives, on the other hand, have sought to use the coming period of fiscal retrenchment to shrink the state, making the state in Britain qualitatively smaller in scope and scale.

Yet the crisis facing Britain is principally a crisis of society, not primarily a crisis of market or state. Ironically, both right and left have presided over the creation of a market state since the late 1970s, in which competition in the private sector based on free markets has co-existed alongside a largely authoritarian and dirigiste centralising state. This is captured by Andrew Gamble's compelling notion of the 'free economy and the strong state', in which the conditions for economic recovery are restored by liberating markets, while at the same time the authority of the centralized state is strengthened (Gamble, 1988).

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As a result, the civil domain in Britain, the public sphere where citizens come together to pursue common purposes and the good life, has been substantially weakened and is now greatly impoverished. While both the market and the state contribute to the fragmentation of the social order, the challenge cannot be reduced to either. The social malaise in Britain goes far wider and deeper, amounting to what Marquand (2004) describes as ‘the hollowing-out of citizenship’. We are witnessing a crisis of society, namely a failure to tackle what the late historian Tony Judt termed ‘the social question’ (Judt, 2010). If progressive politics - by which we mean not only the steadfast commitment to liberty, but to positive freedom based on an indissoluble belief in social and economic equality - is to mean anything in the next half-century, it has to advance the development and discourse of the strong society.

This article spells out the implications of that approach by assessing lessons learned during the previous 1997-2010 Labour government, and setting out a practical agenda for change over the next decade spanning the core themes of affiliative welfare, the new mutualism, local decentralisation of power and a civil economy. All of these ideas afford the opportunity to shift from the relatively narrow terrain of the ‘Big Society’, which is essentially concerned with displacing and shrinking the state, to cultivating the strong society based on reciprocity and an expansive form of civic virtue.

Understanding progressive history

Social democracy as a political movement has not always focused on the assertion of central state power. Early twentieth-century social democrats were strongly influenced by social liberals, including L.T. Hobhouse and T.H. Green. They were interested in the spontaneous evolution of the social order harnessing ‘the passion for improving mankind’ and refusing to limit the scope for progressive political action to government edict (Clarke, 1978). R. H. Tawney also set out a vision of human liberty and dignity in the context of a conception of the good life (Tawney, 1921). These thinkers in turn helped to

shape the ideas of leading post-war thinkers such as Harold Laski and G.D.H Cole. William Beveridge, himself the architect of the British post-war welfare state, warned in 1948 of the dangers of overly rigid, bureaucratic models of state delivery. Even Nye Bevan, one of Attlee’s most traditional socialist ministers, foresaw that an overly mechanistic and centralised National Health Service was in danger of becoming disconnected from local communities.

An explicit distinction can be drawn between ‘moral’ and ‘mechanical’ reform. While the mechanical reformer has an essentially pessimistic view of human nature, believing that change can only be brought about by imposing it top-down through a centralising and hierarchical state, moral reform rests on an optimistic view of the human condition. As Peter Clarke (1978) has suggested in *Liberals and Social Democrats*, social change can be achieved through a change of heart and a new consciousness, as the agent and sanction of a wider transformation within society.

In fact there is an enduring strain of moral reformist thought on the British left prepared to reflect critically on the role of the state, as well as emphasising the importance of a strong civic domain. Sadly, however, this heritage was gradually emasculated after 1945, particularly during periods when Labour has held governmental office. Both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were ruthless exponents of central state action after 1997, from reforming public services to mitigating the impact of the world economic crisis, as well as zealous deregulators of capital, labour and product markets. They espoused the rhetoric of pluralism and reform, devolving power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and strengthened the role of the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of public services. Investment in the public services, particularly health, education and policing expanded dramatically after 1997. But New Labour was notoriously reluctant to empower actors beyond the core of the central government machine. The market state was hard-wired into the DNA of New Labour itself.

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At the same time, there are strands of modern Conservatism which have been influenced by the critique of free markets that grew in earnest during the early 1990s. The counter-revolution against rationalist, abstract and universal free-market triumphalism that gathered pace after the fall of the Berlin Wall and proclaimed ‘the end of history’ grew stronger throughout the 1990s. It can be observed in David Selbourne’s writings on duty and in the ideas of John Gray on Russia, as well as in the growing interest in the family and civic institutions by politicians across the political divide. Increasingly the market economy came to be understood as the product of culture, history and law, reliant on social consent in the widest sense. This echoes the writings of Tawney in the first half of the twentieth century who insisted that the rules of the economic game are intimately bound up with ethical and moral considerations, and that the exercise of economic power is contingent on social obligation (Tawney, 1921).

There were two connected debates which lay at the heart of this question about the nature of the market. The first debate was about the degree to which free market institutions could survive the rapid adaptation of the global market economy, and whether the market would sweep away the traditional civic institutions that had traditionally underpinned it. Second, what was the relationship between politics and markets, what was the role of politics in sustaining markets, and what values should animate social policy in order to strengthen communal ties and civic responsibility?

These debates gave birth to what David Willetts has aptly termed ‘civic conservatism’ (Willetts, 1990). Since that time, however, the free-market critique has ebbed away and no longer has a central place in Conservative thought. The programme of the new Coalition Government appears to resort to the continuation of the market state: shrinking the size of government; relying on techniques drawn from the New Public Management theory in making the state more competitive; allowing more private and third-sector providers into the management of public services; and liberating the power of free enterprise as a means of reviving the British economy. The ‘Big Society’ agenda is concerned with building relationships of trust among appropriate actors drawn from civil society and devolving power beyond the central state. At the same time, financial efficiency and Value for Money (VFM) criteria remain the fundamental drivers of reform in the British state.

The problem restated

As a result, neither the left nor the right in British politics have been prepared to face up to the crisis of society, the fundamental importance of shared values and traditions in our common life which are being eroded and undermined, despite the rich ideological and intellectual heritage on which those from across the political spectrum might choose to draw. Both the Coalition Government and New Labour are

prepared to accept the hegemony of political and economic liberalism. As a result, the centre-left has lost what Maurice Glasman describes as the ‘mutual responsibility, commitment to place and neighbours and the centrality of relationships to a meaningful life’, and has allowed the Conservatives to ‘lay claim to the mutuals, co-operatives and local societies that built the labour movement’ (Glasman, 2010). Without limits, liberalism will supplant human instincts for a common life and the importance of cultivating habits of solidarity with ruthless, atavistic individualism.

The effect of this acquiescence to hegemonic liberalism has been to undermine politics and political representation itself and to erode trust in the polity, as demonstrated by the relatively low electoral turnout in the last four general elections, despite the evident closeness of the electoral contest (Stoker, 2004). The impact on voters is to narrow down the options and choices that might be available in giving the country new direction. That is why it is essential that the social question is returned to the centre of political debate. The health and vitality of civil society itself must be front and centre.

The market state and beyond

The critique of the market state involves not only a critique of free markets and centralising government, but how each reifies and promotes the other. In the UK, for example, a political and economic model was developed in the 1990s and early 2000s in which the fruits of growth in an internationalized economy strongly orientated towards finance would be invested in state-provided public services. The state would guarantee an adequate rate of return on its investment by imposing a regime of inspection, targets, audit and centralised managerial control. Markets in the private sector were left largely free and unregulated, while the central state entrenched its position as the dominant actor in public services. This is what Pearce and Maxwell (2005) have described elsewhere as ‘the Anglo-Social model’, and its limits are well documented (Hay, 2010).

From a centre-left perspective, however, it is important to focus on the critique of the centralising state, as social democrats have often neglected bureaucratic government failure at the expense of market failure. Two themes stand out as particularly resonant in this regard.

The first relates to the problem of moral hazard and the impact of particular human behaviours on the welfare state. Titmuss (1970) originally defined the welfare state as the expression of human altruism, but in truth, all civic institutions have to capture the dialectic between altruism and self-interest. This was historically anathema to the left who wanted the welfare system to be free of moral judgement, such had been the terrible cruelties and injustices of the Victorian poor law and the distinction between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. But welfare states cannot operate without a set of

assumptions about human nature and human behaviour, and how they are underpinned by the common good.

The welfare reforms introduced by New Labour after 1997 did not sufficiently appreciate that welfare states need to articulate and uphold core moral values. The contributory principle in social insurance, for example, was largely eroded in favour of means-testing for income maintenance and pensions, requiring tax credits and an overly complex restructuring of the benefits system. This meant that government was no longer seen to espouse the widely shared virtues of hard work and paying your way in the community, a core proposition of reciprocity in the just society, and this has eroded support for collective provision. According to the most recent Social Attitudes Survey, while in 1991 well over half (58%) thought the government should spend more money on benefits, this had halved to only a quarter (27%) by 2009. The public also have concerns about redistributing income from the better-off to the less well-off. Only one third (36%) think the state should do this, down from a half (51%) in 1989.

Likewise, despite the rhetoric of a society based on rights and responsibilities, public service provision was dramatically expanded after 1997 without strengthening the obligations incumbent on the recipients of public services. The regulation of treatment in the National Health Service, for example, took almost no account of the lifestyles of patients, despite the evidence that this has a dramatic impact on recovery rates. In schools, pupils and parents benefited from the considerable expansion of educational and youth provision, but faced almost no sanctions where they refused to comply with basic requirements for regular attendance and good behaviour. This was an unsustainable approach, weakening public confidence in collectively funded and provided public services during New Labour's thirteen years in office.

The second theme relates to government intervention as a whole. The left has traditionally refused to consider the unintended consequences of government action, the notion that state intervention might do more harm than good in addressing particular social and economic problems. But as Hirschman (1991) suggests, progressives would be on stronger ground if they were prepared to concede that state programmes can have unanticipated effects, facing up to the implications rather than allowing their opponents to do it for them. The danger is that, before long, government is seen as having the answer to every problem, an implausible and untenable assumption, but one that increasingly came to characterise New Labour's governing programme after 1997.

As a result, the Government developed strategies across a host of areas that involved intervening in complex areas of social life from diet and smoking cessation policies to relationship counselling programmes. The result was a complex smattering of different interventions which sometimes made

little sense to citizens and professionals on the ground, and created overlapping bureaucratic structures that were inefficient, as well as ineffective. Monitoring such programmes required a complex audit culture of targets and measurement, eroding trust in professional judgement and discretion (Marquand, 2004).

It is not that there is simply no case for intervention, but that it has to be based on clear guiding principles which actively consider the case for non-intervention, and are alive to the possibility of unintended consequences and policy failure. Under Labour the instinct was to pass a new law, to create a new institution rather than to mobilise civic action. Too little thinking was undertaken during the New Labour period between 1997 and 2010 about the appropriate scope and scale of state action: this was a serious omission. These central thematic assumptions now have to be revisited and revised.

What kind of people are we?

Politics is animated by deeper sentiments, not least fears about the direction our country is taking. For more than two decades, the discourse in many Western societies has been dominated by the question of whether we are collectively becoming less civil: more self-centred, more aggressive, more hostile, less willing to devote time to causes greater than ourselves. This raises the central question of whether our societies are facing a loss of virtue, as David Willetts has described it (Willetts, 1990). It co-exists with the claim that there has been an erosion of the civic bonds that bind people together in our societies, most famously elaborated in Robert Putnam's seminal work, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000). It is alleged that social fragmentation has shattered the shared values that help to bond and bridge communities, creating less mutual understanding between groups and making people increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbourhoods and formal democratic structures.

This is intimately related to the contested debate about immigration and the implications of living in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith society. It relates also to relationships between the generations and the theme of inter-generational justice. These issues are problematic as they tend to imply there was a post-war golden age after 1945 in which British society was unified and cohesive, but that this was eroded from the late 1970s by economic and social change. Nonetheless, the perceived decline in civility and collective identity is indisputable, and has to be related to the crisis of society, 'the social question', that is at the heart of this article.

Is British society broken?

This is linked to the question of whether Britain is in fact a 'broken' society. Prior to the 2010 election the Conservative

Party – heavily influenced by think-tanks, among them the Centre for Social Justice – developed a narrative that Britain was indeed ‘broken’. In particular, this drew attention to the unintended consequences of post-war social policy which, it was claimed, had undermined marriage and family stability at the expense of a myopic focus on the welfare of children. The weakening of the family was responsible for a host of social ills, including higher crime rates, teenage pregnancy, community fragmentation, an increased incidence of anti-social behaviour and so on.

The liberal commentariat was quick to refute such claims, arguing that the broken Britain narrative was empirically inaccurate and conceptually flawed. Crime rates, for example, have declined since the mid-1990s. The number of divorces that took place in England and Wales in 2007-8 was the lowest in a single year since 1976. While there are many more single-parent families in the UK than in 1945, this is a feature of all advanced industrialised societies. The Nordic countries, for example, have higher family dissolution rates, but no crisis of child deprivation and social disorder.

In truth, neither social conservatives nor social liberals have succeeded in capturing the essence of Britain’s social malaise, namely the crisis of society. That there is a profound sense of unease about what British society is, and has become, is undeniable. It is documented in reports such as the UNICEF inquiry into childhood, which purported to show that the UK is one of the hardest countries in the world to grow up in (UNICEF, 2009). Britain suffers from higher rates of mental illness than most other advanced industrial nations, according to cross-national surveys. The efforts to revive severely depressed and dislocated neighbourhoods over the last fifteen years have often faltered. Nonetheless, traditional civic institutions such as the married two-parent family will not easily be recreated, and we are in the midst of a revolution in the role and status of women in our society that should not be reversed. Any remedy to the crisis of British society will have to go with the grain of social change, not live in denial of it.

Reinventing platoons?

The need to reanimate the civic realm in Britain as a response to the crisis of society is the central, driving theme of this article. The solutions so far proposed by the centre-right have failed to convince. The ‘Big Society’ theme on which the Conservatives based their General Election programme appeared to connect only tenuously with the wider electorate. In office, the Coalition is struggling to translate the concept of the ‘Big Society’ into a practical programme for government. The creation of a ‘Behavioural Insight Team’ in the Cabinet office in Whitehall to advise on the ‘Big Society’ is particularly puzzling to those who envisaged the agenda was concerned with empowering actors outside the central government machine.

The sense of place and belonging that links people to the communities that they inhabit was authentically captured in Edmund Burke’s idea of the ‘little platoons’, as he put it: ‘To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections’ (Burke, 1982). But twentieth-century Conservative thought was based on a fundamental distinction between ‘civil’ and ‘enterprise’ associations (Kenny, 2010). Civil associations, according to the Conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott, were forms of collective endeavour that revolved around their intrinsic purpose, for example local sports clubs. On the other hand, ‘enterprise’ associations pursued externally-directed instrumental goals such as the delivery of local services.

While both forms of association would continue to exist in a free society, the distinction was significant for Oakeshott who attached particular importance to forms of organic and non-instrumental association, ‘which he regarded as an important bulwark against the inclination of the rationalistic social-engineering state to meddle too deeply in people’s lives’ (Kenny, 2010). Oakeshott was implicitly critical of the tendency of the twentieth-century state to act as a form of enterprise association, and would have pointed towards the tensions that arise when the voluntary and community sector is incorporated into the delivery of public services. Winning a contract to deliver a public service, for example, means giving up the ethos of civil association that harnesses the civic impulses of individuals and groups. There is little evidence that many contemporary Conservatives are yet prepared to confront these ideological tensions and ambiguities, and no serious debate is yet underway on the centre-left.

Moreover, the idea of collective interest which the ‘Big Society’ apparently espouses conflicts with the ethic of individualism that underpins the Coalition Government’s wider political approach, both to the reform of the state and economic policy after the financial crisis. According to David Cameron, communities will be governed by the ethic of reciprocity, while the state and markets are being re-engineered around incentives that privilege individualism, financialisation and self-interest. The two appear increasingly incompatible, making the ‘Big Society’ highly problematic as a serious guiding philosophy. Nevertheless, the vision of the ‘Big Society’ has enabled the Conservative Party to reach out to strands of progressive opinion that recoiled at much of New Labour’s dirigisme. The language of mutuality, solidarity, reciprocity, tradition and faith have been ransacked from Labour’s ideological and intellectual lexicon.

Better together?

The reality is that Britain has been forced to reinvigorate the civil sphere before, as a response to the great wave of industrialisation that transformed the social and economic

landscape over the course of the nineteenth century. As Geoffrey Pearson demonstrates in his work on moral and social change, *Hooligan: A history of respectable fears*, political debate at various junctures over the last century had become dominated by new social anxieties (Pearson, 1984). The sense was that Britain had entered a remorseless phase of moral decline. Yet many turn of the twentieth-century social reformers, among them T.H. Green, Hobson, Wallas and Hobhouse, understood the limitations of responding only to a crisis of market and state.

Although central and local government became more prominent in the course of the early twentieth century, the most imaginative response was to create new civic institutions that could strengthen and nurture local communities: friendly societies, mutuals, co-operatives, the Workers Educational Association (WEA), church schools, philanthropic associations and so on. The argument of this paper is that such an approach needs to be developed in the twenty-first century, covering four distinct areas: affiliative welfare; the new mutualism; local democratic empowerment; and a civil economy. This is not the place to set out a detailed policy prospectus across each area, but rather to sketch the most significant and compelling themes.

Affiliative welfare

The development of a more affiliative welfare state has to involve mechanisms that encourage reciprocity and mutuality in communities without requiring greater state regulation. This includes focusing on the importance of cultivating civic virtue, encouraging citizens to carry out worthwhile and socially constructive activities, rather than focusing purely on sanctioning ‘bad’ behaviour. The average UK citizen only spends 23 per cent of their waking hours engaged in formal paid work, so the time potentially available for other activities is much greater than is conventionally assumed (Halpern, 2009). This is the ‘hidden wealth of nations’ as Halpern terms it, the networks, knowledge, energy and skills that individuals can potentially provide in order to help others.

The role of affiliative welfare is particularly important in the provision of social care, given the realities of changing demography and the ageing society. It is inconceivable that the social care gap in Britain can be addressed through a wholly state-funded and provided programme akin to the NHS of 1948. Many older and vulnerable people rely on informal care of various kinds, but there are significant gaps in provision.

One solution is to create ‘time-banks’ where, in return for providing care and support to a neighbour or friend, individuals can receive benefits in kind that compensate for loss of time, thereby bringing many more people and forms of support into

the networks of social care provision. This principle could be extended into other areas such as childcare and mentoring school-age children in order to improve rates of educational attainment. Affiliative welfare complements the architecture of social insurance overseen by central government, drawing on rich sources of time and civic commitment that exist within local neighbourhoods and communities.

The New Mutualism

The new mutualism involves forms of public provision that are neither state nor market dependent, but which give a significant ownership stake to professionals and the public. The Conservatives with their rhetoric of the ‘Big Society’ appear to have displaced Labour as the party of ideas in this area. Their emphasis on empowering communities and decentralising power to the local level arguably reflects a co-option of traditional social democratic language, and an encroachment onto the ideological terrain of the centre-left.

Many now see mutualism as the left’s answer to the ‘Big Society’. On the one hand, mutualism may refer to an alternative form of economic organisation – common ownership – in which companies are owned as mutuals in order to give employees a greater stake in the organisations for which they work, ensuring a fairer division of the proceeds such as that encapsulated in the ‘John Lewis’ model. This accords with another aim of the centre-left to build a more balanced and resilient economy incorporating a plurality of ownership structures and forms of production. On the other hand, mutualism may be understood as social mutualism, a form of public service reform in which providers and users of public services acquire greater control over the running of services, where government-provided services may be supplemented, or supplanted, by local citizens’ organisations and groups.

The latter raises questions of equality similar to those posed by the debate about localism, namely whether equal access and quality of services can be maintained across all localities. This ought to be addressed by developing legally enforceable public service guarantees that underwrite equity of access for every citizen. The challenge for Labour is to develop a clear vision of what mutualism means for the left, and how it can be used to drive forward the social democratic project with renewed vigour.

Local Democratic Empowerment

There are two particular challenges in relation to local democratic empowerment that Labour has to address in the next few years. The first is the importance of local initiative and experimentation, not only in responding to the demands of local electorates but in forging new social democratic strategies and models. What is required in John Kay’s terms is a culture

of disciplined pluralism in which locally elected, democratically accountable authorities are able to innovate and experiment freely within a highly flexible regulatory framework, unencumbered by constant interference from ministers in Whitehall. This must include a far greater tolerance of 'failed experiments' and a willingness to accept risk-taking behaviours by local decision-makers and political actors.

The second challenge relates to the enduring issue of local authority finance in England and Wales. At its starkest, too much revenue in the UK is raised centrally and distributed locally, denuding local areas of proper democratic control and exacerbating the controlling tendencies of the centre. At the same time, the structure of Council Tax remains deeply regressive because those on lower incomes spend a larger proportion of their income on the tax than those on higher incomes. According to the New Policy Institute, the amount of Council Tax paid by people in the bottom fifth of the distribution is 5.5 per cent of their income, compared to 3.5 per cent for the middle fifth, and 2 per cent for the top fifth. Britain needs a progressive local taxation system which restores the autonomy of local government after decades of centralization in Whitehall and Westminster, as well as increasing the disposable income of poorer citizens.

As well as giving people more of an opportunity to get involved in local community and civic institutions as the hallmark of the good society, more needs to be done to spread power from Westminster and Whitehall through devolution and decentralisation. The ability of local government to set property and business tax rates in a given locality is a fundamental tenet of local democracy. At the same time, more nationally managed programmes such as health prevention and welfare-to-work ought to be devolved to the local level so that councils can rationalise service delivery, bringing services together on the ground.

Local authorities should also be encouraged to experiment with local neighbourhood and participatory budgeting. The latter proposal would move responsibility for funding local services closer to people in the neighbourhoods where they live. Participatory budgeting would give people far more of a stake in setting local priorities and making tough decisions about the allocation of resources across public provision. This would help to strengthen and entrench intrinsic support for the public realm in Britain.

A Civil Economy

Ideas for a civil economy form the final nexus of proposals that can help to recreate the forms of civic association that were a vital response to late nineteenth-century industrial capitalism. This includes helping to build local production chains in areas such as food and household services, as well as evolving systems for non-monetary distribution that make people less

reliant on the money they are able to earn through marketised transactions. It also requires greater pluralism in the economy, encouraging more small businesses and mutual organisations in the financial sector, for example, where building societies have been largely wiped out by financialisation over the last twenty years.

At the same time, the civil economy involves the mobilisation of citizens to demand a fair share in aspects of the financial system that will substantially affect their long-term futures, notably pension investment funds. Another element of the civil economy entails fair rewards for hard work, including the commitment to a living wage for all workers. The notion of a living wage is intended not simply to promote economic justice in the labour market, but to encourage autonomy and self-reliance among citizens. A fair, living wage would reduce the reliance of individuals and households on the forms of statutory protection afforded by the central state. Finally, a civil economy means strengthening financial participation, including placing a levy on the banking industry to fund credit unions and community finance initiatives, as well as a universal service obligation on all banks so that every citizen has a stake in the financial system. This is crucial for enhancing and embedding civic responsibilities across society and the economy.

Conclusion

In 'The Idea of Character in Victorian Political Thought', Stefan Collini quotes the following passage from one leading late nineteenth century socialist commentator (Collini, 1985):

'Today the key word in economics is "character"...the reason why individualist economists fear socialism is that they believe it will deteriorate character, and the reason why socialist economists seek socialism is their belief that under individualism character is deteriorating'.

Yet for much of the last century, character and virtue have been increasingly absent from political discourse, particularly in the post-war age, and today as the great contest between market and state rages unabated, the crisis of society is again in danger of being marginalised from view. This is precisely the moment, however, when the condition of our society ought to be at the forefront of public debate. We cannot turn the clock back, but we can revitalise and reanimate the civic domain, not least by capturing lost traditions and reclaiming our heritage. We can revive the 'habits of the heart' which Tocqueville argued make life worthwhile.

This is never easy; the philosopher John Gray is fond of citing Wittgenstein's remark that 'trying to repair a broken tradition is like a man trying to mend a broken spider's web with his bare hands' (Gray, 1996). On this view, things are simply getting worse and there is not much that can be done

about it. History refutes such a counsel of despair: we can respond to the crisis in our society and seek to repair it anew. If social democracy is to be a serious force for change in the future, it needs to be re-civilised, both programmatically and ideologically. The centre-left now has to decide whether it wants to engage in such a mission, or risk retreating to irrelevance in the eyes of those who inhabit living, breathing communities.

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Leaving a legacy to Civitas

What will life be like for the next generation of young people growing up in Britain? We hope they will live in the tolerant, free and orderly society that has long been regarded as characterising 'the British way of life'. We hope they will have a good education, experience the benefits of a flourishing economy, and become the bearers of our culture to the generation that follows theirs. However, none of this is inevitable. Civitas has worked to draw attention to some of the threats to this way of life, from within and without, and to offer solutions, both in terms of research and practical projects, like Civitas schools. Will you help us to continue this work in the future?

One of the most valuable things you can do to assist us is to make Civitas a beneficiary of your will. There are different ways of making a bequest.

Residuary: A residuary bequest is made from whatever is left over from your estate after all specific bequests and costs have been deducted. A residuary bequest can be made to one beneficiary or to a group of beneficiaries who share, either equally or in a specified proportion, in whatever remains in the estate after other charges and bequests have been paid.

Pecuniary: A pecuniary bequest bequeaths a specific sum of money, decided on when the will is drawn up. This is simple to administer, but of course inflation will reduce the value of the gift.

Specific: A specific bequest relates to an item such as a property or the proceeds of a life insurance policy.

If you have already made a will, it is very easy to add a bequest to Civitas by asking your solicitor to draw up a codicil. This will have to be signed and witnessed, and is a simple way to make small changes without writing a new will.

Legacies to charities do not incur inheritance tax (death duties). By leaving a legacy you could therefore significantly reduce the inheritance tax liability on your estate. This means that, for example, a £2,500 donation would only cost your estate £1,500.

Civitas is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, no. 04023541. It is also a registered charity no. 1085494.

Our address is:
55 Tufton Street,
London SW1P 3QL.

Our bank details are:
Account name: Civitas
Bank: Barclays Bank
Sort code: 20-65-82
Account number: 90652032

CIVITAS is an independent social policy think tank. It has no links to any political party and its research programme receives no state funding.

The aim of CIVITAS is to deepen public understanding of the legal, institutional and moral framework that makes a free and democratic society possible. Our object is to revive civil society, that network of voluntary social institutions, charities, mutual aid organisations and other collective bodies that lie between

the individual and the state. We believe that in social affairs the alternatives to government are not exhausted by commercial services alone.

We have established a reputation for work on social issues that transcends party boundaries. Our authors examine, analyse and report on views about the best way forward on particular issues. The object is to raise the quality of informed debate. For further information about CIVITAS and how you

could become a member, please email us at info@civitas.org.uk or call +44 (0)20 7799 6677.

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