

CRACKING THE CONSTITUTION MANIFESTO

From The Democratic Assembly at The World Transformed

At this year's The World Transformed (TWT) festival in Brighton, which ran in parallel with the Labour conference, we organised a Democratic Assembly to produce a manifesto in response to the desperate need to radically transform our ancient institutions and conventions so that our political system can deal with the complex and evolving challenges we currently face.

We asked participants to discuss collectively what's wrong with our existing system and together work out how we might build something different, more representative and effective in securing social justice. The question was framed in terms of identifying the challenges and solutions at the national, regional and local levels.

NATIONAL

Constitutional Powers

- Abolish the unelected House of Lords and replace it with a parliament of regions and nations
- Develop a written constitution decided by a citizens' constitutional assembly
- Establish a permanent standing citizens' assembly to deal with issues of national importance
- Eliminate the crown's constitutional authority, addressing the historic power invested in the monarchy
- Put in place new constitutional laws that would not allow a politician to become prime minister without being elected into that position

Electoral system

- Change the first-past-the-post electoral system that is clear and easy to use
- Make voter registration automatic

Influence and accountability

- Develop greater regulations to address the influence of lobbyists, increasing transparency and clarity about who holds agenda-setting power
- Increase regulation of the media, both traditional and social
- Democratise political parties, bringing in open selections and oversight on how parties select candidates — primaries to fund candidates.

Economy

- Democratise the economy, establishing workplace democracy and workers' councils

Engagement of young people

- Increase political education in schools to improve political literacy
- Reduce the voting age to 16

REGIONAL

Institutions and powers

- Establish regional citizens' assemblies across the country
- Along with regional assemblies, address the English question by establishing an English Assembly
- Regional boundaries need to be well defined with clarity on how devolved structures work. Currently there are different arrangements, which lead to a lack of understanding of how regional institutions operate
- Regional institutions must have devolved powers that allow them to deal with different challenges (for example, north-south, urban-rural)
- Establish regional investment banks that can support localised economic growth.

Disparities and Inequalities

- Tackle regional inequalities and disparities (for example, economic, health) that create social disadvantage. There is a lack of capacity and power among communities that impacts their political engagement
- Improve transport infrastructure to facilitate more participatory forms of political engagement
- Support regional and local journalism, in order to hold regional and local authorities to account
- Shift the regional power imbalance that gives some regions more powers and opportunities than others

LOCAL

Accountability

- Radically decentralising power with increased accountability and transparency over decision making.
- There is a lack of knowledge of what counsellors do, which leads to disengagement from the system .
- Councils need to be more diverse, they are often unrepresentative of the communities they serve
- Make local politics more engaging. Current institutions are boring and confusing, and there is little incentive to get involved in an overly bureaucratic system .

Services and Infrastructure

- Provide public money for community projects and increase community engagement in local budgets through participatory budgeting
- Set up more local cooperatives, just energy cooperatives
- Service users should be directly involved in shaping the design of public services: local champions with lived experience help shape public services
- Improve transport at the community level: fragmented transport services affect community connectivity
- Keep spending and procurement local through anchor institutions such as the Preston model.

What do we do now? - Mon 16th Dec 2019: Rich Mix, 35-47 Bethnal Green Rd, London, E1 6LA
In spite of defeat, this election has seen an explosion of energy and enthusiasm for a progressive radical future. Join Hilary Wainwright, Red Pepper and some very special guests to discuss the lessons learned from the 2019 election and what the Left can do next, both in and outside parliament. Booking/Details: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/what-do-we-do-now-tickets-85470381211>