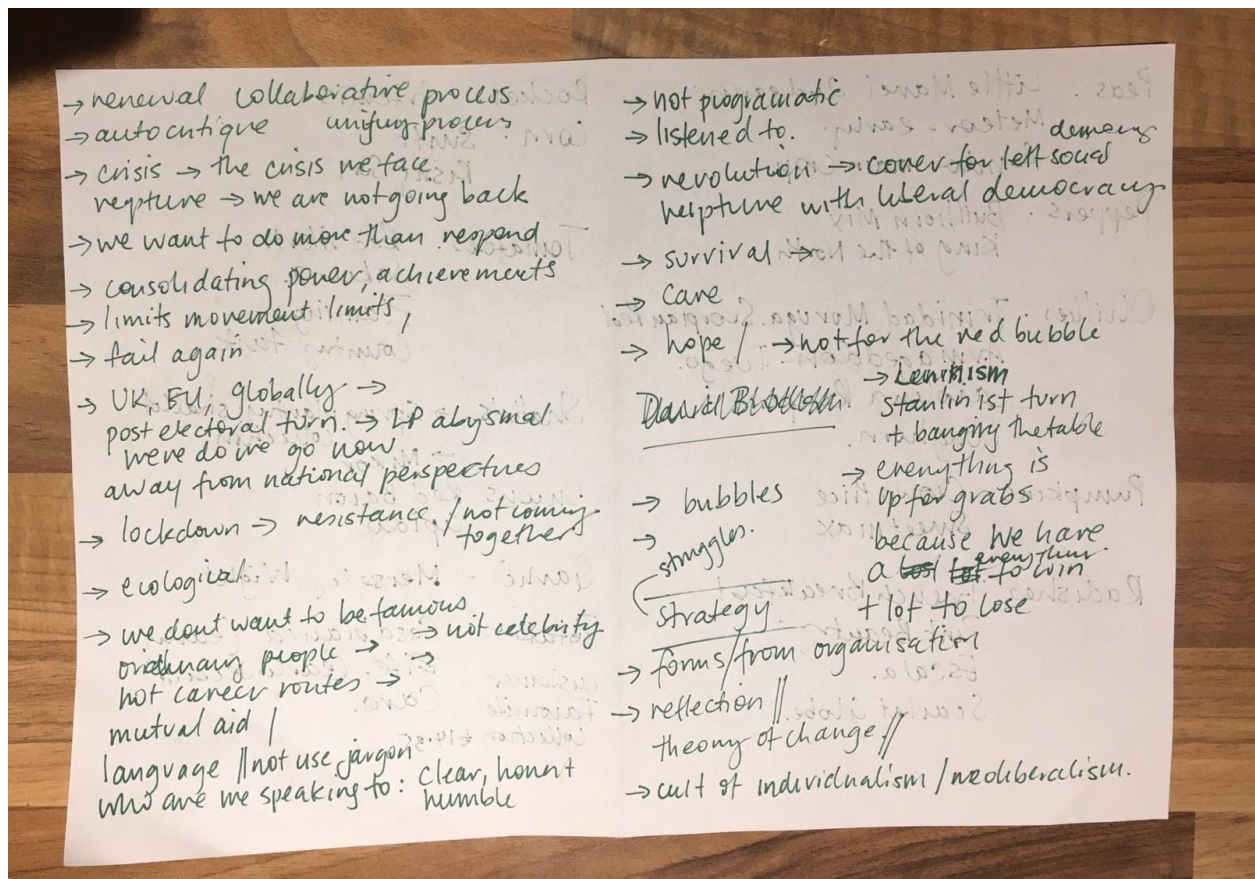




A HISTORY OF PLAN C

It was a difficult process to write this document; and we're fully aware that, written by just a couple of people, will inevitably miss a lot out, emphasise certain aspects and overlook others. There have been literally thousands of events, meetings, actions, demonstrations, and presentations that Plan C has put on. For that reason, this document should be seen as a living document that can be added to, modified and reshaped as more people contribute to it. It should be seen as a non-comprehensive first attempt to document Plan C's origins, histories and political ideas. As an accompaniment to this document, Matt Lee (Plan C Brighton) has prepared a more [illustrated timeline](#).



First pre-Plan C meeting held in a barn, somewhere in Hebden Bridge, 2011

In the beginning...

Plan C started as an inter-city discussion group after a number of founding members attended the '**Network X**' meeting in Manchester in January 2011. This was during the height of the student and anti-austerity movement that had burst onto the scene at Millbank in London a few months earlier (Nov 2010). At the time, thousands of students, youths and others took to the streets, occupying dozens of universities and demonstrating militant and autonomous forms of action that hadn't been seen since the 1990s' Poll Tax resistance. Many existing organisations and at times 'natural' representatives (the NUS, Labour Party, etc.) were sidelined due to their lack of support and completely useless approach, and in part because there was so much street-based action happening that the students themselves were defining. It was a new period, not confined by geography, a new 'global cycle of struggles,' that spread across the regions dealing with the fallout from the capitalist crisis of 2008; and brought thousands into a new movement to confront the present state of things.

Some of the important pre-history of Plan C to weave into the narrative is that a number of founding members initiated and contributed to the [Commoner](#) Convivium - an annual European camp that included comrades such as Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, Massimo DeAngleis, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Les L, and People's Global Action. These camps were held from 2008 to 2013 in Italy, France and London and were extremely influential in developing the politics of commoning, social reproduction and care. Other noteworthy key influences were encounters with activists in ACT UP Paris over a number of years. A number of founding members had been together in struggle for decades in Class War and Earth First in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the early years, Plan C was a reflective space, an infrastructure for breaking out of existing but insufficient forms of organisations. It offered members a 'community of reference' and space to develop new thoughts and thinking. At the time it was often expressed in tripartite ways: Plan C was a network of local groups of activists who were active in their workplaces and communities. Plan C was a national organisation that each member belongs to. Plan C was a perspective that members shared and tried to expand. After a number of years of twice-yearly national congresses, we decided in 2014 to become a membership organisation due to a lack of cohesion at the time. We set about developing - cautiously at times - membership processes, decision-making procedures, care practices and ways of relating with each other that were distinct and different from many approaches within the 'radical left'. We did not want to be an organisation with performative 'aims and principles', or to write a hundred different positions on various 'important' left issues - we wanted to avoid the politics that expressed itself as "Plan C's position on [insert tired old debate: Kronstadt, the two state solution, Hungary in 1956, was the Russian revolution this or that etc.]. We did not want to be just another product on the supermarket shelf of left ideas. We also did not set up ourselves as competitors or rivals to other left organisations; we wanted to break out of the norms of what it meant to be a militant; and we wanted to

speak directly to our conditions, in the now, and to reform the basis of revolutionary organisation.

Plan C was a gathering of many different political generations who still had maintained a sense of possibility; and as new comrades joined, it has also been remade and continues to be influenced by those that organise within it. Plan C has a special role in providing a space for many different generations to carry forward our hope and to inspire others.

From organising creches and care packages at demos, through the Fast Forward Festival and the Women's Strike, our comrades have put into practice ideas and dreams that Plan C has nurtured. From feminist antifascism through to renters' unions, transnational and base union organising and consciousness-raising groups we have supported and developed new modes of resistance to precarious lives and anxiety-producing climate crisis.

FAST FORWARD FESTIVAL: Development of our ideas

We have developed in practice and in theory ideas around social reproduction, the social strike, acid communism and the ideas of developing autonomous working class infrastructure. We have brought solidarity with the revolution in Rojava into the heart of our lives by providing practical solidarity. Looking back at our annual festival, Fast Forward (the name Fast Forward being more than a nod to discussions around Left Accelerationism at the time), we can see a political snapshot of where we were each year. We thought that would be a good place to point comrades in looking at how Plan C developed - especially please check out the links to the programme of events.

Fast Forward 2014

Demanding the Future?



Our first festival in 2014. The central theme of the event is “Demanding the Future?”. From the call out: “We’ll be inquiring into what it means, and what it could mean, to make demands. Who makes them, and who are they aimed at? Can demands help us build our counter-power? What do they achieve? Can demands – possible and impossible – move us beyond a simplistic revolution/reform debate? The format for these discussions will be small group based facilitated discussions which will allow for lots of participation and engagement.”

Plan C Manchester had later gone on to develop Demanding the Future and Luxury Communism projects. The festival had a mix of sessions, one of which was a main assembly on We are all Very Anxious, presented by the author of that text.

The “Future” and imagining a post-capitalist future was a fairly dominant subject, and at that time there was an influence of “Left Accerationist” thinking about imagining and reclaiming such a future, separating modernity from capitalism. Read the full callout [here](#).

Fast Forward 2015

Finding Leverage in the Social Factory



Around 170 people attended our second Festival in 2015. At the time Plan C had around 50 members and the festival was our first attempt to bring together a movement. You can see the full programme [here](#). The three main plenaries were about: "Our stories" - a history of movements featuring Big Flame, Class War, Earth First! And Reclaim the Streets (spanning 40 years); "On social strikes and directional demands", and "The electoral strategy" (at a time when Corbyn had just been elected Leader of the Labour Party a few days before the festival). The few days of the festival were split into five terrains: Housing, Ecology, Work and Health & Care Education.

Fast Forward 2017

Build Commons, Build Counter-power

FAST FORWARD FESTIVAL 2017



Fast Forward Festival 2017, "Build Commons, Build Counter-power"; for the full programme see [here](#). This was our biggest festival, with over 300 people attending. You can read the opening speech [here](#) to get a sense of it.

Fast Forward 2018

Building Autonomy: Concrete plans towards red horizons

We arrived at this festival having had a lot of internal fallouts around Corbynism; and the intention was to address some of what was lost with the electoral turn - an idea of reclaiming utopian thinking as a means to set out what we want. From the callout, "Our visions are dismissed as utopian because we dare to dream of a life unmediated by capital's domination. We are told we cannot afford empty utopian thinking, but utopia is something we should reclaim. We want to ask what we rarely have time to mention: what

will our cities and countryside look like in the world beyond capitalism and nation states? How will we care for, feed and house one another in a society defined by needs, abilities and desires rather than profit and accumulation? What will time mean when it ceases to be stolen from us?"



Fast Forward 2019



Social Strikes, Base building, Rojava, Women Strike Assembly, Radical Municipalism, Popular Mobilisation Antifascism...and more. See full programme [here](#)

Paraphrasing the opening presentation at Fast Forward 2017, 2014-2015 was one in which we – in typical Plan C style i.e. in a messy and uneven way – developed a number of shared political horizons – the social strike, the commons, social reproduction, directional demands, radical municipalism, transformative justice. In 2017 onwards it was very much about concretely putting into practice those ideas in mass forms of radical organising, discussing and reflecting on what strategic orientation needed to happen.



Fast Forward 2019 - International Women's Strike meeting

And also BAMN, the unofficial magazine of Plan C

We produced BAMN (By any means necessary) for two (and a half) issues. It was a 64 page, incredibly well designed magazine with great writing. It was said at the time that the target audience was for the "OK Cupid Marxists", a term that was coined by an observation around 2013/2014 of the prevalence of more politically explicit labels being used on random peoples' dating profiles.

You can read the PDFs of [issue one](#) and [issue two](#). We printed 3,000 copies of each issue and they were given out for free and distributed at every Fast Forward. The project didn't sustain itself due to burn out and conflicts around the purpose of the magazine, which was a real shame.



Plan C Shared Perspectives:

SOCIAL STRIKE

The idea of the [social strike as a strategic orientation](#) for Plan C came about during the first presentation of the idea at a national congress in London in 2015. The wider context of these discussions was that in June and November 2011, comrades had organised during the mass public sector strikes, involving 2 million workers, to “socialise the strike”. This aimed to link the unemployed, students, migrants and the new Spanish 15M movements that were also happening in the UK at the time. This experience led to the creation of **strike assemblies** in 10 major cities that managed to bring around 700 workers together to discuss coordination of action and demands during the strikes. The J30 and N30 branded interventions were also taken up by major unions and the TUC in promoting the day. In London two blockades were organised in the morning and there were banner drops in other cities. This was co-ordinated using a strike website with the locations of hundreds of pickets, crowd-sourced from branch secretaries and shop stewards. Some 200 people had emailed in with the picket data which were mapped on an interactive map.

The above experience was important because it mirrored a lot of the discussions that were happening around working class movements, the decline of strike action that was so central to that power in the 20th Century, and how people related to themselves, their work and their class identity (or lack of).

The main proposition of the "Social Strike" was that it wasn't enough to strike just at the point of production (the workplace) but to expand it further to areas of social reproduction. The historical decline of strike action - overseen by the large unions and the Labour Party (neither had particularly liked strikes), the sectoral division amongst workers, the repression of strike action by various layers of "Anti-Trade Union" legislation - meant a complete fuckup of any uses of the strike as a weapon in the hands of working people. We wanted to reclaim and re-conceptualize it - this was phrased by one comrade as meaning that we wanted to make strike actions look more like social movements, and social movements more like strike action.



Plan C / Transnational Social Strike Poster around Leeds Hospital

Since 2014, inspired by the Autonomist Marxist currents, Plan C has taken on tools like Workers' Inquiries as a process to learn from what is happening in the fields of production and reproduction, and in contemporary working class consciousness. This led us to participate in strikes and struggles in our workplaces and beyond: the UCU strikes, doctors' strikes, Deliveroo strikes, Rent Strikes.

Our Social Strike Cluster produced the [Rebel Roo workers' bulletin](#) in half a dozen cities in the UK. During this time we attended the Transnational Social Strike Platform meetings with

worker militants, migrant collectives and unions, funding Deliveroo workers and junior doctors to attend. This was at the onset of the new cycle of app-based worker organising. Four former members of Plan C that went on to found [Notes from Below](#), an organisation that has used workers' inquiries and bulletins as tools for intervention.

We developed the [Social Strike Game](#), leading to comrades from Leeds forming [Red Plenty Games](#): originally this was a way to engage Plan C in what some found a confusing proposition in the social strike. So instead of a reader that no one will read, we came up with the idea of a social strike strategy game. This was inspired by the rent strikers who originally developed the idea of gamifying their strategy.



Picket the Profiteers action in April 2016. Actions in around 30 cities and towns were called by Plan C targeting private healthcare providers. The actions involved striking junior doctors and midwives.

We struggled to go forwards with the social strike as a shared perspective in Plan C, though there were moments things were all falling into place. A proposal from Plan C Manchester to organise 'UK Uncut'-style decentralised actions targeting private health care companies became a day of action in 2016 called ["Picket the Profiteers"](#). We were taken aback by the different organisations that got on board, especially the number of Junior Doctors, Nurses and Midwives that got involved - some of whom had joined Plan C earlier in the year. We were invited to the Momentum National Exec meeting to consult on a possible mass scale

action to continue this struggle. Unfortunately the second Corbyn leadership election started and that activity fell away.

Later in that year, the Polish Women's strike happened, which really opened up the concept of the strike. This was not a strike called by any official union, but managed in a matter of weeks to mobilise hundreds of thousands of women to strike against the new abortion law. This connected with similar struggles in Ireland and Argentina, that kickstarted the global feminist wave. For us, the Women's Strike is a Social Strike and represents all the parts that we attempted to bring together during the past few years. The [Transnational Social Strike Platform](#) conference we organised in [London in Feb 2017](#), bringing together hundreds of workers, migrants and unions from across Europe; also by hosting a Women's Strike Assembly with participants from feminist collectives from 9 countries (including the Repeal the 8, Polish Women's Strike and Non una di menos) provided the start in developing the need for a process of establishing a Women's Strike Assembly in the UK.



London: 5,000 feminists of all genders descend on the Bank of England in 2019



Brighton: hundreds attend the March 8th Women's Strike Assembly demonstration

One of the outcomes of our discussions around social strikes was the Women's Strike Assemblies in the UK, bringing together industrial strategies around care and sex work within United Voices of the World Union, along with feminist consciousness raising practices and mass demonstrations.



Feminist meeting on March 8th organised by Thames Valley Plan C

RADICAL MUNICIPALISM AND DIRECTIONAL DEMANDS

This was the other pole within Plan C, albeit the one that really didn't get the support it deserved. A great [introductory text](#) was produced. The main proposition of the perspective was:

- That the 'municipal' – whether we're talking about towns, cities or city-regions – might be a fundamentally important scale at which, and through which, to generate progressive movements towards post-capitalism;

- That certain types of political demands might be crucial in organising powerful social movements, helping us both improve material conditions whilst orientating us towards new understandings of what is possible.

The ideas and project did hold a very impressive assembly at Fast Forward in 2017 with organisers from Barcelona en Comu and other Radical Municipal Projects from Croatia and Italy, and the ideas around embarking on such a strategy resonated with a lot of people outside of Plan C.

Consciousness Raising and Acid Communism

The term "Acid Communism" was coined by author and cultural theorist and Plan C London member Mark Fisher, as part of his attempts to envision a Left capable of breaking the "there is no alternative" ideology of Capitalist Realism by unleashing post-capitalist desires. Fisher was writing a book titled *Acid Communism* before his sudden death in 2017. With the aim of exploring Fisher's concept further and embedding it into their practice, some comrades in Plan C designed a [thematically related workshop](#). We started experimenting with [Consciousness Raising Groups](#) as a direct outcome of taking forward a lot of the ideas in [We Are Very Anxious](#) and the various presentations and discussions we were having with Mark at the time in the London group. This work has been continued inside and [outside of Plan C](#).

Base Building...and Left Infrastructure

Plan C, as individuals and city groups, were instrumental in building ACORN in the UK. In Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Brighton ACORN branches were formed; and to many comrades this was what we should be doing - building a base and common experience of working class empowerment. For example, Plan C Manchester decided on a [one year strategy to set-up and build ACORN Manchester](#). In London, the London Renters' Union (LRU) was the obvious choice. This wasn't about 'Plan C doing housing', but focusing on struggle... sometimes to people's frustration - we had always put struggles ahead of building our organisation.

Rojava Solidarity and Kurdish Freedom Movement

We were one of the only non-Kurdish organisations to join [World Kobane Day in 2014](#), beginning our journey of supporting the Kurdish Freedom Movement. This led to joint action and our involvement in organising a [12,000 strong mass demo](#) in March 2016 in London, for which we arranged coaches from different cities. We fundraised tens of thousands of pounds for direct material solidarity, including a [school bus, medical equipment and paramedics](#) to operate in the battlefields of Northern Syria against ISIS; we sent three comrades, including our beloved and lost comrade Josh Schoolar, to participate in civil defence work. We helped form the Kurdish Solidarity Network and participate actively in all [Kurdish Movement activity](#).



A school bus in Rojava, part-funded by the Rojava cluster

Beyond Europe: Anti-Authoritarian Platform Against Capitalism

Beyond Europe (BE) was formed in 2015 mainly by Plan C Manchester and Antiauthoritarian Movement (GR), Kollektiv 115, (CZ), Syspirosi Atakton (CY) and ...ums Ganze! (DE/AT). It is an exchange and understanding between anticapitalist groups, beyond our usual borders and limits.



Later the Birmingham group became more involved and the BE platform [called for No Border Camps in Greece](#), [Anti-G20 Protests in Hamburg](#) and other solidarity initiatives. The network is still going with monthly calls between groups and collectives across Europe. It offers a chance to reconnect with comrades across Europe, to exchange ideas and develop new struggles across borders.

Antifascism

Plan C has been involved in antifascist mobilisations and groups from the beginning. In various city groups we had a presence - from setting up Manchester AntiFascists and organising coaches to confront fascists in Blackpool in 2014, to dozens of other mobilisations from Dover to Leeds, London, Bristol and Manchester. The section on [our website](#) goes much further with articles detailing our involvement.



Blackpool: Plan C Manchester and friends blocking the fascist March for England in April 2015



London: Plan C London and AFN called the demonstration against the DFLA - July 2018

There was a real desire to confront the problems of 'anti-fascism', especially the machismo that often dominated what effective anti-fascism was said to be, as well as needing to confront the actual messages of the far-right which were increasing, using the 'rape scandals' in mainly Pakistani communities in towns in Yorkshire, as mobilising tools. From the general focus on trying to out-mobilise the far-right, the Women's Strike Assembly in London formed FAF (Feminist Anti-Fascist Assembly) and held meetings across the country to mobilise against the main far-right threat, the DFLA. You can read the [report of what happened here](#).

Organised and disciplined blocs on demonstrations



More than just looking cool for photos, the idea of collective, self-organised defense against both cops and fascists was vital in certain situations.

Plan C had discussed nationally on how we should change the atmosphere and 'look' when we were on the streets. Both trying to be inclusive and open (and joyous), whilst also being collective, disciplined and looking out for each other. This influenced anti-fascist street demonstrations, especially in London, and the idea of well stewarded blocs, highly organised and democratic, helped develop a collectivity on the streets that had been lacking before.



Other times, it was the fun and joy of being rowdy in the streets in what were often very non-joyous A-to-B marches.

And finally, the Frustrations...

Schisms and splits

Plan C was a space to find comrades: 300 joined as members, and many thousands passed through the spaces, mobilisations and ideas that came from it. Plan C opened up freedom to experiment with ideas, to work them out and influence others. For some, Plan C should have become a new communist party and adopt a Leninist role as an organisation to intervene in and direct struggles. Others wanted to expand the space because it provided exactly the open field of debate and idea formulation they valued. In 2017, Plan C suffered a series of splits around Corbynism and the flurry of enthusiasm for the Labour Party. Though we facilitated [publishing diverse texts on our website](#) on how best we should involve (or not) ourselves, the toll of disagreements and bitterness, caused a sizable minority of Plan C members to disengage and eventually leave. We lost some long-term comrades in the process.

Our national congresses went from being an amazing and inspirational space to being saturated with bureaucratic procedures, tensions and a lack of clear purpose. It felt that where nationally Plan C had been very cohesive, we had a mismatch of different local realities, an inability to scale up and provide a clear, unifying political intervention; and lacked the means to develop one in a way that could answer the central questions.

Despite our disagreements (and to be honest, these were disagreements on what to do with the Labour Party not our desires to go beyond capitalism), many that remained in Plan C did see acting within Corbyn's Labour Party as a crucial way to engage with it, whilst recognising its limitations. Precisely because of this, we produced a late attempt in August 2019 for a [Plan B+ Cluster](#), which led to holding State of Emergency Assemblies in London, Bristol and Leeds.

We won't attempt to lay out all the reasons we were frustrated with Plan C. There was a practice of posting resignation letters by comrades who had had enough. We will leave it in their words what the issues were, so you can read [10 resignation letters](#) here. There is also the report in the Refoundation set of documents that details some of the issues that people want to change, and no doubt a lot of this will come out during our discussions,

But just to say, there was no monopoly on critiques, there was no monopoly on the frustrations of such a huge task; we all shared that feeling. Regardless of where we all are now, we are always faced with the same questions: What and how is it to be done? How do we change things in our society? How in this mess and chaos do we hope to create something more powerful than what we are faced with - something that is more than a sum of its parts, that does not rest on singular human effort, but the creation of forms of social life that are insubordinate to the totality of capital and the state? How do we construct something together, despite all our personal dramas and hells, despite struggles that act in cruel, individualised and isolating ways? Despite a lot of barriers, we showed it's possible to create movements, to bring ideas together into practical action and build, care and support ourselves as militants.

AL / CAM on behalf the RSG