

**TEN THESES FOR THE PROGRESSIVE FORCES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
EMERGENCE OF P2P AND COMMONS DYNAMICS AND THE END-GAME OF
CLASSIC NEOLIBERALISM**

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Abstract

The emergence of radical right populism shows the end game of classic neoliberalism is in sight, and a new regime is in preparation. In this context, we need to know what the forces are that propel the victories of the Trump movement, and what progressive forces can do, especially in the context of the emergence of peer to peer and commons dynamics. The following is a short summary of such positioning, in the form of ten theses.

Key words: P2P. Commons. Neoliberalism. Trump.

***DEZ TESES PARA AS FORÇAS PROGRESSISTAS NO CONTEXTO DE
EMERGÊNCIA DO P2P E DAS DINÂMICAS DOS COMMONS E DO FIM DE JOGO
DO NEOLIBERALISMO CLÁSSICO***

Resumo

A emergência do populismo radical de direita mostra o fim de jogo do Neoliberalismo clássico e a preparação de um novo regime. Neste contexto precisamos entender quais as forças que elegeram Trump e os que as forças progressistas podem fazer, especialmente no contexto de emergência da produção colaborativa e das dinâmicas dos Commons. Este artigo é um pequeno sumário destas questões, sob a formas de dez teses.

Palavras-chave: P2P. Commons. Neoliberalismo. Trump.

1 Introduction

Michel Bauwens: The victory of Trump signifies the end of an era of neoliberal globalization in which the Western working and middle classes accepted the stagnation and decline due to the inevitable de-industrialization that was a unavoidable result of the neoliberal strategy. The tragedy, of course, is that the reaction takes the shape of a return to forms of national



protectionism that are looking at the past, and at the expense of other minorities. Can we find new forms of organizing production that are compatible with social justice and ecological sustainability? Can we retain and expand forms of trans-national cooperation? Our answer is that it is, indeed, possible to envisage such a re-orientation and transition, and that it will involve a crucial role for the commons. Read on to see how the Trump moment can re-invigorate new strategies for human emancipation.

2 Text

1. The presidential victory and ongoing support for Donald Trump in the USA reflects the crisis of neoliberal globalization and the underlying dynamics of capitalism.

These dynamics include not only the environmental externalities, such as peak resources and climate change, but also the social externalities, essentially the impoverishment of the western working and middle classes and how, for example, this affects attitudes towards migration. Note also that peak resource calculations are not in contradiction with the current oil glut, but paradoxically part of it (see Bio-Physical Triggers of Political Violence).

2. The following struggle therefore emerges. Pro-neoliberal forces seek to maintain the benefits of Empire at the cost of both the internal population and the more nationally bound industries. Trump-backing forces accept that they can no longer dominate Empire, and are ready to endanger it to save the USA as a nation-state. Wall Street and the fossil fuel industry align with Trump in a desperate attempt to maintain profits by slashing social and environmental costs. Other right-wing populist forces have broadly similar designs for their own national realities. Hence, the support for Trump from the more nationally oriented business leaders and the energy sector-fearing climate change costs and regulations. The idea is to retreat back to the nation-state, only accept trade that poses no threat to national capital, and repatriate trillions of dollars stashed abroad through the “imperial” multinationals. This explains the neoliberal elite opposition to Trump.

3. The class compromise of neoliberalism has been gradually rendered unworkable. This compromise included acceptance of the cultural aspects and desires expressed by the 1968 uprising (and thus, of cultural, gender and other minority rights), and a relative alliance with

the postmodern, post labor left that supported it (while actively de-industrializing to the detriment of western industrial labor). “Neoliberal economics preferences’ allied to ‘liberalized cultural preferences’, if you like. Indeed, it is important to understand that just as the labor left institutions became coopted in the New Deal/ Welfare state model, so also did much of the pro-rights left represented by identity politics (see the Boltanski/Chiapello book for an inquiry into this). The Trump forces in contrast vow alignment with the white working class and those sharing certain laborist or productivist values, at the cost of Otherization. It is mobilizing, and creating a convergent enemy: the amalgam of neoliberal business elite and the cultural elite.

Hence the alignment between pro-neoliberal politics and the cultural left. This was represented by the Clinton-Obama coalitions in the US, while social democrats elsewhere also shifted from industrial labor to more privileged “creative” workers, managing the neoliberal retrenchment of welfare provisions and effectively orphaning industrial workers, leaving them ripe for manipulation by right-wing populism.

4. The focus on cultural rights leaves the cultural left understandably opposed to the Otherization and overt racism/genderism of the Trump coalition. They largely feel obliged to offer some degree of support to the neoliberal regime which granted cultural rights and reforms. Given the undermining of the neoliberal compromise, however, this seems a mistake. Instead, it will be necessary to realign with the needs and interests of industrial labor, and to build grand coalitions that no longer sacrifice blue-collar workers’ interests on the altar of neoliberal globalization. As we will see below, we believe the commons is that new glue.

5. The Sanders forces thus more realistically represent those sectors of the left focused on re-creating synergy between progressive labor and the cultural left, intent on building a new coalition. Hence the use of moderate language by Sanders in an effort to maintain bonds with those parts of labor that voted for Trump. However, this means maintaining a broad orientation towards restoring New Deal principles and support for Keynesian politics and, crucially, the same orientation towards re-industrialization and the restoration of the nation-state. Both right- and left populism, despite their great and significant differences, share the nostalgia for a strong nation-state, but lack any vision of going ‘beyond’ it. This orientation

also continues to posit contradictions between the workers in different nation-states. The proposed protectionist re-nationalizations and re-industrializations do not sufficiently address global issues and the need for transnational cooperation in tackling them. A return to nation-state protectionism does not adequately address the needs for transnational solidarities between commoners the world over.

6. Both coalitions, therefore, have their contradictions. For example, Trump needs the support of both labor and their unions, but also of the no-tax Republicans. This means he must cut the budget while simultaneously needing trillions for infrastructural investment. He needs to retreat from Empire, but also needs to pacify the defense establishment. He needs Big Oil, but at the cost of environmental disruption. He wants to increase profitability at the cost of social and environmental disruption, and at the risk of eventually alienating his labor base to appease his industrial supporters. The radical right may talk ‘labor’, but their main base remains the angry declining middle classes who are eager to slash their costs of production.

7. The Obama and Sanders coalitions have their own contradictions. They remain stuck between a rock and a hard place, between a disintegrating neoliberal globalization and a nation-state reality that’s just impossible to restore.

8. Thus, the emerging p2p/commons approach has a crucial role to play in making the Sanders coalition more realistic, by offering new strategies for re-industrialization which are not based on going back to the old models, but on going forward towards a cosmo-local model of production, ‘where everything light is global, and everything heavy is local’. Advocating for this subsidiarity of material production, combining deep global cooperation with deep mutualization of infrastructures is the only recipe for global re-industrialization on an ecological footing, with the re-creation of massive employment opportunities and livelihoods. This model offers solutions not only for the US and European workers, but for populations worldwide. This requires that commoners make their own turn towards focusing more broadly, not only on knowledge workers but on all workers and the rest of the population, through offering perspectives for sustainable livelihoods, centered around the cities and their bioregional contexts. Trans-national institutions that can supplement the likely failings of both corporate neo-globalization AND neo-statist restorations will also be need to be created, based on the current emergence of global productive communities, global ethical

entrepreneurial coalitions and the commodification of public services in support of it.

9. The big issue for the commons movement and emergence is the immaturity of a lot of these potential solutions, which are far from being embraced by sufficient critical masses. Thus, the commons is as dependent on aligning with the progressive nation-state restorers, as the other way around. Such huge transitions are impossible to carry out well without the support of state institutions (what we call the Partner State approach). Hence, one of the strategic priorities is a dialogue between the labor left (a la Sanders and Corbyn), the cultural rights movements, and the emerging commons movement along with regenerative business orientations and sustainability coalitions. Indeed, the only interesting coalition with potential elite forces are those that fully support ecological transitions and 'fair deals' with the larger population on the fruits of labor and the commons. However, there are numerous grassroots generative and 'entre-donneurial' forces that could be aligned with the commons as its livelihood branch.

10. In the meantime, as Arthur Brock and others have suggested, we must accelerate construction of the prefigurative commons economy, with its respect for the sharing of knowledge (free movements), just distribution of the social surplus (solidarity economy), and ecologically viable production for human need (political ecology). This is the micro-coalition of the commons, which undergirds our participation in the larger social and political mobilizations now unfolding.

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