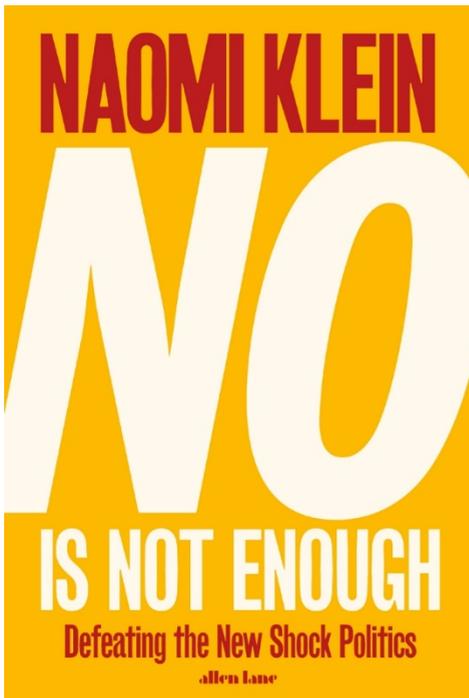


NO IS NOT ENOUGH: DEFEATING THE NEW SHOCK POLITICS

Review by Stephen McCloskey

Klein, Naomi (2017) *No Is Not Enough: Defeating the New Shock Politics*, London: Allen Lane.



Naomi Klein has served the development sector well with sharp insights and groundbreaking analysis that has helped us better understand how today's increasingly deregulated, corporate-driven global economy is ploughing the world toward record levels of social and economic inequality. Earlier this year, Oxfam reported that eight billionaires own as much wealth as the bottom half of humanity (2017) and, last year, Credit Suisse estimated that the 'the wealthiest top 10 percent own 89 percent of all global assets' (2016). So, we are witnessing grotesque levels of wealth concentration in

fewer hands which makes the election of a celebrity billionaire vulgarian as president of the United States look less like an aberration and more like an inevitability. Indeed, one of the strongest assets of this book is its clear-eyed analysis of how Trump came to be elected and Klein spares no criticism of the soft and hard left in the United States (US).

Klein applies the tested methodologies employed in her two most famous books, *No Logo: Taking aim at the brand bullies* (2000) and *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) to the election and presidency of Donald Trump. In *No Logo*, she charted how big corporations like Nike and Apple started to think of themselves as manufacturers of brands rather than products. The manufacturing side of their operations was increasingly out-sourced along a supply chain that minimised labour costs and prioritised branding, creating a sense of ‘tribal identity’ (23). Klein suggests that:

“Trump built an empire by following this formula precisely... and then as a candidate he figured out how to profit from the rage and despair it left behind in communities that used to do the kind of well-paid manufacturing that companies like this long ago abandoned. It’s quite a con” (27).

In *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein demonstrated how governments, often in collusion with corporations, used ‘crisis to ram through policies that would never have been feasible in normal times’ (133). She uses familiar examples such as Chile in the 1970s following the overthrow of Socialist president Salvador Allende by a US-backed coup led by General Augusto Pinochet. Chile became the ‘laboratory of neoliberalism’ and tested many of its key ingredients: rapid privatisation of public services, trenchant cuts to government spending, liberalised trade and a general deference to the market in ensuring wider societal prosperity. An added caveat that helped the medicine go down was the implementation of these ‘reforms’ by authoritarian regimes and few enforced the tenets of neoliberalism with as much brutality as Pinochet. Other examples of shocks used as cover to force through savage neoliberal cuts and resource grabs include New Orleans following the flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the Iraq war of 2003.

The Trump presidency, suggests Klein, implements a combination of shock tactics used to create permanent chaos that masks the

administration's real aims of deconstructing the 'regulatory state', attacking welfare and state supports, unleashing a 'fossil fuel frenzy' and waging a 'civilizational war against immigrants' (5-6). And, yet another key objective of the presidency is to further the interests of the Trump dynasty. 'The presidency is in fact the crowning extension of the Trump brand' (5), Klein argues, adding that 'Every single minute he is president, his brand value and the value of his ongoing business is increasing' (35). Trump is yet another of the 'hollow brands' that 'sell everything' and 'own next to nothing' (59). Yet we know that Trump won the presidency 'on a campaign that railed ceaselessly against the loss of manufacturing jobs – the same kind of jobs he has outsourced at virtually every opportunity' (31). The question is why did Trump resonate with enough of the electorate to win the White House despite coming from the one percent, despite profiting from an empty brand that heaped more misery on the manufacturing class, despite his blatant racism on the campaign trail and a conveyor belt of allegations of sexist behaviour?

Why Trump?

Perhaps the strongest asset of *No Is Not Enough* is its refusal to dwell on the here and now of Trump in power and to reflect upon how he got elected. There are several factors highlighted that reflect a deep malaise in US democracy over the past forty years, including the last eight under Barack Obama. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash Obama, Klein argues, 'had a clear democratic mandate to do more than tinker with the shattered economy' (210). Public anger with the banks and the cost of the public bailout meant that the 'idea of taking on Wall Street was incredibly popular' (210-11). Obama had 'a virtual blank check to design a stimulus package' (212) and introduce enforceable regulation that would prevent a similar disaster in the future. Instead, the banks were gifted with trillions in public money, the culprits behind the collapse escaped accountability and the cost of the bailout fell on the most vulnerable (219). We should remember, too, that it was another Democrat president, Bill Clinton, who paved the way for the crash by deregulating the banks in repealing the Glass-Steagall Act (1933),

legislation that prevented the same financial institutions from combining investment, commercial and insurance activities.

Klein doesn't dwell too long on Obama's foreign policy but could have said that The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (2017) found that 'there were ten times more air strikes in the covert war on terror during President Barack Obama's presidency than under his predecessor, George W. Bush'. There was a total of 563 strikes, largely by drones, during Obama's two terms with between 384 and 807 civilians killed. Klein could also have mentioned that it was on Obama's watch that the Pentagon rearmed Israel during its bombardment of Gaza in 2014 which resulted in more than 2,000 Palestinian deaths (Stewart, 2014). Two years later, Obama signed a record \$38 billion arms deal with Israel which he said will 'make a significant contribution to Israel's security in what remains a dangerous neighbourhood' (*Aljazeera*, 2016). If this seems a little harsh on Obama who, after all, wasn't immersed in personal scandal, could deliver a good speech and had some success with health insurance, then it's because a warm haze of nostalgia is likely to surround his administration the more we become exposed to the madness of Trumpism. As Naomi Klein suggests the 'future cannot simply be where we were before Trump came along (aka the world that gave us Trump)' (220), we need more progressive and radical measures equal to the mess that Trump leaves behind.

Klein is scathing of the failings of Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy suggesting that her:

"failure was not one of messaging but of track record. Specifically, it was the stupid economics of neoliberalism, fully embraced by her, her husband and her party's establishment that left Clinton without a credible offer to make to those white workers who had voted for Obama (twice) and decided this time to vote Trump" (90-91).

Clinton is accused of focusing on identity politics but ignoring the trenchant inequalities created by neoliberalism whereas Bernie Sanders, whom Klein

endorsed, ‘thought that economics could paper over the unique needs and histories of Black people, women and other traditionally marginalized groups’ (124).

What won it for Trump, she argues, was that for white males in particular, ‘losses in social status were layered on top of losses in basic economic security’ (87). She suggests that Trump’s core constituency was not just blue-collar, white males but included solidly middle-class Americans in the \$50,000 – 200,000 a year bracket whose incomes have stagnated and consequently feel less secure. While Clinton was perceived as a Washington insider and a third term for Obama, Trump positioned himself as an outsider and anti-establishment figure despite his wealth who was going to ‘drain the political swamp’.

Trump in power

Trump has managed to surpass our worst expectations for his administration, many of which are not captured by Klein’s book because it was rushed into print in the summer. The US has withdrawn from the Paris Climate Accord, Trump has hardly covered himself in glory in his response to the natural disasters in Miami, Texas and Puerto Rico, and, of course we’ve had a ratcheting up of tensions with North Korea with the spectre of possible nuclear war. Trump has also attempted to introduce travel bans (*Guardian*, 2017) to the US from six Muslim majority countries - Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Libya – though not Saudi Arabia (a strong Trump ally) which Amnesty International (2017) has accused of committing ‘serious violations of international law, including war crimes, in Yemen’.

Trump the president has surrounded himself with fossil fuel and banking corporates including secretary of state Rex Tillerson (ExxonMobil) and five former Goldman Sachs executives (149). Klein argues that ‘Trump’s collusion with the fossil fuel sector is the ‘conspiracy hiding in plain sight’ (73) and before visitor logs to the president were withheld Trump met with 190 corporate executives in a three-month period. Small wonder,

then, that the White House is in denial over climate change. As Klein suggests: ‘To admit that the climate crisis is real is to admit the end of the neoliberal project’ (81) and that would rip up the ideological rug from under the Trump administration.

Another factor offered for the election of Trump is the concept of ‘Philanthrocapitalism’; the idea that philanthropic capitalists / celebrities such as Bob Geldof, Bono, Bill Gates and Bill Clinton have the capacity to cure the world’s ills. We have a multitude of foundations created by these celebrities to receive donations and disburse grants tackling the problems of the world’s poor. The idea that wealth attaches itself to wisdom and the capacity to solve problems on a global scale probably contributed to Trump’s electoral success. As Klein puts it:

“Trump’s assertion that he knows how to fix America because he’s rich is nothing more than the uncouth, vulgar echo of a dangerous idea we have been hearing for years; that Bill Gates can fix Africa. Or that Richard Branson and Michael Bloomberg can solve climate change” (118-119).

Development educators are already on their guard against charity-driven approaches to development which perpetuate the idea that public donations alone will address inequalities within and between countries. The charity versus social justice approach to development is taken up in this issue of *Policy & Practice* by Jen Simpson (2017) and suggests that the charity-based approach imposes ‘limitations to learning’ about the root causes of poverty. Unfortunately, philanthrocapitalism appears to have some traction in the US among Trump supporters.

Trump and Development Education

Development educators know that ‘no’ is never enough and, as Klein has realised, ‘Just saying no to shock tactics is often not enough to stop them’ (209). Development education is predicated on analysis, reflection, discussion and action (praxis) which means that action for action’s sake is

ineffective and talking without action is just verbalism (Freire, 1970). Naomi Klein highlights the shortcomings of the 1990s global movement against neoliberalism and corporate power which she said failed to translate ‘street power into more policy victories’ (108). She argues that the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington and the so-called war on terror, ‘wiped our movement off the map in North America and Europe’ (111). So her book is a warning that something similar may be attempted by Trump in the event of a similar terrorist attack on the US or a foreign war. Trump may use such an event to clamp down on dissent to his presidency which demands more resilient and joined-up campaigning movements rather than the more siloed, single-issue approach often adopted by civil society. Silos are too easy to side-track which makes more integrated movements with deeper manifestos more necessary. *No Is Not Enough* ends with the Leap Manifesto, a ‘call for a Canada based on caring for the earth and one another’. It is a multi-pronged manifesto prepared ahead of the 2017 Canadian general election used as a basis for lobbying candidates and getting more radical ideas into political discourse.

The Leap Manifesto sounds like a large scale development education project as it involved multiple actors in Canadian civil society, lots of discussion on the issues that made (and didn’t make) the manifesto, and a determined effort to get the manifesto into the political mainstream. The development education sector in Ireland has started to debate how we should respond to the global rise in popular nationalism manifested in Brexit and the election of Donald Trump (McCloskey, 2017; Ubuntu Network, 2017). These efforts need to be sustained and elevated to the level of policy discourse to ensure that our education system is equal to the challenges posed by the far right.

No Is Not Enough feels like a more transient contribution to Naomi Klein’s canon compared to the lasting imprints made by *The Shock Doctrine* and *No Logo*. By accelerating publication of the book seven months into the Trump presidency it has already been overtaken by events so it operates best in its reflective mode on how we got here rather than on what we do next. It

draws on the best of her work including her last book on climate change, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate* (2014), and should provoke rich discussion on the left on how to mobilise most effectively against the rise of popular nationalism.

Of course, the biggest threat to the Trump presidency lies within: ‘The potential for corruption is dizzying’ (39). Trump’s juggling of the White House with his own brand may be his ultimate undoing. As Klein suggests: ‘Trump’s animating life force – the quest for money – may actually make him more vulnerable than any president before’ (43). But Trump alone should not be our sole preoccupation. The disaster left by his presidency and corporate acolytes will require bold, radical politics not seen in the US since Roosevelt’s New Deal. Radical education needs to be part of the broad push for electoral acceptance of alternatives to neoliberalism and this book will greatly contribute to that effort.

References

Aljazeera (2016) ‘US and Israel sign record \$38bn military aid deal’, 15 September, available: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/israel-sign-record-38bn-military-aid-deal-160914135203821.html> (accessed 2 October 2017).

Amnesty International (2017) ‘Saudi Arabia 2016-17’, available: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/saudi-arabia/report-saudi-arabia/> (accessed 2 October 2017).

Credit Suisse (2016) *The Global Wealth Report 2016*, available: <https://www.credit-suisse.com/corporate/en/articles/news-and-expertise/the-global-wealth-report-2016-201611.html> (accessed 25 September 2017).

Freire, P (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books.

Guardian (2017) ‘Trump travel ban: new order targeting six Muslim-majority countries signed’, 6 March, available: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/mar/06/new-trump-travel-ban-muslim-majority-countries-refugees> (accessed 2 October 2017).

Klein, N (2000) *No Logo: Taking aim at the brand bullies*, New York: Picador.

Klein, N (2007) *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, London: Allen Lane.

Klein, N (2014) *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

McCloskey, S (2017) 'Brexit, Trump and Development Education', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 24, Spring, pp. 159-168, available: <https://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue/issue-24/brexit-trump-and-development-education> (accessed 2 October 2017).

Oxfam (2017) 'Just 8 men own same wealth as half the world', 16 January, available: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2017-01-16/just-8-men-own-same-wealth-half-world> (accessed 25 September 2017).

Simpson, J (2017) "'Learning to Unlearn" the Charity Mentality within Schools', *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 25, Autumn, pp. 88-108.

Stewart, P (2014) 'U.S. defends supplying Israel ammunition during Gaza conflict', *Reuters*, 31 July, available: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-gaza-usa-pentagon/u-s-defends-supplying-israel-ammunition-during-gaza-conflict-idUSKBN0G022120140731> (accessed 2 October 2017).

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (2017) 'Obama's Covert Drone War in Numbers: Ten times more strikes than Bush', available: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2017-01-17/obamas-covert-drone-war-in-numbers-ten-times-more-strikes-than-bush> (accessed 2 October 2017).

Ubuntu Network (2017) 'Curriculum, Policy and Advocacy: The increasing need for Development Education: a one day conference', 26 May, available: <http://www.ubuntu.ie/our-work/events.html> (accessed 2 October 2017).

Stephen McCloskey is Director of the Centre for Global Education and editor of *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*.