

# Reimagining Politics after the Election of Trump: Introduction by the Editor

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It was a future many did not want to believe was even possible. A second rate real estate billionaire with a slew of mediocre business ventures, turned bawdy reality TV star, turned political agent - openly racist, sexist and authoritarian – it couldn't be. As he mocked his political opponents (Jeb Bush as “low energy” etc.) like a schoolyard bully, the farcical nature of the gaffes (free press coverage?) told us that he would destroy his own chances through careless and inflammatory comments and actions.

Yet there was another side to this, it was also that the thought of Trump as president was too painful; we (or at least I) did not want to believe that it was even possible. While Nate Silver and friends told us we were safe and let us sleep at night, we clung to Hillary Clinton as the last bastion of decency, a glimmer of hope against a rising tide of bigotry. Never mind that she was completely wedded to the neoliberal machine. We knew the litany of contradictions. But she wouldn't deny climate change, and would follow the landmark Paris Accord. She would be a symbol of power and confidence for women – a blow against patriarchy. She would have some commitment to the disadvantaged. Yes there were contradictions, but really anything but him!

As the reality of Trump's victory broke upon us, we awoke to the dystopia we dreaded. Somehow, either intellectually, emotionally or unconsciously, we knew the rules of the game had fundamentally changed. Was it social media, the micro-second cycle of twitter, like piranha feasting on the carcass of slayed opponents? Or fake news? Was it geo-political - the Russians, Putin plus the hackers? Was it that a large part of the county was actually racist (and sexist)? Was it that fear drives people into the arms of demagogues? Disorientation verging on nausea, waking to a reality that one does not truly understand, waking to a future that one is repelled by.

It was in this context that many also began asking questions, what is really going on here? We knew the stakes had been raised. Issues like effectively addressing climate change, gender equity, public education, multi-culturalism, planned parenthood, and many other social goods had now been put in doubt. And because the stakes are raised, there is a need to come to a deeper understanding of what is really going on, which can provide insight, strategic clarity, and guide action.

This symposium was born in an effort to draw upon the strengths of futures studies and related perspectives perspectives: a critical assessment of images of the future, an understanding of macro-history and the *longue durée* (long term social change processes), the role of worldviews and narratives. In short the challenge for authors was twofold: on the one hand explain the Trump phenomenon from a long term historical perspective, revealing deeper patterns and processes, and on the other hand begin to articulate some new strategic pathways and possibilities given this new understanding.

The articles and essays that have emerged in this symposium have begun to meet this challenge. For sure, this is one small step along a much longer road, but it is a solid step.

The first article, “The City, the Country, and the New Politics of Place,” by Andrew Curry, is an exploration of the how ‘third wave’ industrialisation and the services and knowledge economy drive geographic and demographic transformations. The second article by Michael McAllum “Reconceiving the Self and the Other: Possibilities Beyond the Seduction of Popularist and Authoritarian Polarities” looks at the foundations of recent

western populist and authoritarian reactions, and the imperative to imagine narratives of a ‘next social system’.

The essay section begins with Sohail Inayatullah’s “Trump: The Beginning Or The End?”. In his essay he explores ways in which macro-history and epistemology can shed light on Trump’s election and provides short scenarios that emerge from these insights. The second essay, “Trumped: The Unsurprising Election of Donald Trump and our Unequal Opportunity--and Lack of Plausible Visions--for New Governance Design” by Jim Dator, argues Trump’s election signals a crisis in democracy and is a call to action to engage in radical governance design. In the third essay, “Donald Trump and the Birth of a Planetary Culture” I explore shifting cultural dynamics and Trump as part of a process planetization. In “A Post-Hoc Causal-Layered Analysis of American Trumpism” Tim Dolan analyses the deep narratives at work shaping the pasts and futures of US politics. In the fifth essay “Re-dynamising Local Economies in the Age of Trumpism”, Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Niaros argue that the appeal of reactionary nationalism needs to be countered by building real economic alternatives centred around social solidarity and a commons ethos. The sixth essay, “The Rule of the Jester King” by Victor MacGill, is a fairytale with four possible endings (futures).

The symposium is bookended by two vignettes. First, Michel Bauwens’ “Theses on Trump” which encapsulates critical strategic transformations, and secondly short scenarios by Michael Marien to contour the uncertainty of the Trump presidency. Finally, the symposium is capped with a conclusion by Kristin Alford. She synthesizes a strategy and policy overview that provides a sharper focus of the emerging pathways that may have some viability for longer term change.

This symposium has attempted to do two key things. First, to develop a deeper understanding of the Trump phenomenon from the point of view of futures studies (and related social change perspectives, e.g. p2p and the commons). And secondly, to develop forward-looking views that will help us to navigate a new political landscape, and to develop new pathways for action and empowerment. At the time of this writing it is still very early days, the landscape is still shifting and our understanding is emerging. Nevertheless, this symposium holds important insights and clues to our political pasts and political futures. I urge all of us who care about a future of social justice, ecological sustainability and peace to carefully read and study the papers within – and to translate these new insights and strategies into the field of action. Our futures demand it!

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