

Book Review

Naomi Klein

No Is Not Enough: Resisting Trump's Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need.

Toronto, Canada: Penguin Random House, 2017

Reviewed by Howard A. Doughty

1.

Over the past two decades, Naomi Klein has produced four books plus a collection of newspaper articles and other short pieces (Klein, 2002). I have reviewed two of the books in *The Innovation Journal*. The first one, *No Logo*, was part of a review essay on books that “demonized” the corporation in Vol. 6, No. 3 (2001). The second, *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) somehow slipped through my personal editorial cracks (read but not reviewed here or elsewhere), but a generally favourable review of the third, *This Changes Everything*, appeared in these pages in Vol. 19, No 3 (2014). With *No Is Not Enough*, I am finally going for the trifecta. Even covering three out of four, however, requires an explanation.

<p>“Klein is not an academic and cannot be judged as one. There are many places in her book where she oversimplifies. But Friedman and the other shock therapists were also guilty ...”</p> <p>– Joseph E. Stiglitz</p>

Naomi Klein isn't an original or an especially profound thinker. Few such people make it to print, and fewer produce books that attract many readers or make a big impact on the events of their days. Conveying extraordinary brilliance in conventional, accessible language is a talent that escapes most deep thinkers and writers of genius. Naomi Klein, however, does the next best thing, and she does it rather well. She has sold a ton of books, is widely interviewed in all the major media, contributes opinion pieces to widely diverse print and online journals, appears to have attracted a measurable constituency and, from at least one perspective, makes a fair amount of common sense. So, when I said she was neither an original nor a profound thinker, I intended no disrespect and, of course, Ms. Klein makes no such claims. She is and seems content to be a dedicated activist and a well-tuned popularizer. In fact, if people such as Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump hadn't so thoroughly discredited the concept, I might even have referred to her as a “populist.” And I'd have meant it as a compliment.

Why should readers of *The Innovation Journal* pay attention to her? The simple reason is that she raises some of the most salient issues of our day and puts them in language that ordinary citizens can understand. Her main topics should be atop every government's agenda. If innovation is to contribute to the public good, it must address issues such as the vitality of democracy, the fairness of public procedures, the application of universal human rights, the equity of economic arrangements and the sustainability of the planetary biosphere. Anything less is political distraction and an abrogation of our deepest moral and ethical responsibilities. Others,

of course, may do a better job of discussing any one of these pillars of modern civilization; but, few are her equal in provoking intelligent public consideration of them all. Moreover, Klein's personal journey through the complexity and complementarity of the issues she discusses is so open, so honest, occasionally so vulnerable but also and always so passionate, that it is hard not to follow along. Those who do so will almost certainly be amply rewarded.

2.

It took Naomi Klein almost a decade to bring together the ideas she'd accumulated as a journalist and political activist and to condense them into her first three manageable volumes. It was certainly worth the investment of time and effort. Permit me to rehearse her line of thought.

No Logo was an attack on “the brand bullies,” the multinational enterprises that exploited workers on the periphery to sell commodities and merchandise to the exploited middling and lower classes in the centres of empire, or of what Kari Levitt (2002) called the hinterland and the metropolis in *Silent Surrender*, a splendid little book that once inspired social democratic and nationalist dissenters and still holds up well. In her initial enterprise, Klein gave a shout-out to “ethical shareholders, culture jammers, street reclaimers, McUnion organizers, human rights hacktivists, school-logo fighters and Internet corporate watchdogs.” Her goal was to inspire an insurrection against global corporations that were running sweat-shops abroad while closing factories at home, and getting rich at the expense of people everywhere.

“She travels the world to find out firsthand what really happened on the ground during the privatization of Iraq, the aftermath of the Asian tsunami, the continuing Polish transition to capitalism and the years after the African National Congress took power in South Africa, when it failed to pursue redistributionist policies.”

– Joseph E. Stiglitz

I called *No Logo* “the literary centerpiece of the anti-globalization movement.” I have no reason to take that back. Klein was upset at many aspects of the hegemonic corporate culture in the years before the self-inflicted Wall Street-based financial calamity of 2008. That culture remains in place, though (the brief and incendiary White House career of Anthony Scaramucci notwithstanding) it is at the time of writing at least somewhat muted, and it implies the curtailing of respect for the rule of law, the degradation of political democracy, the intensification of economic inequality, the erosion of human rights, the alienation of consumers from their communities, their environment and, ultimately themselves.

The difference, of course, was between the “left-wing” anti-globalization movement that thrived mainly in the 1990s, but was sidelined in the wake of “9/11” and the “war on terror,” and the “right-wing” populist movements in Europe and the United States that are largely based in xenophobic nativism and ethno-religious intolerance. Klein's earlier version has lost some of its disruptive political potency, but not its moral relevance. The remnants of the leftish anti-globalization movement—intermittently bubbling to the surface in the form of the short-lived but temporarily noisy North American “Occupy” movement, anti-G-20 rallies and emerging aboriginal movements in various parts of the world—remain committed to economic equity,

human rights, democracy, international and even economic cooperation and diplomatic multilateralism outside the realm of global corporate domination and imperialism.

The earlier iteration of anti-globalization was mainly based in a critique of hierarchical power relations and layers of ruthless exploitation and discrimination in the interests of a multinational power elite. The current variation expresses an ideology of tribalized sociopathic victimhood which ironically feeds the power lust of precisely those plutocrats, kleptocrats and oligarchs who feed of mass resentment ... but that's another story.

3.

The Shock Doctrine expanded her mainly “economic” message. In light of events such as the US invasion of Iraq, Naomi Klein expanded her treatment of the global economy and paid heed to global politics as well. She simultaneously ripped apart the notion that the market economy was the most effective mechanism to provide for a rational allocation of resources in pursuit of a fair and balanced economy. Rather, from the US-sanctioned *coup d'état* in Chile in 1973 to the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991 and on to the devastation of the American city of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, she composed a narrative that revealed a pattern of ugly events that had its origin in neoliberal doctrine and went on to engineer and exploit artificial and natural calamities, all in the interest of massive profit taking.

<p>She shows us, in clear and elegant language, how catastrophes — natural ones like Katrina, unnatural ones like war — become opportunities for a savage capitalism, calling itself “the free market,” to privatize everything in sight, bringing huge profits to some, misery for others.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">– Howard Zinn</p>

The condemnations that immediately followed came almost equally from “conservative” think tanks such as the Cato Institute (Norberg, 2008) and “liberal” venues such as the *New Republic* (Chait, 2008). Klein was accused of everything from pitiable naïveté to conspiratorial delirium. Yet, her principal thesis was a natural outgrowth of such notions as Joseph A. Schumpeter’s far-famed concept of “creative destruction” put forward in his classic *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1994), wherein he enthused over the “process of industrial mutation that necessarily revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.” Klein merely took notice of a comment made decades later by free-market guru Milton Friedman (2005), who saw fabulous opportunities for profit in the wake of Hurricane Katrina which he parlayed into a celebration of the school voucher system and the movement to do away with public education that has now resulted in the appointment of private school advocate Betsy DeVos to the post of American Secretary of Education. Then, she combined the two into a singular perspective on late capitalism as a system of political economy that allowed disasters, whether ecological or geopolitical, to promote economic opportunity and political authoritarianism at the same time.

It was to be expected that mainstream (never mind right-wing) publications would react badly to Klein’s thesis; however, a good friend of mine not known for his affection for neoliberalism also responded disapprovingly to the book — but for quite different reasons. His complaint was that economic injustice and political tyranny were certainly hateful things, but

they wouldn't matter much if Klein somehow goaded the good people of our planet into humanistic action to forge a more equitable society only to find out that the ecological cost of bringing over seven billion (and soon to be billions more) people up to modest prosperity might be that we would all be exterminated biologically.

4.

Responding to environmentalists who saw her argument as one-sided and unacceptably indifferent to such matters as global warming and climate change, the pollution of the air, land and water, and the extermination of as many or more plants and animals as perished in the so-called Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction event (K/T for short) that brought an end to the Mesozoic Era (and, incidentally, the dinosaurs) about 66 million years ago, her next book set the problem of the co-existence of capitalism and the planet. Her main theme was that capitalism would destroy the Earth's biosphere and so it was required of us to put a quick end to capitalism if our species and most others were to endure. Of course, like many critics from Marx on, precisely what would follow capitalism is left a trifle vague, but Klein makes no pretence of doing more than offering a diagnosis, leaving the exact treatment regimens—apart from some generalizations about democracy, equality, conservation and communalism—for another day.

In any case, Naomi Klein once again travelled the world, not so much to find evidence of authoritarian brutality and poverty, but to take notice of what was happening to birds, bees, fresh water and palm trees. She, too, noticed that unfettered capitalism was not good for plants and animals — domesticated and in the wild. Wilderness conservation, air pollution, desertification and geological eruptions, and the death of the oceans once came nowhere near the top of her agenda.

The result was *This Changes Everything*, a remarkably appealing volume that, through solid and carefully selected evidence and wonderfully thoughtful anecdotes, shifted the attention of “social justice warriors” to the larger landscape and, in the process, alerted “ecowarriors” to the possibility of making common cause with people whose main goal, as they had perceived it, was to protect the jobs of people whose industries were fouling the planet. The economy-environment circle was not easy to square, but she did the best she could.

<p>“Climate change is a crisis leading toward disaster. Everything will change, whether by force of nature or by our choice.” – Naomi Klein</p>

In the end, her message was that our economic system was at war with our environmental system and the only conceivable result was that the losers would be ... well, every human and every other living being. That message has succeeded in jump-starting a large number of grassroots initiatives and it has also demonstrably helped to alter the thoughts and maybe to influence some of the actions of people in many places and in many stations of life. Even top-level public servants have been supportive and engaged though not without penalty, I am sorry to say, in institutions such as the American Environmental Protection Agency. EPA employees (especially those tainted by work in the fields of global warming and climate change) have been constrained, restrained and sometimes purged during the temporary presidency of Donald J. Trump as elsewhere they had found their research defunded and their results suppressed during

Canadian Prime Minister Harper's curtailment of environmental studies especially as related to the development of the Alberta tar sands.

Of course, my friend still has some complaints. "Doesn't she know," he asked me recently, "that the *real* problem isn't just the urban-industrial holocaust, but the massive human overpopulation of the planet?" Well, he's probably right, but it may take Naomi Klein another decade (assuming we have one), to try to defuse "the population bomb." Meanwhile, what about *No Is Not Enough*?

5.

Unlike her previous book-length contributions to our public discourse, Klein's latest was written in a bit of a hurry. The urgency seems to have been prompted by the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States of America. That event has, if nothing else, further polarized already divided opinion and kindled a serious discussion in the American Psychiatric Association about the ethics of diagnosing mental diseases and disorders in public figures who have not been clinically analyzed. So bizarre have been the utterances and actions of the American president that a movement for repeal of the so-called "Goldwater Rule" has begun. According to Section 7.3 of the APA's code of ethics, it is "unethical for a psychiatrist to offer a professional opinion unless he or she has conducted an examination and has been granted proper authorization for such a statement."

Those seeking change to Section 7.3 counter that it is unethical *not* to raise concerns when an allegedly unbalanced individual is put in control of weapons of mass destruction, but is legally susceptible to removal from office according to the 25th Amendment to the *Constitution of the United States* when senior government officials determine that he is "unable to discharge the powers and the duties of his office." Some psychiatrists think the time has come. Meanwhile, Naomi Klein contributes her own impressions with her own thoughts in mind.

Her admonition that "no is not enough" is partly a matter of saying "I told you so" (Lozada, 2017). She writes:

Trump is not a rupture at all, but rather the culmination—the logical end point—of a great many dangerous stories our culture has been telling for a very long time. That greed is good. That the market rules. That money is what matters in life. That white men are better than the rest. That the natural world is there for us to pillage. That the vulnerable deserve their fate and the one percent deserve their golden towers. That anything public or commonly held is sinister and not worth protecting. That we are surrounded by danger and should only look after our own.

According to Klein, we *are* surrounded by danger, but our duty is to look after one another as individuals, groups, nations and as a species. If the strategy of global corporations in cahoots with various governments and military establishments is to govern by the "shock doctrine," then Klein's new book outlines the tactics of "shock resistance."

Her focus in *No Is Not Enough* remains the vociferous advocacy for grassroots, popular political movements that can meaningfully push back against Donald Trump, and the governing political-economic logic of neo-liberalism more generally.
– Hari Kunzru

If worry over the rise of so-called “populism” in the manner of Donald Trump has been assuaged a little by the “buyers’ remorse” of British Brexit voters, as well as the fate of French presidential candidate Marine LePen, Dutch PVV leader Geert Wilders and even the small number of Canadians who briefly supported Conservative leadership candidate Kellie Leitch, it is not evidence that *No Is Not Enough* has succeeded in turning whole populations toward more militant attitudes and actions.

Klein’s call now is for mass organization on a number of related fronts and, perhaps most importantly, for a kind of revitalized “common front.” The days of racio-ethnic, gender-based, class divided, narrowly self-interested pluralistic politics, she says, are behind us. We need to build conversations, coalitions, federations, and promote tactical innovations among unbranded progressives, leftist political parties, environmentalists, clean energy enthusiasts, wildlife conservationists, consumer groups, trade unionists, anti-poverty activists, farmers, artisans, small merchants, indigenous peoples, feminists, LGBT(Q) communities, immigrants, refugee advocates, young people, old people, human rights and peace activists, public school supporters, public transit users, public library patrons and any others whose *real* interests lie with solidarity and not selfishness.

If, as Klein argues, President Trump is “a pastiche of pretty much all the worst trends of the past half century” and the embodiment of “capitalist burlesque,” it is no less important to understand what his emergence means. As *The Globe and Mail* writer John Semley put it (2017): “Like any serious socialist thinker, Klein knows that to meaningfully understand Trump, one needs to understand his emergence from a material-historical tangle of politics, economics and celebrity culture.”

Understanding, moreover, leads to strategic thinking. Klein is not endlessly inclusive. For instance, she wishes to disassociate from philanthrocapitalists, “Big Green” corporations, the “Davos Class,” and such billionaire messiahs as Bill Gates, Michael Bloomberg and Sir Richard Branson. As Hari Junzru (2017) commented in *The Guardian*, “Trump’s unselfconscious reaction to 9/11 was to see it as a marketing opportunity, remarking to a journalist that he now had the tallest building in Manhattan.” The others may not express themselves as guilelessly, but Klein is unrelenting in her belief that it is capitalism *versus* the climate. So, resistance must be directional and targeted. Drawing on the inchoate beginnings in the anti-globalization movement, the Occupy movement, the aboriginal initiative, Idle No More, she insists that any effective effort to redeem ourselves and the planet must come from the bottom up.

There are available models, not least the (to some) surprising success and the continued efforts of Senator Bernie Sanders and his supporters. Some also point to the surprising (to some) success of British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. To Naomi Klein, these are all positives. And so is the work of Canadian and American public servants who have seen their honest efforts cut

short and their employment threatened or terminated if their work appeared “inconvenient” to the private sector. Here the public sector and the public interest most obviously converge.

6.

So, how’s it going so far?

One test concerns the LEAP Manifesto, a document included in *No Is Not Enough*, but previously a specific call to the citizens of Canada to (re)build a society “based on caring for the Earth and one another.” At last count, it has been translated and disseminated in fourteen languages and has won a global audience.

The principles include respecting the rights of indigenous peoples, supporting “energy democracy” (community control of renewable resources, green living and the like), ecologically based agriculture, full workers rights including for migrants, a universal guaranteed annual income, stiffer corporate and progressive income taxes, abandoning government commitment to austerity measures, and so on.

The document was co-authored by Klein and her husband Avi Lewis, a documentary film maker and broadcaster. It was submitted for consideration to the New Democratic Party of Canada’s convention in Edmonton, Alberta in April, 2016. It was immediately branded as a call for a radical shift to the left in a party that had hitched its electoral wagon to then-leader Tom Mulcair’s strategy of moving to the political centre, diluting its policies, and striking the word “socialism” from its documents and rhetoric — a strategy that many blamed for the NDP’s precipitous drop from the most popular party in the country in the Summer of 2016 to an ignominious third-place finish in the Fall.

When Klein, Lewis and their associates brought forth their vision for the future, reaction was swift and often harsh. Alberta’s NDP Premier Rachel Notley, who’d just won a provincial election against a temporarily disunited right, called the Leap Manifesto “naïve, ill-informed and tone deaf” (Giovannetti and Stone, 2016). The major news media chimed in with comments that would echo or anticipate similar dismissals of British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and US Senator Bernie Sanders. Proposals designed to achieve both a sustainable environment and economic equity were dismissed as unrealistic and unduly idealistic on their own; together, they were repulsed as delusional and electorally suicidal. So, for example, former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair (2015) and Nobel Prize-winning liberal economist Paul Krugman (2016) used various levels of sarcasm and hyperbole to downplay ecological and economic difficulties and thereby render radical alternatives moot.

More recently, of course, UK Opposition Leader Corbyn enjoyed unexpected success in the 2017 general election and Senator Sanders finds himself at the top of public opinion surveys measuring political popularity in the United States. Whether these changes in fate betoken the emergence of a more robust progressive movement or at least a temporary period of modestly left-of-centre political success is anyone’s guess; but, the matter is certainly not concluded.

Canada? Well, centrist NDP leader Mulcair is soon to be replaced, quite possibly with someone who will take the party in the direction urged by Naomi Klein. And, of at least symbolic significance, there is the fact that the Leap Manifesto. This document (readily available at <https://leapmanifesto.org/en/the-leap-manifesto/>) has also been championed by an impressive array of individuals from across the political spectrum: Roy McMurtry the former Conservative Attorney-General and later the Chief Justice of Ontario; the late poet/song writer Leonard Cohen; philosophers Charles Taylor and John Ralston Saul; Canadian Labour Congress leader Hassan Yussuff, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Public Service Alliance of Canada and former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, Stephen Lewis. It may not be a “big tent,” but it’s not a straight-jacket either.

In terms of writing in the last decade, the most prominent literary figures among Naomi Klein’s Canadian compatriots are undoubtedly Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro and Michael Ondaatje. But I think a case can be made that Klein is not only her country’s bestselling author of the last ten years, but also its most relevant writer.
Stan Persky, 2010

Stephen Lewis, incidentally, is not only Naomi Klein’s father-in-law, but also the former leader of the Ontario NDP. In that capacity, I vividly recall, he organized the purge of a similar group of left dissidents from the party on June 25, 1972. I attended the convention in Orillia, Ontario that formally expelled the puckishly labeled “Waffle,” formally known as the Movement for an Independent Socialist Canada (Laxer, 2012). Soon after, I sent Stephen Lewis a letter to express my disappointment and I received in return a lengthy and rather fierce personal polemic. A scant forty-five years later, it is gratifying to see him publicly endorsing his daughter-in-law and taking a position consistent with those he had previously so contemptuously rejected

Agree or disagree with her, the public issues that Naomi Klein raises are setting the pertinent (some say “existential”) challenges for public sector innovation. They are not going away. The hazards they identify are real and imminent. The solutions they propose are already the locus of intense debate. Public sector innovation and public sector innovators will inevitably be part of the process and, like it or not, the active engagement of the public sector will define the ethical dilemmas for senior public sector officials, supervisors, planners, researchers and legions of public servants. Be prepared.

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