

Why capitalists need communists: the politics of flourishing

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We are at a turning point: the orthodoxies that have dominated political and economic thinking since the 1980s are crumbling, and it is widely recognised that the big problems we face – climate change, inequality, automation - cannot be solved within the constraints of those orthodoxies. As a result the ‘politics of consumption’ – the politics where politicians’ primary role is to raise living standards – has been giving way to the ‘politics of fear’ – the politics where politicians’ primary role is to protect from enemies. There is however a third possibility – the ‘politics of flourishing’. In this, politicians’ primary role is to create the conditions where human beings can flourish, and in doing so regain control over their own lives.

Governments cannot deliver this on their own, though. They need to work in partnership with business, whose role will be to enhance the wellbeing of workers, customers and communities as well as shareholders. Some businesses recognise this and aspire to contribute in this way. However, business cannot work in a genuine partnership with government without changes to the structures that drive it. The capitalists need communists to help make these changes, and avoid the dystopia associated with the politics of fear.