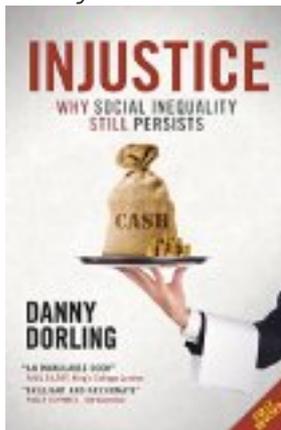


# Hope amid the gloom?

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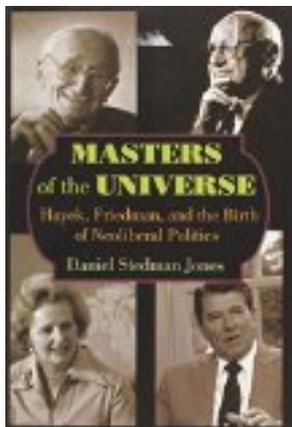
Anybody in the UK who is feeling gloomy about the General Election result could deepen their gloom by reading the new edition of Danny Dorling's [Injustice: why social inequality still persists](#). The book has quite an upbeat conclusion: *"Slowly, collectively, with one step back for every two taken forward, we inch onwards to progress; we gradually undo the mistakes of the past, and recognise new forms of injustice arising out of what we once thought were solutions. ... Everything it takes to defeat injustice lies in the mind. What matters most is how we think. And how we think is metamorphosing because – everywhere – there are signs of hope."*



Clearly this new and greatly revised edition of the book was written before the election. What's more, everything that is new in it ought to make a campaigner for social justice even gloomier. The indicators collected in the book have at best improved only a little since the financial crisis – household indebtedness, income inequality, for instance. Perhaps even more noteworthy is the apparent absence of any change in the zeitgeist, or public philosophy. When the first edition was published in 2010, many commentators thought the scale of the crisis would lead to a significant swing in public opinion away from Big Finance, markets and greed. With the exception of popular disapproval of unseemly bonuses in the socially destructive banking industry, that doesn't seem to have happened.

Or has it? Dorling presents some evidence – Janet Yellen calling extreme inequality ‘un-American’, international efforts to collect unpaid taxes from rich globocrats, popular dislike of elites. It’s not much, perhaps. One could add a few more examples, like today’s [call from the OECD](#) for tech companies to stop their “aggressive tax planning”. Is this enough to justify a belief that the social and economic order will change. Dorling writes, optimistically in the circumstances: *“No-one can truly know what will be sufficient to change deeply held and institutionally transmitted beliefs.”*

In a terrific book, [Masters of the Universe](#), Daniel Stedman Jones described the long process of organising, campaigning, debating by many people that paved the way for the triumph of the individualist ‘free market’ philosophy from 1980 and is still our official public philosophy. Who knows how long it will take how many people who dislike this to pave the way for an alternative – but when a system change of this kind happens, it happens relatively quickly (over a decade at most) and is then dramatic.



[Injustice](#) replaces Beveridge’s original Five Giants with new ones: elitism, social exclusion, prejudice, greed and despair. The book links these in a vicious circle of social and economic inequality – exactly why single policy measures are drops in the ocean and a broader change is needed, Dorling argues, collecting all the evidence one could need to conclude this. I wouldn’t want to predict whether we’ll get it or not; that will depend on what we all do, and think, next.