

Abstract for talk by Vishwas Satgar and Michelle Williams

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Title: 'Transformative Politics and the Solidarity Economy'

The rise of neoliberalism and the collapse of centralized socialist systems have raised many challenges for Left and progressive forces. But it has also been a time of opportunity to rethink old and discover new forms of emancipatory alternatives. We've seen over the last two decades a proliferation of voices espousing alternatives that range from the World Social Forum, to popular movements for land, housing, and social rights, to calls for the democratization of political and economic power in local communities, to the expansion of cooperative forms of production, to the explosion of ethical and fair trade markets, and to the rise of ecologically informed production. Out of this wide range of alternatives have arisen many different analytics to understand these trends. We argue that one of the most important developments has been the solidarity economy and its links to transformative politics. Transformative politics is also a new way to understand power, political strategy and logics of change. Married to the solidarity economy this is both a challenge to and an attempt to transcend the limits of capitalism. The talk draws on a book manuscript that Satgar and Williams are currently working on based on six years of fieldwork with visits to 13 countries to study worker cooperatives, worker cooperative-led economic networks and a new theoretical approach to transformative politics.