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Post-Fordism: Models, Fantasies and Phantoms of Transition

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INTRODUCTION

These appear to be times of bewildering transformation and change in the structure and organization of modern Western economy and society. It seems that capitalism is at a crossroads in its historical development signalling the emergence of forces - technological, market, social and institutional - that will be very different from those which dominated the economy after the Second World War. Though not uncontroversial, there is an emerging consensus in the social sciences that the period since the mid-1970s represents a transition from one distinct phase of capitalist development to a new phase. Thus, there is a sense that these are times of epoch-making transformation in the very forces which drive, stabilize and reproduce the capitalist world. Terms such as 'structural crisis', 'transformation' and 'transition' have become common descriptors of the present, while new epithets such as 'post-Fordist', 'post-industrial', 'post-modern', 'fifth Kondratiev' and 'post-collective' have been coined by the academic prophets of our times to describe the emerging new age of capitalism.

One observer, Ernest Sternberg (1993), lists no fewer than eight potential new ages. The first is the information age, which will generate wealth through the exercise of knowledge, trade in information activities and the potentialities for information technology. The second is the age of post-modernity, which will extend the frontier

of consumerism into all areas of social and private life, including aesthetics, art, leisure, recreation and pleasure. Third, Sternberg refers to the age of global interdependence, to convey a sense of the pervasive globalization of production, finance, distribution and trade within the contemporary economy, a process which increasingly bestraddles and shapes local and national fortunes. The fourth trend identified is a new mercantilism, which Sternberg describes as an age in which national coalitions (industry–government–labour) will seek to develop strategic technological advantage as a basis for national prosperity. Fifth is a new age of corporate control, in which global corporations and banks will exercise systemic power over markets, firms and states; shaping consumption patterns in every corner of the world and run by a new global class of executives and professionals living in select world cities. The sixth age is the age of 'flexible specialization', characterized by new principles in production, including specialist units of production, decentralized management and versatile technologies and workforces, to satisfy increasingly volatile markets. Seventh is the age of new social movements working to 'humanize' the new capitalism and to negotiate for a 'social economy' which might incorporate the rights of minorities and women as well as guarantee ecological sensitivity, economic security and basic human needs. It will contrast with the social movements of the passing age, said to be organized around lines of class and nationality, and often in the name of anti-capitalist and anti-establishment goals. Finally, Sternberg identifies the rise of an age of fundamentalist rejection in many parts of the world of the technocracy and consumerism of the new information age, in defence of territorial or ethnic identities rooted in pre-enlightenment religious or communitarian traditions and values.

Which of these purported new ages will consolidate or combine into the next millenium remains an open and vexed issue. Equally contested is the issue of whether the emerging new trends represent a radical break with the past or a refinement or modification of old trends. New or not, it seems indisputable that the salience of so many of the icons of the age of mass industrialization and mass consumerism appears to be diminishing. Under threat in the West appears to be the centrality of large industrial complexes, blue-collar work, full employment, centralized bureaucracies of management, mass markets for cheap standardized goods, the welfare state, mass political parties and the centrality of the national state as a unit of organization. While, of course, each individual trend is open to dispute, taken together they make it difficult to avoid a sense that an old way of doing things might be disappearing or becoming reorganized.

The 'post-Fordist' debate concerns the nature and direction of such

epoch-making change. It is a debate about the putative transition from one dominant phase of capitalist development in the post-war period to another thirty to fifty year cycle of development based upon very different economic, societal and political norms. It seeks to identify the driving forces in each historical phase and, through this process, to elaborate how these forces constitute a paradigm or system capable of securing relative economic stability over the long term. Different positions within the debate each accept that history can be periodized into distinct phases, guided by a coherent frame of dominant principles, but giving way to a period of uncertainty and transition during which the elements of a new paradigm may develop and mature.

Such a theorization of historical evolution and change is not unchallenged, which is one reason why the literature on post-Fordism must be considered as a debate rather than an achieved or universally accepted theory of transition. Indeed, the entire project of periodizing capitalist history has been criticized in particular from within a Marxist tradition which stresses the dialectical and evolutionary nature of historical change. Critics of the post-Fordist literature, many of them gathered around the Conference of Socialist Economists in Britain and its journal *Capital and Class*, tend to reject the debate for its functionalist or systemic theorization of the historical process, preferring instead an approach which stresses the non path-dependent, contested and open nature of change in class societies (Rustin, 1989; Clarke, 1990; Bonefeld and Holloway, 1991; Pollert, 1991; Psychopedis, 1991). They also criticize the idea of absolute turning points, 'rules of transition' and clear breaks between distinct phases or stages of development, preferring instead a more evolutionary interpretation of change which stresses a mixture of continuity and change from one period to another (Meegan, 1988; Hyman, 1991; Lovering, 1991; Bonefeld, 1993). Reliance on sharp distinctions between phases has been criticized for falling prey, in its worst applications, to a logic of binary contrasts between, say, rigid or collective 'old times' and flexible or individualistic 'new times' (Williams et al., 1987; Sayer, 1989; Thrift, 1989; Sayer and Walker, 1992). It is claimed that such a logic produces overviews based on arbitrarily derived guiding principles and universal claims based on partial truths, thus denying the key aspect of history as a complex and heterogeneous process of many determinations (Gertler, 1988, 1992; Amin and Robins, 1990; Graham, 1992).

But use of the term 'debate' is appropriate in another, 'internal', sense since the meaning and application of the term 'post-Fordism' is disputed among those within the debate. Arguments exist over the nature of the passing age, the origins of its crisis, the bearers of change and the shape of things to come. It would be an error to think of the

post-Fordist debate as variants of one position. Yet there is a perception among observers of the debate that the perspectives within it, with the passing of time, are becoming strands of one broad theorization of change (Amin and Robins, 1990; Graham, 1992) or cohabitants within one approach (Dankbaar, 1992; Elam, chapter 2 in this reader; and to a lesser extent, Boyer, 1988a).

Such a perception has been reinforced by the more popular accounts of transition which draw eclectically from a diverse body of thought to synthesize a new age under the banner of 'post-Fordism'. One example is the work of a group of British intellectuals and activists associated with the magazine *Marxism Today*, which ceased to publish in 1991 (Hall and Jacques, 1989). Through its search for an explanation of Thatcherism rooted in irreversible and deep-rooted changes within modern industrial society, this group draws selectively from the literature to articulate a blend of post-Fordist times:

> A shift to the new 'information technologies'; more flexible, decentralised forms of labour process and work organisation; decline of the old manufacturing base and the growth of the 'sunrise', computer-based industries; the hiving off or contracting out of functions and services; a greater emphasis on choice and product differentiation, on marketing, packaging and design, on the 'targetting' of consumers by lifestyle, taste, and culture rather than by categories of social class; a decline in the proportion of the skilled, male, manual working class, the rise of the service and white-collar classes and the 'feminization' of the work force; an economy dominated by multinationals, with their new international division of labour and their greater autonomy from nation state control; and the 'globalisation' of the new financial markets, linked by the communications revolution. *(Hall, 1988, p. 24)*

This version of 'new times' does not stop at the economy, but also identifies new cultural patterns: 'Post-Fordism is also associated with broader social and cultural changes. For example, greater fragmentation and pluralism, the weakening of older collective solidarities and block identities and the emergence of new identities associated with greater work flexibility, the maximisation of individual choices through personal consumption' (Hall, 1988, p. 24).

The *Marxism Today* version of post-Fordism is brave enough to prophesize the future, to use the term to encapsulate a totality of change and to discard Fordism as an exhausted age characterized by the opposite of all the post-Fordist features described above. Its audacity has been matched by the depth of criticism it has attracted. Some have attacked its theory and method, dismissing its structuralism, lack of conceptual rigour, eclecticism, holism and inescapable

futurology (Pollert, 1988; Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991). Others within the Left have criticized it for: reading off political strategies from structural changes; overstressing the subjective, individual and aesthetic nature of the future; painting a romantically rosy picture of society and culture in the new times; and embracing a politics which, in conjuring away existing social and political conflicts, plays into the hands of the New Right and its social constituency (Meiskins Wood, 1989; Rustin, 1989; Sivanandan, 1990).

In many senses, dispute over the politics of the future lies at the heart of the post-Fordist debate. An underlying theme is the search for a political project which is more democratic, more egalitarian and more humane than neo-liberal Conservatism. On this question the debate represents competing political alternatives, ranging from a defence of traditional class, race and gender politics, through to a desire for 'yeoman democracy' (Piore and Sabel, 1984) or new alliances between diverse social forces including ecologists, the labour movement and the voluntary sector.

The perspective taken in this book, therefore, is that the post-Fordist debate is a confrontation of diverse viewpoints, a heterogeneity of positions which draw on different concepts to say different things about past, present and future. These positions offer different explanations and conjure up different fantasies and phantoms. They also operate at different levels of analysis, from production and industrial organization to the macroeconomy, culture and politics.

The aim of this book is to reflect and represent the diversity and difference of perspective within the debate. The next part of the chapter outlines the broad arguments of three theories of transition which have come to dominate the debate, while the second part of the chapter, reflecting the sections of the book, focuses on the major themes covered within the debate (the macroeconomy, industrial organization, policy and politics, culture and lifestyles). In a field of inquiry which has produced a vast literature, no single book can do full justice to the breadth or depth of the debate. This reader has selected some of the seminal contributions of the past decade and new ones in order to provide broad coverage of the debate. In addition, though the book seeks to represent the main areas in social science involved in the debate (political economy, geography, industrial and urban sociology, political science) the focus of the book is inflected towards the uneven geography of post-Fordism (e.g. industrial geography, urban sociology).

THREE TRANSITION MODELS

It is commonly accepted that three theoretical positions lie at the heart of the post-Fordist debate. These are the regulation approach, the flexible specialization approach and the neo-Schumpeterian approach. All three offer a developed theoretical framework to substantiate and explain the claim that an era of mass production (or Fordism) is under challenge, and portends to give way to a new set of organizational principles if a new long wave of economic growth is to be secured and sustained.

Other cognate theorizations of transition also exist, and could be brought more centrally into the debate than they have been thus far. For example, in the United States, a group of radical economists including David Gordon, Sam Bowles and Herb Gintis has developed the concept of 'social structure of accumulation' to offer an analytical framework which is close to regulation theory, but which places a premium on the role of state and class politics in explaining the transition (see Dankbaar, 1992, for a summary and a comparison with other post-Fordist approaches). Another approach, in which the analysis extends into the social and cultural sphere, derives from the work of two British sociologists, Scott Lash and John Urry (1987, 1993), who distinguish between a passing era of 'organized' capitalism and a new, flexible, era of 'disorganized' capitalism (see Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991, who place Lash and Urry squarely into the debate). A third position, inspired by the work of the Marxist geographer David Harvey, refers to the transition from Fordism to 'flexible accumulation', to signal the rise of flexible labour markets and flexible geographies of production (Harvey, 1987, 1989a, 1991; Harvey and Scott, 1988). Yet another approach, but with a narrower focus than the latter two, draws upon the idea of 'new production concepts' (Kern and Schumann, 1987) to argue that in the arena of work, advanced technology is encouraging a new age of worker–employer cooperation and worker involvement; a new industrial democracy reversing the Fordist interpretation of workers as a restraint in production (see Tomaney, chapter 5 in this reader; Hyman, 1991; Dankbaar, 1992).

There is no space here to consider these approaches but they merit further attention, not only for their intrinsic merit, but also because their particular inflections on change confirm that what comes after Fordism may well be an open matter. Like other reviews of post-Fordist theories (Elam, chapter 2 in this reader; Boyer, 1991; Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991; Hyman, 1991; Nielsen, 1991; Webber, 1991; Dankbaar, 1992; Jessop, 1992a), the discussion below focuses on the three approaches most closely associated with the debate.

The regulation approach

The regulation approach was pioneered in France in the 1970s, and refined in the 1980s, by political economists attempting to explain the dynamics of long-term cycles of economic stability and change (Aglietta, 1979; Coriat, 1979; André and Delorme, 1982; Lipietz, 1985, 1987; Boyer, 1986; Mistral, 1986). The approach has had a huge international impact and has emerged as a major theorization of the patterns of post-war economic growth until the mid 1970s and of its crisis thereafter. Its diffusion as an approach, inevitably, has resulted in considerable internal differentiation (Jessop, 1992a, for instance, identifies seven regulationist schools), and a broadening of the base of heterodox economic theories it draws upon (from Marxian value theory to Keynesian macroeconomic ideas). There is a large body of literature on the regulation approach, including summaries and reviews (see, for example, Boyer, 1986; Nöel, 1987; Dunford, 1990; Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991; Nielsen, 1991; Jessop, 1992a). The summary that follows consequently seeks to provide only a crystallized account of core concepts and arguments, in order to make sense of it in relation to the other theories of transition (see chapter 2 by Elam for a fuller critical evaluation).

The aim of the early French regulationists was to develop a theoretical framework which could encapsulate and explain the paradox within capitalism between its inherent tendency towards instability, crisis and change, and its ability to coalesce and stabilize around a set of institutions, rules and norms which serve to secure a relatively long period of economic stability. This conceptual effort was underpinned by the observation that the stagnation of growth in the world economy after the mid-1970s amounted to much more than a cyclical lull, symbolizing a generalized crisis of the institutional forms that had come to guide the post-war world economy.

The project was thus to identify the structures, principles and mechanisms which underpinned the passing regime, to explain its internal contradictions and to speculate on future possibilities for growth. For the regulationists, it was important to think of a phase or regime as a 'partial, temporary and unstable result of embedded social practices rather than the pre-determined outcome of quasi-natural economic laws' (Jessop, 1992b, p. 26). Thus, while it wished to acknowledge that rules drive a system, it rejected the notion that such rules should be pre-given, immutable or pre-figurative of a future development path. Accordingly, its theorization of economic development and change claimed to give as much regard to historical processes as to the basic rules of the capitalist economy.

In order to articulate and explain the systemic coherence of individual phases of capitalist development, regulation theory draws on a number of key concepts which identify the core mechanisms at work. Two key concepts are 'regime of accumulation' and 'mode of regulation'. The regime of accumulation refers to a 'set of regularities at the level of the whole economy, enabling a more or less coherent process of capital accumulation' (Nielsen, 1991, p. 22). It includes norms pertaining to the organization of production and work (the labour process), relationships and forms of exchange between branches of the economy, common rules of industrial and commercial management, principles of income sharing between wages, profits and taxes, norms of consumption and patterns of demand in the marketplace, and other aspects of the macroeconomy. The mode of regulation (or similar terms – see chapters 3, 8 and 9 in this reader) refers to 'the institutional ensemble (laws, agreements, etc.) and the complex of cultural habits and norms which secures capitalist reproduction as such. It consists of a set of 'formal or informal "rules" that codify the main social relationships' (Nielsen, 1991, p. 22). It therefore refers to institutions and conventions which 'regulate' and reproduce a given accumulation regime through application across a wide range of areas, including the law, state policy, political practices, industrial codes, governance philosophies, rules of negotiation and bargaining, cultures of consumption and social expectations.

Nielsen (1991) refers to three other concepts deployed varyingly within the regulation school either to specify further the two main concepts or to identify other forces of 'systemic cohesion'. One is the concept of 'dominant industrial paradigm' or 'labour process' (Coriat, 1979), which refers to patterns of industrial and work organization, and includes the nature of technologies, management rules, division of tasks, industrial relations and wage relations. The second concept is 'mode of development', used by Lipietz (1988) in particular to denote the total pattern of development within an economy, based on the industrial paradigm, regime of accumulation and mode of regulation. The third concept is 'mode of societalization', or 'societal paradigm' adopted by Jessop (1992a) and Lipietz (chapter 11, this volume) as well as the German exponents of the regulation school (e.g. Esser and Hirsch, chapter 3, this volume; Hirsch, 1991). This concept refers to a series of political compromises, social alliances and hegemonic processes of domination which feed into a pattern of mass integration and social cohesion, thus serving to underwrite and stabilize a given development path.

It is with these five major concepts that the regulation approach has sought to periodize capitalist development, explain relative stability

and systemic coherence, and interpret structural crisis (as the breakdown of the norms captured by the five concepts). The passing age, with its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, has been named 'Fordism', a term coined to reflect loosely the pioneering mass production methods and rules of management applied by Henry Ford in his car factories in America during the 1920s and 1930s. Fordism is summarized as the age of 'intensive accumulation' with 'monopolistic regulation' of the economy. Although the term is applied at separate levels of analysis (industrial paradigm, regime of accumulation, mode of regulation, mode of societalization), it is its usage to synthesize a macrosystem which makes the regulation approach most interesting and distinctive from the two other theories of transition.

The driving force of Fordist 'intensive accumulation' is claimed to be the mass production dynamic, pioneered by the United States and reliant upon the intensification of work, the detailed division of tasks and mechanization to raise productivity, and various forms of 'monopolistic' regulation to maintain this dynamic. Jessop (1991, pp. 136–7) succinctly summarizes the central features of this dynamic:

> Fordism itself can be analysed on four levels. As a distinctive type of labour process [or industrial paradigm], it involves mass production based on moving assembly-line techniques operated with the semi-skilled labour of the mass worker. Not all branches nor workers will be directly involved in mass production in a Fordist economy, of course: the important point is that mass production is the main source of its dynamism. As a stable mode of macroeconomic growth [regime of accumulation], Fordism involves a virtuous circle of growth based on mass production, rising productivity based on economies of scale, rising incomes linked to productivity, increased mass demand due to rising wages, increased profits based on full utilisation of capacity, and increased investment in improved mass production equipment and techniques. As a mode of social and economic regulation [mode of regulation], Fordism involves the separation of ownership and control in large corporations with a distinctive multi-divisional, decentralised organisation subject to central controls [Taylorist division of labour]; monopoly pricing; union recognition and collective bargaining; wages indexed to productivity growth and retail price inflation; and monetary emission and credit policies orientated to securing effective aggregate demand. In this context the key wage bargains will be struck in the mass production industries; the going rate will then spread through comparability claims among the employed and through the indexation of welfare benefits financed through progressive taxation for those not economically active. This pattern need not mean the demise of dual labour markets or non-unionised firms or sectors as long as mass demand rises in line with productivity. And, fourthly, Fordism can be seen as a general pattern

> of social organisation ('societalisation'). In this context it involves the consumption of standardised, mass commodities in nuclear family households and provision of standardised, collective goods and services by the bureaucratic state. The latter also has a key role in managing the conflicts between capital and labour over both the individual and social wage. These latter features are clearly linked to the rise of Keynesian economic management and the universalist welfare state but neither element is essential for the growth of Fordism.

This is a description of an 'ideal-type' Fordism modelled around the US macroeconomy after the 1950s. The regulation approach is careful to insist, against a criticism it has attracted, that Fordism in different national contexts is not envisaged as a clone of the ideal-type, but as 'different combinations of Fordist and non-Fordist features (Nielsen, 1991, p. 23) leading to specific national growth 'solutions' which none the less were forced to measure up to Fordist 'best practice'.

The slow-down of growth and recurrent recessions since the mid-1970s are seen by the regulation approach as symptoms of the crisis of Fordism, underpinned by mismatches and imbalances between its different levels of organization. Summarizing Boyer's analysis of the structural crisis of Fordism, Nielsen (1991, p. 24) identifies four contributing factors with varying significance in different national contexts:

> Firstly, productivity gains decreased as a result of the social and technical limits of Fordism (worker resistance to the Fordist organisation of work and increasing difficulties in 'balancing' ever longer and more rigid production lines). Secondly, the expansion of mass production led to an increasing globalisation of economic flows which made national economic management increasingly difficult. Thirdly, Fordism led to growing social expenditure (the relative costs of collective consumption increased, because of the inapplicability of mass production methods in this area, leading to inflationary pressures and distributional conflicts). Fourthly, the consumption pattern has gradually changed towards a greater variety of use values (the new demands are at odds with standardization, the basis of economies of scale, and cannot easily be satisfied through mass production methods).

Before we move on to the analysis of what might emerge out of the crisis of Fordism (in the next main section) it has to be noted that the regulation approach, though much admired for the clarity of its synthesis of the recent past, has also attracted criticism. At the simplest level, its description of Fordism has been challenged, through the recognition of the importance in the economy of non-Taylorist forms

of work organization, non-Fordist production processes and non-Keynesian state policies (Clarke, 1988; Foster, 1988; Williams and Haslam, 1991). The relationship between the ideal-type or dominant form of Fordism and diverse national Fordisms has also been questioned, with critics arguing that recognition of national diversity undermines the notion of a single, dominant Fordist logic (Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991).

It has also been argued that despite its appeals to historical contingency, the regulation approach ends up ascribing history a systemic, functionalist and logical coherence which it rarely possesses. The argument here is that capitalist development is better seen as permanently crisis-ridden and contradictory, depending, as it does, on conflicting relations within and between social classes, business, government and society. Thus historical outcomes are the result of 'battles and struggles', rather than universalist logics binding economy and society (Clarke, 1988; Bonefeld and Holloway, 1991; Graham, 1992).

Finally, other critics, who accept the idea of an underlying logic of historical development in capitalism, have questioned the status of the conceptual edifice of French regulation theory, arguing that it is an edifice based on a *post hoc* rationalization of history, rather than an *ex ante* explanation of the mechanisms and logic of the motor of capitalist regimes and their limits (Harvey, 1989a; Salvati, 1989). This has led Salvati to conclude, echoing the criticism of Brenner and Glick (1991), that the regulation approach is 'neither theory nor history' (Salvati, 1989, p. 70).

The neo-Schumpeterian approach

Although the neo-Schumpeterian approach cannot claim the breadth of reach of the regulation approach, it shares certain similarities, and one regulationist (Boyer, 1988a) has been quite explicit about building bridges between the two approaches (see also Roobeek, 1987). There is broad agreement between the two approaches over: the systemic and cyclical nature of capitalist development; the periodization and general dynamic of Fordism; the significance of the degree of match between, in neo-Schumpeterian language, the 'techno-economic paradigm' (regime of accumulation) and the 'socio-institutional framework' (mode of regulation); and the stability of a 'long wave' or 'long cycle' of economic development. One major difference, however, is the salience attributed in the neo-Schumpeterian approach to technology and technical standards in initiating, sustaining and separating individual long waves.

This approach is most closely associated with the work on innovation during the mid-1980s by Freeman and Perez and their colleagues based at one time or another at the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at Sussex University (Freeman et al., 1982; Dosi et al., 1988; Freeman and Perez, 1988). Freeman and Perez build on a tradition first initiated by Kondratiev's work in the 1920s on fifty-year long waves of 'boom' and 'bust' in the development of capitalist economies, and then developed further by Schumpeter in the 1930s through his work on the path-breaking role of innovative entrepreneurs in giving birth to a new technical paradigm for future growth. For Freeman and Perez, the successful transition from one long wave to another is dependent, first, on 'quantum leaps' in industrial productivity, which are secured once pioneering advances in technology diffuse across the economy. Second, it is dependent on 'matching' innovations within the framework of socio-institutional norms and regulations, in order to facilitate such diffusion. Once these conditions are achieved, a new long wave of growth can be said to be in full swing, with a distinctive techno-economic paradigm that establishes a universal standard across the economy. The definition of 'innovation' is not confined narrowly to a range of new products or industrial processes. It also includes new forms of work organization and management, new high growth sectors, new transport and communications technologies, new geographies of location, and so on. However, Freeman and Perez are keen to stress the central role, within a paradigm, of 'carrier' products or industrial sectors, which act as system-wide inputs or efficiency-enhancing universal technologies (Perez, 1985).

In neo-Schumpeterian analysis, the passing age of mass production, referred to as the fourth Kondratiev or the fourth long wave, is claimed to have been underpinned by electro-mechanical technologies, the products of the mass consumption industries and oil and petro-chemicals as basic sources of cheap energy. Like the regulation approach, it identifies standardization, massification, scale economies, oligopolistic competition and mass consumption of cheap goods as the distinguishing features of the fourth Kondratiev (organized around vertically integrated and hierarchically governed large corporations). Similarly, the approach broadly agrees with the socio-institutional arrangements identified by the regulation approach, but focuses more on the state policies - from education and welfare to micro- and macroeconomic policy - which, under the banner of Keynesianism, served to sustain the virtuous link between employment, output and productivity growth.

As regards the crisis of the fourth Kondratiev, particular emphasis is placed on the dampening effect on growth of oligopolistic competi-

tion in a context of maturing technologies: a process limiting productivity gains as a consequence of increases in wages, prices and the inefficiency of large corporations. But, importantly, the crisis is also related to the mismatch between an emerging techno-economic paradigm which could renew growth, and the enduring socio-institutional framework of the fourth Kondratiev. For Freeman and Perez, the institutional legacy of the preceding paradigm is slow in changing, thus preventing the widespread diffusion of the benefits of innovation across the economy (Perez, 1986). This inertia is traced not only to the failure of contemporary neo-liberal government policies to provide coordinated and directed industrial policy action, but also to the difficulties and time lags involved in radically changing embedded socio-cultural habits and norms across the wide range of institutions which constitute the 'socio-institutional framework' (e.g. management and labour attitudes, industrial relations, working arrangements, industrial expectations, political and legislative priorities, etc.).

Notwithstanding the importance accorded by Freeman and Perez to socio-institutional factors, the neo-Schumpeterian approach has been criticized for being technologically determinist (see Elam, chapter 2 in this reader). Technology-induced changes (in products, processes, communications systems), rather than social, organizational or market changes which might influence economic efficiency and growth, are given prime position in explaining the formation and development of a long wave. As Nielsen (1991) puts it, the 'socio-institutional' is clearly perceived as subordinate to the 'techno-economic', or, expressed differently, the macroeconomy is too narrowly reduced to its technical attributes.

The flexible specialization approach

This approach to 'industrial divides' is most closely associated with the work of American sociologists Charles Sabel, Michael Piore and Jonathan Zeitlin and, more recently, Paul Hirst (Sabel, 1982, and chapter 4 in this volume; Piore and Sabel, 1984; Sabel and Zeitlin, 1985; Hirst and Zietlin, 1989, 1991). Its use of abstract theory is less pronounced than in the preceding two approaches, in part because of a conscious attempt to avoid emphasizing the role of general structural tendencies in economic and social life, and to reject a deterministic account of historical evolution and transition. Indeed, such is the eagerness of Hirst and Zeitlin (1991) to insist on these differences that it has led them to oppose vehemently any attempt to link the approach to the others, and to insist zealously on the

superiority of their own approach. The approach has a certain conceptual simplicity that is also due to its focus on the arena of production. As Nielsen (1991, p. 12) summarizes:

> Piore and Sabel (1984) base their argument on a simple conceptual distinction between two opposites of industrial production: mass production and flexible specialisation. 'Mass production' involves the use of special purpose (product specific) machines and of semi-skilled workers to produce standardised goods while 'flexible specialisation', or craft production, is based on skilled workers who produce a variety of customised goods.

At the heart of the approach lies the claim that the two industrial paradigms have coexisted since the nineteenth century, with neither exhibiting technological superiority or inevitable dominance over the other on grounds of economic efficiency. But, it is argued that at rare moments in history, when a stark choice between competing technologies and markets becomes available, one of the two paradigms may limit the other, to emerge as a prevailing international standard (although this does not necessarily mean the disappearance of the 'vanquished' paradigm). Thus, the adoption and diffusion of a paradigm is claimed to be a matter of historical circumstances and political choice rather than logical necessity. Central to this choice are claimed to be the policy decisions taken by different actors (from firms and unions to national and local government), which influence the diffusion of one or the other paradigm. At these rare historical turning points, or 'industrial divides', active choices taken in one direction or the other tend to consolidate into an epoch-making standard favouring either mass production or flexible specialization. Thus, one paradigm suffers because of the absence of supporting structures, while the other, it seems, gains in strength, because it comes to be seen as 'best practice' by industry, government and other institutions. Conceptually, it is not entirely clear how a moment of stark choice between paradigms is reached – whether it follows from the crisis of the dominant industrial paradigm, the rise of new options, a change in circumstances, or from forced policy and institutional choices with path-breaking consequences. When an explanation is offered, it tends to be based on a selective interpretation of events at such moments, rather than an analysis rooted in any theory of crisis and transition.

Piore and Sabel identify two 'industrial divides'. The first is at the turn of the century, when the emergence of mass production technology and techniques is said to have limited the growth of craft production methods in various regions of Europe. Thereafter, and

particularly after the 1920s and 1930s, mass production dominated the leading countries and leading industries, and was reinforced as a standard by the introduction of Keynesian policies designed to sustain and stabilize demand. As in the regulation approach, the guarantee of the mass consumption norm is seen to be of crucial significance; a guarantee traced to a series of state measures seeking to maximize and match supply and demand, sustain mass consumerism, avoid underconsumption, stabilize prices, etc.

The present period, dating from the stagnation of the world economy in the early 1970s, is said to constitute the second industrial divide: an open choice, as in the past, between mass production and flexible specialization (see below). It is an opportunity which springs from the general crisis of the structures of mass production, symbolized by the crisis of US Fordism. This crisis is related to two main developments. The first concerns changes in the market, notably the stagnation of demand in the course of the long recession, growing uncertainty of demand owing to the breakdown of international regulatory mechanisms such as Bretton Woods and, above all, the threat to mass consumerism posed by the growth in demand for non-standardized, better quality, short shelf-life goods. These market trends are said to constitute a problem for mass production and an opportunity for flexible specialization. The second development, also an opportunity for flexible specialization, is the rise of non-specialist and highly flexible manufacturing technologies (numerically controlled as well as non-electronic) and flexible work practices. These are said to favour smaller batch production without loss of scale economies in industrial efficiency, thus reducing the historic disadvantage of small firms and smaller units of organization. The implication, therefore, is that on this occasion, such are market and technological circumstances that an epochal reversal in the industrial paradigm towards craft production might well be possible.

The approach has been widely debated, and its dualist logic has invited strong criticism (see Elam, chapter 3 in this reader; Asheim, 1992; Solo, 1985; Frankel, 1987; Williams et al., 1987; Sayer, 1989; Smith, 1989; Amin and Robins, 1990; Hyman, 1991; Pollert, 1991; Jessop 1992b; Leborgne and Lipietz, 1992; Curry, 1993; Harrison, 1994). A number of common arguments run through the critique. One is that the theory is constructed around dual oppositions (mass production versus flexible specialisation) which not only caricature each industrial paradigm (e.g. a rigid past versus a flexible future, unskilled Fordism versus skilled flexible specialization), but also reduce a great deal of diversity on either side of the divide down to narrowly defined paradigms. Another criticism concerns the tendency to slip too easily

between voluntarism and historical logic in explaining the crossing of industrial divides - paradigms are ascribed their own developmental logic, but they are also made the object of choice, policy and politics: history by design and will. In addition, Piore and Sabel have been accused of being too naive in imagining the likelihood or possibility of a large-scale return to a craft industrial paradigm, on the grounds that the embedded structures of Fordism will persist and adapt to new circumstances rather than disappear (history is difficult to reverse). A fourth argument is that the approach makes the error of equating only industrial efficiency with competitiveness, thereby underestimating the power of the protagonists of Fordism (e.g. multinational firms) to continue to dominate markets via their grip over finance, market outlets, distribution networks, advertising and so on. Most controversial, however, has been its portrayal of a rosy, 'flexible' future across the second industrial divide, an issue taken up in the following section.

IMAGINING THE FUTURE: POST-FORDISM, NEO-FORDISM, 'AFTER'-FORDISM, FIFTH KONDRATIEV, FLEXIBLE SPECIALIZATION . . .?

All the approaches discussed above are rooted in different conceptual traditions, and all three generalize at different levels of analysis. Reading across the approaches, however, there emerges a considerable degree of consensus as regards the nature, dynamic and crisis of the passing era. In contrast, their speculations on the future are quite different from each other, varying in terms of not only the trends identified, but also the discernibility and 'fixity' of the new age, seen from the perspective of the present. This section outlines the competing visions, through a discussion of the major themes of change covered in the debate.

New macroeconomic designs

The regulationist and neo-Schumpeterian approaches are the two most rooted in economics, and most orientated towards analysis of the economy as a whole (i.e. production, distribution and exchange). The Schumpeterians consider information technology (microelectronics-based products, processes and communications networks) to lie at the core of the fifth Kondratiev. It is anticipated to be the key technology to drive future growth and to affect the behaviour of the entire economy

by raising productivity and lowering input costs in all industries, creating new industries with high levels of demand, and securing a revolutionary onslaught on space and time constraints via electronic networking. Innovation will also involve transformation within prevailing managerial best practices (Dankbaar, 1992), and introduce a new set of inter-sectoral and inter-firm relationships. Thus, the fifth Kondratiev is speculated to be innovation- and knowledge-intensive; be based on information technology carrier branches such as computers, electronics capital goods, software, telecoms, robotics, electronic data banks and information services; involve a shifting emphasis in production from scale economies, rigid technologies and compartmentalization, towards scope economies, flexible manufacturing systems and integration of design, production and marketing; involve the development of new computer networks-based forms of intra- and inter-organizational collaboration and communication; see the rise of new patterns of work including tele-working, home-working and flexible hours; involve new patterns of consumption such as tele-shopping, enabled by advanced telecommunications systems; and give rise to new geographies of production and consumption based on distance-shrinking technologies.

The vision is of a new 'cybernetic' macroeconomy. The necessity of a fifth Kondratiev, along the lines outlined above, for the survival of capitalism is taken as given by the neo-Schumpeterians. However, the transition is not assumed to be inevitable, but one predicated on profound changes in attitudes and behaviour, and institutional priorities and policies. At a governmental level, it is argued that this requires careful, planned and strategic intervention in order to remove obstacles preventing the long-term development of the new techno-economic paradigm. Such a programme is required to provide: supply-side policies in training and education so as to encourage research, innovation and new skill formation; support for technological upgrading and industry–university research links; programmes to develop advanced telecommunications networks; strategic support for new industries and new services; and support for learning and adaptation of new management and organizational cultures. Indeed, cultural changes across the institutional spectrum are posited as an essential requirement for the consolidation of the new 'information economy'.

The regulation approach, while in agreement that long-term capitalist renewal requires radical change within both the regime of accumulation and the mode of regulation, is more reticent to predict the characteristics of what comes after Fordism (Tickell and Peck, 1992). This is because it sees the present as a period of experimentation with various strategies to resolve the bottlenecks of Fordism, a period

in which particular solutions – more or less successful – will emerge. Thus against the certainty of both the neo-Schumpeterians and the flexible specialization approach (see below) concerning the 'ingredients' of a lasting solution, the regulationists argue that the shape of post-Fordism will emerge from the dialectical confrontation between rival forms. For this reason, this approach is less anxious to fix the name of the new era, hesitating between 'neo-Fordism' (to stress a strong element of continuity with Fordism), 'post-Fordism' (to denote a genuine resolution to the crisis of Fordism) and 'after-Fordism' (a translation of the original *après-fordisme*, to designate a period after Fordism rather than a new phase of capitalist development – see chapter 9 in this volume, by Peck and Tickell).

Some regulationists, however, are less reticent than the Parisian regulationists about the future. Hirsch and Esser, for example (chapter 3 in this volume; Hirsch, 1991), scan the array of dominant patterns of restructuring in Germany to outline a hauntingly pessimistic 'post-Fordist' scenario. Within the mode of accumulation, they outline five tendencies: new technology-based work, representing lay-offs, worker segmentation and social marginalization; a strengthened industrialization of the service sector, representing changes in the social structure towards white-collar strata, and the erosion of collective identities via the use of new technologies; enforced mobility in labour markets provoked by new geographies of employment, resulting in a breakdown of family and communal ties; growing social polarization between high productivity/high consumption strata and low-wage or no-wage strata; and an individualization and pluralization of lifestyles as the result of the preceding tendencies. This is a vision of the future quite at odds with the implicitly benign and socially inclusive growth model proposed by the neo-Schumpeterians, stressing, as it does, the socially divisive and alienating impact of a new technology-based era.

For Hirsch and Esser, the elements of a new mode of regulation, too, are discernible. This they characterize as a strengthening of monopolistic regulation and governance of the economy. They stress the role of advanced technologies in integrating firms and industries, of new small firm networks and of processes of international concentration and coordination in the hands of major firms and financial institutions. They signal the weakening of the trade unions as a 'regulatory' institution. They envisage a scaling down and reorientation of welfare services towards the 'economically active' groups in society. Finally, they anticipate a new corporatism involving state and industry alliances in the high technology sector and select groups of privileged workers. As with the regime of accumulation, they anticipate a post-Fordism

which abandons the universal or collective principles that Fordism had come to embrace.

In contrast, Jessop's regulationist account of post-Fordism (chapter 8 in this volume; 1992a) draws together aspects of the neo-Schumpeterian futurology and that of Hirsch and Esser (although it lacks the bleakness of the German regulationists). He too argues that many new developments in the labour process, in the macroeconomy and in the mode of regulation can be said to be genuinely prefigurative of a post-Fordism (i.e. emerging out of Fordism *and* resolving its problems). However, and significantly, he is careful to stress that a well-developed and relatively stable post-Fordist system is yet in the making, because of the absence of a dominant or binding 'mode of societalization' comparable to the role played by 'Americanism' in the Fordist era. For Jessop, the absence of a strong ideology which secures a general acceptance of the 'rules of the game' makes it premature to announce post-Fordism as a relatively stable and self-reproducing growth regime.

In contrast to Jessop and the German writers influenced by the regulation approach, the Parisian regulationists tend to be more circumspect, couching discussion of the future in terms of 'ways out of the crisis of Fordism', and thinking of post-Fordism either as a coexistence of solutions based on sectoral or national specificity or as a compromise or conflict between competing scenarios. There is a certain openness which stems from a desire to retain a vision of the future as the product of contestation, of many possibilities and unforeseeable outcomes. This is an approach stressed especially by Boyer, Coriat, Lipietz, Leborgne and Petit.

Boyer, for example, in the context of labour markets and their regulation, identifies five possible post-Fordist scenarios: flexible specialization; international Keynesian attempts to underwrite employment; market-led labour flexibility; segmented labour markets; and negotiated attempts positively to develop skills and labour resources (Boyer, 1988b). At a broader level of analysis, he reviews different theories to propose that a new industrial paradigm might consist of a composite model, incorporating different organizational forms appropriate for individual contexts. He argues, for instance, that information technology as a techno-economic paradigm might be applied for flexible mass production in modern high-tech industries, while flexible specialization might revitalize declining or craft sectors, with new versions of Fordist mass production 'exported' to developing countries or applied to the traditional consumer services (Boyer, 1991). In a similar vein, Coriat and Petit (1991) anticipate a macro-scenario presupposing the growth of advanced services and the internationalization of markets and production processes, but they warn of a failure

to change in this direction that could result from inward-looking, short-term adjustment policies by national governments.

The French regulationists are relatively open about the characteristics and likelihood of a post-Fordist macrodesign, and this is the result of on-going dialogue with other theories of transition and an appreciation of the diversity of contemporary 'on-the-ground' patterns of restructuring. Over a decade ago, however, Aglietta (1982), one of the pioneers of the regulation approach, was less equivocal about the characteristics of a durable solution to the crisis of Fordism. He imagined a *neo-Fordism*, involving the extension and deepening of the principles of 'intensive' accumulation which underpinned Fordism. Aglietta wrote of the application of Fordist methods in the service sector to raise productivity, the application of new technologies in production to increase the intensity of work and introduce new forms of labour control, and the globalization of firms with the aid of new information technology. With the passing of time, regulation theory has moved on from this position, and in so doing, it has come to imagine post-Fordist scenarios which are different from rather than an extension of Fordism.

New sociologies and geographies of industrial organization

Although the flexible specialization approach also discusses the possibility of a new macrodesign (via the pursuit of an international Keynesianism based on demand reflation), it is best known for its theorization of paradigmatic change in the nature of work and industrial organization. In presenting a stark choice between mass production and flexible specialization, it is also least equivocal about the future. Though Piore and Sabel are careful to stress that things may go either way depending on the strategic decisions taken by policy-makers and institutions, their analysis of contemporary technological and market developments tends to point the future in the direction of flexible specialization. There is a strong hint that the availability of flexible, numerically controlled machines and other multi-purpose technologies, together with the growth in markets for better quality, non-standardized products, will tip the balance in favour of flexible specialization as the staple industrial paradigm.

Flexible specialization is proposed as the industrial model best capable of producing quality goods for specialist and volatile markets, with the minimum of effort, time and cost. The principle which underlies the model is a reliance on skills, flexibility and networking between task-specialist units in order to produce changing volumes and combinations of goods without incurring productivity losses (resulting

from not utilizing sections of the workforce or the productive apparatus at any given moment).

The ideal-type consists of a set of organizational arrangements which can sustain this principle. One is the division of tasks within the production cycle between specialist, autonomously run units or independent firms, so that each unit or firm may maximize the scale economies and expertise gained from specialization in one field, but, at the same time allow the final product to be varied in volume and shape without loss of overall efficiency. Another aspect is the reintegration of research and design, management, white-collar and blue-collar work - in order to maximize on inventiveness and speed of reaction to changing market signals. A third aspect is a reversal of the Fordist and Taylorist tendency towards deskilling and worker isolation, through greater reliance on skills, polyvalence, worker participation and collaboration in the pursuit of product quality and the flow of ideas, know-how and workers between task and product areas. A fourth aspect is the decentralization of decision-making authority, so as not only to reduce worker alienation, but also to raise responsibility and responsiveness in all areas of the work. A fifth aspect is the deployment of multi-purpose technologies (rather than task-specific ones) which can be used flexibly across task and volume commitments. Related to this is a broader shift in philosophy concerning the people–machine interface, away from skill substitution and human enslavement by technology, towards the craft idea of machines as tools of work. A final aspect is the sedimentation of a culture of cooperation, trust and negotiability between firms trading with each other, as well as within firms, as a key condition underwriting the interdependence and flexibility demanded by this model of industrial organization.

This is a much less technocentric industrial paradigm than that envisaged by the neo-Schumpeterians. Further, and this is part of its appeal, it proposes a less dismal picture of industrial relations than that offered by the neo-Fordist version of the regulation approach, which anticipates further new technology-led dehumanization and atomization of work (see Witheford, 1994, for a 'workerist' critique of celebratory theories of new technology and work). Flexible specialization promises to restore dignity and skills in the workplace, as well as to establish new democratic industrial relations based on cooperation, mutual respect, dialogue and 'studied trust' between employers and employees (Piore, 1990; Sabel 1992). It could thus prefigure a less contentious 'yeoman (artisan) democracy' that replaces the Fordist model of democracy which was based on mass representation (e.g. corporatist negotiation between unions, employer federations and the state) as a general standard for social interaction and political behaviour.

The principal question raised by this interpretation of the future concerns its likelihood and whether it is representative of the most powerful experimentations in work organization today. For Sabel (chapter 4 in this volume) and his colleagues the answer seems to be a positive one based on the observation that the new industrial patterns can be observed in a number of leading-edge industries. The examples quoted have become all too familiar: technopoles such as Silicon Valley in the high-technology industries; craft-based industrial districts such as those in the 'Third Italy' which have revitalized many traditional consumer industries; speciality niches within saturated, mass industries ranging from steel and chemicals to advertising and films (see Storper, chapter 6 in this volume, on the film industry); and 'lean', high performance German, Italian or Scandinavian large companies which draw extensively on innovation, high quality products and skills in order to dominate markets. Common to all these examples is said to be an organizational structure drawing on decentralized management, worker participation, polyvalence, skills and active labour–management cooperation.

Critics, on the other hand, argue that equally or more durable solutions, which have little to do with 'yeoman democracy' and a return to craft principles, can be observed in other industrial contexts. Leborgne and Lipietz (1988) identify three possibilities: a 'neo-Taylorist' solution in contexts of weak labour representation, involving hierarchical labour control, a rigid division of tasks and no worker involvement; a 'Californian' solution echoing the Silicon Valley model of no unions, flexible wages and worker identification with corporate cultures; and the 'Kalmarian' model which takes a leaf out of the Swedish experience of combining negotiated involvement, collective bargaining, rigid wages and labour flexibility. The point made by Leborgne and Lipietz and others (Lane, 1989; Tomaney, chapter 5 in this volume) is that especially in the arena of work organization and industrial relations, solutions are the product of situated socio-cultural traditions and balances of power; thus different local and national solutions may be expected. Conceding, however, that post-Fordist times presuppose a measure of organizational flexibility, Leborgne and Lipietz (1992) argue that an 'offensive' strategy of flexibility based on strong labour rights and worker involvement logically does not rule out a 'defensive' capitalist strategy based on low and flexible wages and individualized or reduced labour rights.

Other critics argue that no discussion of post-Fordist solutions is legitimate without reference to the highly successful combinations of flexibility and rigidity as well as quality and price competitiveness, within mass production, perfected by the Japanese. The argument

here is that Japan offers a unique industrial paradigm that pulls together the scale economies and institutional advantages (e.g. industry–government links, inter-sectoral and inter-firm ties) of mass production and corporatist regulation, and the flexibility of scope and scale guaranteed through subcontracting, loose interdependencies within organizations, labour flexibility, team working, cultures of consensus and cooperation and so on. It is a model which defies the dualisms of the flexible specialization approach that force an artificial distinction between a rigid and confrontational past and a flexible and negotiated future (see Mahon, 1987; Dankbaar, 1992; Sayer and Walker, 1992; Tomaney, chapter 5 in this volume, for more on Japanization).

Observers of contemporary patterns of workplace restructuring also argue that experiments with simultaneous reliance on privileged and marginalized workers, separated by skills, gender, age and experience, is also characteristic of the West. Practices by firms involving the relocation of production in the labour markets of developing countries and less favoured regions, single-union or no-union deals, individualization of salaries, task flexibility and other erosions of worker solidarity are claimed to be symbolic of a new, and perhaps permanent, drive for flexibility and efficiency based on acute labour market fragmentation (Elger, 1991; Marginson, 1991; Pollert, 1991; Rainnie, 1993). For Alliez and Fehrer (1987), two French regulationists close to Aglietta's original line of reasoning, this new labour dualism should be interpreted as a process of further 'enslavement' of labour by capital, through 'marginalization' in the case of peripheral workers, and 'desubjectification' in the case of core workers now fully 'incorporated' by capital into its historic mission.

Another, equally polarized, debate which the flexible specialization approach has stimulated concerns the geography of post-Fordist industrial organization. Sabel (chapter 4 in this volume) makes the forceful claim that flexible specialization encourages the geographical clustering of productive activity, that is, the resurgence of locally integrated regional economies based around their specialization in particular products. Drawing on the examples of Italian industrial districts, Baden Württemberg and high-technology regions such as Silicon Valley, he suggests that the local agglomeration of the value-chain in an industry provides vital support for an industrial paradigm composed of loose confederations of specialist firms responding rapidly to changing market environments. Proximity is said to provide the social solidarity and trust, the face-to-face contact, the pool of skills and know-how, the easy access to input and output markets that such a paradigm needs. Similarly, product-based area specialization leads to

the growth of specialist services and other inputs as well as institutional support for what amounts to a central industrial cluster for a locality, thus serving to provide individual firms with a range of external economies of agglomeration. If flexible specialization comes to replace Fordism, we can expect a reversal of traditional Fordist geographies of production, which were based on national and international hierarchies of command and task distribution that allocated only partial functions to individual locations. The new age, in contrast, promises a return to self-sustaining regional economies: a new inter-regional equilibrium.

The work of Californians Allen Scott and Michael Storper in the late 1980s draws a similar conclusion, but via a slightly different line of argument (Scott, 1986, 1988; Storper and Scott, 1989). Scott and Storper note a widespread tendency towards vertical disintegration (i.e. decentralization of production and management) within and between firms, not only in the context of specialized or new product markets, but also within once oligopolistic or mass markets such as the US film industry (see Storper's detailed account of vertical disintergration in Hollywood in chapter 6 of this volume). For Scott and Storper, the crisis of Fordism and the attendant uncertainty and instability in markets represent a decisive break with the industrial geography of large, vertically integrated, corporations relying upon internal scale economies to service secure markets. The crisis represents a general transition towards specialization and horizontal inter-firm networks as a basis for coping with risk and uncertainty (see Henry, 1992, for a critique of this assumption). It is suggested that, in time, external economies of scope and transaction cost reductions associated with externalization will irreversibly replace corporate reliance on internal economies, and set in train a transition towards flexibly specialized industrial systems. The economics of this transition are explained through a mixture of Marxist arguments concerning new developments in the technical and the social division of labour, arguments within the theory of the firm concerning decisions to 'make' or 'buy', and debates in economic geography relating to the salience of agglomeration economies in industrial organization (see chapter 6 by Storper). Reference to the latter allows the Californians to concur with Sabel that 'vertical disintegration encourages agglomeration and agglomeration encourages vertical disintegration' (Scott, 1988, p. 27). In their more recent work, Scott and Storper concede that the geography of vertical disintegration may involve internationalization of production, but they continue to stress the learning and innovation advantages of the regions of industrial agglomeration (Scott, 1992; Storper, 1992, 1993).

Against the 'localization' thesis, my chapter with Malmberg (chapter 7) in this reader suggests that contemporary patterns of industrial restructuring, particularly those involving multinational corporations, point in the direction of globalization of production and corporate reach (see also Amin and Dietrich, 1991). It reviews corporate and policy trends in Europe and the literature on contemporary international corporate strategies, to draw the conclusion that through increased merger activity as well as new forms of vertical disintegration and networking, multinational firms increasingly rely on the globalization of their activities to raise both efficiency and profitability. Thus, the development of global geographies, rather than local agglomeration, is considered to be a key driving force beyond Fordism.

The 'discovery' of global hierarchies and global networks need not, of course, contradict the idea of a return to regional economies if globalization is seen as a necklace of local industrial complexes (Storper, 1992). This view, however, is not consistent with other interpretations which see globalization as a threat to local autonomy and as a substitute for local linkage formation; a process, as in the past, of uneven distribution of growth opportunities between different types of region. For instance, Castells (1989) envisages a future of global economic flows and few local fixities; Sassen (1991) emphasizes the concentration of global power and influence in a small number of world cities; Dicken et al. (1994) fail to find convincing evidence to show that inward investment in a diversity of regional contexts has become sufficiently 'locally embedded' to constitute local growth poles; Amin and Thrift (1992, 1994) argue that localization tends to be confined only to a restricted number of cities and regions of the world which can offer information, innovation, knowledge and institution-rich environments; Cooke et al. (1992) deploy the concept 'global localization' to stress the uneven articulation between global forces and local opportunities; and Lipietz (1993, p. 16) reiterates the old truism that 'there can only be a certain "type of region" which wins . . . in international economic competition'. These observations, taken together, tend to interpret post-Fordist industrial geography as 'global times', bringing 'good times' to only certain localities rather than all regions.

Policy and politics beyond Fordism

Throughout the post-Fordist debate, there is agreement that no transition to a new industrial paradigm or a new macroeconomic growth

regime will be successful or durable without appropriate changes in the regulatory environment. There is also widespread condemnation of contemporary market-led solutions, on the grounds that an infant macrodesign requires strategic, active and collective institutional support in order to develop and mature. Thus, neo-conservative liberalism, which manipulates markets in favour of the strongest economic and social actors, is rejected as a short-term, backward-looking and individualistic solution to a problem of structural transition that requires a lot more.

However, as regards the ingredients of an alternative regulatory solution, there remains considerable difference within the debate. For neo-Schumpeterians, public policy should seek to identify the emerging technologies of strategic importance and adopt programmes that favour their diffusion across the entire economy. It should seek to encourage new industries, the technological upgrading of firms, the diffusion of new standards and the installation of advanced communications networks, provide support for risk-taking Schumpeterian entrepreneurs who innovate but lack business acumen, and invest in education and training in new areas of knowledge, competence and skill.

Active supply-side intervention is also favoured by the flexible specialization approach, but beyond efforts simply to upgrade technological standards. Hirst and Zeitlin (1991) provide a useful summary of policy priorities for a new manufacturing paradigm. They argue that the challenge of flexible specialization must shift the focus away from classic Keynesian strategies of demand management (since mass consumption is no longer vital), state-directed industrial planning (since central institutions will prove to be inflexible) and state policies encouraging concentration of ownership and scale economies (since 'giantism' has proven to be inefficient and inflexible). They argue instead that strategies should seek to capture the institutional characteristics common to the regions in which flexible specialization has come to the fore. The emphasis thus falls on local solutions, and they isolate in particular one factor without which flexible specialization cannot be nurtured, namely 'the existence of political, normative and organisational means of creating relationships which foster co-operation and co-ordination' (Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991, p. 44). They stress that a local 'public sphere', drawing upon a culture of local identification and trust, is necessary both for strategies to develop small firm industrial districts and for strategies to stimulate the reorganization of multinational firms into constellations of semi-autonomous units embedded within the local economy:

> Trust needs to be institutionalised and co-operation presupposes forums in which it can be developed. This is the most important lesson for policymakers seeking to revitalise declining regions or to sustain previously successful industrial districts. . . . Politics in this sense is broader than the policies of public agencies; it involves the creation of a regional or sector 'public sphere' in which firms, labour interests, officials and politicians can interact and co-operate. *(Hirst and Zeitlin, 1991, pp. 44–5)*

Theirs is a solution requiring the construction of formal and informal ties, networking between public and private agencies, the provision of collective services and public policies to prevent encroachment by investors threatening to break up the cohesiveness of industrial districts: a firm-centred local communitarianism.

This utopia, of course, presupposes that a ubiquitous return to a world of autonomous local economies and local commitments is possible – an assumption which is difficult to sustain if it is accepted that the modern world is composed of many fractured local economies, disempowered regions and fragmented local cultures (Amin and Thrift, 1994). In such a context, the sufficiency of local, flexible specialization-based institutional solutions is open to question. Lipietz (1987, 1992), for instance, makes the case for a neo-Keynesian expansionary programme at the international level, which would include a series of financial, trade and political agreements designed to revitalize demand in both developed and developing countries. Without such intervention, the success of (local) supply-side interventions risks being undermined by a lack of overall demand in the macroeconomy.

Regulationists, as regards the nature of supply-side intervention for a new growth regime, identify the need for change in a broad range of areas including the wage relation and labour markets, corporate organizational norms, inter-firm relations, rules of competition, rules in money and credit markets, and so on (see Jessop, chapter 8 in this volume, for a summary). In other words, a case is made for a new mode of regulation involving pervasive institutional change across the entire economic system (production, distribution and exchange).

But within the approach, there remain strong differences of opinion as regards the characteristics and geography of a post-Fordist mode of regulation. The differences crystallize around discussions on the state, and are well illustrated by the positions taken by Jessop, Peck and Tickell, and Mayer in this reader. Jessop posits the transition from a Keynesian welfare state to a 'Schumpeterian workfare state' which will be governed by the aim 'to promote product, process, organizational, and market innovation in open economies' (hence Schumpeterian) and

'to subordinate social policy to the needs of labour market flexibility and/or the constraints of international competition' (hence workfare). He identifies three variants of this principle in a post-Fordist future: neo-liberalism; neo-corporatist strategies drawing upon a selection of institutional interests, and mediated by the state; and neo-statism (state-guided economic reorganization).

A second aspect stressed by Jessop is the 'hollowing out' of the national state in an emerging context of a simultaneously internationalized and regionalized post-Fordist accumulation regime. The process is said to represent a reordering of state–economy relations and state functions in a dual direction. The first is an enhanced role for supranational institutions and political configurations in providing regulatory authority and strategic guidance for the world economy. The second is a transfer of authority downwards to the local state, which increasingly assumes the role of customizing local supply-side conditions to underpin Schumpeterian competitiveness. Peck and Tickell, on the other hand, argue that a coherent post-Fordist mode of regulation has yet to stabilize, which is why the crisis of Fordism continues, in a desperate search for a 'new institutional fix'. Seeing the present as a crisis of 'after-Fordism', they also dismiss the neo-liberal option which prevails today, as a crisis-prolonging political-economic programme serving only to promote 'systemic instability', as 'business cycles swing ever more violently, while localized growth is increasingly fragile and short-lived'. They therefore disagree with Jessop's portrayal of neo-liberalism as one potential post-Fordist regulatory option. In the same vein, they argue that the twin geographies of hollowing out belong to the 'after-Fordist crisis'. For them, the rise of local and supranational regulatory experiments is a symptom of absent systemic regulation and represents 'responsibility without power' in the case of the former and 'power without responsibility' in the case of the latter. They argue instead the case for a supralocal regulatory framework which would involve coordination at national and supranational level to harness and exceed the institutions thrown up by neo-liberalism.

Mayer, however, tends to share Jessop's evaluation of the increased salience of the local in a post-Fordist regulatory regime. Focusing on contemporary shifts in urban policy and politics, she draws the conclusion that many developments of the 1980s constitute a genuine reformulation of economic and social policies in the direction of a post-Fordist Schumpeterian entrepreneurialism. She notes the proliferation of local measures, institutions and coalitions, and their orientation towards 'the entrepreneurial mobilization of indigenous potential', as a genuine replacement for the overbearing, hierarchical Fordist state,

serving to secure the conditions for a new, flexible growth model. Indeed, she goes so far as to suggest that such changes at the local level might be prefigurative of a new, post-Fordist, politics. Echoing the 'local communitarianism' of Sabel and his colleagues, she contends that a more inclusive, pluralist and democratic institutional politics could be in the making. Her argument is that the new urbanism is producing an innovative political culture which draws upon coordination between different policy areas (from technology policy to education and welfare policies), an expansion in the sphere of local political action (to involve unions, local authorities, investors, planners, research centres, training agencies, voluntary agencies, etc.) and the rise of 'new bargaining systems based on negotiation'. In short, a better form of democracy.

For regulationists, discussion of the shape of future institutional politics is relevant not only as an avenue for exploring beyond the authoritarian centralism of neo-liberal conservatism, but also in terms of its longer-term appropriateness for a new growth regime. The concept 'societal paradigm', theorized as a precondition for a stable growth regime, refers to common 'ways of doing things', including the nature of political discourse and representation. The nature of the relationship between post-Fordism and democracy is explored by Lipietz in this reader. He characterizes Fordism as a hierarchical democracy built around an 'organicist' (hierarchical, but collective) commitment to society-wide redistribution of the fruits of growth via a top-down politics. He identifies the 'liberal-productivism' of the 1980s, based on market solutions, individualism and entrepreneurialism, as a serious contender for the future, but rejects it as a model in which democracy will retreat in terms of both legitimating a philosophy of no societal obligations as well as placing restrictions on who may participate in politics. Lipietz argues that another, more democratic, alternative to both Fordism and liberal-productivism is possible, both as better politics and as new growth regime. He describes the 'alternative' as one which remains socially inclusive but non-hierarchical, and one which defends actively the principles of collective participation, negotiation, 'dynamic guarantee of employment', ecological sanity, the enhancement of free time, the defence of socially useful work and the transformation of the welfare state (based on income redistribution) into the 'welfare community' (in defence of the welfare of communities).

This is a vision of participatory democracy which draws upon aspects of institutional change identified by Mayer at the local level. But significantly, for Lipietz, it is a grand design, a model for the future, which will not follow inevitably from the new institutional configurations of today. Instead, he argues that it needs to be constructed and

fought for. Lipietz calls it a democracy in the making, not a promised outcome, since it involves radically new, non-Fordist, forms of political engagement in pursuit of a radically new set of expectations of social and economic progress: 'a continent to be discovered'. Thus, with Lipietz, the transition to a new societal mode is made a question of politics and political choices. The importance of a need to construct actively an alternative vision of societal goals is too easily forgotten by some accounts seeking a new political project, which have conceded too much to the individualism, the consumerism, the fragmented politics and the subjectivism of contemporary neoliberalism, seeing them as 'natural' outcomes of advanced society and therefore the stuff of an alternative socialist politics (e.g. Hall and Jacques, 1989).

One problem within Lipietz's analysis, however, relates to the tendency to see the politics of transition as relatively open and those of a new paradigm as relatively circumscribed. There is a hint that the period of transition between phases of capitalist development is the moment of confrontation between radical political alternatives, while once a 'societal mode' is established, the 'rules of the game' settle to delimit the political arena. Such an interpretation could be a sticking point for many critics on the Left, uncomfortable with the idea of stable political settlements, and choosing instead to view capitalist development as permanently crisis-ridden and a constant battle between irreconcilable interests. The latter perspective allows interpretation of the timing of political transition and the destabilization of a hegemonic project to remain an open question and a matter of permanent struggle. It thus allows one, 'from a political perspective, to theorise areas of antihegemony, of contradictory development, in order to create openings for projects of social transformation' (Graham, 1992, p. 409).

Post-Fordist city lives and lifestyles

A final theme developed in this reader relates to social and cultural change. Normally in the literature, the term 'post-Fordism' is associated with economic and institutional change, while the term 'postmodernism' is associated with change in the arena of consumption, aesthetics, culture and lifestyle. However, for observers concerned with the totality of change today, not only are the two arenas representative of a single, overarching transition, they are also inseparable. For Stuart Hall (1988, p. 28), one epithet captures both:

> If 'post-Fordism' exists then, it is as much a description of cultural as of economic change. Indeed, that distinction is now quite useless. Culture has ceased to be, if it ever was, a decorative addendum to the 'hard world' of production and things, the icing on the cake of the material world . . . Through design, technology and styling, 'aesthetics' has already penetrated the world of modern production. Through marketing, layout and style, the 'image' provides the mode of representation of the body on which so much of modern consumption depends.

The 'aestheticization of commodities' and the 'commodification of aesthetics' are two aspects of the emerging age which serve to blur the traditional distinction between economic and cultural activity. The first refers to the embellishment of products, artifacts, buildings, workplaces, infrastructure and so on, as a means of enlivening everyday life at the same time as legitimating consumerism and social acceptance of the imperatives of capitalism. The second refers to the increasing transformation of culture and cultural activity, especially leisure and recreation, into cultural industries, that is, commodities sold in the market to individual consumers who, in turn, increasingly identify cultural gratification with consumption, rather than as an independent activity, geared towards, say, creative learning (Urry, 1990).

'Post-modernist' theory, in contrast, tends to focus on and 'celebrate the penetration of aesthetics into everyday life and the ascendancy of popular culture over the high arts' (Hall, 1988, p. 25). It notes that the post-modern condition increasingly blurs image and reality, prefers kitsch over high art, is interested in appearance and the superficial, and celebrates cultural diversity, subjectivism and 'ideals of the moment' over universal and collective metaphors of progress. The theory offers a perspective on contemporary cultural transformation, without, however, exploring in any depth the connections with the economic and political changes identified in the post-Fordist literature.

One notable exception is the work of David Harvey (1989a, 1991, and chapter 12 in this reader), who has sought to relate the rise of post-modern culture and society to the imperatives of a post-Fordist economy (which he calls 'flexible accumulation'). For Harvey, the link and its contradictions are starkly represented in the city, that is, in contemporary urban life. His chapter in this reader (chapter 12), based on his observations on urban transformation in the United States, considers three aspects of the post-Fordist/post-modern city – aspects with worrying social implications. One aspect, which he calls the 'production of symbolic capital', refers to the exploitation of differentiated markets, through the enticement of middle and high income groups into accumulating status-enhancing luxury goods. The

effect of this process is not only the spatial and social segregation within cities of the affluent from others unable to acquire 'symbolic' capital, but also the acquisition of greater power in urban politics by the former because of their privileged position in an urban economy increasingly based on consumption priorities (see also Zukin, 1992).

The second aspect, called the 'mobilization of spectacle', refers to the enormous proliferation in recent years, as a result of active support from the state (Harvey, 1989b), of shopping and leisure 'experiences', such as shopping complexes, marinas, Chinatowns and so on, as a means of boosting mass consumerism. This turning of cities into an arena of spectacle and play is seen to represent a further division between those who can and those who cannot take part in the spectacle, but also, more importantly, a redirection of urban policy and political priorities away from investment in production and from meeting social needs (see also chapter 10 by Mayer).

The third aspect of post-Fordist urban change stressed by Harvey (and echoing Esser and Hirch's analysis in chapter 3) is an epidemic rise in poverty and informal activity (from odd-jobbing and domestic work to drug-trafficking and prostitution) associated with post-Fordist deindustrialization and the emergence of the flexibly organized economy. It is a process which has created a vast underclass of low-income or no-income communities increasingly abandoned by welfare programmes, and isolated from areas of the city 'embellished' for the well-off. This aspect of urban social life, with its stark cultural outcomes related to crime, poverty, degradation, dehumanization and isolation, is conspicuously absent in post-modernist accounts of city life, focusing, as they do, on the new consumerism and on urban aesthetics. In Britain, an interpretation of city life celebrating cultural pluralism and cafe cultures is unashamedly proposed by theorists and planners keen to imagine the 'good' city (e.g. Mulgan, 1989; Montgomery, 1990).

Not all accounts of changing city cultures share this up-beat bias. The chapter by Featherstone (chapter 13) asks whether the emerging post-modern city cultures and lifestyles represent 'enclaved' experiences, for the better-off, in specific urban locations. Like Harvey, he argues that the principle of 'city as play-pen' conceals stark differences between the lifestyles of different social groups. However, he tends not to distance himself from the post-modernist interpretation of cities of tomorrow as centres of consumption, aesthetics and cultural activity. He appears to accept, perhaps because of his focus on cultural issues, that the city has become less a site of production and work and more a site of consumption and play - the most vivid symbol of the post-modern condition. He discusses, for instance, the greater aetheticization of the urban fabric and the daily lives of people, the development

of new consumption and leisure activities (e.g. museums, theme parks, shopping centres) and the gentrification of selected city areas. His analysis thus tends to endorse the idea of the city as fun and spectacle, as its citizens become recast as consumers.

A very different story emerges from Christopherson's analysis of the contemporary American city (chapter 14). Echoing Harvey, Mike Davis (1990) on Los Angeles and other American urban political economists (e.g. Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991, on New York), she argues that the post-Fordist city has ceased to be a place of encounter, cultural mixture and a public sphere open to all citizens. Instead, she argues that the contemporary stress within urban policy and city politics on consumption and consumerism has destroyed the idea of social citizenship and the idea of public sphere which was present in the Fordist city, having replaced it with the credo that city spaces are privatized places of consumption (Davis, 1990, refers to 'Fortress LA' in relation to Los Angeles). She contends that this is a turn with nightmarish consequences for marginalized sections of society, now kept out of public spaces (libraries, streets, shopping centres, select neighbourhoods, parks, churches, etc.), as these areas are turned into 'safe' places open only to people valued as consumers or producers. Further exclusion, she points out, has come from the increasing orientation of local politics towards a defence of communities of self-interest and consumer rights, while the 'old' politics of universal access to housing, health care, public services and so on are abandoned. The post-Fordist city is thus conceived as an arena of exclusion and private spaces, as it 'comes to be dominated by security cages and a honeycomb of residential and business fortresses'. This vision of the city as a segregated and excluding setting contrasts starkly with the concept of the city as post-modern play-pen. The latter concept displays a certain complacence as regards the status quo, while the former demands urgent corrective action to restore social justice and social citizenship in our cities (Harvey, 1992).

Like the other themes of post-Fordist transition discussed in this book, here too the future is contested. The differences in perspective will need to be debated, questioned and tested against contemporary developments. Ultimately, perhaps only time and the forces of history will reveal the true phantoms and fantasies of post-Fordism. It is hoped, however, that this reader might help in laying down the conceptual foundations for making sense of the future as it unfolds.

NOTES

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