

Notes on post Post Fordism.

1. Fordism was a period of capitalism centred round the mass production of commodities, and the attendant changes in consumption, finance, labour, corporate organisation and macro economic management that allowed the economies of mass production to be realised.
2. Post Fordism arose from changes in mass production that allowed it to be integrated more closely with the specificities of consumption, market segments, and unpredictable movements in consumer choice. It shifted power from mass producers to distributors, who operated the bridgeheads between consumers and producers.
3. This was the period of ascendancy of the retailers, who were in a position to capture economies of scope as well as those of scale. As with Fordism, there were changes in modes of consumption, in labour contracts and types of labour, in the role of product and service innovation, in finance and the centrality of logistics.
4. Since the turn of the century a new mode of economy is emerging whose centre of gravity is no longer production delivered to consumers in a linear fashion, but of the incorporation of consumers into production – the expansion of prosumption - when the consumer becomes the producer, or interconnects to production not as a passive consumer but as an active contributor to the type of product required, and how it could be produced.
5. What becomes important is not the factory or the supermarket – the material producers and distributors of commodities – but platforms, tools, protocols, and forms of resource allocation which enables the consumers to play this prosumer role.
6. The web is the new infrastructure for the transformation of the informational economy of late capitalism. This transformation has a number of dimensions:
 - Consumer knowledge; it allows consumers to register information about the consumer experience of others; mutual recommendations; rankings. This enables consumers to access goods and services whose producers would be drowned out in the marketing/advertising of the major brands. It opens up the long tail.
 - Developing a prosumer economy, where citizens share information and knowledge about their own production (the self care of certain chronic diseases for example, or post natal maternity groups).
 - The prosumer as innovator – either outside the market through open source software, or inside the market through the mobilisation of distributed knowledge and ideas.

7. One of the shifts to which this gives rise is the development of a support economy, where new services emerge that are on the side of the citizen and re-bundle the economy into packages that are geared to the individual and their close partners and family. This could be seen merely as a change in the sphere of circulation. It is this, but it is a change that reflects the development of the labour process, where the citizen's self work (formerly marginalised and termed domestic labour) moves to the centre ground of the economy.
8. The new means of communication are also used by Fordist and post Fordist capital as a new and more effective means of marketing. This is the basis of Google's wealth, and of Murdoch's move into the world of web 2.0. From this perspective the age of Google is an age of a transformation of marketing – again a development in the sphere of circulation – rather than production.
9. The rise of the cultural industries reflects the tension. On the one hand a reflection of the power of prosumption and citizen production, on the other the attempt to harness culture and sport to the marketing requirements of the traditional economy. Football is a good example of the new production process and the economy of culture. Is this to develop as an adjunct to capital, or does it offer the basis for the surpassing of capital: contrast Barcelona or Real Madrid with Manchester United.
10. Treating the changes as merely a shift in the mode of circulation would be to ignore not only the development of pro-sumption, but also the change taking place in production. Here we get the developments made possible by the information revolution leading to continuous innovation, and the labour process of innovation itself becoming central to the characterisation of capital's current epoch. The development of the green economy would be an example. Or of bio tech. We are dealing with a labour process of scientific and cultural labour, rather than the simple volume production of material goods. Abstract knowledge as the principal productive force.
11. Virno discusses a post Fordism which is closer to what I refer to as a post-post Fordism. He sees the opposition of the 60s and 70s as a rejection of capitalism/work/the traditional; formulations of socialism. Reflected in the development of individuation – of the recentering on the person, no longer simply the subject of statistical governance.
12. Post Fordism was able to respond to this, but now it has gone a step further, with the individuated citizens taking production into their own hands and capital having to re-organise that. Post Fordism the first response, but now being overtaken.
13. For Virno capital's response has been to create the communism of capital, incorporating extra-productive life and all its features and capacities – of personality, imagination, emotion – into its system of accumulation. In doing so it starts to dissolve the distinction of working life and non working life. The former could be called paid unemployment, the latter unpaid employment.

What is paid and unpaid becomes in part a political decision. Capital has incorporated the rejectionism of the 60s and 70s into a new round of accumulation. Virno thus against Gorz, who says one should ignore the sphere of labour and its transformation, and concentrate on reducing working hours to allow for human development outside formal production.

14. Welcome in short to the eras of informal labour, and to organisational forms which enables it. Virno says however that there is no one dominant form, but rather a multitude of types of labour.
15. The superstructure become the material base.
16. So key features of the post-post Fordist era:
 - Individuation/personalisation/the development of personal capacity
 - Pro-sumption and the support economy
 - Scientific and creative labour to the fore
17. We can analyse the impact of the above in key sectors of the modern economy: culture, health, education, transport, and tourism.
18. The task then is to trace through the effects of the above on organisational and political forms, the reforming the topography of the economy, the melting of some boundaries and the creation of new ones.

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