

# *Global Post-Fordism and Concepts of the State*

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Following a review of the literature on the State and some of the basic features of global post-Fordism, it is maintained that global post-Fordism can be synthesized through a set of four dialectical relationships: deregulation/regulation, fragmentation/coordination, mobility/embeddedness and empowerment/disempowerment. Moreover, it is argued that: 1) the State in global post-Fordism cannot be thought of exclusively in national terms; 2) its re-conceptualization must entail a transnational dimension; 3) the State cannot be conceptualized exclusively in terms of formal public appearances, agents and agencies; and 4) non-public apparatuses, agents and agencies must be included in the analysis.

## *Introduction*

The Wageningen workshop was the last of a series of meetings initiated in Columbia, Missouri, in 1991 with an international conference on "The Globalization of the Agricultural and Food Order." At that time it was decided to create a research group that, through a series of workshops, would seek to identify the changes undergone by the State in the context of the development of the new global socio-economic system. In essence, the basic assumption was that the relationship between the polity and the socio-economic sphere has traditionally been studied employing a nation-centered concept of the State, which the globalization of production and consumption processes has made increasingly questionable. It was, therefore, decided that the new forms through which the economy-polity relationship is developing and the analytical tools to study it need to be investigated.

The outcome of these workshops has been the production and circulation of a wealth of research that has addressed various aspects of the process of transformation of the State and of the global economy. Moreover, through discussion and debate it has been possible to identify some fundamental elements for the re-conceptualization of the State. These elements will be presented in the following pages. As a note of caution, it should be stressed that these reflections remain tentative due to the limited

amount of time spent by this group studying the issue and to the rapid change occurring at the socio-economic level. Further research and discussion are needed.

This article is divided into three sections. First, a brief review of the literature on the State in the global economy and on the emergence of the "new" state is presented. This review, circulated previously to those attending the Wageningen meeting, served as background for the preparation of papers to be discussed. This section is reproduced here to maintain continuity in the discussion. The second section is another review of the most relevant aspects of the new international division of labor, and reflects our overall understanding of the organization of the global economy. The new international division of labor has often been referred to as globalization, post-Fordism, sloanism, and a host of other names. For convenience only, the term "global post-Fordism" will be used. The final section focuses on elements for the re-conceptualization of the State in the period of global post-Fordism.

### *Theories of the State in the Sociological Literature*

The role of the State in society has been a central theme of sociological debate in recent years (Block, 1980; Domhoff, 1979; Offe, 1985; Poulantzas, 1978), and theories of the State have been increasingly employed to address issues in the area of sociology of agriculture (Bonanno, 1987a, 1987b; Friedland, 1983; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Gilbert and Howe, 1991; Green, 1987). In this debate, the State has been identified as exhibiting one of the following characteristics: (a) an institution instrumentally controlled by elites; (b) an entity endowed with relative autonomy; (c) an entity that has its own agenda and is autonomous; and (d) an institution in which

the instrumental dimension and the autonomous dimension are both contained in the State's historical role.

### **The Instrumentalist Position**

The instrumentalist account views the State as either an instrument for promoting the common interests of elites (Offe and Ronge, 1979) or as a committee manipulated by these elites (Carnoy, 1984). Drawing from interpretations of historical accounts of the development of capitalism, the instrumentalist approach emphasizes the direct control that the ruling groups exert in all fundamental aspects of society including the economy and polity. This direct control is the condition for the existence of the existence of institutions such as the State. In the current debate two types of instrumental theories have emerged. The first calls for an identity between elites and the State officialdom (Domhoff, 1967; 1979;<sup>1</sup> Miliband, 1969, 1970). In this case, State bureaucrats tend to belong to the same class or classes that dominate society and are bound to it by common educational backgrounds, friends, and family relations. The second theory, which has been labeled "State Monopoly Capital Theory," indicates that the monopolistic-corporate fractions of the economic elite exercise direct control over the State (O'Connor, 1973a, 1973b). Essentially, it is maintained that the control that monopolistic-corporate groups exercise over the economy entails, almost automatically, control over the State.

### **The Relative Autonomy Position**

The theoretical and empirical bases of the instrumental approach have been criticized by studies that have emphasized the complex character of the relationship between the economy and the polity. Moreover, empirically observed discrepancies between the action of the State and that of the ruling groups have cast

doubts on the ability of these groups to directly control the polity. Drawing from classical works developed within the political economy approach, and more recent formulations that emphasize the role that ideology, the polity and the superstructure in general play in the process of the development of capitalism (Gransci, 1971, 1975; Habermas, 1975; Horkheimer, 1974; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972; Lukacs, 1971; Marcuse, 1964), the relative autonomy approach underscores the partial independence of superstructural elements from the economic structure. Accordingly, it calls for the relative autonomy of the State (an element of the superstructure) from the economy (the structure) (Block, 1977, 1980; Poulantzas, 1978; Offe and Ronge, 1979).

It is argued that the State reproduces class relations not because one class or fraction of a class directly controls it, but because the State is interested in reproducing the social relationships that support the dominant socioeconomic system (Offe and Ronge, 1979). Proponents of this approach (Block, 1977, 1980; Poulantzas 1978; Offe, 1985) suggest that the independence of the State from the elites derives from its ability to mediate the short term interests of class fractions within the dominant bloc and, simultaneously, to ensure the continuation of capitalism as a dominant mode of production. At the same time, however, the State can only favor the economic elites to a certain degree because of its need to legitimize its actions. Legitimization involves developing a consensus on political strategies which are conducive to the maintenance of the status quo.

As indicated by Offe (1985), the inability of capitalism to maintain adequate levels of economic growth increasingly requires the intervention of the State. Such intervention tends to penetrate new and expanding spheres of action outside the traditional regulatory competence of the State (Block 1980). Accordingly, the problem of implementing legitimation in-

creases with the recurrent crises of accumulation of capital. Accumulation and legitimation, then, remain the conditions under which modern capitalism can expand. However, legitimation contradicts accumulation, as resources are withdrawn from the social actors in charge of accumulating (economic elites) to be utilized by the social actors in charge of administration (the officialdom of the State). Changes in favor of one or the other group of actors triggers crisis. A reduction in the economic solvency of the State could generate an inability to regulate the socio-economic sphere and to overcome present elements of crisis. An increase in transfer of resources from the economic elites to the State would signify a reduction of the potential for accumulation and a drainage of capital which would be detrimental for both groups in question. It follows that the State is called upon to mediate the contradiction between accumulation and legitimation, a task that the State is only partially able to manage.

### **The State-Centered Theory**

Yet another view of the State comes from state centered theorists who contend that the polity has its own interests and agenda apart from the dominant elites, but that the autonomy of the polity can rise or decline in significance (Hooks, 1990; Orloff and Skocpol, 1984). This approach emphasizes the politicized workings of the State in developing and implementing new policies. Skocpol and Finegold (1982), using studies of the agricultural policies of the New Deal, assert that the polity acts autonomously by implementing policies contrary to the wishes of the capitalist class. Prechel (1990) uses the steel industry during World War II to show that the government chose production targets and forced expansion of production against the wishes of the steel manufacturers, supporting the idea of the polity's autonomy.

### The Mixed Approach

The theories cited above have generally been employed in exclusive terms (for the debate in rural sociology see Bonanno, 1987a, 1987b; Green, 1987, 1989). An analysis explicitly rejecting the separation between the instrumentalist and relative autonomy positions has been provided by Friedland (1983, 1991) who contends that the role of the State in society is not given or fixed; rather it depends upon specific historical circumstances. Indeed, these circumstances are the sources of an instrumentalist or autonomous posture of the State in society. Employing the cases of various agricultural commodities, he demonstrates that the State is simultaneously called upon to organize various interests of dominant elites and to mediate between the elite's interests and opposing interests emerging from other classes (relative autonomy theory). He also demonstrates that in specific instances the State operates as an instrument of dominant elites, as the latter directly and effectively control the action of the former (instrumentalist theory). Empirically, he concludes, neither theory is sufficient to describe the complex patterns of State involvement in society. Paradoxically, each theory becomes correct under differing circumstances.

As underscored by many students (Bonanno, 1987b; Carnoy, 1984; Green, 1987; O'Connor, 1973a, 1973b, 1986), the various theories of the State contain a number of important similarities. Among these are the overall tenets that economic growth and capital accumulation are not possible without the aid of the State and that the State cannot exist without the continuous existence of an accumulation process. In more specific terms this signifies, first, that accumulation of capital, economic growth, and the established position of the elites in society depend upon the ability of the State to maintain the conditions necessary for the reproduction of capital. Second,

accumulation of capital must be legitimated and the State provides such legitimation through the mediation of the various interests in society. This phenomenon refers to both mediation among various elites and among these elites and other groups. Third, the State obtains its financial resources from the taxation of revenue generated through the accumulation process. Accordingly, the continuous existence of the accumulation process through economic growth is paramount for the existence of the State. In essence, for all the above mentioned schools of thought there is an intrinsic relationship between the process of capitalist development and the existence of the State apparatus.

Another similarity shared by these approaches, central to the present research, is the nation-centered conceptualization of the State. Specifically, these approaches assume that the polity and the socio-economic sphere are bounded within the same spatial context represented by the nation-state. It is in this context that the polity can aid and regulate the development of the economy and the latter can provide the basic financial resources for the continuous existence of the former.

A host of recent studies, which have carried out empirical analyses adopting the nation-centered concept of the State, exemplify this position. Hooks (1990) examines the USDA and its actions within the agricultural sector in several different time periods to find support for a state-centered theory, identifying the State within the U.S. political apparatus. A similar understanding of the State is employed by Devine (1985), who examines social investment and social consumption outlays in the U.S. to support a political economy perspective. Quadagno (1984) looks at the Social Security Act of 1935 to support the theory of the U.S. State's relative autonomy in operating within the national sphere. Within the sociology of agriculture, Gilbert and Howe (1991)

attempt to demonstrate the superiority of the relative autonomy theory in regards to the Agriculture Adjustment Administration's socio-economic impact on farmers, again within a national context. Finally, Green's (1987) examination of the structural changes within the national flue-cured tobacco industry posits that capital has gained power from the State.

The debate on the role of the State has been redefined by scholarship in the sociology of agriculture and sociology of the economy. This scholarship has underscored the emergence of new forms of the State that transcend the nationally-centered forms discussed in the literature. Various authors have hypothesized the existence of embryonic forms of supranational or transnational forms of State. Following is a brief review of this literature.

### *Current Status of the Literature on the "New" State*

The recent debate on the relationship between the transnationalization of the economic sphere and the State underscores the effects that changes in the former have generated for the latter. In previous socio-economic phases, i.e., the national and multinational phases (Bonanno, 1987a, 1991:21-22), the primary roles of the State were those in support of capital accumulation and social legitimation (O'Connor, 1973, 1986). The manners in which the State performs actions aimed at fostering accumulation and legitimation have been called into question now that the accumulation of capital has entered its transnational phase. A number of analyses have delineated both the limits of State action domestically and the emergence of a transnational State. Four positions exemplify the various understandings of the role of the State in globalized post-Fordism.<sup>2</sup>

The first position interprets the State in terms of class control. This position is exem-

plified by Friedland (1991, 1994) who has emphasized that transnationalization of the economy requires the emergence of a State apparatus which can assert its powers beyond the boundaries of the nation. Historically, the State has emerged to minimize uncertainties in the accumulation of capital, to create a climate of business confidence. This process must be continued in the new transnational scenario if accumulation is to continue without unbearable contradictions. More specifically, given the continuation of conflict among various fractions of capitals (particularly between domestic capital and transnational capital) and between the interests of capital in general and subordinate social groups (environmental movements, consumer movements, ethnic and minority groups, organized labor, etc.), the organizational, mediative, and legitimizing roles must be performed in the new global scenario. Following Hechter and Brustein's (1980) historical analysis of the emergence of the capitalist State, Friedland argues that the emergence of the transnational State must be linked to the issue of control of social opposition. In fact, it was through the action of controlling opposition that the domestic State emerged in the early phase of the expansion of capitalism. The question of the State, then, is recast in terms of what opposition is developing at the global level which, in turn, will shape the terms of the emergence of a transnational State. Despite the availability of a number of possible outcomes, Friedland concludes that the path for the emergence of a transnational State is still unclear, though some embryonic forms of transnational State can be detected in the regulatory attempts of international organization in the agricultural and food sector such as FAO and OECD.

The second position maintains that the domestic State has already been transformed into a transnational State by economic forces. This posture is exemplified by the work of

McMichael and associates (McMichael, 1991; McMichael and Myhre, 1991). McMichael criticizes the regulationist literature that argues global arrangements stem out of negotiations among nation-states (Aglietta, 1979; Gordon, 1988). This critique is centered on the fact that, by assuming a nation-centered system, regulationists (a) are unable to understand the recently established global mechanism of regulation, and (b) reify the concept of nation-state. Conversely, McMichael argues that the transnationalization of the economic sphere has already transformed the State and the State system. This process is based on the integration of the State into capital circuits that are increasingly transnational. First, the State is faced with diminishing control of the activities of transnational financial structures. This decreased control, in turn, affects the existence of the State by generating a shift of power within the State in favor of finance ministries and to the detriment of program-oriented ministries. Second, the establishment of a global agro-food system has diminished State capacity to control the composition of local food and agricultural production. Agriculture is increasingly extroverted and oriented toward the production of inputs for livestock feeds and processed foods for affluent markets. The net result is that the State is no longer a "political mediator" between global capital and national bourgeoisie and the working class. Rather, it has assumed the role of "facilitator of the requirements of global capital."

The third position emphasizes the limitations to the emergence of a transnational State by underscoring the importance the domestic State retains in processes of accumulation of capital and social legitimation. As illustrated by Koc (1994), the domestic State plays fundamental roles that are still unresolved transnationally. First, at the legitimitative level, the domestic State has historically been an agent

that has homogenized and controlled ethnically, religiously and politically diverse groups. These groups have been brought together through processes of legitimation that have culminated in the establishment of the "nation" and the ideological and normative dimensions associated with it. In this respect, the identification of diverse social groups with a country has allowed the creation of more or less cohesive social formations. The existence of an entity that could mediate and eventually resolve the differences among these groups at the international level is embryonic and certainly does not have the same powers of the domestic State. Second, and at the level of accumulation of capital, the domestic State continues to organize and maintain conditions amenable to capital accumulation within its territory by controlling labor and protecting capital. The globalization of production has altered these conditions so that protectionist measures are called for by various segments of capital while others advocate State action in opposing directions. In this respect, the ability of the domestic State to perform actions in protection of some segments of capital has been somewhat eroded. As far as labor is concerned, the transnationalization of production processes has not been accompanied by the transnational mobility of labor. Despite some partial exceptions such as the EC, the regulation of fluxes of labor at the transnational level is unresolved at best and could become the source of a resurgence of nationalist and racist sentiments among the working class.

The fourth position focuses on the concept of contradictory convergence and the resulting relationship between TNCs, the State, and subordinate classes in the transnational phase (Bonanno, 1992, 1994). Bonanno argues that the previous three approaches pay considerable attention to the attempts of TNCs to bypass State action and/or to direct State action toward the fulfillment of their interests but have

missed an important component of the emerging transnational State. Little discussion is provided on the interests that both TNCs and subordinate classes would have in the emergence of a transnational State and the implications and contradictions that this process would entail for all groups. Both TNCs and subordinate classes have a strong interest in the development of a transnational State. TNCs need a political mediator/facilitator at the transnational level to provide a business climate of accumulation and mediate legitimation demands from subordinate classes and between capitalist class fractions. Subordinate classes need a transnational State to help regain many of their losses centered around health and safety for workers, consumer protection, and environmental regulations which the transnationalization of the economy accomplished. Some cases in point are the Amazon Basin/Rainforest issue, global warming concerns, the Circle of Poison problems, and challenges arising from the decline of unions.

Bonanno (1993) argues that the emergence of supranational organizations such as the European Community (EC) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) are early attempts at forming transnational States. He sees the strengthening of supranational organizations as the most advanced effort to establish political and legal elements of the States beyond national boundaries. In particular, the EC, with its 30 year history of movement toward economic and political unification, is the "most advanced and sophisticated case" of a transnational State (Bonanno, 1993:349).

This literature indicates that there are a variety of reasons to argue for the continuous existence of the State at the domestic level. Simultaneously, there are numerous reasons to argue that a form of a transnational State should also exist. These arguments echo posi-

tions developed in fields outside sociology of agriculture (e.g., Borrego, 1981; Fine and Harris, 1979; Pitelis, 1991; Picciotto, 1991),<sup>3</sup> which conclude that the collapse of the international order typical of the Fordist regime requires the emergence of new transnational forms of the State. However, neither the empirical nor the theoretical form of the "new" State is clear at this juncture.

### *The New International Division of Labor or the Transnationalization of the Economy*

As indicated above, the emerging debate on the State is contextualized in the broad process of transnationalization of the socio-economic sphere. This change has often been referred to as the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism (Friedmann and McMichael, 1988; Kenney et al., 1989; Lipietz, 1992, 1987; Piore and Sabel, 1984). In essence, Fordism refers to a system of mass production and mass consumption based on a stable employed and well-paid labor force in core countries and sectors, intensive exploitation of labor and resources in the Third World and relatively large and concentrated production units (see Lipietz, 1987; Piore and Sabel, 1984). While the character of the post-Fordist regime is yet unclear, a few of its characteristics have been stressed in recent works.

More specifically post-Fordism denotes a restructuring of postwar capitalism that clearly got underway by the middle 1970s. A central feature of post-Fordist change is the concerted effort to diminish rigidity and increase flexibility. Although this tendency involves many multifaceted processes, operating in a relatively autonomous fashion in different spheres (i.e., spatial, cultural, ideological, organizational, etc.), one decisive dimension, having wide consequences, is the effort to

eliminate constraints to the free mobility of capital and to maximize its speed of movement. In the 1980's, the new business-government "partnership" emphasized weakening or eliminating the State's capacities to regulate business environments. While this strategy sometimes has been successfully opposed, it has also intensified deregulatory and re-regulatory pressures throughout capitalist societies and has led to many important victories (often at the costs of the underclasses and other groups that lack political voice and representation). Most importantly, post-Fordism has been implemented internationally and is inextricably entwined with the increased "globalization" of capitalism. Accordingly we can talk about global post-Fordism. Following are several dimensions of global post-Fordism, all related to the strategy of maximizing flexibility.

First, production is decentralized among different owners in various locations. Under Fordism, production was unified in vertically integrated firms, often with operations located in a limited number of central locations. Post-Fordist production has been decomposed into many subunits and subprocesses carried out by numerous firms spread widely across regional and national boundaries (Harvey, 1990; Mingione, 1991:198202). But such decentralization of production should not be mistaken for deconcentration of large capital. Rather this strategy enhances corporate control. For example, by divesting certain aspects of the productive process, firms are able to break the bargaining power of unions, transfer risks to other producers, and exploit inexpensive labor or resources of other strategically located firms (Reich, 1991; Strobel, 1993). It also enhances the leverage of capital in bargaining with the State. Smaller decentralized operations can choose locations where regulatory and welfare costs are low and organized labor is weak (Calasanti and Bonanno, 1992; Mishel and

Bernstein, 1993; Strobel, 1993). Firms use "global sourcing" to seek the least expensive factors of production on an unlimited worldwide basis and decentralize operations accordingly (Constance and Heffernan, 1991). Workers understand that higher wage demands or unwillingness to accept cuts will "force" local operations to be relocated. Public bodies operate with the same awareness. Decentralization of production is also used to make concentrated financial holdings more profitable and secure (Sassen, 1993). For example, resources from divestments can be re-invested in entirely new forms of production and products, which provide hedges against different possible shifts in the economic environment. By contrast to vertical integration, financial ownership of diverse types of smaller scale production enables firms to act more quickly and efficiently in rapidly changing and fluctuating markets (Bonanno et al., 1994).

Second, while production is dispersed in many localities, regions, and nations, financial and research capacity remains concentrated in countries of the first world. Here, financial global cities (Mingione, 1991; Sassen, 1993) orchestrate and control worldwide production; similarly, research and development activities remain close by (Busch et al., 1991). Contrary to the positions that portray current conditions as chaotic, disorganized, or decentered, global post-Fordist flexibility depends on the maintenance of strong centers, anchored in extremely rationalized control of most essential fiscal and intellectual resources, which are the key for exerting command over more widespread people and resources than ever before. Regardless of post-Fordist firms' lack of national identity and their tendency to weaken the State's capacity to constrain the operations of capital, they still require the benefits of the legal, social, political, technical, and material infrastructure provided by the most advanced and effective State structures. But a primary



contradiction of the current situation is that the overarching emphasis on flexibility diminishes recognition of the continued need for coordination (Friedland, 1993).

Third, "spatio-temporal" compression facilitates the maximum extension and velocity of economic processes (Harvey, 1990). Geographically dispersed, decentralized production combined with concentrated control requires new forms of instant communication, transport, credit, and other innovative technologies that connect distant operations and rapidly changing locations. The network of transactions is much more complex and depends on multiple and flexible informational and financial linkages. Simultaneously, new technology has also accelerated the speed with which material commodities are exchanged. The fresh or semi-processed food sector is perhaps one of the best examples of increased global spatio-temporal compression. As indicated in a number of works (e.g. Bonanno and Constance, 1993; Friedland, 1993; Gomez and Goldfrank, 1991), transnational corporations (TNCs) have developed new forms of technology and organization that allow them to take advantage of lower production costs and more favorable environmental legislation existing in some countries while maintaining a foothold in affluent markets. Spatio-temporal compression, however, has also involved a reduction in the political blockages, that slow the movement of goods and information. Economic policies oriented toward open markets and corporate strategies to by-pass local protectionist policies have also facilitated the global flux of resources (Lambí, 1994).

Fourth, the spatial-temporal unity of the polity and economy, characterizing the earlier phases of capitalist development, has been fractured with the consequence that the State's capacity to mediate between market and society has been weakened. The Fordist conception of market-centered democracy presumed the

State's capacity to establish socio-cultural limits to capitalist development and provide community and national institutions with relative autonomy and safety from the forces of unrestricted economic rationalization. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the State was not able to assure growth and, at the same time, contain capitalist dynamism without eroding its capacity to limit socially unacceptable costs. In particular, post-Fordism substantially reduced the local, regional, and national State's control over its economic and non-economic environments (Constance and Heffernan, 1991; Koc, 1994; Ross and Trachte, 1990). Post-Fordist firms sought settings with good "business environments." While this concept often includes such qualities as a skilled labor force and a highly developed and maintained infrastructure, it also very frequently means low wages, weak unions, and lax regulation of the workplace and environment that disempower people and communities. Moreover, States use tax abatements and various other subsidies to attract or simply hold businesses. For many, "economic development" means States encouraging competitive rollbacks in all these areas (Lambert, 1991:9; Mingione, 1991). In this fashion, post-Fordism's "flexible" organizational features generate external flexibility (i.e., pliable labor forces, publics favorable to deregulation, and cooperative States) outside the firm in a wide array of interorganizational settings.

Fifth, the nature and quality of work is transformed. Full-time employees are being replaced by part-time and temporary workers and manufacturing and farming occupations by service positions. As indicated by Pugliese (1991:148-9), the nearly universal Fordist model of work has been replaced by a multiplicity of employment arrangements (Bluestone and Harrison, 1986; Calasanti and Bonanno, 1992; Mingione, 1991; Newman, 1988). Part-time or temporary laborers are

hired and released according to market conditions, and keep the operation running continuously, without overtime pay. In addition, the workday is reconfigured to enhance flexibility. For example, workers are put on sliding shifts or are "beeped" in during off-hours. This labor regime has generally reduced the bargaining power of remaining full-time workers. Older workers are aware that they would not be able to find equally favorable employment if they lost their current positions. Consequently, they are more likely to accept "givebacks" in order to maintain job security. At the same time, the new flexible arrangements benefit other workers. For example, many highly skilled and well-paid, high-tech professionals prefer non-traditional schedules in order to work in more relaxed settings (e.g., in their homes), to meet family responsibilities (e.g., dual parenting), or to blend work with other life-style priorities (Leinberger and Tucker, 1991:300-51). Even less advantaged workers sometimes benefit from such flexible arrangements. However, the post-Fordist reshaping of work has meant poorer working conditions, lower wages and benefits, and less job security for the vast majority of workers. Low-wage (especially minimum wage) jobs are being created much more rapidly than high wage ones (Harrison and Bluestone, 1988; Newman 1988), and workers are working longer hours with less vacation and time and sick leave. Schor (1992) contends that the intensification of labor has been so great that many workers cannot meet the demands of other aspects of their everyday life. Lipietz (1991:105) argues that the postwar capital-labor accord has been restructured into a one-sided vision of the worker as a commodity, who can be freely "borrowed and declined at will by the employer." This costly pliability is at the heart of post-Fordism's coercive flexibility.

Sixth, a new form of transnational capitalism has emerged, qualitatively different from

the Fordist type of multinational capitalism (Borrego, 1981; Friedland, 1991; Picciotto, 1991). Under Fordism, it was possible to identify corporations with country of origin (Sassen, 1988). In this context, international operations were treated as extensions of entrepreneurial activities designed and engineered in the home country and supported by its state apparatus. By contrast, in the transnational phase, corporate products and overall identity cannot be identified unambiguously with a particular country (Reich, 1991). The automotive industry exemplifies this change. Until a few decades ago, automobiles were built primarily from domestic components and assembled in plants located in the same country. Today, components have diverse national origins and relatively few might be made in the nation where final assemblage takes place. However, companies still utilize national identity as a marketing strategy (e.g., Chrysler's flag-waving, America's back" advertisements). The lack of national identity increases flexibility by reducing loyalty and responsibility to national entities and their economic, social, and political requirements. Maximum flexibility means operating as purely as possible in accord with the bottom-line.

### *Toward a New Concept of the State*

The changes indicated above raise the question of the distinction between the State and the nation-state. While it was possible in the Fordist era to equate the State with the nation-State, in global post-Fordism this equation can no longer be maintained. As documented above, the creation of supranational states, the delegation of nation-state imperatives<sup>4</sup> to non-national entities, the by-passing of State action by economic actors, and other similar phenomena indicate that simply equating the State with the nation-state will

capture only a limited dimension of State action. If this is the case, the operational definition of the State employed by studies that assumed a national center concept of the State must be modified. The issue of the modification of the operational definition of the State can be addressed by identifying the imperatives of the State in capitalism and by tracing their evolution in global post-Fordism. By illustrating this process it is possible to identify, (a) the limits of action of the nation-state, and (b) the evolution of such imperatives above and beyond national spatial boundaries. What are, then, the State's imperatives in capitalism? In a recent paper, Friedland (1993) discusses the action of the State in terms of four interrelated imperatives: maintenance of processes of accumulation of capital, maintenance of processes of social legitimation, mediation among various conflicting societal groups, and social and physical reproduction. Furthermore, Friedland distinguishes between the formal quality and non-formal quality through which these imperatives can be carried out. In this case he refers to the fact that these imperatives can be carried out through either recognized "formal" channels or alternative "nonformal" channels.<sup>5</sup> Finally, he identifies four spatial levels in the context of which these imperatives are carried out. In global post-Fordism these levels consist of the national, the international, the supernational, and the transnational.

Focusing on imperatives signifies that the State manifests itself through the actions of its various elements. This posture translates into an operational definition in which the State is to be understood as the set of apparatuses, agents and agencies which carry out the imperatives at various levels and with various qualities. To be sure, imperatives, qualities, quantities, and levels are not static elements. On the contrary, their existence is to be verified empirically. In other words, they should

not be treated as axioms, but rather as aspects which can be exhausted and/or maintained in the process of evolution of the socio-economic system.

Following the above definition and the recent group research, the re-conceptualization of the action of the State must include the following:

- The State can no longer be conceptualized exclusively in national terms since the imperatives of the State have been delegated and/or subsumed by greater than national entities.
- Conversely, any re-conceptualization of the State must entail an international dimension. More specifically, State action has to be verified through the inclusion of more than national elements. This involves international, supernational, and transnational activities, yet must not mandate the exclusion of the national dimension; all four levels should be part of the analysis.
- The State cannot be conceptualized exclusively in terms of formal public apparatuses, agents and agencies. As documented by the group's research, the delegation of State imperatives to a set of new actors mandates the consideration of alternative spheres. Accordingly,
- The re-conceptualization of the State in global post-Fordism must include non-public apparatuses, agents, and agencies. The concept of non-public should not be equated exclusively with private. Private entities should be considered as part of the nonpublic sphere, yet they should not be automatically equated with it. In this context, non-public has a broader meaning which includes quasi-

or semi-public entities as well as quasi- or semi-private apparatuses, agents, and agencies and all the various possible combinations that can be found in the continuum between "private" and "public."

One of the pre-conditions for the re-conceptualization of the action of the State lies in its contextualization within global post-Fordism. This requirement can be difficult to operationalize if we take into account the fact that global post-Fordism is characterized by a complex set of phenomena often involving contradictory trends. Accordingly, it is necessary to create a framework which synthesizes global post-Fordism without diminishing its complexity and its dynamic character. For this purpose, global post-Fordism can be conceptualized as an ideal type characterized by a set of dialectical relationships. In this case we speak of relationships of opposing forces that symbolize the evolution of this phase of capitalism. Four dialectical relationships have been identified: deregulation-re-regulation; fragmentation-coordination; mobility - embeddedness; and empowerment - disempowerment.

First, deregulation/re-regulation. Strategies such as global sourcing and the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies have allowed observers to argue the deregulation of socio-economic processes. More specifically, it has been claimed that the State is either unable to regulate or has diminished or withdrawn from regulatory activities. The diminished intervention of the State has been paralleled, however, by two related phenomena. First, withdrawal of State intervention in some spheres (particularly the social sphere) has been accompanied by strengthening of intervention in other spheres. Accordingly, the withdrawal of State action has been developing only partially and contingently. Second,

the space left from the withdrawal of traditional forms of State intervention has been claimed by other regulatory processes that involve the action of either public or non-public entities. In essence, global post-Fordism involves both deregulatory processes and, simultaneously, new forms of re-regulation.

Second, fragmentation/coordination. As indicated earlier, among the most important characteristics of global post-Fordism are the spatial dispersion of production processes and the differentiation of consumption. In general, these processes have been associated with the concept of fragmentation. Post-Fordist fragmentation has been conceptualized as a strong departure from the Fordist concentration of production and consumption. Research has indicated, however, that the fragmentation of economic processes requires sophisticated systems of highly specialized coordination as decentralized production processes need to be coordinated at a number of levels. They need to be coordinated, for instance, at the level of control (e.g., control of the standards of production, control of quantity of output, and control of the quality of products). They must also to be coordinated at the level of specialized markets. In this case, increased production of specialized commodities must be channeled to specific markets with very high levels of accuracy and rapidity. As illustrated by the case of the fresh fruit and vegetable sector, coordination between fragmented production and specialized niche markets is key for the continuous existence of the production system. Finally, coordination is needed at the level of type of output. As perhaps best demonstrated by the cases of durable foods or computers, the various dispersedly-produced components of each individual product must be generated in such a way that they can immediately be utilized in the creation of the final good. This situation refers to the cases of both ingredients and specific parts.

The third dialectical relationship is the dichotomy mobility/embeddedness. Global post-Fordist flexibility is synonymous with the rapidity of mobility of capital. The mobility of capital is paralleled, however, by relatively less mobile productive structures and much less mobile labor (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982:18; Strobel, 1993:84-87). While capital can be moved electronically, allocation of investments depends on a set of variables such as availability of land and other required natural resources, infrastructures, and structures that require a greater amount of time to assemble than the simple electronic transfer of capital. Reallocation of labor depends upon an even greater quantity of time consuming and spatially constraining items. These items can include getting out of current housing situations, paying for moving expenses, finding alternative employment for significant others, etc. (Strobel, 1993). Aside from the material logistics involved, numerous human realities keep labor tied to particular places. Places are often connected to personal and familial histories, as well as social and affective networks that are not easily left behind (Mingione and Pugliese, 1994). In short, the mobility of the various productive elements transcends the existence of spatial enclaves that are touched by global post-Fordism. In locales left behind by the hyper-mobility of global capital, the negative consequences are often most evident in terms of unemployment, underemployment, environmental degradation and community decay. Simultaneously, localities that "receive" global capital also experience a host of consequences, some positive and some negative. Global capitalism thus entails a local dimension that certainly touches processes involving labor, production, consumption and institutions.

The fourth and final dialectical relationship is empowerment-disempowerment. Global post-Fordism has been viewed by many as a strategy to weaken subordinate classes in

society. The crisis of unions, the generation of "bad" jobs that are increasingly replacing well-paid employment, and the proliferation of part-time and/or flexible occupations are a few of the most significant cases in point. Similarly, capital hyper-mobility has been identified as one of the reasons for the economic decay of regions and communities. The severity of these phenomena has been so great that global post-Fordism has been interpreted as a totalizing phenomenon leaving little room, if any, for resistance. While this scenario has a significant degree of validity, research has also shown that, along with the disempowering of some social groups, movements that resist global capital have emerged. In the sphere of agriculture and food, the growth of the environmental movement and some consumer interests are certainly significant examples. Moreover, it has been argued that within global post-Fordism TNCs have reached unmatched levels of power. Their ability to by-pass regulations created to protect other social groups attests to this claim. However, research has also shown that TNCs are not exempt from experiencing significant contradictions and problems. Perhaps one of the most relevant of these is the limited level of inter-corporation coordination generated by the restructuring of the State.

## Notes

1. It must be noted that Domhoff (1976, 1990) has rejected rather forcefully the label of instrumentalist attached to his theory. In this case, the inclusion of Domhoff's early work in the instrumentalist school should be treated as an heuristic device rather than as a specific classification of his work in this category.

2. The classification of these authors into four groups should be viewed as a heuristic simplification of a much more complex and differentiated debate.

3. Pitelis argues that capital needs both the nation-state and international organization on the grounds that, domestically, it needs to control and exploit labor through the existence of some form of local state. Internationally, capital needs international organizational forms, particularly in relation to the crisis of American hegemony world-wide. Furthermore, Fine and Harris (1979) argue that transitional organizations better serve transitional capital.

4. In several of his papers (e.g. 1991, 1993) Friedland calls these imperatives "functions." As neither he nor the authors of this paper adopt a functionalist posture, the term "imperatives" will be used to refer to Friedland's term "functions of the state" in order to avoid possible confusion.

5. This term does not exclusively refer to informal channels. It is a more inclusive term of which informal activities are just a part.

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