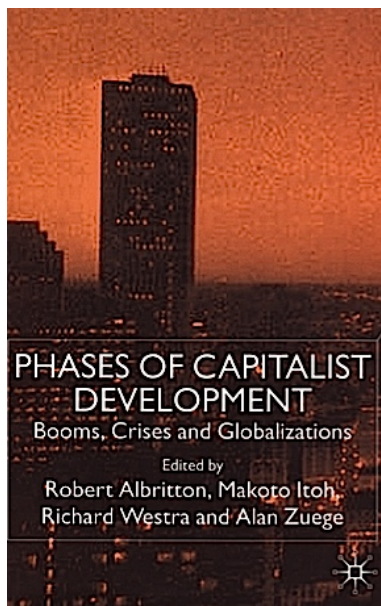


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# The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Post-Fordism

- Économiste, auteur - Économie internationale -



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**[2001b] Coll " The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Post-Fordism", in Robert Albritton, Makoto Itoh, Richard Westra, Alan Zuege, eds. *Phases Of Capitalist Development: Booms, Crises And Globalization* Palgrave, Basingstoke (UK) & New-York.**

In times of crisis there is a tendency to idealise the declining social order as a lost paradise. This is now the case with 'Foredooms', the model of development which characterised the post-war Golden Age in the West, and was partially imitated in models of 'import-substitution' in the Third World. The logic of Fordism secured rising standards of living and provided a feeling of security to workers. The crisis of Fordism in the 1970s gave rise to a period of experimentation with new models. Among them, one model in particular seems increasingly dominant on a world scale, but still faces serious contenders. Consolidated around the North Atlantic rim, It is especially well represented, and thus well studied, in the United States. While appealing to capital, it is not at all appealing to workers. But nowhere in the genes of capital is it inscribed that what is good. for capital is also good for workers, and even less for nature!

The new model of development which has triumphed on both sides of the Atlantic, and which we call the 'neo-Taylorist', 'flexible', or 'liberal productivist' model, is much less stable than its predecessor., It is cyclical like capitalism in the nineteenth century, but its transnationalization renders these cycles particularly dangerous. However, it is not the, only possible form to succeed Fordism, even within a capitalist framework. Other models have emerged that are less 'liberal' (in continental Europe and in Japan). They remain highly competitive and better preserve the interests of workers, even if they also suffer from instabilities linked to transnationalization.

I have described the development of Fordism in earlier works: its crisis; the dangers of the responses to the crisis by the United States, Britain and France; as well as the multiplicity of models that have appeared across the globe (Lipietz 1987; 1992b; 1997b). I will thus be brief in resketching these analyses, which I will present in the simplest form through a focus on the social question (drawing especially on the French context) in the period of 'after-Fordism', which raises issues of exclusion, precariousness and increasing inequalities of income and position. From the perspective offered by this lens, which highlights important features of the current transition, the 18 Phases of Capitalist Development Fordist social order will be called: the 'hot-air balloon society' and the Atlantic (flexible) after-Fordist order: the 'hourglass society'.

In the first section, I will present the causes of the crisis of Fordism and the two paths chosen to move beyond it. In the second section, I will concentrate on the characteristics of the flexible model: its social consequences and macroeconomic regime. Finally, I will offer an evaluation of the relative situation of the different models in the world at the end of the twentieth century.

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