

## Productivism and beyond

In Part I, we began by outlining the main principles of the NSD, using New Labour as our exemplar. I outlined the major criticisms and argued that the main problem with the NSD is that, although it should not be equated with conservatism, it fails to establish a distinct and convincing alternative to the conservative hegemony. Chapter 2 began to substantiate this position, defining the NSD as support for weak equality and strong reciprocity, in contrast to an alternative theory of distributive justice (equality of powers plus diverse reciprocity) that I believe a more radical politics should aim towards. Chapter 3 argued that the NSD derives from and embeds a security state that has remodelled the welfare state and reconfigured needs as risks and fears; the security state was then further explored in terms of New Labour's approach to information and ICTs. In the last chapter I then questioned the scope of the NSD, showing that 'old' social democracy is still very much alive, though not without difficulties. However, I also suggested that productivist reforms are not the only potential solution to the post-industrial dilemmas that social democracy faces.

We have therefore laid the ground for Part II where our focus shifts from the NSD to what I call 'ecowelfare'. Since ecowelfare is a post-productivist form of social democracy, theoretical and practical hints of which can be found lurking within existing social democracy itself, then our first task is to define and justify what is meant by post-productivism. This then leads into a model of ecowelfare. Rather than expose you to an overlong chapter, we will here focus upon post-productivism and then use Chapter 6 to explore ecowelfare.

### Productivism and post-productivism

Robert Goodin (2001) offers an interesting purchase on these ideas. He categorises welfare regimes in terms of the relationship between welfare

and work: conservative welfare states are based upon the ideal of 'work *not* welfare', corporatist ones are based upon 'welfare *through* work' and social democracies are based upon 'welfare *and* work'. In other words, whereas conservatives interpret welfare and work as crowding each other out, social democrats regard them as being complementary and conservatives adopt a middle position between the two. On this basis, Goodin defines the ideal of post-productivism as 'welfare *without* work' and identifies the Netherlands as the embryo of a post-productivist welfare system. Yet as suggestive as Goodin's formulation is, there are at least three problems with it.

First, as a description of the relationship between work and welfare *policy* it is reasonably accurate, but it says little about welfare in the more philosophical sense of well-being. Second, by gathering both waged and unwaged labour under the heading of 'work', Goodin confuses work with employment, although he is undoubtedly aware of the distinction, and intimates that attitudes towards unwaged work can be read off from attitudes towards waged work, though feminist researchers have argued for years that things are not so simple (e.g. Lewis, 1992). Third, Goodin's encapsulation of post-productivism is a hostage to fortune, since it is hardly realistic at present to imagine an employmentless society and certainly not a *workless* one! Nevertheless, so long as these points are remembered we can use Goodin's formulation as a starting point for understanding the contrast between productivism and post-productivism.

The common denominator for each of these welfare regimes is waged work. They may disagree on the nature of citizenship rights and duties, and on the relation between formal and informal labour, but the commitment to employment is pivotal to all three. This commitment derives ultimately from the view that underpins all developed societies: something is valuable proportionate to the extent to which it contributes to productivity growth, i.e. social value is primarily *economic* value. This does not mean that activities which do not contribute to, or even subtract from, productivity growth are necessarily devalued, but it does mean that they are *undervalued*, that the farther we stray from economic criteria then the harder it is to justify non-economic sources of value. There is, we could say, a kind of 'economic gradient' by which moral, aesthetic, emotional and natural values must constantly struggle to overcome the event horizon of the economic. This gradient tends to be more severe in conservative versions of capitalism than in social democratic ones, as the cash nexus is more prominent in the former, but although social democratic capitalism has reduced the gradient, it has nowhere near eliminated it, due partly to the fact that the traditional labour movement has sought to distribute social goods more widely rather than reconfigure the meaning

of social value. Productivism is therefore the insistence that employment is the principal means by which growth in productivity can be effected because it is easier to increase capital stock, and therefore output, through formal than through informal activity, since the former involves more specialisation, more division of labour and a greater potential for substituting labour with capital. So just as social value largely signifies economic value, so work revolves around the norms of employment.

Before defining post-productivism, I should indicate how the above account differs from some other recent theorists. Holliday (2000: 708–9) characterises productivist welfare as an alternative to Esping-Andersen's typology and identifies it as an East Asian regime for which 'social policy is strictly subordinate to the overriding policy objective of economic growth'. He therefore interprets productivism as the subordination of 'state policy' to economic growth, a subordination that even liberal and conservative systems avoid. Yet this is too narrow a conception of productivism, since economic growth is everywhere the *sine qua non* of social policy and although welfare states may differ in the degree of subordination they embody, none has sought to invert it. Holliday imagines that decommodification implies freedom from the labour market when, in practice and as indicated in the last chapter, it offers only relative freedom. This is not a mistake made by Dahl *et al.* (2001: 301), though even they too tend to interpret productivism as activation policies rather than as a logic that underpins modern welfare. It is Offe (1984: 296–99; 1993: 67–72) who manages to trace that logic through the ontological and cognitive frames of modernity, regarding it as that through which a complex of political and cultural practices constructs as natural, desirable and self-evident activity which is most conducive to the commodification of well-being.

Although there is no space here to critique Offe's approach in any depth, he does suggest that there are at least two counterpoints to the reduction of social to economic value and of work to employment. First, there is carework, most of which is unwaged and most of which continues to be performed by women. Carework possesses obvious economic value, in that it involves the performance of activity that neither the capitalist market nor the state have either the inclination or the ability to remunerate fully (Waring, 1988), which is exactly why public carework services have been established almost everywhere in recent decades. Indeed, there have been various attempts to estimate the shadow value of carework, i.e. the extent to which it would increase GDP. However, although carework possesses economic value, economic value is not its primary rationale. We do not have children in order to populate the future economy, or look after us in old age; we do not care for elderly relatives in order to make a profit.<sup>1</sup> The value of carework does not derive from

our willingness to pay for it in a market. Therefore economic value is a consequence of carework, but not its motivation; some carework can and should be performed as waged activity, and should be factored much more closely into social and economic policies than at present, but most carework will always remain informal, performed for reasons of emotional belonging. In short, carework is largely non-employment work and a form of value captured by the term 'emotional labour'. We will return to these points in Chapter 6.

Second, there is the ecological value of the environment. Greens have long pointed out that, whatever your ideological interpretation of it, economic value depends upon and feeds off an environmental substructure (Henderson, 1981; O'Connor, 1998; Douthwaite, 1999; cf. Brennan, 2000, 2001). The resources we mine and the ecosystem we pollute once those resources have been utilised are the origin of economic value. Locke's definition of property, as the mixing of labour with the fruits of the earth, gave rise to the labour theory of value where labour is implicitly defined as 'active' and nature as 'passive' leading, whether subsequently cloaked in capitalist or Marxist costume, to an emphasis upon labour rather than the nature that labour converts into commodities. For Greens, by contrast, the environment's value may be quantified to some extent (Pearce, 2000), but ultimately transcends the economic. As argued in Chapter 6, to convert each and every aspect of nature into the commodity form is the preferred solution of productivism, but one that is ultimately self-defeating. Most Greens therefore argue that no economic system is fully capable of preserving the environment: it is certainly necessary to 'Green' the economy, but even a Green economy could not perform all of the work of sustainability that needs to be done. For this, a wider conception of social activity and participation is required. In short, sustainable work takes us beyond the employment society in order to preserve the intrinsic essence of ecological value.

These counterpoints resemble each other in that both are concerned with the emotional and ecological conditions of economic value, but conditions that can be only partially nurtured by the employment society, given the dominance it accords to economic value (the economic gradient). At the end of the last chapter I mentioned the importance of devising criteria that do not derive from the discourse of production. What I now propose is that we regard the above emotional and ecological conditions as providing us with such criteria, the means by which productivity (the transformation of emotional and natural resources into sources of wealth) should be judged. I therefore propose to incorporate emotional and ecological value under the heading of 'reproduction'. Reproductive value refers to the emotional and ecological foundations of economic value, that upon which economic value is founded, but which it can never

fully incorporate or commodify, since care and sustainability imply forms of activity so extensive that they can never be completely quantified or reduced to economic criteria. Reproductive value and economic value therefore share ambiguities vis-à-vis one another. Economic value depends upon the reproduction of its conditions, but cannot acknowledge this dependency, since no economy is wealthy enough to fully compensate for the emotional and ecological costs that it creates: the ethics of affluence and growth are undermined the moment we render visible the foundations upon which they rest, because it is these foundations which they are gradually eroding. Reproductive value is the ultimate source of economic value, yet it is the destructive effects of affluence and growth which now provide us with the reflexive skills and resources needed to preserve reproductive activity. Reproductive and economic values therefore push both away from and towards one another.

Productivism is that which would subsume reproduction within the sphere of production, insisting that the costs of the employment society *can* be incorporated within an economic logic, e.g. by insisting that care-work and sustainability are job and therefore growth friendly. Post-productivism is that which would subsume production within the spheres of reproduction, insisting that those costs are beyond the capacity of the employment society to fully recognise and absorb, so that we must alter our conceptions of value and so of affluence, growth and work. Post-productivism is therefore a doctrine of 'reproductivity', whereby productive activity is justified if and only if it can be demonstrated that the emotional and ecological sources of production are enhanced. Reproductivity does not, then, deny the importance of productivity, but subjects it to 'non-productivist' criteria, i.e. it is opposed to the ideology of productivism but not to productivity *per se*, since productivity growth *may* be crucial to the maintenance of reproductive value – though the extent to which this is true cannot be judged theoretically. Of course, productivists will argue that productivity is *never* an end in itself and that economic growth is pursued not for its own sake, but to improve human well-being. Post-productivists answer that this ideal no longer prevails (if it ever did) and that the well-being we are allowed to experience has narrowed to an economistic range upon which it is consequently dependent. Rather than economic growth serving improvements in well-being, it is the narrowing of well-being that serves the pursuit of economic growth. For post-productivists, therefore, it is increasingly necessary to foreground emotional and ecological values that underpin the economic, but which are not reducible to it.

This contrast between productivism and post-productivism may throw light on the faultlines in radical politics. Many within feminism, environmentalism and on the Left advocate the productivist route (Midgely, 1997;

Bowles and Gintis, 1998; Gough, 2000: Ch. 8). 'Wage-earner feminism' prizes Orloff's right to commodification and says that gender equality is best delivered through dual breadwinning households; ecological modernisers insist that Green reforms are ineffective unless they promote productive activity; the labour movement has long argued for better ways of creating and distributing, rather than reconstituting, economic growth. However, others advocate what we here call post-productivism on the grounds that productivism undermines the sources of its own value and so is ultimately self-defeating. Some feminists point to the disadvantages of dual breadwinning, e.g. that it predicates gender equality upon the repertoires of masculinity; many Greens argue that ecological modernisation is a short-term solution at best; the post-industrial Left calls for approaches that do not try to beat capitalism at its own game.

So should we base our radical politics upon productivism or post-productivism? The strongest support for productivist radicalism can be found in social democracies, for here we witness not only distributive justice, but also a large degree of gender equality and the gradual emergence of sustainable economics.

Feminist researchers nearly always praise social democracies, though they also acknowledge the incompleteness of the social democratic record. Plantenga *et al.* (1999) note that the Netherlands idealises the equal sharing of time between waged and unwaged work and between men and women. However, although women's labour market participation has increased, there has been no corresponding increase in men's care participation and so women are still the secondary earners in a 'one-and-a-half-earner' model (Lewis, 2001). The Dutch system salutes part-time employment as the means of combining employment and care, but it is primarily women who take such jobs and so the government has not yet created a 'twice-three-quarter' model where both men and women are in the labour market for approximately 4 days per week. Policies still favour breadwinning and thus the privatisation and feminisation of care. According to Tracey Warren (2000), Denmark too pulls away from the male breadwinner model, but only half successfully as unwaged work remains underemphasised and, as in the Netherlands, because the substitute for *male* breadwinning is regarded as *dual* breadwinning, then considerable remnants of male breadwinning nevertheless remain as women are concentrated away from the core jobs that men have little incentive to vacate. There is a similar pattern visible in Sweden: high rates of female participation in the labour market combined with generous childcare and parental leave policies. The price, though, is a labour market with some of the most sexually segregated divisions to be found anywhere, with

women grouped into public sector jobs and the one-and-a-half model also visible here (Sainsbury, 1999).

Is the ambiguous record of social democracy due to relatively simple policy failures that await rectification? Or might those policies be perfectly consistent with the productivist logic that underpins them?<sup>2</sup> Productivist logic demands either lots of waged breadwinning or lots of unwaged caregiving (or preferably both): the former facilitates economic growth, since improvements in output are easier to achieve through formal activity; the latter is consistent with economic growth so long as employment levels are reasonably high. Conservative and social democratic nations depend upon high rates of breadwinning, though the former prefers low-wage jobs in the private sector, whereas the latter prefers high-wage jobs in the public one. Corporatist welfare states by contrast have strong insider/outsider markets and so have low rates of female participation and therefore high levels of unwaged caregiving. What the productivist logic cannot countenance is lots of *remunerated caregiving*, since this seems to subtract from growth by being neither inexpensive nor oriented to productivity increases. In a productivist economy, then, employment (labouring for another) *must* be promoted over carework (labouring for others).

So the ambiguous successes and failures of productivist social democracy is no accident. Whereas social democracy is able to pay women to enter the labour market, and so expand the very caregiving services that those women need, it cannot pay men to leave, it since this would strain social expenditure to bursting point. This is not to decry social democracy's record on gender equality, nor to predict that future improvements will not be made, but it is to observe that there are productivist limits to the feminist agenda: male breadwinning can only be reduced if it is replaced by dual breadwinning, though evidence shows that the latter retains considerable residues of the former.

Similarly, evidence also suggests that social democratic societies are the Greenest (Lafferty, 2001). We hinted at this in the previous chapter and, in the mid-1990s, then Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson was talking of creating a Green welfare state and society (quoted in Lundqvist, 2001a). Action, though, has languished behind the rhetoric and, because of the stress upon international market competitiveness, the emphasis has been placed upon technological, end-of-the-pipe fixes, top-down managerialism rather than grassroots democracy, a win-win philosophy that avoids the difficult questions of trade-off and a legacy whereby Swedish industry has developed through environmental exploitation (Jamison and Baark, 1999) – Sverrisson (2001) suggests that this is for reasons of pragmatism. Environmental concerns have not been integrated into the

wider array of economic, social and welfare issues, unless to justify a 'business as usual' approach (Eckerberg, 2000, 2001). Jamison and Baark (1999: 217) find that Denmark's record is better, but that, even here, environmental policies have not been integrated in the social lifeworld, such that they are easily abandoned when they become too costly – a risk also noticeable in Finland (Niemi-Iilahti, 2001). In the Netherlands and Norway, the environment tends to be brought into the decision-making picture only when it benefits, but does not challenge, economic orthodoxy, e.g. job creation in the waste management industries (van Muijen, 2000; Langhelle, 2000).

Again, this is not meant to sound petulant, as social democracies already offer a model for other nations to follow, but it is to insist that just as there are productivist limits to feminism, there are similar limits to environmentalism. There are many aspects of the environmental agenda that can assist productivity, growth and efficiency: where, say, sustainable technologies can reduce the costs borne by the transport infrastructure or health care systems, releasing expenditure that can be invested elsewhere. But just because there can be sustainable growth, it does not mean that all forms of growth can be rendered sustainable and costs to the environment that are inherent within a productivist economy tend to be ignored. For example, without a reduction in many types of consumption and without the localisation of production, the shift towards cleaner technologies and recycling is likely to resemble the habit of jamming one foot on the brake and the other on the accelerator (Douthwaite, 1996). Yet such reduction and localisation point in the opposite direction to consumerist, cosmopolitan capitalism and would mean bringing onto the economic stage values and criteria which are of no obvious or short-term benefit to the actors involved. Only a democratic, ecological state can direct the action across a longer timespan, but that requires the kind of political rationality that is barely visible even in social democracies, where the imperatives of global competitiveness hold sway (Lundqvist, 2001b).

So although the strongest support for productivist radicalism can be found in social democracies, that radicalism has taken social democracy to the door of post-productivism. In terms of both caregiving and sustainability, social democracies have gone further than other countries in incorporating reproductive values into their socioeconomic institutions and policies. Yet they are bumping up against the limits of productivism because the economic gradient makes it harder to achieve more than modest (though still welcome) forms of gender equality and sustainability. And, I would argue further, if social democracies are therefore poised between productivism and post-productivism, then path-dependency arguments finally fall by the wayside.

### Path dependency and post-industrialism revisited

This is an argument that I hinted at in the last chapter when addressing the criticism that if path dependency disproves the hyperglobalisation thesis, then it also rules out the possibility of all but a few countries pursuing the social democratic path. I suggested that this depends upon a simplistic conception that neglects the extent to which political traditions are to be found across a range of national contexts. Indeed, if this were not so then hegemonic struggles could not occur as there would be no oppositional forces to hegemonise!

But if so, then it is also the case that political traditions are not one thing or another. Within the hegemonic battlefield they are spread across diverse lines of attack and defence. So just as there are multiple paths within a particular nation, there are also multiple paths within a particular tradition. In short, the path-dependency thesis explains nothing unless we understand (1) the extent to which traditions are 'overdetermined' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), i.e. each tradition incorporates multiple versions of itself within a multilayered domain, and (2) the means by which traditions hegemonise in the process of being hegemonised. This means that version of the tradition that prevails is not the real or only one, but the version which dominates within a given conjuncture according to contingent circumstances. But that conjuncture and those circumstances not only fluctuate constantly, but do so as a result of hegemonic struggle, both within and between traditions. So just as the distinction between social democratic and non-social democratic nations is overdrawn, so the distinction between productivist and non-productivist social democracy is overdrawn. Those who therefore say that the future of social democracy *must* be productivist, because this is the path that has already been set, are ignoring the idea that any path is a multiple overdetermination of itself within a contingent field. Counter-hegemonisation may be difficult to achieve, depending upon the conjuncture in question, but is never impossible. This is one reason why I have defined post-productivism, not as opposed to productivity, wealth, etc., but as a doctrine that, consistent with feminism, environmentalism and the post-industrial Left, recontextualises those goals at a layer deeper than that of economic value.

What this also does is to throw a new light on the trilemma that we discussed in the last chapter. In fact, the trilemma might be regarded as an example of social democrats limiting their horizons by refusing to think outside the productivist box. The trilemma holds if economic and employment growth not just *are* but *ought to be* the objectives of any welfare system. However, we have reason to question both of these aims. What of economic growth, first of all?

Let us dispense with two perspectives, both of which insist that growth and sustainability are mutually exclusive (Dryzek, 1997). The first perspective insists that sustainability must prevail, even at the risk of economic contraction (neo-Malthusianism) and the second insists that sustainability can be made consistent with existing forms and rates of growth (the Procrustean Bed argument). Neo-Malthusianism diverts too radically from contemporary expectations and neglects the possibility that social (if not always personal) affluence can be a force for good; Procrusteanism is simply dangerous wishful thinking. We are therefore faced with two further options. One is to introduce environmental criteria into GDP/GNP measurements and the other is to regard economic growth as only one among a much broader range of indicators. In short, the productivist orthodoxy defines us as wealthy according to the size of GDP and as productive according to the rate at which GDP wealth grows (cf. Coates, 2000: 265–73). Post-productivism defines us as wealthy according to the enhancement of the reproductive conditions underpinning GDP growth and as productive according to the rate of reproductivity. What are the respective merits of these options?

Those who defend Green GDP/GNP do so on the basis that the environment can be treated as a form of capital for which we must pay the appropriate charge and what follows from this is support for the ‘substitution’ of natural resources for their manufactured equivalents (Choi, 1994). The first of these premises risks being superficial. Nordhaus (Nordhaus and Tobin, 1972), for instance, estimated that the USA should commit no more than 2 per cent of its annual national income to environmental investment. One problem with this is that to make estimates of ecological value according to (a) economic standards and (b) existing market preferences is to confuse price with value and to regard the environment as equivalent to other goods when it is in fact much more fundamental (Douthwaite, 1996: 38–9). Another problem is that economists usually favour a ‘market discount rate’ rather than a ‘social discount rate’ in comparing future costs and benefits to present-day ones, precisely because the latter is less amenable to purely economic calculation. But if economic calculations are too narrow, then the market rate is misleading (see Chapter 7).

The second premise of Green GDP/GNP tracks back to the assumptions that neo-classical economists were making in the 1970s, namely that capital can substitute for natural resources. Daly (1997a, 1997b), following the lead of Georgescu-Roegen (Perrings, 1997), argues that this is to underestimate the importance of nature, the entropic effects of growth (at least on a local scale) and to overestimate the possibility for converting resources into capital, since this does not overcome the ultimate problem of scarcity and ecological finiteness. In response, one of the architects of

those neo-classical assumptions conceded that substitution has only an 'intermediate' usefulness (Stiglitz, 1997); the other architect (Solow, 1997) does not address the essential critique. The merit of a Green GDP/GNP, then, is that it ties in with existing practice and offers a short- to medium-term solution that, through substitution, can slow down the rate of environmental degradation. The problem, as Stiglitz acknowledges, is that although substitution can reduce the resource amount needed to produce one unit of output, it cannot ever halt the depletion of resources. The problem of scarcity and finiteness is simply deferred.

The implication is that Green GDP/GNP must eventually be superseded by less productivist conceptions and measurements of wealth such as that articulated by the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW), an overview of the debate being provided by Jackson (2002). According to research cited and conducted by Jackson, because we have reached a threshold beyond which the benefits from growth no longer outweigh the losses of environmental degradation, then the quality of life is permanently stalled. This is true even in social democracies, though here the ISEW scores began to diverge from GDP scores more recently and less dramatically than in other nations. In short, Green GDP/GNP can be effective in the short-run *if* it is used to turn our economies away from their present course towards conceptions of wealth captured by the ISEW though Jackson concedes that even the ISEW may need to be superseded in the long term. To put it another way, productivism must gradually abolish itself in favour of post-productivism.

These considerations also relate to the second assumption of the trilemma, that concerning employment growth. If we need much broader ideas of wealth, then we may also need a much broader notion of what is and is not valuable work and an acceptance that unwaged activity may often be preferable to employment. As noted in the last chapter, if it can be demonstrated that unwaged work contributes to sustainability more than its employment-based equivalent – by being more local, involving more self-reliance and less orientation to profit, for instance – then we can no longer afford to devalue it as most productivists continue to do, e.g. recall the dichotomy between employment/activity and non-employment/passivity that Huber and Stephens expressed in Chapter 4. Employment growth is essential *only if* 'the active' are interpreted as subsidising 'the passive', since the passive would otherwise be without purchasing power (income). But if this distinction is too crude, then what we need is a kaleidoscope of social activity that contributes to reproductivity, a *mutual service society* of both waged and unwaged service provision which operates on the basis of diverse reciprocity.

On one level this is a now-familiar call for an expansion in the 'Third Sector' or 'social economy'; yet remember that almost everyone supports

the Third Sector and almost everyone disagrees about its practical implications (cf. Mertens, 1999). For conservatives, it is frequently an alternative to state provision (Green, 1993), while for new social democrats it complements state provision in the form of not-for-profit associations and faith-based organisations offering welfare services (Jordan, 2001). For post-productivists, it implies an expansion in land trusts (and ecotaxation), welfare associations, communal self-management, democratic social investment funds, stakeholder firms, basic and participation incomes, informal exchange systems (whether based on currency or time) and local banking (Offe and Heinze, 1992; Offe, 1996: Ch. 7; Douthwaite, 1996; Benello *et al.*, 1997). What this Third Sector would do is capture and harness the wealth that we already create for ourselves, and upon which productivism already depends, directing it in more socially reproductive ways (Jordan and Travers, 1998).

None of this is to deny the difficulties that social democracy faces. In fact the post-industrial trilemma actually *underestimates* the obstacles ahead because, by focusing upon budgetary constraints, it neglects not only environmental constraints but also the familial constraints that Dean draws attention to (Dean, 2002). Yet the characterisation of our future as one of permanent austerity does not capture every aspect of our condition, since productivists also underestimate the natural and social resources to which we have access and which can be re-engineered to meet these constraints if we can break free of simplistic notions of growth and affluence. It may well be that post-productivist welfare would require an increase in the *absolute* amount of wealth dedicated to common goods, yet this increase may actually represent a *relative decrease* as a percentage of the total stock of available wealth compared to existing social expenditure levels.<sup>3</sup>

### Concluding remarks

Tying up the loose ends of this and the previous chapter leaves us with three points to make.

First, productivist social democrats will continue to appeal to *realpolitik* by observing that post-productivism in one country, or even several, is far from being a realistic option, given the shift towards global free trade in the 1980s and 1990s. Path dependency implies that enough space exists for variations around the productivist model, but not for an ideal that appears to violate international constraints. Even *if* Nordic countries are poised at the brink of post-productivism, international constraints ensure that at the brink is where they will remain.

This objection is well taken and because post-productivism recommends the greater localisation of economic activity, such localisation is

unlikely to occur on any worthwhile scale unless the national and international structures are in place to facilitate it. Yet this dualism is not something to which the Green, anti-corporate and women's movements are oblivious (Cohen and Rai, 2000; Houtart and Polet, 2001; Rowbotham and Linkogle, 2001) and in fact the campaign for alternative forms of globalisation operates with a much more sophisticated vision of local/global interactions than the apologists for global free trade will ever achieve. Therefore, productivist social democrats have to decide whether they are on the side of the free traders or the fair traders. If the former, then how are they to take account of the familial and environmental constraints that we have discussed above? If the latter, then why not argue for more local production, trade and consumption, as post-productivists recommend? In short, because international constraints are an omnipresent feature of any political strategy, then productivists have to make a *moral* case for the superiority of one type of international order over another. *Realpolitik* is no more than a refuge for the lazy.

Second, Chapters 4 and 5 have hinted more than once at the limitations of the concept of decommodification if this implies 'freedom from the market', since such freedom is only ever partial and highly conditional, even in terms of health and education systems.<sup>4</sup> Huber and Stephens are correct to point out that in practice decommodification refers to 'active participation in the labour market' and so implies a contributive form of autonomy and satisfaction that social democracies have come closest to embodying: freedom *within* rather than freedom *from*. However, although a complete freedom from market exchange is unrealistic, the more important questions are 'what kind of market?' and 'what kind of informal activity, are possible?' Post-productivism addresses itself to both of these questions, implying markets that are geared towards reproductive value and activities outside the formal economy that are similarly concerned. In short, the aim of radical politics should not be decommodification *per se*, but the post-productivist versions of both commodification and decommodification. This idea is partly captured by Room's (2000) redefinition of decommodification as self-development, where creativity, learning, self-actualisation and *critical* participation are regarded as much more important than at present. Room offers this as an alternative to the standard notion of decommodification for consumption, where Esping-Andersen and his intellectual descendants set out to measure the extent to which living standards are maintained during periods of labour market absence.

Yet although Room's variables are more subtle and varied than those usually run through the statistical cruncher, he too remains with an employment-centred paradigm that valorises human and social capital. To be fair, Room does so to operationalise self-development and it has to be conceded that, by relegating the kind of variables that render

productivist societies quantifiable, post-productivist societies would be difficult to measure and so could make thousands of social scientists unemployed (I suspect I've just lost half my audience). Fortunately, those social scientists would not find themselves trapped between the pincers of employment and non-employment, for the rationale of post-productivism is not that it frees us from 'the market', but that it multiplies the number of social spaces within which meaningful social interaction and exchange can take place. Therefore post-productivism is not an alternative to decommodification, but it *is* an alternative to the productivism that collapses decommodification back into the employment society where our primary role as citizens is to earn, shop, save and pretty much shut up.

Finally, I have associated post-productivism strongly with social democracy. But does this mean that conservative societies cannot provide a launch pad to post-productivism? If so, this would imply that the only route to post-productivism is through social democracy and how realistic does that make post-productivism in anything shorter than the very long term?

However, the answer is 'no', social democracy is not the only launch pad and it *is* possible to envisage conservative and corporatist variants of post-productivism. The former would perhaps resemble a situation where reproductive values are attended to through an extreme form of social stratification, i.e. ecological and emotional conditions depending upon heavy doses of inequality, coercion and moral conditioning. The corporatist version would be more solidaristic, but might still make reproductivity depend upon a strict distribution of fixed roles across a conditional, hierarchical and familialist set of social relations. In short, just as there are free-market, corporatist and social democratic versions of productivism, so there could be free-market, corporatist and social democratic versions of post-productivism.

Yet just as social democracy is the preferable version of the former, so it is the preferable version of the latter given its core commitment to egalitarian universalism. Therefore, and especially within conservative contexts, productivist and post-productivist social democrats need to do what they usually do already: make common cause in favour of universalism, distributive justice and social citizenship. The dispute about the relative merits of the productivist and post-productivist models cannot be deferred forever, obviously, and clearly affects the counter-hegemonic strategies adopted in nations where social democracy does not dominate. Nevertheless, such compromises are possible and the faultline in radical politics can be overcome and has been on numerous occasions. To conclude, post-productivists and traditional social democrats have more to gain from one another than they have to gain from alliances with others:

social democracy needs post-productivism, and vice versa. Such is the premise of this book.

### Notes

- 1 Though some of these economic reasons may have been stronger in the past.
- 2 I am not intending to analyse the concept of patriarchy. I assume that patriarchy and productivism are not the same – indeed, wage-earner feminism insists otherwise – but that they *are* mutually reinforcing. So although there is no logical contradiction in the idea of non-patriarchal productivism, it is unlikely ever to emerge for the reason about to be given.
- 3 However, I offer this assertion tentatively and it is another hypothesis that cannot be demonstrated theoretically and so awaits empirical proof or disproof.
- 4 I specify ‘limitations’ because my intention is not to reject commodification either as a concept or an indicator (and recall that we made use of it in Chapter 3), but simply to observe that it has to date been caught within the productivist discourse that I have now spent more than a chapter challenging.