

STATE POWER AND CAPITAL: assessing Bob Jessop's account of the transition to the Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime

Pedro Mendes Loureiro¹

Abstract: We discuss the work of Bob Jessop, focusing on the transition he proposes to the contemporary state form – the Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime (SWPR). After a brief presentation of the author's account, we explore its main critiques and recent reformulations. We then consider whether Jessop's narrative resorts to economic determinism, structuralism or functionalism, as some authors have indicated. We defend that while some traces of these might indeed be found, they can be sidestepped by approaching the emergence of the SWPR as part of an ongoing research agenda. We finally propose some changes to the latter, related to developing an explicitly evolutionary theoretical framework, to the space that post-Fordism comprehends and to the articulation between different subtypes of post-Fordist social formations and accumulation strategies. A central point is not proposing competing regimes of accumulation for a single space, but rather a single regime that articulates the relevant forms of capital and is brought about by competing accumulation strategies.

Key words: Marxist state theory; contemporary political economy; strategic-relational approach; regulation approach; Bob Jessop.

Resumo: Discute-se a obra de Bob Jessop, com foco na transição que o autor propõe para a forma estatal contemporânea – o Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime (SWPR). Após breve exposição da narrativa proposta pelo autor, exploram-se suas principais críticas e reformulações recentes. Avalia-se, em seguida, em que medida Jessop resulta a reducionismo econômico, estruturalismo ou funcionalismo, como indicado por certos autores. Argumenta-se que embora haja traços dos mesmos, estes podem ser evitados ao se abordar a emergência do SWPR como parte de uma agenda de pesquisa em andamento. Propõem-se, finalmente, algumas mudanças a tal agenda, relacionadas a desenvolver um arcabouço evolucionário explícito para a coevolução institucional, ao espaço que o pós-fordismo compreende e à articulação entre diferentes subtipos de formações sociais e estratégias de acumulação. Um ponto central é a proposição de que não se veja regimes de acumulação a concorrer em um mesmo espaço, mas sim um único regime que articule as formas de capital relevantes e emerja do conflito de diferentes estratégias de acumulação.

Palavras-chave: teoria do Estado marxista; economia política contemporânea; abordagem estratégico-relacional; teoria da regulação; Bob Jessop.

JEL: B51 (Current Heterodox Approaches: Socialist; Marxian; Sraffian); H70 (State and Local Government; Intergovernmental Relations: General); P16 (Capitalist Systems: Political Economy); Z13 (Cultural Economics; Economic Sociology; Economic Anthropology: Economic Sociology; Economic Anthropology; Social and Economic Stratification).

¹ Economics Institute of the University of Campinas (IE/Unicamp). Email: lmpedro@gmail.com

1. Introduction²

Bob Jessop, a well-known Marxist state theorist and political economist, has for long theorised about post-Fordism and its state. Along over three decades of research, he has offered a growingly complex account of the emergence of contemporary political and economic forms, the fullest expression of which can be found in *The future of the capitalist state* (JESSOP, 2002) and its thesis of an ongoing transition to what Jessop calls the Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime (SWPR) and the knowledge-based economy (KBE). We consider this to be a revealing and sophisticated account and a much-welcome contribution to a contemporary critique of political economy, especially in its articulation of political and economic elements. With this in mind, we approach Jessop's proposed transition as part of an evolving research agenda and suggest some modifications to the latter. In order to do so, after a very brief exposition of how the author explains the emergence of the SWPR we explore the main critiques of his account. We then analyse his more recent output, particularly after the onset of the global economic crisis, seeing how this has affected the matter at hand. Having done so, we assess his contribution and argue that, in spite of passages that can otherwise be construed, it can be read in a non-functionalist, non-structuralist and non-deterministic manner. We also suggest five shifts to the agenda, before offering some final remarks.

2. Towards a Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime

Matters of space prohibit a fuller exposition of the transition to the SWPR, which will be presented very schematically so that we can deal at more lengths with its assessment³. Jessop's argument goes that Fordism and its state form, the Keynesian welfare national state (KWNS), enter a joint crisis in the mid-seventies. Both economic and extra-economic factors, present in most spaces of Atlantic Fordism, played a part in this. The overriding developments, however, are related to the internationalisation of the economy and the society, which disarticulated the coherence of the 'integral state' and the 'integral economy'. Particularly as wages came to be seen as international costs of production, instead of as domestic source of effective demand, and as money growingly functioned as international currency, and not national money, the main crisis-management routines became ineffective. Demand-side interventions, operated through wages and national credit, became dysfunctional and led to a prolonged stagflation. There is thus a period of attempts at resolving the crisis by established means, which, as they had become ineffectual, but escalate the situation. The former congruence between national societies, national states and national economies is no longer observed, which amounts to a deconstruction of the national economy as an object of regularisation and governance by the national state. Jessop indicates this as the end of the national spatiotemporal fix, accompanied by a 'crisis of crisis-management', employing Offe's (1984) expression. As a result, the wide-ranging economic and social disorganisation that entails gradually favours the development of discourses and strategies aiming at more profound transformations. There thus were, in the various spaces, processes that led to a deep reorganisation of the state form and the accumulation regime, which were determined by the hegemonic disputes and as the result of the conflict of different strategies. These processes unfolded in conjunctures whose strategic selectivities were given by each concrete crisis, in turn marked by more or less common factors – such as the internationalisation of the economy and the society – and by particular elements dictated by the history of each social formation. The new accumulation regime and state form jointly develop themselves, and are later indicated as the KBE and the SWPR. These political and economic forms, if they indeed come to be institutionalised, would be mutually complementary in the sense that their strategic selectivities reinforce each other's, so that the accumulation of capital tends to be regularised and governed.

In substantive terms, Jessop presents four main tendencies of the substitution of the KWNS by the SWPR, represented by each term of the concepts. They are related to the participation of the state in the circuit of capital, in its more directly economic policies; to the state's participation in the reproduction of

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³ We present this argument based on the following works (JESSOP, 1993, 2000, 2002, 2006b, 2006c, 2006e).

labour power as a fictitious commodity, as regards its social policies; to the dominant scale of the state, if any; and to the prevailing mechanism for coordinating social relations. Respectively, they comprehend: i) a substitution of demand-side, Keynesian-oriented intervention to a supply-side, competitiveness-enhancing and innovation-fostering Schumpeterian action; ii) a subordination of social to economic policy, with downwards pressure on the social wage and a change of focus from full employment to 'full employability', leading to more flexible labour relations and a transition from welfare to workfare; iii) a relativization of scale that entails a clear loss of primacy of the national one (even if it still important in many respects) without any other scale assuming dominance; and iv) a greater role of governance as a mechanism of correcting for market and state failures, accompanied by the state's growing resort to metagovernance – which operates under the shadow of hierarchy.

3. Recent debates: critiques of the transition to the SWPR

We now turn to the critiques of the presented narrative. Their central claim is that Jessop provides a narrative lacking in agency, which is either seen as a consequence of the author's Marxist framework or of conducting an excessively abstract analysis. Philip Cerny (2006) reviews three pieces by Jessop and Neil Brenner (BRENNER, 2004a; BRENNER *et al.*, 2003; JESSOP, 2002) and, in spite of agreeing with several substantive points the two authors advance, he provides a markedly different interpretation of them. For him, Jessop is only able to formally distance himself from economic determinism, as he ultimately explains political and social phenomena through economic developments. It would purportedly be the 'adoption of accumulation strategies that determines the direction of structural development and institutional change' (CERNY, 2006, p. 688). This would in turn lead Jessop to consider that the remodelling and rescaling of the state is centrally caused by the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism and the KBE – with Cerny seeing the latter, even if implicitly, as a purely economic change. It would seem that the author understands that Jessop and Brenner present such a transition as a 'cause without cause', and, against this, suggests two hypotheses (CERNY, 2006, p. 691-692). Firstly, post-Fordist production techniques and strategies could have become a more efficient set of routines due to the expansion of markets that occurred during the Fordist period. And, secondly, it could further be related to a political process that eventually led to the opening and internationalisation of financial markets, which decisively explains the emergence of post-Fordism⁴.

Cerny furthermore argues that the Marxist framework employed by Jessop and Brenner would, besides inevitably leading to economic determinism, add no value to their analyses. It is the case that all processes they study can be better approached by other traditions. Against the value-theoretical claim that only productive labour generates value, markets should be considered as sources of wealth in their own stead. And, even if they are not self-regulating, the Marxist endogenous market failure theories are reductionist and fail to recognise that the dynamism of capitalist societies is precisely due to competitive market behaviour (CERNY, 2006, p. 683-684). Moreover, when dealing in the extra-economic Jessop would deliver no theoretical or analytical novelties – metagovernance, for example, is seen as nothing more than the 'longstanding adage in political philosophy that the main task of the state is to provide the general conditions for the stabilization and continued existence of the endogenous society itself' (CERNY, 2006, p. 686). As regards the spatiality of accumulation, notwithstanding his remark that powerful insights have been offered in this terrain, Cerny argues that spatiotemporal fixes should not be seen as a structural imperative for regularising capital accumulation. A better view of the subject could be produced with transaction cost theory, which indicates that in an economy of highly mobile production factors and non-specific assets geographical dimensions lose weight. For all that,

it might be preferable simply to downgrade the structural imperative of Marxist-style capital accumulation and its relationship with spatio-temporal fixes in general and to upgrade the other variables Jessop and Brenner continually discuss but insufficiently privilege in theoretical terms (CERNY, 2006, p. 693).

4 'these changes did not result spontaneously from processes of production but from political decisions [...] Embedded liberalism was originally a Fordist project that turned into a post-Fordist one because of the expansion of the scale of markets, especially financial markets. This process of market expansion did not take place by itself, but was the result of a now well researched *political* process of trade and financial market opening.' (CERNY, 2006, p. 692, author's emphasis).

the outcome [of the transformations of the state] will not be determined by the structural imperatives of capital accumulation, however co-constituted and realized through struggles. It will be the product of old-fashioned, more structurally open and politically fluid processes of conflict, competition and coalition-building (CERNY, 2006, p. 694).

Colin Hay (2004) also assesses Cerny's and Jessop's accounts of the current transformations of the state. He organises his critique around three main issues. The overriding one is that the authors have produced good descriptions of contemporary state forms, but their work reduces itself to merely that – descriptions. Insofar as one tries to read them in search for explanations behind the emergence of the SWPR or the Competition state (Cerny's thesis), the end result would by force be a functionalist argument based on economic determinism. Which is to say, Hay considers that Cerny commits the errors of which he accuses Jessop. The second point, closely associated to the first, is that the highly abstract narrative employed entirely obscures social agency. Lastly, Hay raises the question of the SWPR being an excessively encompassing category, suggesting that it is better to study transition processes on a case-by-case basis.

According to Hay, it is not clear whether Jessop intends to merely offer a stylised description of the emergence of the SWPR, present the necessity or logic of such a transition or, yet, explain this process in its temporal and spatial specificity. This is in itself troublesome, as it may come to depict contingent results as historical necessities and, thereby, naturalise the former. On top of that, when Jessop effectively tries to explain how or why the SWPR came to be, his form-analysis would slip into functionalism as it reveals the functional complementarity between the state form and the accumulation regime. The SWPR would assert itself, if it comes to do so, for being the state form most compatible with post-Fordism, for contributing towards the resolution of the crisis of Fordism. This can be divided into two different claims – one regarding the necessity of the functional adequacy between political and economic forms, another regarding the capacity of one sphere determining the other. On the one hand, Hay considers that there are no reasons to expect the development of such adequacy, as state regimes do not respond to economic crises themselves, but rather to dominant discourses of the latter – which is to say, to narrated, not real crises (HAY, 2004, p. 43). There are thus no mechanisms capable of bringing about this compatibility, which therefore stands as an undemonstrated necessity. This argument is indifferent to which sphere determines the other: there are no processes that mould economic forms so that they adjust to political ones or vice-versa, nor are there any forces that co-constitute the state and the economy in a mutually compatible manner. But there is a second dimension to his critique, for Jessop would purportedly suggest that the economic dimension holds constant while dynamically shaping the state form so that it becomes functional to the accumulation of capital. Hay thus argues that if the SWPR effectively institutionalises itself 'one must presume this to be a triumph of capitalism's ability to conjure for itself optimal economic functionality out of the contingencies of political conflict and contestation' (HAY, 2004, p. 48). Hence his denunciation of functionalism implicitly includes one of economic determinism, with the political being reduced to an epiphenomenon of the economic. Varró (2010, p. 1268) has a similar interpretation, as she concludes that Jessop gives in to the temptations of stretching a static analysis of the functional adequacy between systems to a dynamic account in which such functionality becomes the explanatory principle of systemic evolution. The author furthermore argues that the concept of ecological dominance leads to determinism, as it allegedly establishes economic structures that inescapably define political phenomena.

Another issue Hay raises regards the abstraction of Jessop's analyses, which leads to an apolitical account devoid of agency and insufficiently attentive to the diversity of the studied processes. Even if political elements are mentioned, they would be operative in more concrete levels that are not approached. Consequently, the thesis would offer nothing in the direction of contestation strategies, nor would it be able to shed light on the specific processes that brought about the SWPR – notwithstanding rich descriptions of the strategic terrain in which such strategies are played out. For Hay, 'this is a product no doubt of the simple fact that the ethereal realms of abstraction at which the analysis is for the most part conducted are not densely populated with clearly identifiable actors, strategic or otherwise' (HAY, 2004, p. 47). The transition to the current state form could be better seen, on the other hand, as the result

of neoliberalisation processes occurring in response to supposed, fabricated or genuine crises of political regimes. This would have the advantages of eschewing functionalism, reintroducing agency, better dealing with the temporality of the various processes and being more consistent with the idea that politics deals with the *political construal* of crises, and not directly with the latter. Varró (2010) leans towards a similar direction, even if it is not clear whether she interprets the lack of agency in Jessop's narratives as a result of his general framework or of the level of abstraction employed. On the one hand, Jessop would implicitly adopt an ontological distinction between the economic and the political, equating the former with the space of structures and the latter to the space of agency – to the result that the political would be unavoidably determined by economic factors (VARRÓ, 2010, p. 1268-1269). On the other hand, however, she also suggests that more abstract analyses are not able to explain how and why the phenomena at hand occur, nor can they identify the agents responsible for them.

As far as the problems of abstraction go, it might also be the case that the schematic transition would illuminate none of the concrete processes to which it refers. Which is to say, given the wide variety of KWNSs and SWPRs, a single account of the transition from the ones to the others would, in the end, not be related to any. In other words, Hay is not convinced that the factors behind such transformations are indeed common to the various cases at hand, or even that they are all part of a single phenomenon (HAY, 2004, p. 45). Even if many states can be described as KWNSs or SWPRs, positing that they systematically evolved from the former to the latter, especially through a process with shared causes, is not seen as a fruitful interpretation. Moreover, the argument behind that would be circular. This is because, insofar as he presumes that there is a single transition occurring in the various KWNSs, Jessop postulates that it is thus caused by a common group of mechanisms. In the end, the validity of the degree of abstraction employed, which depends on the processes sharing common causes, remains a presupposition that is circularly justified for it being easier to explain the various transitions by means of a single account. In order to avoid this, it would be necessary to further research the varieties of KWNSs and SWPRs and examine the (dis)similarities of their transitions, so as to identify how (allegedly) common mechanisms are overdetermined in concrete conjunctures and there arises (or not) a genealogical tree of contemporary state forms.

Another result of this agent-free, functionalist narrative is that it cannot envision alternatives to the SWPR. As it is posited as the 'best political shell' of post-Fordism, how is one to look beyond it? There are no clear indications of which characteristics of the SWPR are necessary to avoid political and economic crises and which can be safely modified in a post-Fordist context, which hinders the practical struggle to transform the state. The same point is made by Bas van Heur (2010a, 2010b), which he ascribes to the exaggerated importance attached to capital as a social force. This leads to an understanding of state developments as sub-products of the needs of the economy. Open and political processes would thus be read according to a deeper imperative related to the necessity of guaranteeing the conditions of capital accumulation, pre-judging history in the direction of a pro-capitalist resolution⁵. The abstract character of the analyses would also be unable to determine the causality of the examined processes, for which one needs more empiric studies and historically precise approaches (VAN HEUR, 2010a, p. 433, 2010b, p. 453). Hence, Jessop's theoretical *corpus* (more specifically, CPE) would neither inform concrete practices nor subsidise empirical studies.

It is worth mentioning that Hay is criticising Jessop's account of the transition to the SWPR as presented in *The future of the capitalist state* (JESSOP, 2002), for in other works he considers that the strategic-relational approach Jessop employs is able to escape structuralism, determinism and functionalism (HAY, 2006). Nevertheless, Hay does understand that the Jessop is pursuing a problematic research agenda that should be essential redirected, and not further developed via more concrete studies⁶.

5 It should be noted that Bonefeld (1987) had already issued a similar critique.

6 Marinetto (2004), on the other hand, considers that *The future of the capitalist state* initiates a productive research agenda, even if should be essentially taken for a set of hypotheses to be tested against more concrete studies.

4. Post-crisis post-Fordism: some of Jessop's recent remarks on the SWPR, the KBE and finance-dominated accumulation

Particularly after the onset of the ongoing economic crisis, Jessop has returned to the transition to post-Fordism, the KBE and the SWPR in a rather different light. Even if he had stressed the heightened importance of financial capital and its destabilising potential, the matter has acquired a more prominent role in his recent output. Related to this, Jessop now reads back into the preceding decades a conflict between two accumulation regimes, one centred on financial accumulation and the other on the KBE (the SPWR being compatible only to the latter). The role of the USA in the transition to post-Fordism, an issue scarcely mentioned before, also receives some attention. Given the fairly recent character of these contributions, many of which deal with an ever-changing crisis, the author's arguments are not always very coherent or clear. It seems reasonable to suggest that they are more exploratory in nature, but as they – implicitly or not – review formerly held positions one might be able to assess the development of the research agenda through them.

As previously shown, Jessop considered that the hegemonic post-Fordist accumulation regime was the KBE, in and through which he also explored the articulation between financial and productive forms of capital. In more recent texts, however, the author is less clear on this respect. In certain moments he indicates that the KBE competed with a finance-dominated regime, either in the same spaces or in closely interconnected ones (JESSOP, 2013c; JESSOP *et al.*, 2013). In others, he suggests that the latter regime became hegemonic after the crisis of Fordism, or even that the two asserted themselves in different spaces⁷. Nevertheless, Jessop has definitely redirected his thoughts towards considering that somehow a finance-based regime coexisted with the KBE, instead of exploring the articulation between the financial and knowledge-based moments of capital in a single accumulation regime.

With this change, some of the strongest crisis tendencies that were associated to post-Fordist social formations come to be rather circumscribed to the finance-dominated regime⁸. This may be seen by the fact that when dealing with the KBE in his post-crisis contributions, Jessop rarely mentions financial capital, the dominance of which was behind most of the destabilising phenomena. In fact, this form of capital comes into play when neoliberalising tendencies interact with the KBE⁹. In this process, the SWPR is also reviewed. It is indicated as the complementary form only of the KBE, and is described in a somewhat more stable and progressive light. Especially as regards its participation in the reproduction of labour power, the workfarist elements of this state form are inflexed towards guaranteeing social security, as it is seen as compatible with 'an innovation-led, *flexicurity oriented*, multi-scalar and governance-based mode of growth' (JESSOP, 2013c, p. 18, our emphasis). Another important issue is that the competition between the two regimes, instead of a clear dominance of either, increased the overall systemic instability, as it hindered the development of the extra-economic supports adequate to each one (JESSOP, 2013c, p. 20).

It is worth exploring why the neoliberalising, finance-dominated strategy became hegemonic and continues to be so as the crisis unfolds (JESSOP, 2010a, 2013c, 2013a, 2013b). One argument is that neoliberalising reforms were carried out in most spaces, and even after a change of course they continue to exert strong influence in a path-dependent manner. Besides this, the weight of neoliberal USA and the position of the dollar as the international reserve currency, associated to the greater ecological dominance of the world market, indirectly allow the USA to export its problems and contradictions to other spaces, regimes and social formations (JESSOP, 2010a, p. 33). This should not be understood, however, as there

7 See, for example, the following quotes: 'the crisis of the post-war mode of growth [...] created the conditions for a neoliberal regime shift and a **transition to a finance-dominated mode of growth**' (JESSOP, 2013b, p. 241, excerpts in italics indicate the author's emphasis, those in bold our own) and 'finance-dominated accumulation regimes [...] emerged in a few but important economic spaces' (JESSOP, 2013b, p. 244).

8 These were the exaggerated emphasis on the abstract moments of capital, the dominance of financial capital and the incapacity of developing a stable spatiotemporal fix (JESSOP, 2002, p. 104-113, 2006h, 2007, p. 178-197).

9 'While it [the KBE] tends to favour productive over money capital, it has sometimes been inflected in a neoliberal manner that highlights the role of market forces as the driving force behind innovation' (JESSOP, 2013c, p. 17). The contraposition of money and productive capital suggests that market forces would implicitly contain a stronger role for financial capital.

being a unilateral imposition of forces organised around the USA on the rest of the world. However much finance-dominated regimes might have emerged in but few spaces (JESSOP, 2013b, p. 244), they are part of a strategy of a *transnational* power block (JESSOP, 2013c, p. 16-17). In this vein, there are social formations on which neoliberalism was imposed, but by and large the latter is 'the product of specific *national and transnational* class projects' (JESSOP, 2012a, p. 210, our emphasis) that actively pursued neoliberal regime shifts. It can also be said that the bases for expanding and maintaining this model are located in the greater power of financial capital and on a wider dynamics of domination:

This regime gained increasing influence in the variegated world market through the disembedding of financial capital and the importance of neoliberalism as the driving force in world market integration [...] The continuing efforts to revive this model tell us something about the limits of the regulation approach in so far as it ignores the broader dynamics of class domination, the ability of those with power not to have to learn from their mistakes, and the growing turn to authoritarian statism and, indeed, repressive measures to maintain class power (JESSOP, 2013c, p. 18).

5. Reassessing the transition towards the Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime: notes for an open research agenda

We suggest that Jessop's contribution can be better appreciated if seen as part of an agenda that to date remains largely to be done. Criticised and improved though it may be, and even if we might in fact occasionally come upon structuralist, functionalist or determinist elements, Jessop's wider oeuvre does not authorise such an interpretation. With this in mind, we now explore the transition to the SWPR trying to bring out the potential of this approach, to indicate some issues we consider better dealt with from a change in perspective and to highlight the imprecise, ambiguous or insufficiently studied phenomena.

An overall assessment of the author's interpretation lies in it being or not deterministic, structuralist or functionalist. Firstly, it should be noted that, in contradistinction to Cerny's (2006, p. 691-692) understanding, it is not the transition to post-Fordism that brings about the SWPR. Fordism and post-Fordism are emergent categories only reproduced through the social relations on which they are founded, and only insofar as these relations are themselves reproduced by the relevant actors (JESSOP, 1996). Thus, any idea of a crisis of Fordism must be based on the incapacity of reproducing its main forms (e.g., the wage norm); likewise, one can only speak of a post-Fordist accumulation regime or social formation to the extent that there is an ensemble of mutually supportive relations. It is thus the case that, quite clearly, 'the transition to post-Fordism and the KBE is itself a dependent variable' (CERNY, 2006, p. 691), in the double sense that it can only be explained by the institutionalisation of a series of relations from which it emerges and that, as any other event, it is caused by multiple determinations that must be historically explained (JESSOP, 1990, p. 12).

There is another reason why the transition to post-Fordism did not cause the SWPR – objects and modes of regulation, regimes of accumulation and modes of regulation are actually co-constituted (JESSOP, 2006d, p. 365, 2006a, p. 300). Specific elements found in each of them may be prior to these forms, such as microelectronics and the privatisation of state services, but one can only consider that post-Fordism exists when these various objects – or, better, the relations between them – acquire a certain degree of structured coherence. This happens via a multifaceted process, with political as well as economic determinants, that alters the overall efficacy of every element (JESSOP, 1990, p. 311). It should also be noted that modes of regulation, including state forms, are 'chance discoveries' (*Findsache*) (JESSOP, 2006b, p. 84, 2006f, p. 238), the development of which does not follow a preordained process that leaves economic circuits unaltered. They rather come to be through attempts at reflexively moulding *economic and political* relations and imposing partial coherence on nascent structures (JESSOP, 2006a, p. 316)¹⁰. In this vein, if economic factors were the amongst the main ones responsible for *deconstructing* Fordism, they cannot be seen to have single-handedly *structured* even the post-Fordist regime of accumulation,

¹⁰ Brenner's (2003, 2004b) works are a good example of this process. The author highlights how urban governance mechanisms underwent extensive changes during the crisis of Fordism and gradually fixed themselves around globalising competition strategies, which actively participated in regularising accumulation along lines that came to be post-Fordist.

let alone other dimensions of post-Fordism. There is no inert economic dimension to summon beneficial state forms, as Hay (2004, p. 48) suggests. In all effect, the reason why Jessop sees the SWPR as an inherently post-Fordist state runs rather the other way round: 'The key mechanism in this case [is] the critical role of the state in securing the extra-economic conditions for capital accumulation and hence in *shaping and guiding the forms that capital accumulation can take*' (JESSOP, 2002, p. 268, our emphasis).

Seen in this light, it would thus seem that economic determinism is not to be found in the transition to the SWPR. The issue should not be so rapidly dismissed, however, for we believe there in fact are some traces of it, as in the following quote:

The general and widespread nature of the changes involved in the tendential emergence of the SWPR suggests that the primary causes of this transition should be sought in general and widespread features of the postwar political economy since the 1970s and '80s (JESSOP, 2002, p. 142).

Regardless of the term 'political economy' indicating a wider conception of the economic, there are some deterministic elements not easily dismissed here. Without denying this, we suggest that it can be sidestepped by referring to Jessop's wider oeuvre according to the following interpretation. The author (JESSOP, 1982, p. 211-220) proposes that a theory is adequate to the extent that it retroductively explains the contingent necessity of the phenomena at hand, at the degree of complexity and concreteness that it is formulated, while also being extensible to different levels of complexity and concreteness. In addition to this, the more abstract is a hypothesis, the greater will be the variation of the results compatible with it – it is underdetermined. It must be borne in mind that the SWPR is a very abstract concept since, for example, its participation in the reproduction of labour force is defined in terms of promoting flexibility and the (re)insertion of workers in the market, while varying between the extremes of 'flexploitation' and 'flexicurity' (JESSOP, 2002, p. 156). Even Brenner (2009), which often works with Jessop, recognises that in many aspects the latter's account of the rescaling of the state is rather preliminary. The SWPR is, in a nutshell, 'the naturally necessary form of the capitalist type of state in a globalizing knowledge-based economy' (JESSOP, 2002, p. 268). We suggest this means that the concept is defined at the degree of abstraction that allows it to encompass every necessary dimension of a state form compatible with post-Fordist social formations, and no more than this.

We propose the following interpretation. Retrospectively, one notices that there was an ongoing transition to post-Fordism and that there were no radical breaks with capitalism, but rather attempts to carry on with the integration of the social formations of Atlantic Fordism to the world market. In this scenario, political-economic factors are behind the emergence of the SWPR at a highly abstract plane, given two interconnected issues. Firstly, the growing integration of the economies and the higher mobility of capital are the main reasons why it was necessary to restructure Fordism and the KWNS. Secondly, the world market assumed greater weight as a mandatory reference of economic calculation and as a space of competition. Insofar as this subjects each individual capital and social formation to the lines of force given by the clash of all accumulation strategies, the compatibility with the capital relation growingly becomes a validation criterion for the various social forms. Increasing the interconnectedness of the world market was certainly not a historical necessity, but, *once this condition is accepted*, the ecological dominance of the economy is heightened. This should not be taken to mean that global economic integration implies the adoption of a single ensemble of social forms, which would naturalise – and hence fetishize – one amongst many paradigms. What is at stake here is that there is greater pressure to develop competitiveness in face of the totality of capitals (a more restrictive condition than competing in national boundaries), however that may occur. The social formations are thus faced with more numerous and more intense economic forces, many of which they cannot individually influence. The impact of an eventual misalignment to global competitive conditions is thereby increased. One may thus conclude that there is a stronger necessity of developing a competitive economic structure, with higher penalties attached to failing to do so. In other words, the economic places greater adaptive pressures on social formations as a whole and is more capable of destabilising the various social dimensions. Which is to say, the ecological dominance of the economy increases.

We might then say that, for the various agents participating in the development of a new state form, certain economic elements – which would come to be part of the post-Fordist accumulation regime – imposed themselves as structural conditions for a great part of their strategies¹¹. In this sense, *given the acceptance of the project of increasing global financial and productive integration*, the economic in fact assumed greater ecological dominance. In this context, economic factors were actually able to mould important traits of the state forms being developed. This account suggests that, for this specific matter, competing in a growingly integrated world market and further increasing this integration were strategies and objectives present in the various analysed spaces – and they decisively produce certain traits that, hypothetically, allow one indicate the tendential emergence of the SWPR in all of them. We thus suggest that Jessop tries to demonstrate the hypothesis that some very general aspects of the transition to the SWPR are given mainly by economic factors. The issue then becomes assessing to what extent does this inform more concrete approaches while not being rendered contradictory by them (JESSOP, 1982, p. 211-220).

We present two examples of this possible integration. Oosterlynck (2010) studies the transformation of the Belgian state and shows how a general scenario, given by the crisis of Fordism and the transition to post-Fordism, was overdetermined by factors specific to the case at hand. The author convincingly demonstrates the open-ended character of state rescaling processes, while also exploring the strategically selective terrain in which they operate. Of particular relevance here is how far-reaching events (such as the end of colonialism and the competitive challenge of post-Fordist production processes) interact with more specific ones (such as the linguistic basis for developing regional hegemonic projects), as well as how the end result in Belgium can be seen in the lines of an SWPR. Jessop (2006e) himself also provides an interesting case study. Comparing the English and German transition to conservative regimes in the mid-eighties, he concludes that greater similarities were observed in matters more influenced by international competition and in which post-Fordism was already more coherent, while in both cases a break with Fordist regulation (that had become ineffective) was necessary. On the other hand, the prior trajectory of both countries produced crises of different intensity and dimensions in each one, which favoured varying responses as regards the extents of the transformations to be conducted. In this sense, we observe political and economic strategies in each formation that deal both with the inescapable scenario of the crisis of Fordism and the KWNS, under the risk of developing a ‘strategy that is inconsistent with long-run trends emerging from the clash of all strategies in the world economy’ (JESSOP, 2006e, p. 149), and with each country’s political and economic particularities that overdetermine concrete struggles.

It thus seems possible to read Jessop in a manner that avoids the determinist elements that eventually arise. If *The future of the capitalist state* (JESSOP, 2002) really is rather silent as regards the specific processes that brought about the transition to the SWPR, it is not an approach incompatible with, or in opposition to, more concrete ones. On the contrary, there is a research agenda, including works by Jessop and others¹², which tries to reflexively integrate both. In order to correctly frame this agenda, a note on the relationship between abstraction, agency, the economic and the political seems necessary here. While the abstract analyses Jessop usually conducts do not tend to *specify* agency in the studied processes, one is thereby not necessarily in structuralist terrain. This is true as long as there effectively is space for it in more concrete dimensions – i.e., as long as the agents are not seen simply as *Träger* of the indicated relations, but are actually able to strategically reproduce or transform the latter (JESSOP, 1982, 1996). Hence, it is necessary to admit the underdetermination of these abstract explanations. On the other hand, this must not be confused with equating structures with the economic and agency with the political, as Varró (2010, p. 1268-1269) would have it, for two reasons. Firstly, for Jessop (1996) has

11 ‘the “structural” moment in social relations is now seen to comprise those elements in a given temporal-spatial strategic context which cannot be altered by a given agent (or set of agents) pursuing a given strategy during a given time period. The “conjunctural” moment in turn will comprise those elements in a given temporal-spatial strategic context which can be modified’ (JESSOP, 1996, p. 124).

12 The following works can be considered to advance this research agenda, either by explicitly following in Jessop’s footsteps or, more frequently, by critically approaching his work and trying to progress on it (BRENNER, 2003, 2004b, 2009; GOODWIN *et al.*, 2005; JESSOP, 2006e, 2013d; JESSOP *et al.*, 2008; JONES, 2008; OOSTERLYNCK, 2010; WISSEN, 2009).

a relativized and dialectical approach to the duality of structure and agency. Political dimensions thus might be structural constraints for some actors and strategies, while, inversely, economic elements might emerge as conjunctural opportunities for others. Secondly, the interrelations Jessop posits between the economic and the political completely disavow the conception of a self-sufficient economic sphere reproducing itself behind the backs of the agents and a voluntarist political dimension¹³. His concepts actually try to show how agency and structure are always present in the economic and the political, and how these dimensions continuously interact and are mutually implicated. As an example, hegemonic projects are not only conditioned by economic factors but also decisively influence the latter, while accumulation strategies are an agential category dealing mainly with capital accumulation that nevertheless include political and discursive conditions of success (JESSOP, 1983, 2003, 2006a). We thus suggest that it is a false dilemma asking whether the transition to post-Fordism and the SWPR was *either* politically *or* economically determined, as Cerny (2006) seems to put it. Inevitably, state transformations are effected through political processes; what is important is to investigate how political and economic factors, and the definition of a certain conjuncture, interacted over time to bring about the results observed. Accordingly, Jessop's account points out that economic (but also political) factors made it necessary to break with the KWNS and, in the open restructuring process that then begins, the victorious strategies did not seek to detach themselves from the world market and the apparently more competitive nascent forms of economic organisation, but, rather, took these as desirable objectives – and, in time, they were able to gradually institutionalise, in a mutually implicated manner, what would come to be a post-Fordist accumulation regime (the KBE) and state form (the SWPR).

Given the possibility of a non-determinist reading of Jessop, let us now observe how functionalism comes to bear on his analysis. It must first be noted that a crass kind of functionalism that proposes a perfect fit between the state form and the accumulation regime is not to be found. It is sufficient to indicate that Jessop has long considered that the typical form of the capitalist state problematizes its capitalist function and that, in the specific case of the SWPR, he points out many enduring contradictions and insufficiencies, such as the incapacity of developing a stable spatiotemporal fix (JESSOP, 2006g, p. 294, 2006h, p. 341-344, 2002). Nevertheless, this is no proper demonstration of a lack of functionalism – proposing that the most functional forms will be selected *because* they are functional, however much precarious this maximum congruence may be, is still a functionalist interpretation.

It is clear that the SWPR is to some extent functional, for it has got the 'basic structural features that are congruent with the globalizing, knowledge-based economy' (JESSOP, 2002, p. 268). We must then investigate how this congruence is seen to emerge, where it effectively does so. Two previous points should be established. First, in no moment does the author say that the SWPR will in fact institutionalise itself. Functionality is thus not seen as a sufficient condition for the emergence of social forms. Second, this state form is an ideal-type, not a concrete description of 'actually existing' states; hence, we are dealing with an empirically-informed, theoretically-based mental experiment that seeks to identify certain complementary features of a regime of accumulation and a state form.

Bearing this in mind, it should be noted that in the theoretical framework employed some degree of adequacy between the political and the economic is necessary for social reproduction to take place. Given that accumulation depends on a set of relations only partially under the value form (JESSOP, 1983, 2001, 2002), *insofar as* the capital relation is reproduced *some* congruence between the state form and the accumulation regime must have been present. This escapes functionalism for two reasons. Firstly, because in no moment is it decreed that capital will be reproduced (and hence the necessary presence an organic state); and, secondly, for it does not require the *most* functional forms to be selected. In view of this, the somewhat trite observation that capitalism greatly expanded during the post-1980 period, marked as it might have been by higher instability, suggests the presence of a congruent state form – albeit with relevant contradictions and insufficiencies.

13 The idea is precisely to avoid what can be deduced from a statement of Varró's, in which the political is explicitly equated to all agential features of social reproduction and, implicitly, the economic is reduced to structures: "re-politicising" also entails that we leave room for agents who act within a field of multiple structures. The political in this sense comes to signify the potential for change that resides in all social relations" (VARRÓ, 2010, p. 1273).

We might explore the issue employing the contributions of Cultural Political Economy (CPE), a still embryonic approach being developed mainly by Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum. Although considerations of space prohibit us from fully dealing with this recent methodological turn, it seems a relevant framework since one of its central concerns has been the interplay of semiotic and extra-semiotic factors in the evolution of institutions (JESSOP, 2007, 2013b). Crises *of* a mode of development (such as Fordism) are considered to represent the incapacity of reproducing the capital relation according to formerly established norms, thus giving rise to a conjuncture of ‘profound cognitive, strategic, and practical disorientation by disrupting actors’ sedimented views of the world’ (JESSOP, 2013b, p. 237). There then is space for developing myriad interpretations of the crisis and politicising solidly established issues. During this initial moment of unstructured complexity, semiotic factors are particularly efficacious in producing various interpretations. As one moves towards the selection and retention of these discourses to serve as bases for social action and the sedimentation of institutions, however, extra-semiotic factors tend to grow in relevance. This is a path-shaping process that occurs under the shadow of path-dependency, in which the strategies for interpreting, contesting and acting upon the crises are continuously subjected to semiotic and extra-semiotic factors, with variable weight. The plausibility and the potential for selection/retention of a certain discourse or strategy is also dependent on how it resonates with the experience of relevant groups, how it deals with the media, its interaction with the selectivities of various public and private apparatuses and its capacity of convincing specific actors. In addition to this, each strategy is met with different structurally-inscribed selectivities – a crisis-management strategy organised around bailing-out large enterprises and waiting for alleged trickling-down effects, for example, in principle needs to convince fewer (if important) actors than one based on popular contestation of the regime and workers’ self-organisation. As crisis-management and crisis-contestation unfolds, an ensemble of interpretations and practical responses *might* eventually give rise to a new situation of structured complexity, when, *ex definitio*, the crisis period will have ended and some congruence between the different social dimensions will be observed. Under the hypothesis of a continuation of capitalism, this involves restoring accumulation as the chief principle of societalization and guaranteeing the compatibility of the state form and the accumulation regime. It should be highlighted that functionality is *one amongst the many* factors to influence the probability of a given discourse or strategy being selected and retained:

Other things being equal, more resonant interpretations will get selected as the basis for action, whether this takes the form of restoration, piecemeal reform, or radical innovation. But other things are rarely equal. Power matters. Powerful narratives without powerful bases from which to implement them are less effective than more ‘arbitrary, rationalistic and willed’ accounts that are pursued consistently by the powerful through the exercise of power. Indeed, periods of crisis illustrate forcefully that power involves the capacity *not to have to learn from one’s own mistakes* (JESSOP, 2013b, p. 241, author’s emphasis).

These observations clearly establish the possibility of a non-functionalist theoretical framework. What is at stake is that, to exit a period of crisis, minimally practical strategies must be pursued. While functionality does indeed affect their probability of being retained, many other issues are in place and there is no guarantee whatsoever that the most functional strategies will be selected. It should also be noted that if Hirsch (1977) has already taught us that the state does not respond directly to economic issues, but to their political repercussions, this should not be extended to indicate that there is no mutually responsive interaction between economic and political variables eventually capable of finding a translation into the state form. Contrary to what Hay (2004, p. 43) seems to understand, it is hence possible to approach in non-structuralist-functionalist manners the process whereby the state form and the regime of accumulation (do not) become complementary to each other: the variation, selection and retention of discourses and strategies do indeed respond to extra-semiotic and economic variables. We suggest further exploring the issue under the light of the concepts of ecological dominance of the economy, hegemonic project and accumulation strategy.

These notions are part of the ‘social fixes’ Jessop proposes. They try to bridge different social dimensions, particularly the economic and the political. We do not have space here to present the following consideration at length, but we understand that Jessop gradually developed these various social fixes in

response to critiques of politicism¹⁴, trying to avoid the latter by growingly exploring the imbrication of political and economic phenomena. We further understand that these various concepts are developed in a two-pronged process, in which the author successively acknowledges the underdetermination of a certain aspect of social formations and, simultaneously, proposes a middle-range strategic concept that explores how this dimension might contingently acquire substantive unity in and through social action. Jessop thus leans towards viewing social reproduction and accumulation as *a priori* ever more improbable, while at the same time proposing to investigate how it is effectively secured. A cursory glance reveals that back in his first book Jessop (1982) recognised that the class unity of the state was not guaranteed, and thus proposed that hegemony could provide for it. The next year (JESSOP, 1983), we find that the value and state forms are underdetermined, but can be substantiated through accumulation strategies and hegemonic projects. As the decade progresses (JESSOP, 1990), the state apparatus itself is made devoid of pre-given substantive unity – nevertheless, specific state projects can secure it. The author’s larger contact with the Regulation Approach (tentatively positioned in JESSOP, 1993) leads to a similar effect, since one of the guiding principles of this theoretical *corpus* is examining via middle-range concepts how accumulation – although inherently contradictory and fraught with class struggle – is possible (BOYER, 1990, p. 70; JESSOP; SUM, 2006). We also suggest that studying the relationship between the mechanisms for coordinating social relations and the circuit of capital (JESSOP, 1995), as well as the ‘political economy of scale’ (JESSOP, 2000), may all be seen as part of this process¹⁵. If our reading is right, we can suggest that these concepts intend to demonstrate five points: i) the *a priori inexistence* of substantive unity (and hence functionality of any kind) for a given aspect, be it in a single social dimension (e.g., unity of the state apparatus) or in the interaction between more than one (e.g., economic hegemony); ii) the *possibility* of establishing such unity in *a certain spatiotemporal horizon*; iii) the *precariousness* of such unity; iv) the *necessity of concrete practices* for such unity to be observed; and v) in view of they being developed by exploring the mutual implication of the political and the economic, the *multi-determined* or *complex character* of the possibility of such unity being established.

Let us then consider how these concepts inform our understanding of how the SWPR and the KBE might have become complementary to each other. The ecological dominance of the economy, recently increased due to the internationalisation of the circuit of capital and its greater capacities of time-space distantiation and compression, indicates that the economic sphere offers greater adaptive pressures to the other systems than the other way around (JESSOP, 2002, p. 24-28, 2010b, 2010a). It is not precisely a matter of capital being able to dynamically secure adequate extra-economic supports, but rather that ‘the logic of accumulation tends to *cause more problems* for other systems than they cause for the expanded reproduction of capital’ (JESSOP, 2010b, p. 79, our emphasis), that it is able to export its crises and contradiction to other social dimensions. The main thrust of the idea hence lies in denoting the asymmetry between the economy and other spheres. A particular emphasis should be put on the capacity of accumulation-derived problems being translated into other orders, even exploiting the latter as a means of guaranteeing the accumulation of capital¹⁶. In this sense, much more than to functionality, it is an idea related to the capacity of economic phenomena and economic power subverting the capacity of other systems reproducing themselves – it might perhaps be a demonstration of systemic *dysfunctionality*.

Accumulation strategies, state projects and hegemonic projects, on the other hand, are more related to the possibility of establishing congruence between political and economic forms. Three aspects are noteworthy in this: the ability of forming a general interest (in economic or wider terms), the multiple

14 For some important moments of the debates behind this process, see (JESSOP, 1983, 1987, 1991, 2000). We believe authors associated to ‘open Marxism’ were amongst the main instigators of these various shifts; some contributions can be found in (BONEFELD, 1987, 1993; BONEFELD; HOLLOWAY, 1991; CLARKE, 1991; HOLLOWAY, 1988). Two self-reviews of the author’s theoretical trajectory can be found in (JESSOP, 2001, 2007).

15 Ecological dominance does not precisely fit our scheme, for it is not an agential concept. Nevertheless, it is how Jessop breaks with economic determination (in the *n*-th instance). The latter in a certain sense considers that there is a long-term pre-given unity of class and economic power, while ecological dominance points towards a contingently greater influence of the capital relation. As to the political economy of scale, the rough idea would be that a spatiotemporal fix contingently provides spatiotemporal closure to the circuit of capital, whose predominant scale is not pre-given.

16 On such a process in the Eurozone crisis, see (JESSOP, 2013b).

bases and criteria necessary for the project or strategy to be successful and, given the latter point, the need to translate economic capacities into political ones and vice-versa as a condition of efficaciousness. Jessop points out that any general interest, even if restricted to that of 'capital in general', must be relationally created (JESSOP, 1990, p. 152-155). Successful accumulation strategies and hegemonic projects must define and sediment such an interest, which then becomes the basis for institution-building. In other words, an important strategic dimension lies in being able to conform a social and economic imaginary that, by selectively and hierarchically reducing complexity, defines subgroups of social relations and interests that become the practical objects of structurally oriented strategic action (JESSOP, 1983, 2007, 2013b). It should also be borne in mind that capital depends on relations outside the value form for its reproduction, just as the state is dependent on accumulation. If this by no means implies that they will by necessity conform to each other, it does suggest that, even if accumulation strategies mainly deal with economic factors, they *tend* to try and secure adequate extra-economic conditions. Likewise, however much hegemonic projects need not refer primarily to accumulation, they are bound to be more successful insofar as they are able to establish mutually compatible state forms and regimes of accumulation, for – amongst others – this enables the distribution of material concessions to subordinate groups (JESSOP, 1983, 1985, 2003).

It is thus to be expected for agents to reflexively pursue strategies that aim at bringing about certain congruence between economic and political forms. If this amounts to no more than using economic power to reach particularistic political ends (or vice-versa), it would be reduced to a case of economic domination and the *lack* of a substantive unity of state power – to use a Poulantzian expression, the state would not have relative autonomy regarding the various capitals. On the other hand, the strategic terrain in which hegemonic disputes and accumulation strategies are played out tends to require the sacrifice of more immediate interests in order to cement longer-term goals and class domination. This is represented in the development of a materially based general interest. The latter tends to be more stable and is more likely to be legitimised and accepted insofar as there is an overlapping between different positions of dominance, particularly in the economic and political dimensions. We may place certain remarks of Jessop's in this context, such as 'the expanded reproduction of capital is best viewed as "economic hegemony armored by economic domination"' (JESSOP, 1983, p. 93) or that hegemony depends on structurally embedded factors, its strategic orientation and its relation to accumulation (JESSOP, 1983, p. 98-107, 1985, p. 347-353).

This discussion clearly suggests that the reproduction of capital in a relatively stable fashion centrally depends on there being congruence between the accumulation regime, the state form and other social dimensions. It moreover indicates that such a condition can only be guaranteed by specific practices reflexively aimed at institution-building, even if not necessarily as a planned result of the latter. In face of the substantive interdependence of the various social dimensions, as well as of the multi-determined conditions of success of economic and political strategies, there is also a constant process – as unequal as it may be – of translating phenomena from one dimension to the others. At last, there is also the possibility of there not being any societal unity whatsoever, in which case there would be no governance or regularisation of accumulation.

In any case, Jessop's theoretical framework suggests that short of an explicit crisis one is to expect some congruence between the state form and the regime of accumulation. In no case should it be concluded, however, that the *most* functional forms are the ones to be selected and retained. Hay's (2004, p. 48) question of why we are to expect that the economically most functional state form is to emerge thus seems a valid issue. In fact, when Jessop states that 'a Schumpeterian workfare post-national regime will provide the best possible – but still imperfect and always provisional – spatio-temporal fix for a globalizing, knowledge-based, post-Fordist economy' (JESSOP, 2002, p. 268) we are left with the options of considering this a functionalist slip or seeing it as a rather empty statement. In the latter case, the SWPR should be seen as the state form that developed alongside the KBE, decisively shaping capital accumulation under this regime; the *best possible* fix would be reduced to the trite condition of being *the* inherently post-Fordist form. We do not see any analytical purchase with this, on the contrary – there

would be a serious risk of hypostatising the SWPR and post-Fordism as ‘final’ forms, or ones with an already-defined developmental trajectory, which would be contrary to the approach as a whole.

We propose dealing with the issue in a more explicit evolutionary approach, for the following reasons. In the first place, it offers a direct manner of investigating, in a single analytical framework, the participation of semiotic and extra-semiotic elements in institutional development, as has been recently done under the CPE project. In the second place, it is well suited to better specify the factors responsible for (not) generating congruence in particular aspects of the social formations (such as in the reproduction of labour force or the prevalent governance mechanisms). It is also capable of shedding light on the processes that lead to a greater or smaller weight of the state in regularising capital accumulation. An evolutionary framework is furthermore a good way of avoiding functionalist traits, for the possibility of dysfunctional lock-ins is often a result of such an approach. On a more general note, an evolutionary account fits well the stylised facts regarding institutional development during crisis periods that Jessop (2002, 2006b, 2006e) and Brenner (2003, 2004b, 2009) present – namely, that there is a phase of experimentation with old and new forms of crisis-management, which for different reasons (not quite clearly presented) are selected and retained, or else get discarded.

Our proposal is based on the consideration that, whereas Jessop does explore the mutual interconnections between the political and the economic and indicates how strategies mainly concerning one of these spheres have got in the other decisive success conditions, his comments remain at a fairly general or non-specific level. While we are told that the state’s strategic selectivities impact the long-term viability of a hegemonic project, there is not much to be found on *which* selectivities impact *which* aspects of the projects, nor on the particular implications of carrying forward an hegemonic project out of tone with certain aspects of the state form¹⁷. Likewise, there is the proposition that accumulation strategies are more stable when the hegemonic fraction of capital also enjoys economic domination, but there is little on which factors lead to this condition or on the results of it not happening. Jessop deeply explores the adequacy of economic and political forms, indicates some contradictions that arise when such compatibility is not observed and examines how strategic action must tumble through different social dimensions in order to be successful, but is much less clear in investigating *how* and under *which conditions* can the agents effectively secure these necessary means. Moreover, the author rarely goes down to the factors responsible for the structural coupling of the state form and the accumulation regime in its specific aspects. There does not seem to be much, for example, on which factors favour the SWPR to help shape the reproduction of labour power in ways favourable to the KBE – and, additionally, if these factors are compatible or not with those that favour a congruent scalar configuration. In these terms, an evolutionary framework might reveal the (in)compossibility of the congruence between the state form and the accumulation regime in its different aspects, which seems to fit recent research agendas (JESSOP, 2007, p. 225-245; JONES; JESSOP, 2010). At the current stage, there does not seem to be clear indications of why certain complementarities are more present or likely than others, which we consider a relevant deficiency.

This suggestion is certainly not to everyone’s taste, as van Heur (2010b) attests, but it should be highlighted that we do not suggest it as the single theoretical development to be pursued. It does not make up for ‘specificity and detailed analysis’ (VAN HEUR, 2010b, p. 453), nor can it take the place of historical accounts, but we argue that it offers a valuable general analytical guide. As it is developed through a reflexive movement from the abstract-simple to the concrete-complex, it might gradually be able to specify the importance of a series of factors in the evolution of political and economic forms. To the extent that it reveals the more resilient aspects of social formations and those more prone to be transformed, it can also inform practical actions and the militancy.

In short, we propose that Jessop’s account of the emergence of the SWPR can be read in a non-functional, non-structuralist and non-deterministic way. In order to do so, one must pay attention to how the author’s various works come together in this and how *The future of the capitalist state* is but a step of

¹⁷ There indeed are certain remarks on this, such as that hegemony tends to be less inclusive, and more based on repression, when economic growth falters (JESSOP, 1982, 1983, 1985, 2003). Nevertheless, we consider them to be underdeveloped.

a wider research agenda, avoiding the temptation to directly ‘substantiate’ the more abstract arguments (in this case, mainly economic in nature) in a reductionist manner – against which the author has long argued (JESSOP, 1982). Having done so, we now propose some further changes to the agenda. They are related to the space that post-Fordism comprehends and the articulation between different subtypes of post-Fordist social formations and accumulation strategies.

Fordism was, according to Jessop, organised around a national spatiotemporal fix¹⁸. It is the latter that allows one to study Atlantic Fordism as a series of national economies, for the essential determinants of the mode of development at hand were to be found in each national space (with variations between them). Post-Fordism, on the other hand, is hypothetically characterised by the relativization of scale, a loss of primacy of the national level and, to date, no stable spatiotemporal fix. These are amongst some of the results linked to what Jessop has termed the ‘political economy of scale’, doubtlessly a great contribution of his. Nonetheless, we consider that its full potential has not yet been brought to bear on two points. Firstly, we suggest that, whether currently in existence or not, post-Fordism might develop a spatiotemporal fix that itself displays a relativized scale – or better, a complex polymorphy. When Jessop considers that there currently is no fix, it seems as though he is looking for essentially territorially-delimited arrangements with nested scales, for the possibilities most commonly referred to are the global, the local and the triadic levels – with the latter been seen as the most likely (JESSOP, 2000, p. 348, 2006h, p. 344, 2002, p. 182). If the arguments for the relativization of scale are convincing, one should no longer focus only on ‘simple’, territorially-cohesive configurations, but should rather explore to what extent arrangements with multiple, partially overlapping and intermeshed scales, perhaps organised in networks, together account for a spatiotemporal fix capable of making compatible the various temporal and spatial dynamics of the main post-Fordist forms of capital. We do not offer a substantive answer to the issue, but suggest that a clue may be in the global city-regions whose importance Jessop points out. They might comprise the main scale of a post-Fordist fix, to which other secondary scales and networks would be attached – such as their direct zones of influence, high-technology districts and innovation poles. The idea behind this proposition is that this spatiality would encompass the main financial and knowledge-intensive circuits. We also suggest that, if a fix actually does institutionalise itself, it will be the emergent result of the interaction between various ‘partial fixes’ (JESSOP, 2007, p. 187). Given its spatially less inclusive nature, as well as its multiple non-concentric hierarchies, it is expected of this ‘relativized scale’ to increase many forms of inequality. As what is at stake, however, is the stabilisation of the accumulation of capital – an inherently contradictory process, based on exploitation –, this in no way requires any progressive developments to take place. It might be the case that a stable post-Fordist fix will lead to a recrudescence of the sociospatial division of the costs of the capital relation in many axes – between countries, states, neighbourhoods, between capital and labour and so forth. As a metaphor, we could think of a fractal of inequalities. In this case, there would certainly be a huge impact on legitimation and repression strategies, as well as on the stability of the mode of development as a whole. The implications for the various capitalist political forms loom large, for this amounts to an intense re-organisation of contemporary spatiality that would no doubt lead to the production of, using Brenner’s (2004a) expression, ‘new state spaces’. Exploring the issue is clearly out our scope, but it strikes us as a relevant field for research.

Related to the former point, we propose that economic reproduction in the space that once was Atlantic Fordism has come to involve, as a necessary condition, a strong articulation with the Asian economies, particularly as regards the imports of manufactured goods from what is now the ‘workshop of the world’. Which is to say, post-Fordism should not comprise the territory of Atlantic Fordism thirty years later, but a larger circuit that encompasses the main phenomena behind the socioeconomic dynamics of the formations at hand. Post-Fordism is not a merely chronological concept, such as after-Fordism would be, nor an evolutive one to indicate a phase of formations that once were Fordist, such as late Fordism. It aims, on the other hand, at representing conservation-dissolution effects (with a predominance of the latter), and designates the patterns capable of answering to the Fordist impasses and

18 On small open Fordist economies, see (JESSOP, 2006b).

crises (JESSOP, 2006b, 2006h). As these in large part came from beyond Atlantic Fordism, as is the case with the organisation of production processes, post-Fordism needs to comprehend the spaces organised along those lines. Yet more important, the growing economic integration between the space of Atlantic Fordism and Eastern Asia, the former having become structurally dependent on importing manufactured goods produced with low wages in the latter, indicates that a key-element of post-Fordist accumulation lies in the relationship *between* the triadic economies.

The clearest example of this is in what came to be known as 'Chimerica', which 'indicates the pathological co-dependence of the US and Chinese economies' (JESSOP *et al.*, 2013, p. s11). Based on this, it is clear that theorising about the US accumulation regime (or the post-Fordist one in general) not taking into account the role of Eastern Asia in it implies ignoring a central dimension of the studied object. It is, for example, Chinese imports (and growing debt) that allows for maintaining a minimum consumption level for the population at large. We can say that while the Chinese and the US accumulation regimes are jointly compossible, they are individually impossible. Thus, understanding either of them necessarily entails studying the other. The issue is that as Fordism had a national spatiotemporal fix one could approach the countries it comprised individually, for their tendencies were not essentially altered by their relationship to other spaces. For post-Fordism, however, the situation is different. As accumulation is not contained in the national level, but is determined by the relations between phenomena organised along relativized scales, one cannot approach it in terms of relatively self-referential national circuits – for they individually lack the determinants of their processes of accumulation. In other terms, one must study the polymorphy of accumulation being careful not to enclose it in a presupposed spatiality that does not comprehend its relevant circuits. As indicated above, we suggest this involves Asian 'territories, places, scales and networks', not necessarily including whole countries – it might be the case that post-Fordism necessitates certain specific networks and places, and not other wider Asian dimensions.

Associated to this, we believe the approach can be improved if framed in terms of a variegated capitalism, as Jessop has been recently leaning (JESSOP, 2010a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013d, 2012c). As the author himself is turning to this direction, we shall not explore it in more detail here. Nevertheless, some brief indications of how we believe this is an important development seem in place. The two main changes that concerns us are the explicit consideration of i) how a given regime of accumulation, of variant thereof, impacts the conditions of existence of the rest, and ii) how by the interaction of all of them the world market is reproduced as the ultimate horizon, 'as both the historical presupposition and the posit (outcome) of differential accumulation' (JESSOP, 2013d, p. 5). Given this, one is better placed to examine how the ecological dominance of a certain variety of capitalism codetermines the evolution of others, as well as the (im)possibility of extending regimes of accumulation beyond the spaces in which they are found. Another important result is that seeing the world market as being reproduced through a process of variegation clearly opens space for exploring social and economic alternatives. By investigating the interdependency of social formations, one can analyse the possibility of setting up regimes of accumulation and state forms that are not versions of dominant ones, but new paths compatible with the force lines given by the world market. This, it seems, might eliminate a certain 'fatalism' that can at first sight be associated to the idea of a growing ecological dominance of the economy and the integration to the world market.

On a different note, we propose that one should not consider that there are different regimes of accumulation competing in the same spatiotemporal matrix. As seen above, Jessop (2013c) has recently considered that the transition to post-Fordism comprehended a dispute between two regimes of accumulation, the KBE and a finance-dominated one. We consider this to be a setback, for less attention is paid to the relations between the different forms of capital and their concrete and abstract dimensions, particularly as regards, in this case, financial capital and 'knowledge-intensive capital'. It is not that Jessop thereby ignores all articulations between these moments of the circuit of capital, but it does seem profoundly counterproductive to look at the issue through competing regimes, and not through a single one with different developmental tendencies and a contradictory relation between the above-mentioned dominant forms of capital.

The competition between regimes of accumulation is a matter that deserves attention. In some moments, the concepts of regimes of accumulation and accumulation strategies seem to be conflated, as when Jessop (2013c, p. 20) states that ‘although I have presented the KBE and finance-dominated accumulation as if they were simple alternatives, they actually co-existed as competing accumulation strategies’. There is a risk of conferring agency to an emergent category (the regime), thus falling into a form of structuralism. There are two options in avoiding this. We might take the citation to mean that there were a series of social relations being developed, which could be divided in two groups. Each of these would display a certain internal coherence and developmental tendencies that indicated the potential of constituting an accumulation regime. Competition between the latter would thus assume a metaphorical sense, related to the fact that developing the relations from which each emerges negatively impacted the stability of the other. Against this, we might consider that there was an effective competition between accumulation *strategies*. In this case, it seems better not to pose a regime corresponding to each strategy, since ‘there can never be a one-to-one correspondence between structures and strategies’ (JESSOP, 1987, p. 157). On the contrary, one ought to see how accumulation is regularised/governed as the global result, only partially foreseen, of the conflict between different strategies – as contradictory as they might be. A useful consideration is that the objects of regulation both pre-exist it, as so many ‘free elements’, and are constituted through it, as they are integrated into partial totalization attempts that relatively fix them as moments of the mode of regulation (JESSOP, 1990, p. 311). According to this view, the various strategies attempted to coordinate social relations through different circuits that would alter the efficacy of all of them, and it is through the synthesis of these practices that an accumulation regime emerges – however different it may be from the one each individual strategy intended. While we do accept that ‘there is neither regulation in general nor general regulation; only particular regulation and the totality of regulation’ (JESSOP, 1990, p. 311), it should be noted that the ‘totality of regulation’ differs from the sum of particular regulations – the efficacy of the latter is affected by all strategies in play, while the totality of regulation emerges from, and as the (but partially intended) resultant of, the clash of all attempts at regulation. As Jessop puts it, indicating how coordination arises through conflicting strategies:

The success of the ‘*n*th’ strategy depends on its complementarities to all other relevant strategies [...] There is no global subject to plan accumulation strategies [...] Instead we find only different subjects whose activities are more or less co-ordinated, whose activities meet more or less resistance from other forces, and whose strategies are pursued within a structural context which is both constraining and facilitating (JESSOP, 1987, p. 158-159).

In lieu of studying two ideal-typical accumulation regimes of doubtful existence, one would explore the contradictions of a certain form of regularisation and governance that operates without a clear strategy behind it (‘there is no global subject to plan accumulation strategies’). There are elements to do so. One can study the different fractions of capital (particularly those involved with finance and knowledge-based sectors) in terms of their capacity to exert ecological dominance or economic determination, domination and hegemony, and thereby explore the resultant tensions or complementarities. Jessop himself hints at this, when he suggests that there is a ‘growing antagonism between the globalising knowledge-based economy as the material and ideological expression of productive capital and the logic of a finance-led, shareholder-value oriented process of capital accumulation’ (JESSOP, 2010a, p. 36). It should be borne in mind that financial domination, in this context, refers to ‘the articulation of the circuits of finance and production and is not intended to re-assert the misleading distinction between finance and the “real economy”’ (JESSOP, 2013a, p. 53-54). One could then explore how this supposedly less stable regime, which lacks a clearly dominant strategy, interacts with the hegemonic project (if any) as regards the latter’s bases of support, the room in it for offering material concessions, its legitimisation strategies and so on. In the case of the US, a particularly important dimension is how the insufficiencies of such a regime interact with, and are partially made up for by, the country’s global hegemonic position and hence its capacity to issue the global reserve currency.

This argument is also informed by some substantive observations. Firstly, there is a complex and intense articulation between the financial and productive forms of capital, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors. This suggests that the regularisation of the latter’s circuit should not be conceived in the

absence of a key-role for financial capital. In spite of this not being a *necessary* implication of Jessop's recent works (see in particular 2013c), since one can investigate the practical articulation of the two ideal-typical regimes proposed, it does seem at the very least a counter-productive heuristic procedure. As, moreover, the idea of an accumulation regime defines the elements of an economic arrangement that jointly reveal the main features of the form that the expanded accumulation of capital tends to assume, it seems more sound to explicitly encompass in a single regime of accumulation, *as was previously done*, the articulation between financial capital and the KBE. This could perhaps happen via attempts to impose conflicting accumulation *strategies* (e.g., one of financial and the other of knowledge-intensive sectors), with a resultant regularisation/governance of accumulation comprising elements of both – but corresponding to neither. We do not propose any substantive solution, but there are various works¹⁹ that in pointing out the complementarities and instabilities of the relation between finance and innovation indicate that their interlinking is a central characteristic of contemporary capitalism – hence, both must be theorised together. The idea of competing regimes is made even harder if the most advanced expressions of financial domination and a knowledge-intensive, innovative economy are arguably to be found, in a deeply connected fashion (as venture capital attests), in the same social formation – the USA, both home to Wall Street and Silicon Valley.

In light of the preceding, neither should one devise a state form compatible with the finance-dominated regime and another compatible with the KBE. It seems better to further develop the SWPR, paying attention to its (non-)complementarities with the various moments of the circuit of capital. It once more seems that some of Jessop's recent works fall behind his earlier output, particularly as he defines that the SWPR would be a congruent state form only insofar as it is 'flexicurity'-oriented (JESSOP, 2013c, p. 18). This constitutes a perhaps excessive detachment from concrete cases (the SWPR would only be found in, say, Denmark and the Netherlands), as well as, which is more preoccupying, a conception of regularisation of accumulation that would necessarily comprehend progressive traits. Even if risking repetitiveness, we stress that regularising accumulation is nothing more (nor less) than guaranteeing, in a precarious, partial and unstable manner, that the expanded reproduction of capital asserts itself as the main principle of societalization. This, by necessity, entails the reproduction of contradictions and of exploitation.

6. FINAL REMARKS

This brief tour of Jessop's account of the transition to the SWPR has defended that it constitutes, some deficiencies notwithstanding, a fertile research project. We have argued that there are indeed certain structuralist or functionalist nuances to it, as well as passages which if not carefully placed in their due context might be (mis)construed as a resort to economic determinism. This, however, only holds if one reads the author as having presented a finished and sufficient account of the emergence of the current state form, particularly by taking *The future of the capitalist state* (JESSOP, 2002) in isolation. Once one approaches this contribution as part of an ongoing research agenda, on the other hand, we have tried to show that the latter is capable of unfolding a progressively finer critique of contemporary political economy. With this in mind, we have offered the following suggestions.

First, we propose developing a more strictly evolutionary approach to the process of institutional creation and retention, which might eliminate some functionalist and deterministic tensions. It can, additionally, provide a more precise analytical blueprint to the interrelation between economic and the political forms, particularly as regards the conditions that favour them becoming congruent *or not* in *specific* points. In the second place, we argue for integrating Chinese and Eastern Asian spaces to post-Fordism. This is because they are an intrinsic element of post-Fordist economic reproduction, the exclusion of which, therefore, leads to a cycle that cannot be closed and to a biased theorisation – notably in not realising the dependence of KBE to the precarious work of the 'sweatshop of the world'. We also suggest, as Jessop has recently started to do, to study post-Fordism through the interaction of its different

¹⁹ See, for example, (ALBUQUERQUE, 2010). For a more general take on the role of financial circuits in contemporary capitalism, from a Marxist view, see (BRYAN; RAFFERTY, 2006).

sub-types. Instead of relatively independent modalities of post-Fordism and the SWPR, one would look at how their relationship to each other, to the various other social formations and to the world market, as the ultimate horizon and the necessary reference of production and valorisation, concur to reproduce all of them. It is thus a movement towards studying the (in)compossibility of the reproduction of post-Fordist capitalist formations in their global insertion, which additionally would, as argued above, facilitate identifying economic and political alternatives. In the fourth place, we propose not to theorise about competing regimes of accumulation in a same spatiotemporal matrix, but rather about a single regime developed through conflicting strategies, so as to better apprehend the articulation of the different forms of capital and the impacts therefrom. At last, we suggest that the relativization of scale should be brought to bear on identifying eventual spatiotemporal fixes. There seems to be some residual 'methodological territorialism' in the hypotheses Jessop advances for a post-Fordist spatiotemporal fix – based on his own works, one should consider the possibility of a such a fix assuming a complex polymorphy.

7. References

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