

**Workers' strategies to secure jobs, their uses
of scale, and competing economic moralities:
rethinking the 'geography of justice'**

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Comments and criticisms would be very gratefully received.

Abstract

This paper considers workers' strategies to secure jobs, the justice of these strategies, and the spatial scales which they involve. It discusses strategies within which workers compete individually or collectively for a given geographically-structured supply of jobs, including the use of social oppressions and territorial chauvinism in such competition. It contrasts these strategies with actions which challenge social oppression within employment, and which seek to know, contest and control flows of capital at large spatial scales. These strategies present a radical alternative to mutual competition, and embody different notions of economic justice. All of these strategies are analysed for the relations between workers and between workers and capital which they construct, the scales at which these relations are played out, the political ideologies they involve, and the moral notions generated and deployed. It is argued that to understand the different moralities involved, justice needs to be conceptualised not as rights understood as quasi-property of individuals but rather as an aspect of social relations. Accordingly, the 'geography of justice' is conceived as the geography of these social relations rather than geographical patterns of (dis)advantage. Whereas in the strategies of workers' competition actions to address distinct forms of oppression tend to be counterposed to each other, in the radical strategies they can be aligned and melded together. It is argued that the 'interests' of individuals and of collectives are not given objectively by social structure but are constructed through and between different feasible strategies of action; this has implications for the problem which selfishness poses to socialist economic strategies.

Keywords: employment, justice, spatial scale, workers' competition, workers' cooperation, social oppression

Workers' strategies to secure jobs, their uses of scale, and competing economic moralities: rethinking the 'geography of justice'

1. Introduction

For the left, the contemporary world economy is one of gross injustice. The ever-widening distribution of income; the pervasive intensification of work in the interest of profit; the enormous social and spatial unevenness of employment; the contrast between the freedom and mobility of capital and the vulnerability and paucity of options for labour – all these are rightly criticised by the left as unjust. And yet this critique very quickly encounters two linked difficulties. The first is that the left's morality is contradicted by the dominant notions of justice in the present period, within which all the phenomena criticised by the left are, in essence, perfectly just ('in essence' because few would justify *all* the concrete ways in which these processes are being carried through). It is just that both enterprises and individuals have no monopoly on resources and economic decisions, but rather have to match their endeavors within markets. It is just that these endeavors should be rewarded according to their efficiency. And it is just that businesses, their shareholders, workers and consumers should be able to pursue their interests free from the dictates of states. And if these mechanisms or means are just, then the outcomes too must be just, even if they involve such unpalatable phenomena as insecurity and inequality. To attempt directly to 'ameliorate' the latter would involve curtailing the just mechanisms of the market economy, and therefore would produce perverse and less just outcomes. While these ideas have been put forward in sharp forms by contemporary neoliberalism, they are rooted in the fundamental social structures of capitalism. Accordingly, in an illustrious tradition, I will refer to this notion of justice as 'bourgeois economic justice'.

The second difficulty – indeed, embarrassment – for the left critique of economic injustice is that the economic actions of workers are, for most of the time, within the framework of bourgeois justice. (I use 'workers' in this paper in the Marxist sense.) For the left it is not simply capital which is unjust, but, most of the time and in many modes, workers too. This is because the taken-for-granted daily routine of workers is of competition for jobs. Self-interested behaviour which ignores or downplays its spatially- and socially- wider impacts is the *normal mode of living* as a worker in capitalist society. This competition is pursued in a great variety of ways. The most basic and ubiquitous form of competition is to make oneself individually acceptable to employers: obtaining a job, securing it by pleasing one's employer, getting promoted, or moving to a better job, all by means of working harder, receiving training, or through adopting the right attitudes and cultural attributes. Workers may also compete through more *collective* forms. Those of a particular social identity may exclude 'the other': white workers may organise to exclude blacks, men to exclude women, and so on. In doing so they narrow the competition and make it easier to access and hold on to particular jobs. Alternatively, workers may secure their jobs by collaborating collectively with employers to enhance the competitiveness of the unit of the economy which employs (or potentially employs) them. This unit may be the workplace, the firm, the locality or the nation; all of these have been the object of labour-capital cooperation aimed at improving efficiency and business competitiveness and hence securing jobs.

In these various forms of competition, workers act in accordance with the precepts of bourgeois economic justice: you look after your particular interests and ignore the effects

on other workers, whether they are in the same enterprise, in less powerful social groups, or spatially distant. Moreover, these forms of competition seem to promise that effort will be rewarded, whether this be the effort of the individual worker or that of collectives of workers in a workplace or territory, thus conforming to the effort/reward claim of bourgeois justice. The varied forms of workers' competitive behaviour are lent a 'naturalness' and legitimacy partly by their compatibility with the dominant notions of justice in capitalist society.

All this poses key problems for the left's critique and, more importantly, for its practice. The left has to oppose the pursuit of jobs by individuals or more-or-less large collectives which ignore the interests of others or directly harm them. In the most general sense this is because such competition for jobs forms an integral part of the processes leading to the inequalities, instabilities and power relations mentioned at the start of this paper. More specifically, it is because the project of socialism, however conceived, involves cooperation, practical solidarity and the creation of an altruistic culture within the majority of the population. How can such an alternative practice, and the alternative notion of justice which is bound up with it, be taken forward?

In this paper I argue that the individual and territorial forms of workers' competition can be transcended by practices and notions of justice which develop in a socialist direction. I say 'transcended' rather than 'replaced' because these alternative practices have to grow out of the real and pressing needs which are expressed in workers' competition. These alternative practices both rely on, and serve to construct, forms of collectivity. But a necessary moment of this change in the relation *between* workers is change in their relation *to capital*: it involves constructing increasing control over capital's decisions, and in the end constructing an economy in which those decisions are removed from private decision making altogether.

These changes in workers' practice are bound up with changes in notions of *justice*. Most obviously, the bourgeois notion of justice as residing in the ability to deploy property and to compete in markets has to be transcended by the valuing of cooperation. But developing a different economic morality is linked to practice, to developing alternative, feasible economic relations, institutions and processes. This implies, at more abstract level, a shift from justice conceived as rights adhering to *individuals* to justice as egalitarian and altruistic *social relations*.

This way of conceiving of justice avoids the problems of that concept which made Marx so famously (or notoriously) unwilling to use that concept (Harvey, 1996: 346-7). All too often notions of justice are merely ideal (in the philosophical sense); they have no purchase on practice, and worse, may serve actively to mystify practice. This is why I relate different notions of justice to practices within capitalism and to future *feasible* forms of economic coordination. But notions of justice are crucially important to practice, since societies reproduce themselves - that is, make themselves practically and ideologically coherent - through particular notions of justice. Justice, then, cannot be formulated in an ahistorical way. I thus seek to relate the transformation of notions of economic justice to the transition to a different system of social relations of production.

I develop these arguments by considering the forms of workers' competition for jobs. I argue that these involve particular uses and constructions of economic scale. They are also

associated with particular political programmes. I consider how alternative, cooperative forms of securing jobs can be developed. These involve very different relations between workers and between workers and capital, each with its own particular geography. These relations, in turn, both develop and depend on different notions of justice.

Through this analysis I seek to understand ‘the geography of justice’ in a particular way. Much discussion of justice in geography has been concerned with differences between territories in the quality of life (justice as between territories) and with the resultant inequalities between individuals in those territories (the effect of geography on justice for individuals) (e.g. D. Smith, 1994, Part II). In contrast, I shall be concerned with the way in which place, distance and scale are deployed in social practice and social imagination to produce notions of justice, and the ways in which these in turn enter into social practice. My focus is thus *the justice or injustice of social relations in space*. This is not counterposed to what Smith (ibid.) terms ‘justice as equalisation’. But it seeks to examine how the latter can be constructed by geographical social relations.

While I shall be concerned with structured systems of social relations, my particular interest in this paper is in the conscious action and moral choices made by workers. Herod (1997) has rightly argued that economic geographers have neglected the active and conscious agency of workers in constructing space economies, and that these actions can be unpalatable to the left. As well as the collective forms of action considered by Herod, I shall also be concerned with workers acting as individuals.

In earlier work I developed an analysis of workers’ competition in space and its relation to the geography of capital accumulation (Gough, 1986; 1992; 2002, Ch.13). In this paper I develop these ideas further, particularly by considering their implications for justice and scale, and relate them to some work by geographers on workers’ competition. I consider some of the recent writing by geographers and others on justice (a literature which has evidently been stimulated by the increasing injustice of contemporary society), particularly the work of David Harvey, Nancy Fraser and theorists of ‘rational choice’. The paper is also intended to contribute to the current debates on the significance of scale.

The level of abstraction of the analysis of this paper is capitalist and socialist societies in general. Aspects of the present neoliberal period of world capitalism are considered, but the latter is not discussed in a systematic fashion.

The plan of the paper is as follows. Section 2 examines a number of different ways in which workers compete against each other for jobs, and explores how these use and articulate spatial scales. Section 3 considers different notions of justice, contrasting the bourgeois notion of justice as the property of individuals, a notion implicit in workers’ competition for jobs, with a more radical notion of justice as a characteristic of social relations. The next two sections consider workers’ strategies around employment which move away from (though they may start from) competition, and look at the types of collective organisation and their scales which these strategies involve. Section 4 considers strategies to combat job segregation based on social oppression. Section 5 considers the limits of ‘militant particularism’, and how local action can develop into strategies which build workers’ control over distribution of profits, investment and the labour process. These strategies can thus propose social relations which are more just than those of competition. Section 6 considers the problems of selfishness and motivation. I argue that

workers' choices between strategies, and their conception of their interests, are created by the range of feasible alternatives and by struggle which is simultaneously material and moral. Section 7 concludes the paper by reconsidering different notions of justice and their relation to geography, and the dialectics in workers' actions of justice, culture, class relations and space.

2. Just wars? The varied spatial politics of workers' competition for jobs

2.1 Workers' competition

Capitalist society presupposes and reproduces a working class made up of people who sell a particular kind of commodity, labour power. They do so because (and to the extent that) other forms of livelihood such as subsistence or petty commodity production are not open to them. In selling their labour power, individual workers are in competition with all others for the given supply of jobs; the latter is, in the first place, beyond their influence (but see section 5). At this level of abstraction, then, the worker is constituted as the individual owner and seller of a commodity in competition with others. [1] This social-economic identity is associated with an ideology of possessive individualism; although labour power is a commodity produced in a very particular way, this ideology is shared with petty producers of ordinary commodities. Neoliberalism has sought to accentuate this individualistic identity among workers, but it is inherent in all capitalist societies.

This individualism is, of course, often modified by forms of collective organisation, particularly in trade unions. But the potential for and forms of such organisation are a function of particular *strategies* which workers adopt. Competition for jobs can be developed in many different ways, which can be thought of as alternative strategies; and workers may also engage in struggles which go beyond mutual competition and open up quite different ways of securing jobs.

In this section I consider three competitive strategies. There is an enormous literature on these; here I approach them through a particular problematic. For each strategy I examine -

- (i) the forms of competition between workers;
- (ii) the relations between workers and capital;
- (iii) the way these relations use and articulate particular spatial scales;
- (iv) the political ideology involved;
- (v) the practically-embodied notions of justice; and (less systematically)
- (vi) the articulation and reinforcement of these strategies by academic discourse.

Each strategy has a real logic in everyday life in capitalist society. They do, however, have their limitations and contradictions, which may lead workers to adopt different strategies,

whether in a rightwards or leftwards direction. In this paper I consider some of the limitations of particular strategies, but I do not examine their contradictions in a systematic way (on which see for example Gough (1992) and Fraser (1995)).

2.2 Individual advancement

In this strategy, workers seek to secure and improve their job prospects through modifying the nature of their individual labour power or employers' perception of it. The central scale here is that of the body (Harvey, 2000a: 101-110), and attention is directed inwards narcissistically. But this body is reproduced within households and local communities. Moreover, maintaining or improving one's saleability may be directed not just to staying in the same job in the same place but to having wider geographical horizons, to becoming more socially and spatially mobile as a worker. This strategy thus articulates different scales – the body, the residential sphere, and variable wider scales of employment differentiation – in particular ways.

The practice of individual advancement in the labour market integrally involves a particular political morality, which both drives the individual and legitimises the political-economic organisation of a 'free labour market'. On the one hand, to compete as an individual develops independence and avoids parasitism on others, and this competition ensures that rewards are in line with effort (as neoclassical economics purports to show for the marginal case). On the other hand, to compete effectively requires self-discipline and a 'strong character'. This morality was given classic expression in strands of Protestantism and in 19C ideologies of self-improvement and self-sufficiency; in the 20C these were substantially reproduced in dominant ideologies in the US. [2]

In recent times, this ideology was articulated in the 1980s anglo-neoliberalism of Thatcher and Reagan. The morality involved here is of 'equal opportunities' and unequal outcomes, the former allowing unequal effort and skill to produce the latter. 'Equal opportunities' means the absence of formal and overt cultural or political barriers to competing in the labour market, barriers which are pictured as unjust infringements of liberty. In the 1990s a substantially different variant of this ideology was developed, evident in the modified neoliberalism of New Labour in Britain and the modified Washington Consensus brought into the World Bank by Wolfensohn. Here, the individual may need support from the state, capital or community in order to develop and enhance their labour power, particularly through education and training. The 'socially excluded' may need support - backed up with state coercion – in order to have any labour power at all to sell, that is, in order to become culturally a wage labourer.

The shift from 1980s to 1990s neoliberalism embodied a subtle shift in moral discourse: whereas in the 1980s the moral imperative to compete tended to be presented in bald utilitarian terms – both individual and society will get richer this way, in the 1990s neoliberal morality pointed inwards, to the cultivation of self-control and self-improvement. The shift also changed the scale of the moral subject. The morality of the 1980s focused particularly on the individual worker and on the state as guarantor of orderly and free markets; the shift in the 1990s introduced the scale of the locality and community, understood as sources of support for improving individuals' labour power and as ancient repositories of 'moral' behaviour.

These practices, scales and moralities of personal advancement embody particular class relations. The individual worker is strongly subordinated to capital through their political isolation and their social-spatial mobility. This reality is neatly inverted in the official ideology: because everyone can compete in the jobs market (perhaps with a little state or community help), class is seen as having been eliminated, as in John Major's claim that British neoliberalism had created a 'classless society'. 'Class' is here understood as an income and status distribution of individuals; this fits with a methodological-individualist understanding of class, and with a bourgeois notion of class justice (Wood, 1995). But this critique should not obscure the fact that sustaining one's place in this distribution, or moving up within it, is a common daily preoccupation of workers.

2.3 Enforcing social monopolies of jobs

One way in which workers seek to avoid the insecurities of a 'free' labour market and improve their prospects is by the use of diverse sorts of social power. In various contexts men have excluded women, whites have excluded blacks, citizens have excluded non-citizens, and the middle aged have excluded the young or the old. The relation of workers' organisation to actions of capital is highly variable here. Social discrimination in jobs has sometimes been *actively supported by capital*, often with state backing: this has been the case with the exclusion of non-citizens (immigration controls); discrimination based on ethnicity within a country has been supported by capital and state in regimes such as apartheid, Northern Ireland, and the European immigration and guest worker systems; weakening accumulation in industries or the whole economy has sometimes led capital to support exclusions, as in the expulsion of women from jobs after the Second World War in Britain. In other cases *capital has gone along with* such exclusions under pressure from workers: the exclusion of women from most jobs in the London printing industry during the 20C was constructed largely in this way (Cockburn, 1983). In yet other cases, *capital may oppose* such discriminations because they tend to raise wages and conditions and cause shortages of recruits. In cases where capital supports, or tolerates, such exclusions, the exclusions create a profound reactionary collaboration of workers with the employers, which makes more difficult, though it does not totally exclude, serious resistance around workplace conditions (Loyalist culture and politics in Northern Ireland is a case in point). And this is one reason why capital supports or tolerates the discrimination. Capital's attitude to these discriminations *in general* is thus contradictory; and this results in very varied inter-class relations around this strategy.

The political morality of these exclusions draws on all manner of reactionary assumptions. These are sometimes covered over, and legitimated, by pretending that the exclusion is based on skill (whose social distribution is taken for granted) or strength (e.g. Cockburn, 1983), thus naturalising it. Alternatively, exclusion may be naturalised as 'cultural tradition': women are excluded not because they are inferior but because 'the work culture in this industry has always been male'. But not too far beneath the surface, assumptions of social power and superiority are drawn on, institutionalised, and thus reproduced. [3]

The geographical scales involved in this type of competition are quite different from those of individual advancement. Workers have pushed for social exclusions through industrial bargaining regionally or nationally, and sometimes through pressure on nation states (regarding for example 'the protection of women' or immigration rules). The national scale is of course integral to racist ideologies in particular. For all forms of social exclusion,

territories of varying scale are important as imaginaries: forms of social power are legitimated by reference to ‘the way we have always done things here’, that is, to a (partly) imagined traditional culture. The traditions of the locality, region or nation may then be invoked to gain or maintain support for workers’ social exclusions. Thus territories, particularly of regional and national scale, are materially and ideologically integral to this strategy of job competition.

2.4 Collaboration with capital to enhance production efficiency

A third, very different strategy for competition for jobs is through workers collaborating with capital to enhance the efficiency of production. This collaboration may be organised at different spatial scales: within a workplace, a firm, a regional or national industry, or across a whole regional or national economy. The scale of the collaborative unit is, however, always larger than the scale of the efficient individual involved in personal advancement. Whatever the scale of the unit of production, the premise of this strategy is that jobs will be secured and enhanced through enabling the capital within that unit to compete better against capital elsewhere: the workplace against rival workplaces, the regional industry against competitor regions, and so on. The competing unit of production is thus articulated with a larger scale, that of competitor capitals and workers. As with individual advancement, the strategy thus proceeds through an opposition and dialectic of two scales, in this case those of the collaborative unit (the inside) and the competitors elsewhere (the outside).

This strategy promises to benefit workers to the extent that they are constrained to seek employment within the corresponding unit or territory (Storper and Walker, 1993; Cox, 1998). Benefits may take the form of securing an existing job or attracting investment in new ones, or higher wages and better conditions enabled by the unit’s enhanced productivity and profitability. The zero sum nature of workers’ competition for jobs is explicit here: jobs are to be secured and improved by competing more efficiently against firms and workers elsewhere.

Dick Bryan (1985) has shown how the competition between capitals is not primarily a question of exchanges in final markets but rather of exploitation within production. Within the strategy of competition we are considering, the latter sphere becomes the object of workers’ conscious action. The forms through which the collaboration of workers and capital proceeds are varied. Within a particular workplace, workers may collaborate with management in changing tasks, suggesting innovations in processes or products, intensifying work, or in altering hours worked, any measures, in fact, which can increase (surplus) profits. Within a regional or national industry, unions may collaborate with firms to enhance training, fund innovation, or rationalise capacity in ways which increase productivity – the ‘high road’ to competitiveness. State action, too, can be a part of this kind of strategy. Workers may exert pressure on the state to support ‘their’ capital (at a workplace or larger scale) through such subsidies or other intervention as will increase productive efficiency - the Keynesian approach to industrial policy, broadly defined. State intervention may indeed include the reproduction sphere as well as production itself: workers may push for education, health, housing and social services to be improved, not merely for the direct benefits, but in order that their *labour power* is enhanced, thus enhancing the competitiveness of the territory’s capital. Hence reproduction, too, can be a

sphere of intervention where the interests of capital and labour in productive competition are made to coincide (I.Gough, 1982; Eisenschitz and Gough, 1993, Chs 6 and 9).

Through these varied paths, particular geographical class relations are constructed. There is collaboration between the classes not globally but 'locally', a collaboration within *this* unit or territory *against others*. Of course, these relations may be replicated in many places; but the point of the strategy is precisely to be different from other units. Within such collaboration, however, workers are not uncritical of capital. They seek to encourage capital to pursue 'productive' paths rather than others; to invest in new fixed capital, R&D and skilled labour power, with the long term commitments and corresponding risks that these entail, rather than in rentier activities or speculation. This *may* involve workers siding with particular sections of capital against others (industrial against financial, for example: Fine and Harris, 1985). But it is, more fundamentally, a question of enhancing the transition of money capital into productive capital as part of the overall circuit of capital.

The ideologies of this strategy do not, usually, present it in class terms, since these would tend to expose the political nature of the strategy. [4] They would also be hard to fit with ideas of justice: 'work harder so that your employer makes larger profits' does not have a very high-minded ring to it. Rather, the strategy is understood and presented in the apparently classless terms of productiveness, enterprise, markets and territory. Implicitly, workers are to collaborate with their employers because the latter have the power to enhance production. The unit of production, whether workplace, firm or territory, must be enterprising in order to compete in given, external markets. But this is given moral tone by the idea that productiveness and enterprise are moral qualities in themselves: who can be against them? (Note here the deep alienation, in its Marxist sense: workers are to realise their creative powers by handing over their control to capital, which then appears as the source of productiveness.) As with the ideologies of individual advancement, there is appeal to a *need* for the unit of production to be tough and independent, and these are simultaneously presented as *moral* qualities.

Finally, the strategy is pictured as a defense and enhancement of the territory in its 'natural' competition with others. Localism, nationalism and xenophobia are integral parts of this strategy. The territory must be ever more productive or it will fall from grace, eventually into a state of barbarism; the then finance minister of Australia, Paul Keating, warned in the 1980s that the country was in danger of becoming a 'banana republic' if collaboration between labour and capital was not forthcoming. Thus the culture and dignity of the territory is put at stake: economic competition becomes a moral imperative to defend the territory's civilisation. These moralistic strands may be deployed at the scale of the locality (Gough and Eisenschitz, 1996). Or they may be deployed at the national level, as in Social Imperialism in late 19C Britain, an ideology which combined inter-imperialist rivalry and xenophobia with inter-class solidarity, attention to workers' welfare, and paranoia concerning national decadence and decline.

Through these paths, the strategy of enhancing productivity and thus doing other workers out of jobs emerges not as selfish and parochial but as perfectly justifiable and even a moral imperative. If unknown others elsewhere suffer, that is merely a side-effect of one's being productive, and the price of maintaining the social fabric of one's territory. Notice how geography is key to the notions of justice involved here, since they invoke a 'natural' and hence moral need for territorial competition.

This strategy of productive collaboration has long been supported by liberal-left, broadly Keynesian, academic economists. Since the 1980s it has established itself as the dominant political-economy among economic geographers. The ‘new regional economics’ emphasises the benefits to productive efficiency of collaboration between workers and capital and stability in their relations, especially through the strengthening of information flows and learning (e.g. Storper, 1998; Scott, 1998; Cooke and Morgan, 1998). For nearly all authors within this school, this is not just a *description* of the most ‘economically successful’ regions, but is a strategy which *deserves* support. The new regional economy is *moral* because it is productive, because it stabilises economy and hence society, because it involves non-conflictual and creative relations between workers and management, and because it rests on workers’ skill and initiative. Critiques of this new orthodoxy have begun to emerge (Gough, 1986; 1996a; 1996b; Lovering, 1999; Perrons, 2000). One theme of these critiques is the *silences* of the new regionalism. This theme is particularly relevant here, since it is in a large part through these lacunae that the moral superiority of regional productive cooperation can be maintained. The new regionalism largely ignores the problem of spatially uneven development (*ibid.*) and thus does not have to face the problems of workers who are out-competed. It does not see any strong forms of conflict between workers and their employers (Gough, 1996a), and so portrays essentially harmonious – and thus presumably good – industrial relations. And the new regionalism has little to say about money capital, unless it is strongly regionally committed (Lovering, 1999; Perrons, 2000), and thus does not have to face the more obviously amoral moment of capital as abstract value (Gough, 1996b). The new regionalism gives little attention to the reproduction sphere, and thus neglects the injustices constructed between production and reproduction (Gough, 1996b; Perrons, 2000). Finally, and connectedly, it is uninterested in those who are inevitably outside wage labour through age, disability or social situation; productivist politics are inimicable to a politics of redistribution. The silences in this academic discourse thus speak eloquently of the moral evasions of a strategy of productive collaboration and competition.

2.5 Modes of competition, modes of bourgeois justice

The three strategies of workers’ competition considered above are different in the scales and the concrete practices involved. They use distinct class relations, ideologies and notions of justice. But there are also overlaps and continuities: the overt racism of the social exclusion strategy, for example, shades into the less obvious racism which, as we have seen, is often present in the strategy of productive collaboration. And there are notions of justice which are common to the three strategies: competition as an end as well as a means; the value of independence, economic efficiency and productiveness; and indifference to workers who are competitors and a construction of them as the inferior, whether it be individual ‘failures’ and ‘losers’, inferior social groups, or inhabitants of less productive territories. All three strategies construct oppositions, both social and spatial, between insiders and outsiders, and thus articulate different scales in opposition to each other in both material practice and the imagination. With the exception of some strategies of social exclusion (section 2.3), all seek collaboration between workers and capital ‘on the inside’.

These competitive practices are evidently deeply rooted in the capitalist space economy. How can we move beyond them, theoretically and in practice?

3. Justice and jobs

It is useful first to consider the notion of justice in its relation to the social relations of capitalism. Bourgeois justice concerning employment treats the sale of labour power as a 'labour market', as sharing the attributes of markets in general. It thus rests fundamentally on the equality of buyers and sellers, and the equal value of the commodities which they exchange – in this case the exchange of 'labour' for the wage. Sellers of labour compete with each other, as do its buyers, and this competition ensures that 'labour' is indeed exchanged fairly. If competition within the 'labour market' were to be transcended, it would become less just. The key flaw in this argument was shown by Marx (1972 ed). Labour power is not an ordinary commodity: it differs from all others in that its consumption by capital can create more value than it itself embodies. This is achieved through exploitation within the workplace. The 'free and equal' world of the labour market is thus inextricable from the unequal and coercive world of the capitalist workplace. Moreover, exploitation in the workplace is in turn dependent on the capital which is invested in production; exchange in the labour market is shaped by flows of capital between spheres of investment, sectors and places. We thus do not have to accept the moral basis of the competition between workers nor the outcomes of that competition in wages and individuals' job allocations, since these are constructed by coercive relations of exploitation and by the vagaries of capital flows.

The longstanding hope of socialism is that competitive relations between workers can be replaced by solidarity and altruism. The latter would realise, or realise better than capitalism, certain transhistorical notions of the moral: respect for others, and suffering because of others' suffering (compassion). But just as bourgeois justice arises from life in a real capitalist society, so this socialist morality is meaningless unless it can correspond to feasible social practice. The latter has two linked aspects: a coherent system of production relations to which we can aim - a socialist economy; and feasible forms of organisation and struggle which can take us in that direction. I examine below how these could transform competition between workers for jobs into cooperation.

Before doing so, a word needs to be said about justice as individual rights. At the most abstract level, the bourgeois notion of justice is based on the *rights of individuals* qua owners of *property*. Equality and freedom flow from the ownership of property which can be exchanged equally and freely in the market, and this, as we have seen, is the basis of bourgeois economic justice. Since this property is (ultimately) owned by individuals, justice itself then becomes conceived of as rights adhering to individuals as quasi-property. This conception is reproduced in liberal theories of justice, even those, like Rorty's, with avowed egalitarian aims.

This, however, is a mystification: capitalist society is in reality a set of *relations between* people – in this context relations between workers and relations between workers and capital owners. Bourgeois justice in 'the labour market' consists, as we saw in the previous section, in relations of competition between workers and subordination of workers to capital; and in this competition a whole set of forms of *social power* (of class, gender, 'race' and so on) are brought into play. Moreover, the appropriation by capital of what has been produced by the worker violates notions of individual property right. Thus justice

understood as individual (property) right is an inaccurate representation of capitalist society. Nevertheless, it has a real basis in lived experience in capitalism and is a correspondingly powerful ideology.

In developing socialist employment relations and associated notions of justice, then, we should have two guidelines. Firstly, justice needs to be considered as fundamentally a set of relations between people rather than individual quasi-property. How can these *relations*, which are constituted by the entire global economy, be changed? Secondly, we need to address all the forms of social power affecting employment, including but not limited to that of capital over labour. It is necessary to emphasise these points not only in reply to bourgeois ideologies of economic justice but, nowadays, in reply to postmodern notions of justice. To the extent that the latter centre on the valuation of difference of whatever type, and espouse a Nietzschean morality of creation and assertion of individual difference, the moral is again conceived of as the expression of individual property or attributes, even if these do not issue from a 'centered' subject. And to the extent that postmodernism rejects all order as an effect of power, it cannot help us to conceive of an orderly system of economic relations which is more just than the present one. [5]

With these points in mind, we can return to workers' strategies towards jobs. These are not limited to the strategies of competition with others considered in section 2. In varied ways and to different degrees, workers' actions depart from mutual competition and combat capital's power and forms of social oppression. These forms of action, too, have their characteristic scales. In the next two sections I consider two such forms of action which are important in contemporary capitalism: struggles against social oppression in employment, and attempts to constrain and ultimately control capital in the interest of jobs. I argue that these strategies are varied and ambiguous in their social relations and political dynamics. But both have the capacity to develop towards solving employment problems by confronting and transforming social relations.

4. Combating social discrimination in jobs

Oppressed groups, most prominently women and people of oppressed ethnicity, attempt to break down the myriad forms of de facto exclusion in employment. There are many different ways of attempting to do this. These have different political dynamics and different scalar qualities, and differ in their class relations, characteristic ideologies, and notions of justice.

A first set of strategies against job segregation, perhaps the most common, are focused on *improving the competitiveness of members of oppressed groups* within employment. This can be done in each of the three modes of workers' competition considered in section 2, though here with more progressive aims:-

(i) individual advancement

The individual tries harder, and forces their way past institutional barriers through hard work, ingenuity, or self-improvement. The onus for overcoming disadvantage is placed on the individual. For women in the English-speaking countries, this is sometimes described as the 'superwoman' strategy after Jilly Cooper's notorious book of that name. The

associated ideology is of the self-reliant, independent and resourceful woman who does not depend on 'artificial help'; the first woman prime minister of Britain gave exactly this account of her success.

(ii) removing discriminatory rules

This strategy is a direct riposte to the kinds of institutionalised discrimination considered in section 2.3. Explicit or inexplicit rules and practices which discriminate against particular social groups are challenged, including those which have been set up by socially-advantaged groups of workers, but also those in which employers and the state have had a hand. Note that this strategy is limited to the production sphere. The forms of action are here necessarily more collective than in (i) (though they can also incorporate individualised forms such as legal challenge by individual workers), and the scale of action is that of the firm, industry or nation. Ideology centres on formal equality of opportunity and the injustice of rule-based discrimination.

(iii) collaborating with capital to become more productive

Employment segregation is also tackled through collaboration between employers and disadvantaged workers to increase the latter's productivity, particularly through educational and training schemes. Employers are then more prepared to take on or promote these workers. This strategy, like that discussed in section 2.4, thus proceeds through collaboration of workers with capital to improve productivity and profitability. It has a strong legitimacy, combining equal opportunities, enhanced productivity, and benefits to both oppressed workers and management, and hence tends to command a broad consensus.

Strategies (i) and (iii) avoid confrontation with both capital and oppressor social groups (men, whites). Strategy (ii), on the other hand, in general confronts both of these; the extent to which capital and oppressor social groups respectively are attacked depends on capital's role in discrimination which was discussed in section 2.3. While the immediate aim of strategy (ii) is to develop a level playing field for workers' competition, it also attacks practices and ideologies used by capital and/or oppressor groups to maintain their power.

The challenge to social power of strategy (ii) is taken further in a second set of strategies, those which move beyond improving the competitiveness of oppressed groups. Two types of action are particularly relevant here:-

(iv) Oppressed workers concentrated in occupations or industries which have poor wages and conditions may fight to improve those terms of employment so as to be closer to those typically received by workers from dominant social groups. In doing so, oppressed workers have to directly confront employers who profit from low wages and poor conditions. They may also have to combat the indifference or hostility of socially advantaged workers, as for example the mainly Asian workers at Imperial Typewriters in England had to do in their landmark strike in the 1960s.

(v) Disadvantages in employment associated with gender, ethnicity, age and sexuality are profoundly structured by the social relations of *reproduction*. Attempts to remedy employment segregation with the production sphere are often blocked by disadvantage

generated within reproduction. The logic of overcoming job discrimination is therefore towards confronting these reproduction practices. These typically involve dual forms of struggle: against the privileges of advantaged workers (for example men's resistance to equal effort in domestic work, or whites' support for racist housing allocation), and against capital to secure better social resources for oppressed groups (for example state funded care or subsidised housing).

More clearly than strategy (ii), these two types of struggle move away from an equal opportunities approach to one which confronts social oppression and social power, from 'horizontal' to 'vertical' aggression. They more clearly require collective organisation of the oppressed, forms of collectivity based simultaneously on an identity as members of an oppressed group and as workers. These can be formed at varied scales from the neighbourhood to the nation to the international level (an example of the latter being the recent Women's Marches against Poverty and Violence). These scales tend to be more fluid and more linked to each other than in struggles whose terrains are the institutions of formal collective bargaining and state regulation of employment such as (ii) and (iii) above.

This second set of strategies also differs from the first in their notions of justice. Actions which seek to enhance the competitiveness of workers from oppressed groups often rest on bourgeois conceptions of justice: the right of each individual to sell her or his labour power unrestricted by non-market or anti-market constraints. In contrast, strategies (iv) and (v), and to an extent (iii), pose justice in terms of a critique of social relations. In combating social power, they label the relations of gender, 'race' and class as unjust. Justice goes beyond the individual right to compete equally towards the construction of different materially-based social relations. The *scales* and *forms* of collective organisation through which these strategies are pursued in a sense embody this notion of justice, since they are based on the solidarity of the oppressed and aggression against the powerful.

The distinctions I have made between the two sets of strategies chimes in several ways with the conclusions of Nancy Fraser's (1995) much-cited paper on justice, despite our very different theoretical approaches. Fraser distinguishes between two types of injustice, those of 'distribution' and those of 'recognition' or respect, corresponding to economic and cultural processes respectively. Class injustice falls into the first category, oppression of sexuality into the second, while gender and racism have aspects in both categories. She considers two types of strategy for overcoming injustice, 'affirmation', which ameliorates injustice superficially, and 'transformation', which changes the underlying structures. The strategies (i)-(iii) above would fall roughly into her category of affirmation, while strategies (iv) and (v) are transformative. She argues that affirmation strategies to combat gender and racial injustice tend to separate, and even make antagonistic, the distribution and recognition aspects, whereas transformation strategies tend to make them compatible, partly because transformation strategies tend to destabilise and erode difference in both its economic and cultural forms. Fraser argues, further, that strategies of transformation tend to draw together and make compatible struggles against *different* forms of oppression (class, gender, and so on). These conclusions fit with my critique of the strategies (i)-(iii), namely that they may ameliorate gender and 'racial' differences but they simultaneously deepen class subordination, that is, the remedying of the two types of oppression pull in opposite directions. They also fit with my argument that the strategies (iv) and (v) tend to meld the struggles against social oppressions with that against class, and tend to erode both forms of social difference.

Fraser's argument, however, differs from mine in important respects. Her conception of economic 'distribution' is theoretically unspecific; while it potentially includes the control of investment, it does not include the coercion of labour within production to produce surplus value. (Fraser's term '(re)distribution' is inappropriate, since it implies that the issue is simply one of distribution of value.) As a result, she neglects the way in which culture is *intrinsic and integral* to class relations: while she acknowledges that class may have cultural effects and may not be purely concerned with 'the economic' (ibid: 72-3), this is seen as an external relation rather than concerning the *nature* of class. Fraser therefore underestimates the extent to which struggle to abolish class is social and cultural (see further section 5). In her account the relation between transformative struggles against different forms of oppression takes the form of compatibility rather than, as I have argued, a melding. [6]

5. Confronting capital and building solidaristic workers' politics

5.1 Extracting more jobs from local capital: militant particularism?

In section 2.4 I argued that attempts by workers to maintain or secure jobs in their particular unit of the world economy deepen competition between workers. This may be so even in very militant union struggles 'in defense of jobs'. This point was argued by Hudson and Sadler (1986) in relation to militant struggles in the early 1980s against closure of steel capacity in Germany, France and Britain. More recently, David Harvey (1996, Ch.1) has sharply criticised the 'militant particularism' of workers who attempt to maintain jobs through local struggle, centering his discussion on the attempts to keep open car production at Rover in Oxford. I agree with the general direction of these arguments. But two, rather different, qualifying points need to be made.

Firstly, locally-limited struggles may not be a simple zero-sum game *if* they secure jobs at the expense of capital. Pressure from workers in a workplace, firm or across a national industry, sometimes mediated by the state, may prevent capital from shedding jobs as fast as it would like to; for a time the intensity of labour may be held down or even reduced. This eats into the profits of the capitals concerned. To the extent that capital is free to flow out of the sector concerned, and to the extent that rates of profit are equalised across the economy, this will lead to disinvestment [7]. But as Webber and Rigby (1996) have shown, both sectoral and national rates of profit can be substantially different over long periods. It is therefore possible for workers' pressure on capital to secure more jobs in particular units of the economy, sometimes quite durably.

Secondly, 'militant particularism' is normally a necessary *starting point* for spatially wider and politically more ambitious struggles against capital. This is so because of the fundamental conditions under which workers' struggles are constructed. We saw in section 2 that there are powerful processes, simultaneously economic and cultural, which lead workers to compete against each other at various scales rather than cooperate. Moreover, workers' knowledge of conditions elsewhere and in other sectors is normally limited precisely because of their role in the production system as workers. It is local issues which are best known, most immediate in effect, and hence around which it is easiest to build action. Workers' organisation often relies on, or is strengthened by, social ties within the

locality (Massey, 1993). Thus formal union organisation is much easier to construct locally than more widely. Underlying these 'organisational' difficulties are the fundamental conditions of proletarian life as contrasted with that of management – the denial of time within the working day to think about or plan production, the lack of social resources for such coordination, and limited distances of social-economic interaction. Harvey's critique of militant particularism, while founded on a materialist analysis, does not adequately take account of these material conditions.

Harvey puts forward issues which he thinks the socialist movement in Oxford should have raised, including jobs for the unemployed, the low quality of the jobs in Rover, overcapacity in the European and world car industry, and the ecologically-damaging use of cars, and counterposes these to the immediate issue taken up by the unions, saving jobs in Oxford (Harvey, 1996: 21-3, 40). But in the concrete conditions of working class struggle in Britain in the 1990s, the latter was a necessary starting point (see further Hayter and Harvey, 1992). Given the intense restructuring of the car industry at the time, Harvey sees the focus of the unions at Rover on preserving jobs as arising partly from a nostalgic wish to preserve long-established identities, even though these identities are the products of exploitation and involve "shit jobs" (ibid.: 40), and he criticises this as the oppressed colluding in their oppression. But the aim of preserving jobs had more material underpinnings: the need for a job in the short term, the practical difficulties of organising and the pressures towards simple competition for jobs. Moreover, as we see shortly, different structures of both organisation and political programme are needed to address 'the wider questions' which Harvey raises.

5.2 Building control of the economy

The point, then, is not to denounce locally-based and locally-focused action from an abstract standpoint of more aggressive demands around which no organisation exists, but rather to explore how local struggles can *develop* away from competition for jobs and towards challenging capitalist social relations. A key element in doing this is, as Harvey argues, to attend to scale (ibid.: 41-2). Workers' competition for jobs is a corollary of capital's control of the labour process and of productive investment flows at scales up to the global. In order to attenuate the former, the latter have to be brought under social control (Gough, 1992). To substantiate this statement, we need to consider how flows of productive investment and capital's control of work construct workers' competition at a number of different scales:-

(a) *The aggregate number of jobs* increases with the rate of extensive productive investment in the economy as a whole (national, international). The aggregate number of jobs decreases with the rate of intensive productive investment due to increases in labour productivity. Thus aggregate investment is the crucial determinant of unemployment rates, and hence of the competition for jobs.

(b) Aggregate jobs *in particular sectors* (nationally, internationally) are similarly proximately determined by extensive and intensive investment in the sector; this determines the pool of jobs for which the sector's (potential) workforce is competing.

(c) Aggregate job numbers in sectors are also determined by the intensity of labour. Overcapacity relative to effective demand can result from work intensification – a point which the shop stewards at Rover in Oxford have argued strongly.

(d) Within sectors, distribution of jobs *between firms and localities* is dependent on investment which gives a competitive advantage.

Going beyond competition for jobs therefore involves, firstly, democratic control over investment flows at these various spatial scales, and secondly, control over the intensity of work. The volume and type of investment in the economy as a whole, in sectors, and in enterprises needs planning in such a way as to ensure full employment in territories of different scale, and to create the maximum stability of employment in sectors and enterprises compatible with equalising work intensity and balancing capacity with demand. How this might be done goes beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that work in the last fifteen years or so on models of a socialist economy demonstrates that democratic coordination could constitute a dynamic planning process, interacting between different scales, so as to achieve such aims (Devine, 1988; Itoh, 1995; Laibman, 1999).

On this basis it is then not utopian to pose measures which overcome competition and build solidarity among workers. Of course, such national and international systems of democratic economic planning have to be actively constructed. Workers' organisation and popular control of investment flows and work intensity have to develop together; and these need to be developed at increasingly large spatial scales and these scales of control related to each other. Possible organisational forms are varied. The traditional spatial form of union organisation, across a sector in a particular territory (regional, national), is one starting point; through this, investment and work intensity across that territorial sector can be researched, contested, and eventually controlled. In large, multisite firms, including transnationals, cross-firm unions can develop a view of the firm's investment and competition between sites, and contest it (Wills, 1998); an example was the refusal in early 2001 by the Dutch union in the steel transnational Corus to take any work transferred from sites in Britain which the firm is seeking to close. But in international sectors which are oligopolies, it is not a major step to envisage coordination between unions *across* firms, hence potentially contesting overall investment flows within the world industry. In territories which contain a large variety of sectors, particularly those dominated by small firms, territorial but cross-sectoral forms of organisation may be the only ones initially feasible; but these would need to develop sectoral forms of control of investment to be effective. The essential point here is that workers' knowledge, organisation and control of investment and work all develop together, and can gradually build up in their scope – both spatial scale and sectoral reach. And these are directed increasingly against the private and fragmented control of investment and thus against capital itself. [8]

Certain solidaristic demands then become increasingly realistic: jobs for all who want them, and reasonable and human intensity of work for all. Although jobs in particular sectors and enterprises cannot be guaranteed (since they are subject to final demand and productivity levels influenced by technology), workers' control can ease movement between jobs, and can seek to ensure that those who do not wish to migrate for work are not forced to do so (Gough and Eisenschitz, 1997).

These aims could, indeed, be proposed as universal *rights*: the right to a job and to decent conditions of work. Harvey (2000a: 84, 96; 2000b) has pointed out that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, formally adopted by most states, contains just such employment rights, which have, of course, been almost completely ignored both by the states and by labour movements. One way of understanding this neglect is that ‘the right to a job’ is not in the form of a bourgeois right: it does not refer to a property of a person but rather to the social relations which determine employment levels. The discussion of section 3 warns us to pay attention to these substantial, materially-based relations rather than the legal form of the ‘right’. Harvey argues justifiably that the workers’ movement should take such rights seriously since the language of rights can be a powerful one in mobilising and uniting people. But one needs to examine the forms of organisation, economic control and social relations which would be involved in any serious (non-rhetorical) campaign for such rights. As I have argued in this section, decent jobs for all is not a utopian demand; but it cannot be achieved except within socialist relations of production, and moving towards such relations requires cumulatively building organisation, knowledge and demands rather than relying on legal rights.

These processes of economic control, collective organisation and solidaristic demands then pose the possibility of constructing different employment cultures and different notions of justice. Rather than a job being ‘earned’ by self-denial and by alienating one’s capacities, it is merited by a reasonable contribution to a collective labour. Rather than being secured by exclusion of others, on whatever pretexts, it is secured by collaboration with others in economic planning and the work process itself. Rather than posing the individual, or the social group, or the industrial-territorial unit as the site of interest, increasingly wide groups of workers construct and acquire common interests. The scale of the just, as well as the human attributes promoted, are thus radically shifted. Paradoxically, this upward shift in scale enables the legitimacy of ‘globalisation’ and its supposed imperatives to be challenged. The inevitability and justice of capital’s mobilities, which are thought to require workers’ competition and make it just, are challenged.

Such a *notion* of employment justice can only be popularised as part of the kind of *practices* of struggle and organisation just discussed. The scale of the aspiration ‘workers of the world, unite’ can only be made real as part of increasingly large scales of organising and debate. To the extent that such a morality is popularised it then, iteratively, become an integral part of how workers’ organisation is constructed and its aims made more aggressive and ambitious.

6. The problem of interests and motivation: how do workers decide between strategies?

Herod (1997) has described how workers’ interventions into employment geography can vary strongly in their political complexion. The discussion so far suggests some reasons for this variety. The strategies are distinguished by the form of organisation of workers and its relation to flows of capital, each of which is scaled in crucial ways. They differ in the social relations formed between workers and between them and capital, or, to put it another way, in their cultures of work: of tough individualism, of understandings of inside/outside, of gender, and so on. And they are distinguished by their notions of justice, which refer to particular scales, and these are important in motivating people and thus constructing the

strategies. The variety of workers' employment politics is thus bound up with the historical-spatial complexity of class relations, of cultures around employment, and of workers' capacities to organise.

In considering those strategies within which workers cooperate with capital on the latter's terms, Herod argues that workers are not dupes of capital, partly because they are acting *consciously* in their own interests (1997: 16). We can consider this question, and the meaning of 'interests', a little more deeply in the light of the discussion so far. In such strategies – the strategies of competition considered in section 2 – workers are not (simply) duped by capital, since (a) the workers pursuing the strategy do sometimes receive real benefits, and (b) the ideologies associated with these strategies, while powerful, do not come (solely, or mainly) from employers' propaganda but from within the social practices of competition. On the first of these points, workers adopt these strategies because they promise to, and sometimes actually do, yield results in terms of jobs. In this qualified sense, they are indeed in workers' interests. But 'interests' are always practical and comparative: action x is 'in my interest' if it promises better results and/or is more feasible than action y. Strategies of collaboration with capital and competition with other workers are 'in workers' interests' if and only if other paths cannot secure jobs as effectively, or if these other paths are, or seem, infeasible. We have seen that strategies which challenge capital and other forms of social power can in fact secure jobs better than competitive strategies; the problem is that they often involve new forms of organisation and culture, are opposed by capital, and thus seem utopian. The question of what is in workers' *interest*, and how workers are *motivated* by such an interest, therefore needs to be re-conceptualised in order to be answered: it is a question of what forms of workers' organisation and culture, and what transgressions of capital's power, can feasibly be constructed. This, of course, has no abstract answer: it can be considered only in particular spatial-historical conjunctures. It is for this reason that in most of this paper I have used the concept of strategy rather than interest.

This is relevant to the problem of selfishness: doesn't self-interest lead workers to compete with others, and to fail to contribute to collective struggles because they can be free riders? Such behaviour is privileged, and assumed as fundamental, in liberal theory. Individualistic worker behaviour is taken as axiomatic in neoclassical economic theory. Liberal political theory, elaborated in public choice theory, assumes the self-interested individual, who will and should cooperate if and only if the 'rationally-expected' outcome is favourable to them. Marxist 'rational choice theory' makes similar assumptions. There is certainly a political (and theoretical) problem to be addressed here. Geras (1998) has argued that contemporary culture is dominated by a morality of 'mutual indifference': I do not expect any help from you since (and hence) you do not expect any help from me. But liberal theory misrepresents the problem, by removing individualism from its construction by social institutions and practice, thus reifying it as a simple attribute of human nature. Part of the problem is liberalism's neglect of the patterning by culture of people's aspirations and relations to others (Barnes and Sheppard, 1992); I have emphasised that contrasted workers' strategies, both competitive and collaborative, are associated with distinct territorial and distance-related cultures. But even this is not the nub of liberalism's theoretical weakness, since a liberal could retort that cultures are ineffective if they conflict with the constraints of economy and human nature. The deeper weakness of liberalism is that it does not register that people's 'interests' and motivations are constructed by participating in *alternative projects* according to their possible outcomes and their

feasibility; and these are open-ended, historical processes, whose development depends on a contestations of power which are simultaneously cultural, social, political and economic, and within which spatial scale is crucial. Individualism and solidarity are just moments of these practices and struggles.

Relevant in this context is the work of Clark et al (1992), who use a rational choice framework to consider the coercion of workers and citizens in restructuring by capital and the state. Their conclusion offers some criticisms of this framework, and considers the claims of communitarian and collective notions of justice. But the latter notions are weakly developed, partly because economic coercion of workers by capital is considered as just one tactic of coercion ('intimidation', *ibid.*: 55) rather than as a fundamental feature of capitalist dynamics and relations which informs all tactics. Moreover, they do not consider how individual and, especially, collective practical projects of economic intervention construct what is legitimate and (hence) workers' and citizens' rational choices.

7. Conclusion: justice and scale

Bourgeois notions of justice are based on rights regarded as quasi-property of individuals. In contrast, the notion of socialist justice used and developed in this paper is concerned with social relations between people. For this reason I have departed from commonly used approaches to 'the geography of justice' which are focused on distributions of benefits between individuals and territories. I *have* considered the distribution of social benefits (in this case jobs) between areas, particularly in looking at workers' responses to the uneven distribution of jobs (section 2.4) and forms of economic planning which could ameliorate spatially uneven development (section 5.2). But the meaning of 'geographical justice' which I have sought to develop goes beyond the territorial distribution of benefits. Its central concern is the justice and injustice of social relations, and the ways in which these social relations use scale, space and territory. Geography here is relevant to justice not simply as regards geographical patterns and outcomes but in the ways in which space is implicated in relations of power, competition, resistance and control.

The notion of the just which I have used is, at root, transhistorical. It assumes certain fundamental human needs which social arrangements should meet. It sees respect for others and concern for their welfare as central to just social relations. It is opposed to social power to the extent that that power prevents people's welfare being met and to the extent that its exercise implies lack of respect for others. But this notion of justice cannot be developed further without considering historically-concrete societies. To be useful, definitions of the just have to be set within *feasible* social arrangements; their meaning is thus contingent on these real practices. And moreover, these practices are always spatial. Defining the just is thus always historical *and* geographical.

Specifically in this paper I have considered what forms of injustice in employment are created by capitalist, gendered and racialised society, and how particular forms of working class organisation and a socialist economy could create more just relations of production: more secure employment, and relations between workers based on respect and solidarity rather than competition. I have argued that overcoming the injustices of contemporary employment arrangements implies not just taming but overthrowing the rule of capital. [9] And space is strongly implicated in these forms of injustice and justice. The forms of

competition for jobs by workers in capitalism use and articulate different spatial scales in particular ways: the scale of the body and the individual, the scale of the living space, the scale of real and imagined cultural commonality (of relatively homogeneous practices of gender, ethnicity and so on), and the scales of competition and flow of capital. As we have seen, it is often the *relation between* scales which is important here, a point which has been made in some recent writing on other scaled social practices (for example N. Smith, 1992; Jonas, 1994; Swyngedouw, 1997). Similarly, the forms of workers' action which attack social power and form the basis for a democratic economy use scale in particular ways. They construct workers' collectivity at the levels of the workplace, the neighbourhood, the region, the nation and beyond. But these scales of organisation are deeply connected to each other, in that those at smaller spatial scale cannot realise their progressive potential without relating to, and having as horizon, the larger scales of organisation. This is true, too, of the forms of socialist coordination considered above: workers' empowerment in workplaces and localities is contingent on, as well as being an ingredient of, the planning of investment at larger spatial scales.

As I have tried to show, all these scalar practices and materially-based social relations are integrally cultural in that they involve particular qualities of relations between people and particular views of the self and others. [10] And these cultures are not simply facts but are endowed by the participants with *moral* significance: it is right to compete with your fellow workers for promotion, it is wrong for this industry to employ women, it is right to refuse to steal foreign workers' jobs, and so on. These moralities serve to legitimate those social arrangements - to stop people opposing them and to motivate people to participate in them.

Struggles to change employment practices are thus always, in part, struggles to create new cultures and new notions of justice. In these cultural and moral aspects, such struggles, and new durable social structures which they create, can change what people think and feel to be in their interest. This is not to propose that human beings can become 'perfectly altruistic' (even if one could conceive what that might mean), nor that such altruism exists ready-formed and waiting to be released (though human *potentials* do include sociability and compassion). Rather, it is to argue that people's notions of their interests and of what is just in relation to others develop with social practice; this is why I have been concerned with the *feasibility* of forms of struggle and economic allocation.

But this correspondence between practice and morality is not a mechanical one. People's notions of justice can be built on *partial* experiences and *anticipations* of what may be practically possible; thus the notions of solidarity and economic justice traditional in the socialist movement have been neither pure speculation, nor based on an existing fully-fledged economic system, but rather extrapolations from partial and ambiguous experiences of workers' organisation in capitalist society and understandings of how things might be different. Notions of economic justice, then, are vital in both motivating and guiding people in their choice of strategy - which is why these notions should be of central interest to geographers.

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Notes

1. In some cases labour power has been sold to capital by collectives of workers (families, the ganger system, clans), and some forms of subcontracting come close to this. But the dominant form, particularly in mature capitalism, is the sale of *individual* labour power by its holder. This is not merely an aspect of the abstract-conceptual definition of the mode of production: it is practically reproduced by the dynamics of capital accumulation. Capital prefers to select individuals rather than collectives, since particular qualities of labour power can then be obtained, the appropriate quantity of labour power hired (and if necessary fired), and discipline imposed directly rather than via a husband/father or ganger. Workers, for their part, find themselves possessing differentiated labour power, and it is often in their interest to sell this particular labour power rather than have it subsumed in a collective sale. This individualisation of the worker has indeed been responsible for the erosion of historic forms of collectivity among the exploited population – families, clans, local communities.
2. While at first sight this aspect of US culture can appear anachronistic, it is consistent with the US's role as the most powerful capitalist country during this period: the strongest capitalism reproduces the strongest construction of the worker as individual labour power.
3. An implication is that racist ideology among workers is created and reproduced in the realm of employment in two ways: (a) through workers' discrimination aimed at eliminating competition for jobs (section 2.3); and (b) through low esteem of black people by whites on the grounds of their supposed failure to compete effectively in the jobs market at various spatial scales (section 2.2). Analogous ideologies apply to gender *mutatis mutandis*.
4. An important exception was the support for this strategy by the official Communist Parties in the developed countries (and sometimes elsewhere) from the rise of Stalin until the 1980s. These propagandised for alliances within each country between the labour movement and 'progressive', 'national' or 'patriotic' sections of capital, with the aim of enhancing the productiveness of the national economy. The class relations were made explicit. This explicitness was necessary in order to convince the cadres of the party who were schooled in the categories (if not the substance) of Marxism.
5. Sayer (1995, 231-4) has usefully discussed the considerable overlap between postmodern thought and liberalism.
6. Similarly, Fraser regards the oppression of lesbian and gay sexuality as (almost) wholly cultural, and sees transformative strategy against it as cultural deconstruction of the gay/straight dichotomy. This underestimates the internal relations of lesbian and gay oppression to both class and gender (Gough and Macnair, 1985; Greenberg, 1988; Chauncey, 1994). These problems arise from Fraser's abstract-empiricist approach, in which dialectical interrelations are mentioned but bracketed.
7. Unless oligopoly allows capital to set prices at levels which offset 'excess' wage costs and give it an average rate of profit; the British national newspaper industry before the 1980s was an example.

8. I do not have space to consider here the obviously important questions raised: whether this process of increasing workers' control arrives at a point of crisis where capital will not allow further encroachments, and what political responses by the workers' movement are then possible.

9. And, I believe, gender power and racial oppression. But I have not pursued those arguments far enough in this paper to claim this as a 'conclusion'.

10. In the Marxist approach adopted here, class relations and value processes are not merely influenced by culture, as in socio-economics and institutionalist economics, and in Fraser's approach discussed above, but are *intrinsically* cultural.

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