

Commentary on  
Herrigel & Zeitlin:  
*Inter-Firm Relations in Global  
Manufacturing: Disintegrated  
Production and Its Globalization*

Phil Almond,

[palmond@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:palmond@dmu.ac.uk)

- Pathways in 'post-Fordist' coordination/disintegrated production
  - Industrial district/local production system model
  - Lean production/collaborative supply chain model
  - Ongoing process of convergence between the two models

# Role of agency in disintegrated production

- Non-teleological analysis:
  - “Actors often seek to avoid definitive choices between polar alternatives”
  - Change narratives do not lead simplistically/straightforwardly to outcomes:
    - “Actors do not enact orientations blindly: rather they are malleable frameworks or points of reference that actors adopt and recompose as they seek to resolve problems”
- Coordination a matter of intra- and inter-organisational negotiation, embedded both in established and newer norms
- Disintegration > more attention needed, through relational understanding of negotiation strategies/“ideological” resources used by spatially and/or organisationally related actors.

# Transfer of knowledge/routines

- Very quick and efficient transfer of knowledge within geographically dispersed operations key to success of LP/CSC model
- Where (and how serious) are the points of friction in transferring knowledge/organisational routines?
  - Intra/inter organisational, geographical, institutional/cultural, occupational/professional/sectoral
- Role of the different firms, state actors, civil society actors, in overcoming (or using creatively) these points of friction? With what effects on national/regional business systems?

# The governance of disintegrated production

- Governance dilemmas in dealing with a fluid production model, and with power dynamics between governance actors and firms.
- How pro-active/innovative can local governance actors be?
  - Strategies/patterns from sub-national business (and political) systems trapped in NBS logics?
  - How do sub-national actors create/support distinctive sub-national forms of interaction?
  - Universalist answers (or even “national-universalist” answers) will not work.
  - Risks:
    - Excessive isomorphism within countries
    - “Institutional capture”: how far *should* sub-national governance actors tailor their business systems to needs of *specific* actors in global production networks?