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The big trends, the big choices

15 June 2049: Pat shuffles into the homeless shelter. They're hard to find and they've always been spartan places, but more so now than they ever were when she was a student and did some volunteer work here in 2019.

Not that she has time to dwell on those memories much. She knew she never wanted to come here, but she's finally given in. It's just too dangerous outside. The bashings are getting harder to avoid, sometimes shootings by the gangs or the cops. And if they get you, there's no point in going to a hospital. If you don't have private insurance ('whatever that is', she mumbles, though she knows what it is) you pay an up-front fee that she has no chance of handing over. Or they don't let you in.

15 June 2049: Pat has coffee with an old friend from her university days. She hasn't seen her for a quarter of a century. They've both aged since then, but both like to think the other hasn't.

They sit inside the cafe, next to the main window. Across the road is a sparkling new medical clinic. Her friend looks closely at it, then recognition dawns.

'Isn't that where we both did volunteer work for our degrees, back in 2019?'

'Yes, though of course the homeless shelter moved out long ago. They've much nicer premises now, but I hear it's rarely full.'

'You see quite a few homeless people sleeping out in the park. I guess there's nothing much to bother them.' She pauses. 'Ever used that clinic?'

Same with GPs, though at least the charge isn't so high there. It used to be called a 'copayment' when it was lower, but eventually, she remembers, the government just stopped paying anything to doctors. 'Rightsizing government', they said, or some other buzzword.

She wonders if she recognises the face on the other side of the soup ladle from her student days, but she says nothing.

'Where you from?' he asks, trying to make conversation as he half-fills a bowl.

'Round here. I went away. Came back a few years ago.'

'What brought you back?'

'I had some work—well, from time to time anyway.'

'Doing what?'

'Oh, through the app I got work as a sessional tutor at the uni. Had my last contract there about eighteen months ago, a few years after I got my PhD.'

'Couple of years ago, I had a cough, real bad. My chest hurt so much I thought I was having a heart attack. They hooked me up and ran all the expensive tests, figured it was just a cracked rib. Well, they weren't expensive tests for me—didn't cost me anything, of course. But it was really good.'

'And how's the job going, Pat?'

'Quite well. You know, it's pretty secure. I've got my hat in the ring for a promotion.'

'To senior lecturer?'

'Yes. It's a few years since I got my PhD, I've done my share of teaching and publishing. I think I'm about due. Is that app your baby crying?'

'I'll bring her in. I thought she might sleep better in the sunshine. Never mind.'

It's the same Pat in each vignette. The focus of our attention, though, is not the choices Pat made. She had limited choice. It's the choices *we* make. We, as a society, face choices that affect what we do, the way we work, the nature of work, who benefits, and who suffers from it. But it's the choices that we make that make the difference to her—and to millions of others. The movie *Sliding Doors*, released in 1998, presented two very different, alternative scenarios, distinguished by whether the main character caught or missed an underground train. In that movie, the defining event was

essentially random (whether or not she got through the train's sliding doors), but in this book it is not random events, it is conscious choices that make the difference to our futures.

This book will outline the potential futures we face and the choices we make that will affect those futures. But it does so very much in the context of the reality of work *now*. Many books about the future of work start by talking about the latest technology, and focus on how *that* is going to change the way we work. And there is no doubt that technology will have huge impacts. However, to really understand the direction in which work is going, and the impact that technology and other forces will have, we need to first understand where we are.¹

I wrote much of this book while based in Australia, and so some of the examples are Australian. But there are also examples from the USA, where I finished writing this book, and even from Scandinavia, where I spent a few months living quite some time ago. Those two areas—the USA and Scandinavia—represent the extremes of the industrialised world, from what would be called the archetypal liberal market economy, in which the state plays ostensibly a minimalist role and the market mostly rules, to the group of archetypal coordinated market economies in which the market is frequently subordinated to the demands of the state and civil society.² That range tells us something about the diversity of possibilities open to us all, and underlines one of the ideas in this book that there are, indeed, choices that can and will be made.

So where Australian examples have been used, they have been chosen with more than one eye on, and countless lessons from and for, the world at large. Australia also has many lessons for the rest of the industrialised world because, although Australian people have liked to think of themselves as egalitarian,³ it is a liberal market economy that has undergone some of the more substantial neo-liberal transformations over the past three decades, and is in some ways an indicator, short of the extremes of the USA, of

1 Much of this chapter first appeared in *Griffith Review* in David Peetz, 'The Choices We Make—a "Sliding Doors" Moment'. *Griffith Review* 45 (July 2014): 44–75.

2 The terms 'liberal market' and 'coordinated market' economies come from the 'varieties of capitalism' literature, centred around Peter A. Hall and David W. Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

3 Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties* (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1964).

where other industrialised countries have been heading. So, before going further into the future, what's the back-story? How did we get to where we are? And where, exactly, are we?

Through parts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, improved living standards were manifested first as increased health, and later as improved wages.⁴ Inequality rose in the later part of the nineteenth century and peaked in the 'gilded age' before World War I, but thereafter reduced. Through several decades after World War II, living standards improved, unemployment was low and workers' slice of the cake gradually got more icing on it. Wages and benefits rose, annual leave got longer, working hours got shorter. Responding to pressures from numerous parts of civil society, fearful of the alternative (communism) and legitimated by the economic role the state had played in World War II, governments widened and deepened the range of services they provided.

This changed through the 1980s, in many countries. Major shifts in economy and society were brought about by financialisation, described by Thomas I. Palley as 'a process whereby financial markets, financial institutions, and financial elites gain greater influence over economic policy and economic outcomes'.⁵ Increasingly, financialisation prioritised the monetary over the real, the volatile over the stable, the immediate over the sustainable, and the rich over the poor.

For many, financialisation in Australia was most symbolised in the decision by then treasurer Paul Keating and prime minister Bob Hawke to deregulate foreign exchange markets and substantially loosen regulation of financial markets in December 1983. For me, though, it was most symbolised by a meeting of the budgetary committee of the Labor Cabinet on 28 July 1986 when, fearing a run on the dollar in financial markets and possible intervention by the International Monetary Fund,⁶ ministers hastily reversed an earlier decision affecting taxation of capital flows and loosened foreign investment policy.

4 Daniel Gallardo Albarrán, *A Composite Perspective on British Living Standards during the Industrial Revolution* (Groningen, NL: Groningen Growth and Development Centre, University of Groningen, 25 April 2016).

5 Thomas I. Palley, 'Financialization: What It Is and Why It Matters'. Working Paper No. 525 (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute, 2007), papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1077923.

6 Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 207.

Since then, finance capital has grown in strength. Governments around the world have been attracted to ‘market liberal’ policies (sometimes described as neo-liberalism).⁷ Unions have declined in coverage and influence in the face of increasingly hostile employers under pressure from financiers, indifferent or hostile governments, and their own ‘institutional sclerosis’, as Barbara Pocock described it:⁸ unions’ failure to make sufficient internal changes to accommodate the demands of the market liberal era. Globalisation has thus developed in an environment that has been most conducive to the interests of capital, and most antagonistic to the interests of labour.

The ‘sliding doors’ portraits of Pat illustrated two alternative visions of the future for workers. Which of these turns out to be true depends on the choices we make over coming years.

Management

In 1987, Wolfgang Streeck wrote of how the great ‘uncertainty of management’ was dealing with the ‘management of uncertainty’.⁹ Managers have responded—to the volatility of the product markets in which they sell and the financial markets in which their equity and debt are nested—by a range of strategies, some consistent, many contradictory.

Chief among the consistent strategies is the search for greater flexibility. We hear a lot about employers offering greater flexibility *for* employees—more choice in their start or finish times, perhaps in their total hours. This can be in response to demands from employees themselves—more on that later. It might, however, be a different story when people actually try to use such flexibility, for which they may be penalised.¹⁰

The *principal* form of flexibility is the flexibility *by* employees that employers seek, to help employers manage—and shift—their own risk. Sometimes they seek ‘functional’ flexibility: getting employees to take on multiple and quite different tasks and hence skills. Sometimes they

7 Erik Olin Wright, *Understanding Class* (London: Verso, 2015).

8 Barbara Pocock, ‘Institutional Sclerosis: Prospects for Trade Union Transformation’. *Labour & Industry* 9, no. 1 (1998): 17–33.

9 Wolfgang Streeck, ‘The Uncertainties of Management and the Management of Uncertainty’. *Work, Employment and Society* 1, no. 2 (1987): 281–308.

10 David Burkus, ‘Everyone Likes Flex Time, but We Punish Women Who Use It’. *Harvard Business Review*, 20 February 2017.

seek ‘numerical’ flexibility, meaning that the number of workers, or the number of hours they work, or maybe even their pay rates, move up and down according to the needs of the enterprise.¹¹

For a long time, greater numerical flexibility was seen as an unequivocal plus, creating greater stability, or at least resilience, in labour markets. Governments were encouraged, including by bodies like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to make wages more variable, remove restrictions on hours and on hiring and firing, and attempt to emulate the most flexible of them all—the US labour market, where employers hire and fire ‘at will’.¹² Then the global financial crisis came along, and, although Europe experienced a greater fall in economic activity than the USA, it was America that suffered the greater drop in employment. In its biggest test, the theory failed spectacularly.¹³ The OECD had been having misgivings even before then. After the crisis it recommended governments improve income support and unemployment insurance benefit systems,¹⁴ which it had previously said would decrease flexibility.

Alongside greater flexibility came the urge for control. But how? On the one hand, employees were demanding more voice at work and more control over their working lives. The decline of unions meant that, for many workers, an obvious mechanism for voice was no longer there. Some technologies inherently gave greater discretion to employees using those technologies. A case study by James R. Barker showed that employees were often more effective at exerting control over the behaviour of fellow employees, and extracting maximum effort, than were their supervisors.¹⁵ So, many employers gave employees greater control over their work.

But it is hard for managers to ‘let go’. The urge for control is human. How could they justify the ‘big bucks’ if the workers themselves were in charge? Other technologies gave the opportunity to micromanage employees—

11 John Atkinson, *Flexibility, Uncertainty and Manpower Management*. IMS Report No. 89 (Brighton, UK: Institute for Manpower Studies, 1985).

12 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The OECD Jobs Study: Facts, Analysis, Strategy* (Paris: OECD, 1994).

13 David Peetz, Stéphane Le Queux, and Ann Frost, ‘The Global Financial Crisis and Employment Relations’. In *The Future of Employment Relations: New Paradigms, New Approaches*, ed. Adrian Wilkinson and Keith Townsend (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 193–214.

14 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Employment Outlook* (Paris: OECD, 2009).

15 James R. Barker, ‘Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-Managing Teams’. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1993): 408–37.

in particular, to dictate their time. Swipe cards could tell warehouse bosses just how long their workers were taking to move a pallet of cans from shelf to truck.¹⁶ Monitors could tell call centre bosses how many seconds ‘customer service representatives’ were pausing between calls, or taking to go to the toilet.¹⁷ Barcode scanners could tell supermarket managers how long shop assistants took to process a trolley of groceries.¹⁸ All could be used to tell staff, ‘Work more! Work faster!’ So, many employers gave employees *less* control over their work.

Regardless of whether they gave employees greater or less *individual* control over their work, employers typically sought to reduce the *collective* discretion employees exercised. The sort of control employers were happy to let employees have was only contingent control—management could always take it back. For some, keeping out, or throwing out, unions became important. While decades of research had shown that employees could be, and commonly were, simultaneously committed to both union and employer,¹⁹ many employers could not stomach the idea of an alternative source of power. Sometimes through sophisticated human resource management policies that signalled ‘We’re all in this together’, sometimes through aggressive policies of exclusion, those employers often succeeded in obtaining unilateral control of the workforce, precluding collective bargaining in favour of individual contracting.²⁰

These employers would often cloak individualistic rhetoric with a collective demand on their employees (though the term ‘employees’ was often replaced with ‘partners’, ‘members’ or, more commonly, ‘associates’). Corporate ‘culturism’, as it was described by Hugh Willmott,²¹ sought simultaneously to make employees feel as if they were treated as individuals but needed to subvert their individuality in pursuit of the collective, corporate goals. Those who failed to toe the corporate rhetoric

16 Christopher Wright and John Lund, ‘Best Practice Taylorism: “Yankee Speed-up” in Australian Grocery Distribution’. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 38, no. 2 (1996): 196–212.

17 George Callaghan and Paul Thompson, ‘Edwards Revisited: Technical Control and Call Centres’. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 22 (2001): 13–37.

18 Robin Price, ‘Controlling Routine Front Line Service Workers: An Australian Retail Supermarket Case’. *Work, Employment and Society* 30, no. 6 (2016): 915–31.

19 For example, D.G. Gallagher, ‘The Relationship between Organizational and Union Commitment among Federal Government Employees’. *Academy of Management Proceedings* (1984): 319–23. More extensive references are in footnote 80 in Chapter 5.

20 David Peetz, ‘Decollectivist Strategies in Oceania’. *Relations Industrielles* 57, no. 2 (2002): 252–81.

21 Hugh Willmott, ‘Strength Is Ignorance; Slavery Is Freedom: Managing Culture in Modern Organizations’. *The Journal of Management Studies* 30, no. 4 (1993): 515–52.

line, as Diane Van den Broek found in her study of a telecommunications company, would be performance-managed out.²² It was reminiscent of the scene in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*, in which Brian, facing an adoring but uncomprehending crowd, calls out 'You're all individuals!' They respond, 'Yes, we're all individuals!' He pleads, 'You're all different!' 'Yes, we are all different!' Then a little voice at the back pipes up: 'I'm not!'

Willmott took a more sinister view of it all, likening 'culturist' strategies to Big Brother's attempts at totalising control in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.²³ Yet often these attempts failed because, unlike in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s Oceania, workers were exposed to all sorts of ideas outside the workplace. The HR Department could never be as softly persuasive as Orwell's Ministry of Truth, or as violently persuasive as his Ministry of Love.²⁴

Services

One of the biggest shifts in the location of work has been from the public to the private sector. In the public sector, 'new public management' became the rage from the 1980s.²⁵ Some activities were totally privatised. Services were outsourced to the private sector, policy separated from delivery. But not all changes in work can be traced to market liberal policies or financialisation. Some simply emerged as part of the normal process of development in a trading world.

In all industrialised countries, manufacturing has, in relative terms, declined. Manufacturing instead provides the engine for rapidly growing Third World or transition economies, for dragging people out of poverty.²⁶ Still, government policies in industrialised countries influence how much manufacturing declines, and what it would look like. Most employment

22 Diane Van den Broek, 'Human Resource Management, Workforce Control and Union Avoidance: An Australian Case Study'. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 39, no. 3 (1997): 332–48.

23 George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four: A Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949, repr. 1976).

24 Willmott, 'Strength Is Ignorance'.

25 Christopher Hood, 'A Public Management for All Seasons'. *Public Administration Review* 69, no. 1 (1991): 3–19.

26 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Trade and Development Report: Capital Accumulation, Growth and Structural Change*. UNCTAD/TDR/2003 (New York and Geneva: United Nations, 2003).

growth now and in the future in developed countries is in ‘services’, a term so broad it can mean ‘anything that isn’t primary production or manufacturing’.

Much of the structural growth in new service sector jobs is in occupations that involve personal interactions. These jobs put demands on employees that were relatively unknown in manufacturing or mining: demands for the use of ‘emotional labour’. Employees are asked to evoke emotional reactions in clients or customers that bring about sales or at least make the targets feel more satisfied. From waitresses, bar attendants, sales assistants, and customer sales representatives in call centres to air stewards, aged care workers, and child carers, employees work with what Arlie Hochschild called the ‘managed heart’.²⁷ They may be required to ‘put on a face’ to boost sales, stressfully pretending to feel something they do not (Hochschild calls this ‘surface acting’), like in a ‘smile’ campaign documented by Emmanuel Ogbonna²⁸ but seen many times over by bewildered customers of numerous firms. Or employees may actually embody, deep down, the emotions that are needed, for example in care work (Hochschild calls this ‘deep acting’). Often these skills are associated with ‘women’s work’. Often they are seen as ‘attributes’ rather than ‘skills’. Often, therefore, the jobs undergo ‘undervaluation’ and the workers are poorly paid for what the work requires.²⁹

Other emerging jobs in the service sector, though, may be alienated from human interaction. The rise of internet sales has caught many storefront retailers off-guard, replacing shop visits with screen clicks. There are no book sales assistants in Amazon warehouses, where mobile technology monitors and directs workers to use the quickest route between two points: ‘You’re sort of like a robot, but in human form’, said one manager to the *Financial Times*.³⁰ Not just emotionless labour, some jobs are thoughtless labour.

27 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983, repr. 2003).

28 Staff were instructed to smile at all customers. Emmanuel Ogbonna, ‘Organisation Culture and Human Resource Management: Dilemmas and Contradictions’. In *Reassessing Human Resource Management*, ed. P. Blyton and P. Turnbull (London: Sage, 1992), 74–96.

29 Sara Charlesworth and Fiona Macdonald, ‘Employment Regulation and Worker-Carers: Reproducing Gender Inequality in the Domestic and Market Spheres?’. In *Women, Labor Segmentation and Regulation: Varieties of Gender Gaps*, ed. David Peetz and Georgina Murray (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 79–96.

30 Sarah O’Connor, ‘Amazon Unpacked’. *Financial Times*, 8 February 2013.

The changes in economic structure had other implications. Manufacturing had long been a source of employment for migrant workers in many countries, and so its decline caused particular problems for that workforce. Manufacturing, once seen as the heartland of unionism, now accounts for only a small proportion of unionists. Unionism has become white collar, like the workforce.

Flexibility

One person's flexibility is another person's insecurity. The mythology of the 'portfolio' career, as if somehow workers like to be shunted from industry to industry over their lifetime, often hides the fact that workers are treated as more disposable than before. Some, of course, may prefer changes of career, but for others career changes are a euphemism that is forced upon them by the impermanency of work.

Particularly in English-speaking countries, employers have become less hesitant about downsizing, and less reluctant to make big cuts. Yet research by Wayne F. Cascio showed that downsizing often results in lower morale, lower productivity, and worse performance, in part due to 'survivor syndrome' among those left behind, and employer expectations that somehow those left will make up, at least in part, for those departed.³¹ It may be a contradictory strategy, but still a popular one. We've seen companies turning permanent jobs into casual jobs, shifting from direct employment into labour hire, converting employees to the status of dependent contractors, often to avoid union-negotiated pay and conditions.³²

For some workers, nonstandard employment of this type is a means of gaining some control over their working lives. Nurses, for example, might choose labour hire as an alternative to the grind of rotating daily shift work or to avoid night work.³³ For other workers, though, it deepens

31 Wayne F Cascio, 'Downsizing: What Do We Know? What Have We Learned?'. *Academy of Management Executive* 7, no. 1 (1993): 95–104.

32 Max Chalmers, 'Cooped up Workers and Mystery Contractors: Major Chicken Supplier Roasted for Labour Exploitation'. *New Matilda*, 18 June 2015; Josh Bornstein, 'The Great Uber Fairness Fallacy: As a Driver, How Do You Bargain with an App?'. *Guardian*, 24 August 2015; Anna Patty, 'Cold Storage Company Blocked from Locking Workers out of Bargaining'. *Age*, 19 June 2017.

33 Barbara Pocock, Rosslyn Prosser, and Ken Bridge, *'Only a Casual...': How Casual Work Affects Employees, Households and Communities in Australia* (Adelaide: Labour Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Adelaide, 2004), 91.

risk and insecurity. Risk is passed on to workers, many of whom are no longer ‘employees’ but now responsible for their own sick leave and injury insurance. It may also be a means of weakening worker organisation. In Australia, it appears that there is a wage premium (a plus) for casuals on high incomes, but a wage penalty for casuals on low incomes, with most receiving less than what the ‘casual loading’ suggests they would have if they obtained equivalent rewards to other workers with similar characteristics.³⁴

For workers in lower-skilled occupations, or at least those outside professional or managerial occupations, insecurity is likely to outweigh choice. But it is not only the low skilled who find themselves marginalised this way. Besides the food retailing and hospitality sector, it is in education where casualisation is greatest.³⁵ We are not referring here to workers who left school early and can find no better work—we are talking about highly skilled workers with doctoral qualifications, who spend semester after semester doing ‘sessional’ or ‘adjunct’ tutoring, lecturing or administering of courses, some never quite sure when they will be paid, sometimes only knowing a week in advance that they will be teaching a semester but knowing with certainty they will get no holiday pay.

Maybe just like Pat. Those ‘sliding doors’ portraits at the beginning of this chapter were not extreme imaginations. The first was inspired by modern day USA. From there, reports have emerged in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of adjunct (sessional) academic staff living in relatives’ basements or homeless shelters.³⁶ The problems of the unaffordability of healthcare would be familiar to anyone who has spent time in the USA—a country whose health, education and minimum wage regimes seem to be admired by some countries’ present policy-makers. Health insurance is a work-related issue. In America, unions battle hard to obtain it for their members, employers see cutting it as a means to make major cost savings; Canadian employers regard national health insurance as

34 Inga Laß and Mark Wooden, ‘The Structure of the Wage Gap for Temporary Workers: Evidence from Australian Panel Data’. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (2019). doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12458.

35 Robyn May, David Peetz, and Glenda Strachan, ‘The Casual Academic Workforce and Labour Market Segmentation in Australia’. *Labour and Industry* 23, no. 3 (2013): 258–75.

36 Isaac Sweeney, ‘Adjunct Emergency Fund’. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 August 2011, chronicle.com/blogs/onhiring/adjunct-emergency-fund/29317; Simone Pathe, ‘Homeless Professor Protests Conditions of Adjuncts’. *PBS News Hour*, 31 March 2014, www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/homeless-professor-protests-conditions-adjuncts/.

a competitive cost advantage that attracts businesses across the border; and Australian unions negotiated the reintroduction of national health insurance as part of their 1983 Accord with the federal Labor government.

The second portrait was inspired by my time in Norway, with its more socially engaged public sector in health and other areas, where university vice chancellors are elected by staff and students and resist state attempts to impose new public sector management techniques on universities,³⁷ and where mutual trust is so high that parents routinely leave prams with sleeping babies outside shops and cafes while they go inside. You can get arrested for that in the USA.³⁸

Time and resistance

As employment becomes more insecure, and as management strategy toughens, work also becomes harder. Through the twentieth century, workers gradually achieved shorter and shorter working weeks through various rounds of industrial action and advocacy.³⁹ Yet in the 1980s this started to change. Working hours for full-time workers increased through the 1990s. Surveys showed large numbers of workers reporting increases in how hard they had to work and in the pressure they felt at work.⁴⁰ They also showed increasing difficulties experienced by workers in balancing their work and family lives, and problems of work interfering in their personal lives.⁴¹

37 David Peetz, 'Aim for Gains, Not Profits'. *The Australian Higher Education Supplement*, 6 September 2006, 30; Tobias Schulze-Cleven and Jennifer R. Olson, 'Worlds of Higher Education Transformed: Toward Varieties of Academic Capitalism'. *Higher Education* 73 (2017): 813–31.

38 Raquel Laneri, 'I Went to Jail for Leaving My Baby Outside a Restaurant'. *New York Post*, 25 November 2017, nypost.com/2017/11/25/i-went-to-jail-for-leaving-my-baby-outside-a-restaurant/; Reuters, 'Swedish Woman Who Left Baby Outside Restaurant Investigated', 16 August 2011. www.reuters.com/article/us-restaurant-baby/swedish-woman-who-left-baby-outside-restaurant-investigated-idUSTRE77E62O20110815.

39 Jeffrey Helgeson, 'American Labor and Working-Class History, 1900–1945'. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-330.

40 Francis Green, 'Why Has Work Effort Become More Intense?'. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* 43, no. 4 (2004): 709–41; Department of Industrial Relations, *Enterprise Bargaining in Australia: 1994 Annual Report* (Canberra: AGPS, 1995); Griffith Work Time Project, *Working Time Transformations and Effects* (Brisbane: Queensland Department of Industrial Relations, 2003).

41 Department of Industrial Relations, *Enterprise Bargaining Report 1994*. Griffith Work Time Project, *Working Time*.

No small part of this reflected the changing regulation of working time. Hourly wages with premiums (extra payments) for unsocial hours and overtime became less common, and annualised salaries that ‘incorporated’ these things became more common. Employers no longer paid the full cost when employees worked extra hours. So, management could raise expectations, employees would absorb them, and the extra work would get done. Some universities, for example, regularly expected their staff to increase research outputs annually with 5 or 10 per cent compound growth.⁴² If wages and premiums stayed in place, then employers might push for the introduction of rotating 12-hour shifts. Alternatively, employers might push for the abolition of time-related premiums.

But these are not processes that could continue indefinitely. Eventually, increases in work intensity or working hours become unsustainable in the face of organised and unorganised resistance by employees and the disappearance of goodwill by employees. So, too, resistance to increasing insecurity may grow, and be manifested in the same ways.

Inequality

In public debate, the rationale for the policy choices that have underpinned these changes in work has almost always been about improving economic wellbeing. You may not be made better off as a result of being more insecure, working harder or having less quality time with your family, it goes, but you’re better off through the higher productivity that is brought about. The trouble is, there has not been a productivity dividend from all this.

Not all countries adopted the ‘liberal market’ model as enthusiastically as Australia or New Zealand. Generally speaking, it is the English-speaking countries that are most closely associated with the ‘liberal market’ model. But when we make long-run comparisons across OECD countries, we do not find evidence that productivity growth, or productivity levels, are consistently higher in market liberal economies than in ‘coordinated

42 For example, Griffith University, *Annual Report 2014* (Brisbane: Griffith University, 2014), 126–39.

market' economies like Norway, Sweden, Germany or the Netherlands. (In fact, Norway has higher productivity levels than *any* of the English-speaking countries.)⁴³

Where these economic models really make a difference is in the distribution of income, wealth and power. Inequality is higher in market liberal countries. Poverty is higher.⁴⁴ The top 0.1 per cent typically gets more—though nowhere more than in the USA—and the bottom half usually get less. As documented by Georgina Murray, Bill Carroll and others, a small proportion of (mostly) men really do occupy increasingly powerful positions.⁴⁵ In a 2006 interview in *The New York Times*, one of the world's richest men, Warren Buffett, said, 'There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning'.⁴⁶ He said that with good reason. Measured income and wealth inequality declined in Australia and other countries through much of the twentieth century, but they have increased since the mid-1980s.⁴⁷ In addition, there has been growing outrage that the wealthiest in society have been minimising or avoiding tax through complex transnational accounting devices.⁴⁸

Other inequalities persist. The narrowing of the gender gap in earnings between men and women—it closed substantially between 1969 and the late 1980s—has slowed and, in some countries, reversed.⁴⁹ Progress in achieving more positive attitudes among the populace at large and within institutional settings seems to have been offset by a greater

43 David Peetz, 'Does Industrial Relations Policy Affect Productivity?'. *Australian Bulletin of Labour* 38, no. 4 (2012): 268–92.

44 Ibid.

45 Georgina Murray, *Capitalist Networks and Social Power in Australia and New Zealand* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); William Carroll, 'The Corporate Elite and the Transformation of Finance Capital: A View from Canada'. *Sociological Review* 56, no. s1 (2008): 44–63.

46 Ben Stein, 'In Class Warfare, Guess Which Class Is Winning'. *New York Times*, 26 November 2006.

47 Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Anthony B. Atkinson and Andrew Leigh, 'The Distribution of Top Incomes in Australia'. *Economic Record* 83, no. 262 (2007): 247–61.

48 Oxfam Australia, *The Hidden Billions: How Tax Havens Impact Lives at Home and Abroad* (Oxfam, 2016); Javier Garcia-Bernardo et al., 'Uncovering Offshore Financial Centers: Conduits and Sinks in the Global Corporate Ownership Network'. *Scientific Reports* 7, no. 6246 (2017).

49 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations, *Making It Fair: Pay Equity and Associated Issues Related to Increasing Female Participation in the Workforce* (Canberra: House of Representatives, 2009); Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender Pay Gap Statistics* (Sydney: WGEA, 2013); Gillian Whitehouse, 'A Cross-National Comparison of Gender Gaps'. In *Women, Labor Segmentation and Regulation: Varieties of Gender Gaps*, ed. David Peetz and Georgina Murray (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

distancing between working women and the regulation that protects their interests.⁵⁰ Women continue to be undervalued when in female-dominated occupations, discriminated against when in male-dominated occupations, and excluded from the top echelons of business.⁵¹ Recent migrants often find their skills and qualifications undervalued and end up in jobs that underutilise their skills. People with disabilities continue to encounter career barriers.

It is not as if the period before market liberalism was one without difficulties, and not just those associated with gender and other forms of segmentation. In the 1970s and early 1980s, a key problem was competition for economic surpluses—what economists like to call ‘rents’. In an economy with many areas where product markets were poorly competitive, especially in relation to overseas-produced goods, there were opportunities for parts of both labour and capital to extract surpluses. This competition for surpluses became a spiral that heightened the problems of simultaneous unemployment and inflation. That is what prompted incomes policies in a number of countries, including Australia.

These days surpluses are still being extracted, but by different groups—essentially extremely high income earners, the chief executive officers, directors, and managers of top firms, parts of the finance sector, and the like.⁵² The old problem of general inflation (and of responding to it) has been superseded by the narrower inflation of executive remuneration and of the incomes and wealth of the rich (especially the top 0.1 per cent), including through asset price bubbles.⁵³ Market liberal ‘reforms’ have not solved our economic problems or delivered an acceleration of our growth in wellbeing. They have just changed the problems, and in doing so made life more difficult for many workers.

50 Gillian Whitehouse, ‘Unequal Pay: A Comparative Study of Australia, Canada, Sweden and the U.K.’ *Labour & Industry* 3, no. 2–3 (1990): 354–71.

51 See Chapter 8.

52 David Peetz, ‘An Institutional Analysis of the Growth of Executive Remuneration’. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 57, no. 5 (2015): 707–25.

53 Charles M. Elson and Craig K. Ferrere, ‘Executive Superstars, Peer Groups and Overcompensation: Cause, Effect and Solution’. *Journal of Corporate Law* 38 (2013): 497–8.

Globalisation and the mega-trends

You may have noticed that I have barely used the term ‘globalisation’ in this chapter to describe the forces at work. It is easy to blame problems in the way we work on globalisation, as if some external, inevitable force is at work and nothing can be done about it. After all, globalisation is a major force. But globalisation—if we mean increasing trade and international communications—is neither good nor bad in itself. Its effects are complex and contradictory.

On the one hand, for example, increased trade through globalisation helps Third World countries industrialise and grow wages, employment and living standards.⁵⁴ On the other hand, globalisation increases uncertainty and puts increased pressure on companies to find new flexibilities with the associated pressure on security and wages that this implies.⁵⁵ The net effect of these two tendencies is not set in stone. It depends on the policy choices taken by states and the mobilisations by employers, unions and other parts of civil society that determine the conditions under which globalisation proceeds.

The rhetoric of ‘free trade’ is used by multinational corporations to pressure governments to relinquish powers to regulate environmental or workplace behaviour, through special clauses in ‘free trade agreements’. Yet governments do not need to do that. It is a choice they make. Norway, for example, is more ‘globalised’ than Australia—trade is 49 per cent of Norway’s GDP, compared to 34 per cent of Australia’s⁵⁶—but Norway places more emphasis on ‘job quality’ or what the International Labour Organization (ILO) calls ‘decent work’ than is shown in Australia, and its sovereign wealth fund refuses to invest in multinational companies that breach certain ethical standards.⁵⁷

54 Ann Harrison, *Globalization and Poverty*. NBER Working Paper 12347 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2006).

55 Streeck, ‘Uncertainties of Management’.

56 World Bank, ‘Merchandise Trade (% of GDP)’ (Databank, World Bank, 2014). data.worldbank.org/indicator/TG.VAL.TOTL.GD.ZS.

57 Andreas Bieler, ‘Small Nordic Countries and Globalization: Analysing Norwegian Exceptionalism’. *Competition & Change* 16, no. 3 (2012): 224–42; Mikael Holter, ‘Norway’s \$860 Billion Fund Drops 52 Companies Linked to Coal’. *Bloomberg*, 14 April 2016; Norges Bank Investment Management, *NBIM Quarterly Performance Report; First Quarter 2008* (Oslo: Norges Bank, 23 May 2008).

Globalisation is one of four ‘mega-drivers of change’ identified by the ILO that it says will shape the future of work. The other three are technology, demographics and climate change. Each of these is, in its own right, important enough to warrant that epithet of ‘mega’. We will cover each of these through the book, but it is worth expanding on each, just a little, here.

Technological change is what everybody seems to focus on when they write about the future of work. There is no doubt that it will have a huge impact. Much of the discussion focuses on the numbers of jobs lost by technological change: Will my job be one of those gone? Will there be anything else available for me? What will I have to do? Will I have to become a freelancer or ‘gig’ worker, or follow a ‘portfolio career’? These are all legitimate questions, but sometimes the discussion of the future of work descends to its being *only* about these things, and there being an inevitability about them. Sometimes this is for political purposes: jobs will go, so you *must* be flexible, and forget about all those unnecessary protections and rigidities associated with the old ways. But one of the themes of this book is that there are choices to be made, including about those things like flexibility and protections. Technology is *part* of the future, but it is not the *whole* of the future.

A second ‘mega-driver of change’ is demographics. Western countries, in particular, are ‘ageing’ as birthrates drop and life expectancies increase. Women have entered the workforce in substantial numbers since the 1960s. In most countries, participation by women is still less than by men and, perhaps surprisingly, the ILO does not expect the gender gap in labour force participation to narrow substantially over the coming 15 years across the globe, with small improvements in the Arab states and northern Africa (where the gap is huge) almost offset by small deteriorations in eastern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (where the gap is already much smaller) and little change in OECD countries.⁵⁸ Migration can be expected to continue and, if anything, intensify—though it may face rising political barriers from the growth of nationalistic or ethnocentric political sentiment.⁵⁹ The political conflict that this may engender has the potential to shape

58 International Labour Organization, ‘Gender Gap in Participation Rates Is Not Expected to Improve over the Coming 15 Years’ (ILO, 2017). www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/trends/WCMS_545630/lang-en/index.htm.

59 International Labour Organization, ‘Migration Is Likely to Intensify in the Future as Decent Work Deficits Remain Widespread’ (ILO, 2017).

the policy response to rising inequalities at work, much as the emergence of Trumpism in the USA has strengthened the hand of capital against labour in that country.

The final ‘mega-driver of change’, and one of the principal reasons behind the intensification of migrant flows, is climate change. In Bangladesh alone, 27 million people live on land at risk from sea-level rise by 2050, and 10,000 hectares is lost each year to riverbank erosion.⁶⁰ Globally, ‘300 to 650 million people live on land that will be submerged or exposed to chronic flooding, by 2100, under current emission trends’.⁶¹ Aside from the effects on migration and political tension, even if abated, climate change will affect productivity, work organisation and the nature of technology.⁶²

The rest of this book

The rest of this book explores these issues in more depth, giving at least as much attention to the reality of work now as to the future of work. The next chapter (Chapter 2) examines globalisation, financialisation, neo-liberalism and power. What is globalisation? Has it peaked? Is it still happening? How does it affect work—what are the contingencies involved and how do they relate to work? How do we distinguish between it, financialisation and neo-liberalism? The chapter also discusses the key theories of power and how they relate to work, and asks: what are the trends and prospects in power and inequality at work?

The third chapter looks at past and current visions of the future and what they have said about work. The chapter, in part, examines how accurate or otherwise earlier popular predictions of the future have proved to be. What happened to all those predictions of increased leisure and short working weeks? Have trends on working hours and work intensification

60 Tribune Desk, ‘Report: 27m Bangladeshis at Risk of Sea-Level Rise by 2050’. *Dhaka Tribune*, 27 August 2017, www.dhakatribune.com/climate-change/2017/08/27/report-27m-bangladeshis-risk-sea-level-rise-2050/.

61 Climate Central, ‘New Analysis Shows Global Exposure to Sea Level Rise’ (Climate Central, 2017). www.climatecentral.org/news/new-analysis-global-exposure-to-sea-level-rise-flooding-18066.

62 For example, Charis Palmer and Sunanda Creagh, ‘Climate Change Linked to Declines in Labour Productivity’. *The Conversation*, 25 February 2013, theconversation.com/climate-change-linked-to-declines-in-labour-productivity-12407; John P. Dunne, Ronald J. Stouffer, and Jasmin G. John, ‘Reductions in Labour Capacity from Heat Stress under Climate Warming’. *Nature Climate Change* 3 (2013): 563–6.

continued? What explains recent developments in these areas? What is the future of, and what are the influences on, work–life balance? And what does this tell us about how the choices that affect the future of work will be made? Many visions of the future have been seen in books, movies and songs. A TV series, *The Worst Jobs in History*, told us of some of the work people did in earlier centuries, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* told us about working life in the Great Depression, but how has literature treated work in the future? One classic futuristic scenario is that in George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As a dystopian vision, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* had some similarities to Orwell’s book: showing how power was maintained through ideology and violence, but it also emphasised the use of rewards and divisions among the subordinated in maintaining power, and placed a greater emphasis on gender and its interactions with class. Dave Eggers’s *The Circle* depicts the dystopian reality within a seemingly utopian workplace. Those last three are the focus of much of that chapter.

Chapter 4 considers trends in employment and how they will be affected by two of the ‘mega-drivers of change’ mentioned earlier—technological change through digitalisation, and demographic change—though with most emphasis on the former rather than the latter. On the supply side, it looks at things like the ageing and so-called ‘feminisation’ of the workforce. On the demand side, it looks at the sorts of jobs that will be created and destroyed by digital change. It will look at the veracity of competing claims about the future numbers of jobs. Will over 40 per cent of present jobs not exist, as estimated in a study by Oxford University?⁶³ Will robots eat your job? Is the job you’re aiming for going to be obsolete? Or will the scenario be more like the 8 per cent of jobs estimated by the OECD as being lost to technological change?⁶⁴ What sorts of skills, if any, will be demanded? What will be the areas of growth and decline in the industries and occupations of employment?

Chapter 5 examines trends in management and effects on employees. It asks: What models of management strategy exist? What types of management strategy are growing or declining into the future? What illusions affect managers and how can managers respond? The chapter

63 Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, *The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?* (Oxford: Department of Engineering Science, University of Oxford, 2013).

64 Melanie Arntz, Terry Gregory, and Ulrich Zierahn, *The Risk of Automation for Jobs in OECD Countries: A Comparative Analysis*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 189 (Paris: OECD, 2016).

will then turn to issues of control, previously raised in Chapter 3 and the discussion of Orwell. How is technology used to tighten or loosen control—in areas such as logistics, warehousing, retail and call centres? Hugh Willmott discussed modern corporate cultural control and monoculturism, treating Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as analogous to management in the 1990s.⁶⁵ The 1960s psychology experiments by Milgram and Zimbardo showed the dangers of monoculturism, and Joel Bakan's *The Corporation* applied this to modern organisations.⁶⁶ How have views on corporate culture and culturism changed, and where are they heading? What is the role of dissent in organisations? Are the mistakes of the past being repeated now and will they be in the future?

Chapter 6 looks at how these intersect—that is, it looks at trends in work, taking account of changing management structures and strategies. It considers the forms of flexibility that are sought by employers, their origins and their effects on employees—for example, through their impact on security and insecurity. It looks at 'precaritisation' of work through the push for flexibility. It asks what aspects of digital change are affecting, and likely to affect, work and workplace relations? Are digital platforms fundamentally changing or destroying the employment relationship? Are we moving to a world of freelancers or the 'gig economy' ('Uberisation')? The chapter analyses these questions through the lens of 'not there' employment (the attempts by core capital to centralise profits and minimise costs and accountability, through such devices as contracting out, franchising and the use of digital platforms) and the seemingly surprising persistence of the employment relationship. It therefore examines the reasons, in the logic of capitalism, for employment's resilience.

The seventh chapter investigates employee responses and actions in the face of these strategies and changes. Management often seeks to reduce employee resistance and harness the inputs of employees by expanding employee voice, and there may be broader social objectives for enhancing voice. So, what are the differences between formal and informal forms of employee voice, between direct and indirect forms, and between management-constrained (conditional) and employee-controlled (independent) forms—and why do these matter? What are

65 Willmott, 'Strength Is Ignorance'; Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

66 Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Philip Zimbardo, 'Stanford Prison Experiment: A Simulation Study of the Psychology of Imprisonment'. 2005. www.prisonexp.org; Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (London: Constable & Robertson, 2004).

the patterns and trends in different forms of employee voice? How are ideas about collectivism changing? What does this mean for the future of collectivism? What have unions done in response to their own decline? How does the ‘gig’ economy affect cooperative and collective action and trade union futures?

The eighth chapter examines the reality and future of women and segmentation at work. It will interrogate the situation of women in employment and whether and how it has altered. What is the segmentation of work into male and female jobs? What causes it? Has it broken down or solidified? What are so-called ‘male’ and ‘female’ jobs? What are the links to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) work (especially in information and communications technology)? How does gender relate to harassment, career exits and apparent labour shortages? What explains patterns and trends in gender gaps? Why is there an increasing emphasis on emotional labour, and how do patterns and trends in emotional labour relate to gender? What is the concept of ‘intersectionality’ and how does it relate to gender, ethnicity, age and other forms of disadvantage? What are the futures of gender gaps and of women at work?

Chapter 9 looks at ethics, sustainability and work. It will ask about the meanings of ethics and sustainability, their relationships to each other and the role of externalities in those concepts. It considers that final ‘mega-drivers of change’ in the world of work: climate change. What are the future effects of climate change on work and productivity? What are the barriers to sustainability? What is a ‘just transition’? What are the future demands for sustainability and responses to climate change? How are they affecting, and will they affect, employees?

Chapter 10 discusses regulatory responses to changes in the world of work, particularly those arising from the shift towards ‘not there’ employment discussed in Chapter 6. Three angles on this are discussed. The first is the regulation of ‘not there’ employment. The second is the problem of noncompliance (sometimes referred to as ‘wages theft’), the factors that promote it and the changing methods used in enforcement of labour standards. The third is the maintenance of labour standards in global value chains or global production networks. The chapter looks at the purpose of regulation, the different forms of regulation by the state, innovation in regulation, and the potential and limitations on those innovations, drawing

on, for example, the response to the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh. How can and will organisations respond to increasing pressures for codes of conduct and corporate social responsibility?

The final chapter talks about what this all means for society as a whole: What are the options available to us, and the choices that will be made, at the social level that will affect and be affected by the workplace? Will the future be one of neo-democracy, neo-liberalism or neo-totalitarianism? What choices will determine which of those it becomes? What policy decisions are necessary in an agenda for a liveable future?

Through this book, we identify the policy implications of the patterns and trends that are discussed. This chapter began with a ‘sliding doors’ moment that showed the stark differences in outcomes that may arise from critical decisions still to be taken. We will also consider what those decisions are, and what directions need to be taken. There are choices that need to be made about the directions of economic policy; and there are choices to be made about the rights of people at work.

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