

cartels since at least the rise of modern capitalism, long before there were any electronic computers."¹ So who is right?

Globalization certainly has deep antecedents in processes such as the rise of international lending, the shift from portfolio to foreign direct investment and the changes in the type and location of foreign direct investment over the course of the 20th century. Although the internationalization of finance and production was thus possible before the electronics revolution, it can be argued that the technological rupture of the 1970s and 1980s has done more than simply alter the magnitude of these processes— it has qualitatively changed them.

If changes in the world-wide organization of production were already quite advanced before the onset of the information technology revolution, can the same be said for the transformation of production within the firm? Here, too, I'm afraid the answer must be yes. In the early 20th century, the old artisanal way of doing things was progressively replaced by a model of production that some have called Fordist. This was a model in which workers were specialized to perform narrow tasks in a division of labour, parts were interchangeable, products were standardized and economies of scale were obtained by mass production. Some of you have heard about the debates in the business literature about the competitiveness of this model in the face of a Toyota-inspired form of what some have called lean production. As described by a team of researchers at MIT², in the lean production model, specialization has given way to team work that enhances product quality, just-in-time coordination of inputs resulting from closer links between producers and their suppliers improves efficiency and reduces costs

¹ J. Weizenbaum, "Once More the Computer Revolution" in Tom Forester, *The Microelectronics Revolution* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990], pp.550-560, pp.568-9.

² James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones and Daniel Roos, *The Machines that Changed the World: The Story of Lean Production* [N.Y.: Harper/Collins, 1990].