Immediate Struggles

People, Power, and Place in Rural Spain

Susana Narotzky
and Gavin Smith

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Immediate struggles [are those in which] people criticize instances of power that are the closest to them, those which exercise their action on individuals. They look not for the "chief enemy" but for the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle).

Michel Foucault, in H. L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* 1982

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CHAPTER 1

Toward an Anthropological Framework for Studying Contemporary Europe

First and foremost this book is a historical account of people who seek a livelihood by threading their way through agricultural, manufacturing, and service pursuits in a rural area of southeastern Spain. But it is also an exploration of the possibilities of ethnography as a means of understanding the history of the highly complex, fractured, crisis-ridden world of today. As such, this book is directed to readers concerned about finding a comprehensible perspective on that world while simultaneously being deeply engaged within that world—an audience interested in people and places, an audience far wider than our colleagues in anthropology. Ethnography has conventionally been associated with "place" in the sense that physically or metaphorically the anthropologist "travels there" (Clifford, 1997: 17–46) and, once "there," does fieldwork "in which the whole self physically and in every other way enters the space of the world the researcher seeks to understand" (Ortner, 1995: 173).

In the more literal reading, insofar as ethnography is about place—how places are peopled and how people are placed—it has something in common with other kinds of study of the production and retention of place. Over the past fifteen years, as capitalist forms have undergone moebius strip–like changes (Sabel, 1991), there has been a fluorescence of such studies in a wide variety of social science disciplines. With the striking exception of David Harvey's work, much of this literature on the social constitution of place has gone unremarked in our own discipline, while conceptualizations long developed and debated among ethnogra-

phers are taken up unproblematically in those studies. This is especially so with respect to the use of history and culture for understanding the present.

A more metaphorical reading of place and travel would probably rest more comfortably with most of today's anthropologists, as Ortner's caveat of "in every other way" suggests: "in every other way enters the space of the world the researcher seeks to understand." We have no problem with such a journey, though we feel that the need to experience the space of other people's worlds is only part of ethnography. By confining themselves to the exploration of "experience," "identity," "everyday practices," and the like, anthropologists run the risk of reproducing the shallow image of their discipline and of culture so often found in studies of place uninformed by a thoroughly multidimensional ethnography.

Here we present a particular account of some people in Spain with whom we have lived but on whom we have a perspective also as intellectuals, social scientists, or anthropologists. We seek to make a case for a particular way of doing this which we see to be different from recent studies of place in other disciplines and different too from ethnography understood in uniquely cultural terms. We call this "historical realism," a notion to which we devote much of this first chapter.

HISTORICAL REALISM

The world is changing. The capitalist economy and society on which the founding figures of social science honed their conceptual tools no longer looks as it did to them. Though industrial capitalism or the modern state that so obsessed Marx, Simmel, Durkheim, and Weber may not have been superseded, still Marx's industrial England or Durkheim's modern France would seem idiosyncratic places to begin an exploration of economy and society in the twenty-first century. How then might we study today's economy and society in a way that is sensitive to contemporary realities while not shying away from the deeply felt responsibilities of scholarship these earlier writers felt?

We seek to do this through ethnography. But in making our ethnographic inquiry sensitive to the complexities of today's reality as well as responsive to scholarship committed to political change, we seek to produce an especially rigorous, historically grounded kind of ethnography (Smith, 1994). As a form of inquiry, ethnography currently spans academic disciplines ranging from anthropology and sociology to geography, political science, and history as well as a wide range of methodological and theoretical positions (Wacquant, 2003: 2). Yet this renewed

centrality of ethnography as an expression of a different understanding of our responsibilities as social scientists has to be both noted and queried. Defining ethnography as "social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds herself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do," Wacquant also highlights its role as a "form of public consciousness" (2003: 1).

In this book we use ethnography—both as a mode of inquiry and as a form of political engagement—from the perspective of historical realism. The object of our study is the social relationships that produce—historically—an economic "factor" that has recently been described as "social capital" and has been attached to particular spaces or territories in what has been termed by social scientists and economic historians "regional economy," "industrial district," or even "economic nationalism." Methodologically, we stress a multilevel approach by highlighting the dialectical tension between the social practices we observe and the concepts and models we construct, which then feed back into the discourses and practices observed, mainly through the implementation of development programs and policies. We seek thus to problematize the issue of place in the context of contemporary capitalism, an issue that addresses the anthropologist or sociologist interested in revived expressions of locality in a globalizing world as much as the geographer or economist interested in the benefits to be gained for a regional economy from its "local culture."

For some social scientists the critique of the grand narratives of the Enlightenment led to an increased stress on various forms of ethnography, in an attempt to understand the ways this vast world is experienced on an everyday basis by ordinary people. Few who spend long stretches of time doing fieldwork would reject this agenda. Yet we become uncomfortable when our fine-grained attention to people's lives, as experienced daily, leaves us no room to address the currents of force and tendency that underlie those daily experiences—currents sometimes historically produced, sometimes arising from diffuse sources beyond the local sites of daily experience. So it is our goal in this book to work at the interface between people's articulated experiences and feelings and the obscured connections, currents, and relationships of social reproduction and—always immanent—transformation.

The challenge to ethnography is great: what part of the Hydra to tackle first? One recent anthropological study of Europe goes immediately for the head(s?)—Cris Shore's *Building Europe* (2000; see also

Abélès, 1992, 1996; Bellier, 1999)—while another—Douglas Holmes's *Integral Europe* (2000)—applies George Marcus's (1998) injunction to do "multi-sited ethnography." Both make distinctive and important contributions to the study of the current conjuncture through political anthropology and cultural history. Meanwhile, *Producing Culture and Capital,* Yanagisako's (2002) ethnography of entrepreneurs in northern Italy's Como district, addresses the culture of small capitalists (see also Blim, 1990; Rothstein and Blim, 1992). Yet for us something is absent. The dimension of capitalist reproduction and the necessary forms of regulation it requires keep tugging at our sleeves, as we try to get on with studying the politics and culture of people's daily lives.

The specificities we encounter from one time and place to another lead us to a particular way of deciding what first steps to take in trying to understand the Europe of the twenty-first century. This has to do with the way space is being reconstituted across the continent. A key figure in the discourse of today's Europe is the ubiquitous yet amorphous term "region," with the integration of Europe being envisaged along the lines of "regional economies." There is no reason such a history of spatial forms might not be understood in terms of its implications for changes in social experience; this is what Raymond Williams did in seeking out "structures of feeling" in nineteenth-century England in his study *The Country and the City* (1973; see also1988). They might on the other hand be understood in terms of the structural logics of capitalist production and regulation, what David Harvey undertook in his *Limits to Capital* (1982). But the fault line of our own explorations runs somewhere between these two geographies, seeking to discover the dialectical constitution of the one by the other: a history in which people [re-]produce concrete and abstract artifacts for life, these concrete abstractions then providing the landscape that conditions subsequent generations' reproduction and transformation. We term this kind of approach "historical realism" (Smith, 1999, 2004b), and in the next section we explain how such an approach gave rise to an agenda and set of priorities—that is, a problematic—that led us to a particular place and a particular entwining of our histories.

IN SEARCH OF A SOCIAL WORLD

Our analysis entwines three different kinds of attention to reality. The first requires the inquirer to seek elements of reality that help him or her characterize the reproductive features of the current political economy

narrowly conceived. Were we to disaggregate the term, we would see the "political" within this frame in terms of Wolf's "structural" power and the "economy" in terms of what David Harvey (2001), following Marx in the *Grundrisse,* calls the "concrete abstractions" that condition the possibilities of social reproduction. This would mean attending to the historically specific "deployment of social labour [and] how people are drawn into the social ensemble" (Wolf, 1999: 289–90) as well as to the conditions of material production (machines, technologies, etc.) and the historical impress of such things on the landscape in the form of roads, irrigation channels, and prisons. So we devote all of chapter 2 to the historical geography of the area, and throughout our chapters we try to place social practices and cultural expressions within the settings of these concrete, but nonetheless silent and obscured, abstractions of capitalist reproduction.

Our second lens is more familiar to people doing fieldwork in the tradition of social anthropology. We call this the lens of "instituted social practices." We add "instituted" to the normal phrase "social practices" to allude to the way practices become part of the albeit malleable frame that organizes agency. This concept approximates Bourdieu's (1977) *habitus,* though whereas Bourdieu is especially exercised over the dialectical constitution of practices and the emergent elective affinities that then structure them, we note the additional structuring effect of concrete abstractions as we have just described them.[1] It would be hard to select any one part of our book to illustrate this particular focus, but our persistent attention to real people, addressing actual circumstances in their lives, probably best reflects our commitment to this element of social reality.

Finally, our third kind of attention to the social world alerts us to the ways people interpret their social world in the immediate practical moment of living it. Here the "facted-ness" of the world as it presents itself is suspended in favor of a particular kind of interpretive sensibility. We invoke Raymond Williams's expression "structures of feeling," a term he used in a thoroughly historicist sense to describe the essentially collective sensibility of an epoch. In writing on the development of the country-house novels of nineteenth-century England, for example, Williams explored how these works both silently invoked and actively constituted a structure of feeling that gave rise to a specific meaning of "the country" and "the city" as "knowable" communities.[2]

Likewise, we employ histories (in the plural) to show how concrete abstractions, instituted practices, and structures of feeling are reciprocally

conditioning and enabling (Roseberry, 1989). Ultimately the goal, the project, of such a sociological exercise is to discover the praxis of people hidden in the undergrowth and potentially unearthed by our intellectual contribution. It is hard to select bits of the overall cake that would demonstrate the moments when our attention is so drawn in this ethnography—though perhaps chapter 8, on political cultures, offers the most sustained example. But the more important point is that, seen over a historical period, changing concrete abstractions combine with the agency of people's practice to change the conditions that confront them. Language, gestures, and sighs, patterned by the structures of feeling of a given place and time, then make those things knowable. And these taken together—concrete abstractions, practiced agency, and structured feeling—cast each of us into a particular kind of person: a historicized social subject/agent.

This study focuses on an area in the Valencia Autonomous Community, to the south of Alicante. There has been a long history of prosperous irrigated agriculture here, combined with small manufacturing. Pockets of product-specific manufacturing centers go back a long way, one town and its surroundings making rugs, another ropes, and yet another shoes. The growing of commercial crops sold on international markets has a long history here too. There is a significant history of interlocking agricultural and manufacturing production rather than a separation of industrial town and agricultural country. Moreover, for both the male and female populations, geographic mobility, small-scale manufacturing, large-scale factory employment, and service work were variously experienced.

In the 1970s, to these preexisting modes of production came the demands of the new international division of labor—first, and with greatest influence, affecting local shoe production but also taking in other manufacturing and service activities in the nonagricultural sector. With changes over the subsequent thirty years, the overall pattern was one in which a small local firm, and in a few cases branches of larger firms, organized production through a workforce located in its legally registered factory, plus a much larger workforce spread out in a "putting-out" system. Putting-out involves both stages of work undertaken in semilegal workshops and stages undertaken through homework. In the home, from the initial wife's contribution, we move—through her already established network—to an extensive set of subcontract and then sub-subcontract homework.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, homeworking women were likely to be part of an agricultural household and, as a result, under extreme

pressure. Of that period, Smith wrote (1990; see also Sanchis, 1984; for Catalonia, see Narotzky, 1989, 1990, 2000, 2001):

> The demands for work on the family's own farm are erratic—the husband/father for example, may get a day's work and, finding a task on the farm incomplete, will put pressure on his wife or daughter to put aside the home work in favour of the farm. . . . [Meanwhile] work distributors, anxious to minimize the amount of travelling and contacting they have to do . . . encourage women to take large batches by paying geometrically higher rates up to the last item completed. To acquire these rates, home working women, already under pressure from their farming husbands, may speak for excessive batch sizes with a view to off-loading some to a neighbour.

Such a complex set of social relationships is built on a long history of extensive interpersonal networks. Over time, personal claims extending outward from immediate family to extended family, neighbors, community members, and so on became an institutionalized component of everyday life. Moreover, these complex sets of ties also served to offset regional instability produced partly by unpredictable climate, partly by trade cycles, but most significantly by the elusive character of firms themselves. When changing economic and policy conditions arose by the end of the 1980s, providing government endorsement for "flexible" and deregulated firms and labor practices while severely undermining local agriculture, this already thoroughly "informalized" economy was made still more informal.

A primary means of social regulation became the invention of crises and the inducement of pervasive insecurity. Often, for example, firms transmogrified from production to intermediary status, but entirely for evasive reasons. Registered firms declare bankruptcy and close one day, only to open the next with the original shell firm now operating entirely in a merchant capacity, leasing the old machinery either to a "cooperative" or to a now wholly illicit subcontract shop made up of workers who agree to reduced wages, safety, and benefits to get the contract from their old boss. The pattern is a familiar one: while officially registered firms and employment figures in the industry declined, overall shoe production increased. Superficially this looks like a response to recession, but in fact the atmosphere of crisis and disorganization was ideologically constructed to justify forms of labor regulation that generated personal insecurity and fragmented collective responses. And this has a long history.

Ruling groups' attempts to control ordinary people through induced insecurity and attacks on collective responses are well established in the

area. Thus, alongside this organization of economy and society we found a kind of alienation from public politics among the people we worked with, and this too became a major element of the problematic we began to form as we gave shape to our study.

Though, needless to say, there is much about all this that is specific to this region and to these people—indeed much of our argument stresses the importance of recognizing specificity—the insecurities, the strains on families and individuals, the sense of alienation from the direction the economy is taking, and political projects being formulated in "higher places" are all widely felt among people trying to put together a livelihood in many parts of contemporary Europe. One might address this with an "ethnography of the present," focusing on the way people in this area experience their daily lives today and trying to evoke the particular character of that experience. This is certainly one way we, as anthropologists, have approached the situation—but, again, it is only one dimension of our inquiry. Indeed we feel strongly that current anthropology has narrowed its focus far too much to an agenda that appears to refer only to issues of "culture" or "experience" of "the local" and "the everyday." Our discomfort with this current strain of anthropology can partly be explained by our respective backgrounds.

We are both shiftless Europeans. Susana, having her early education in Spain and France, had migrated to the United States to do her doctorate and subsequently returned to Spain. Gavin, born in England and having his early education there, moved to North America at seventeen but returned to England for his doctorate. After earlier fieldwork in Peru, Gavin began a long period of ethnography in southern Valencia. As the stuff of that fieldwork—the data, the personal interactions, the gaps and highlights—began to take some kind of narrative and theoretical form, he felt a growing urgency to join his perceptions and ongoing work with Spanish scholars working in and on Spain. And so we met at one of a series of workshops held by French and Spanish anthropologists with the support of Maurice Godelier, on the issue of social transitions.

Committed to the importance of historical ethnography, both of us also felt strongly that comparison too enriches ethnography. Although this book is not formally a comparative ethnography, it is fundamentally informed by Susana's earlier fieldwork in Catalonia as well as the work we did together (with the help of Clare Belanger and Simone Ghezzi) in La Brianza, a regional economy of northern Italy. So, as we talked about our political and intellectual interests, we became convinced that the

sum of our separate endeavors would be far greater if we worked together: Gavin, as a European something of an insider but as a Canadian anthropologist also an outsider; Susana both European and Spanish though with great familiarity with Anglophone anthropology; and the two of us sharing theoretical and political concerns—a sharing that has increased over the years we have worked together.

For us social inquiry should always be clearly situated within a stated political project, and both of us had been embroiled in a debate in which the concept of class was essential to the political project of understanding social and cultural difference as well as a crucial lever for transforming unequal social relations to attain undifferentiated opportunities of livelihood. So, working against what we believed was the current in both anthropology and the other social sciences, we felt we needed a form of doing ethnography that would retain a way of sorting out the complexity of the social world by using class as the guiding conceptual base. Yet we were not so much interested in the various structural properties of class, be they Weberian social strata or Marxian relations to the means of production (Ossowski, 1969), as in the principles that led theorists to stress class in the first place. We were thinking, for example, of Marx's image of society in which the process of social reproduction generates structural contradictions which, in turn, are resolved—technologically through greater overall productivity, geographically through displacements of capital across space or, most important, through the outcome of social conflicts—conflicts that cluster people around the control of property and the necessity to offer out labor. However far we may have moved into a postmodern condition, or a postindustrial society, we have by no means moved away from a kind of society in which "the reproduction of daily life depends upon the production of commodities produced through a system of circulation of capital that has profit-seeking as its direct and socially accepted goal" (Harvey, 1985: 128), and it therefore seems to us that anthropologists have a responsibility to address this fundamental characteristic of social reproduction under capitalism. So this is the first reason why, for us, class remains central to ethnographic inquiry.

A second characteristic of the spirit that led authors on the Left to focus on the crucial features of class, strongly associated with the work of Edward Thompson, might be summed up as the proposition that it is only through collective action that subordinated people have any leverage on power and that, while there are many lines and shapes through which collectivities can be expressed, there remains a crucial organic

link between collectivities of class and the retention or transformation of capitalism. This second element was especially important to us precisely because of its apparent absence from everyday life in our field site. Why absent? Because such collectivities, as structures of feeling, as models of social relations, and as leverage to political empowerment and agency, had been the objects of severe attack through history and continuing into the present, an attack that took on particular force in the years following the Spanish civil war.

Indeed, it is in the wake of this attack that the kind of world we have described above has become configured in recent hegemonic discourse as one of regional economies—a "Europe of the regions." These are new configurations that downplay the structural and political features of class as a means of understanding historical process. They favor instead an understanding of social practices, experiences, and relationships in terms of corporatist collective values, local knowledge, and emotional propinquity. In place of a complex history loaded with the tensions of contradiction, conflict, resolution, and transformation, we get an audit of their entrepreneurial "social" and "cultural" possibilities (and failures thereof), a balance sheet of pluses and minuses: "flexible production," "downsizing and dispersed firms," and "social capital." A responsibility of our social inquiry was, therefore, to find the traces from which collective strengths could be reconstituted.

Even so, as we familiarized ourselves with the literature, we found historians, economists, and sociologists working on Europe (Berg et al., 1983; Bagnasco, 1977; Piore and Sabel, 1984) who increasingly paid attention to something like organized petty capitalism. A new model of the development of the market economy, taking account of social "externalities," was becoming increasingly popular as a "third way"—a more viable and even humane mode of organizing capitalism. While this seemed to confirm to us that these other ways of organizing labor/capital relations were indeed significant, it also made us conscious that we must understand two rather different phenomena simultaneously: the practices and relations we could find in a loosely predefined economic area, and the economic models for developing regions along the lines of networks, social markets, flexible firms, and so on that experts and policymakers in Europe are generating today. Moreover, we soon recognized a dialectical relation between the two levels, for developmental policies (regulatory or deregulating practices, subsidies, etc.) were providing crucial conditions giving direction to the practices and relations we were seeing in the field. They provided specific material resources

that people had to claim in particular ways, of course, but they also affected people's lives more generally. The way people thought about their own lives and the social space they inhabited was threaded through hegemonic discourses that highlighted the region as cohering under the general rubric of an "entrepreneurial culture," or what was termed "economic nationalism."[3]

Our sense was that such conditions, strikingly at variance with the classical Manchester model of industrial development, were widespread, and so we sought a setting where such a pattern was both historically deep and currently thriving. In Spain, Gavin had done previous fieldwork in the area of the Valencia Autonomous Community described by economic historians (Nadal, 1990; Lluch, 1976; Aracil and Bonafé, 1978) as one of those regions where a different sort of capitalism had developed during the nineteenth century. The area south of Alicante presented a landscape of small family firms and a mix of commercial agriculture and manufacturing industries. Less well known was the presence there of a mix of political radicalism and extreme conservatism, going far back into the nineteenth century. Gavin had been interested in pluriactivity in his 1978–79 fieldwork, and this seemed to sum up many of the main issues we wanted to observe in detail. Pluriactivity directly raised this question: What happens with class when the process of social reproduction generates a structure of constant uncertainty and fluidity in peoples' life destinies so that the classical oppositional experience between labor and capital does not prevail?

Aware of the radical changes taking place in the labor process of capitalist production in Europe then, we intentionally sought an area that would not fall neatly within the frame of the classical capitalist definition of a "developed economy" with an efficient market system regulating labor/capital relations. Instead we were looking for a region that, while long inserted into commodity production, indeed into the entire circuit of national and international capitalist trade, nonetheless exhibited forms of relations of production that differed from the classical model.

But then the question shifted into pragmatic gear: insofar as there was no longer a homogeneous working experience among the people of the region, like that of classical Fordist industry, for example, was class still a useful concept? So fragmented had people's livelihood experiences become that the way their insertion into the processes of social reproduction related to their social identity and their historical praxis became ever harder to trace. Working through the complexities of these issues

over the years has given form to the way we wanted to make the inquiry: first in reference to the locality or the scope of our observation, second in reference to the need to embed history deeply into our observations.

We needed historical depth if we wanted to understand the main forces of social reproduction, and we knew we could get this through the work done by Valencian economic and social historians of the region. But we also needed the nuanced narratives of particular histories if we were to get at the lived experience of people. So the fact that we had life histories for the region that went back to the beginning of the twentieth century was key for us. Key too was the fact that the Valencian fieldwork had been carried out at an especially important political moment, during the first years of the transition from Franco's regime to parliamentary democracy, when Gavin had observed and recorded firsthand the debates emerging around the first democratic municipal elections after forty years of dictatorship. Susana, in particular, thought that firsthand data on that period of Spanish history would be extremely useful to get an idea of the public expression of class issues.

Even so, we did not want to think of this as the "return" of the anthropologist, twenty years later, to record the changes that had occurred from an older to a more modern type of society (see Collier, 1999). Rather, we were interested in tracing a process of social reproduction—the historical continuities and ruptures—that produce and constrain people's practices. But it was not only practices that interested us; we also wanted to attend to how these are experienced by people as historical subjects, and then how they become institutionalized to constitute the cultural environment. This, then, was not really just an ethnography of the daily life of ordinary people, nor was it an audit sheet used to frame the successes and handicaps of a regional economy in Europe. For us history is not so much the background to the present as two synchronic moments—one in the past, the other in the present. History is the necessary way to understand society—as the varied means by which the social reproduction of a particular kind of social system—capitalism—becomes a lived part of the present.

NAMING THE PRESENT

The way social scientists name phenomena in this real world has implications for ordinary people's lived present. In this section we show how this process has unfolded—from the notion of articulated modes of production to that of an informalized economy, and thence to the current

designation: "regional economy". Aware as we are of these changing designations and their implications, we make a case for a particular kind of historical anthropology that attends to the specific ways power is used to make exploitation possible and, over time, gives form to various kinds of social person.

In the 1960s several regions west and southwest of the port city of Alicante became sites of small and medium-sized firms producing shoes for the national and international market. These included the areas around Elda and Novelda, the Vinalopó to the west of Elche, and the area we are interested in, the Vega Baja, south of Elche. As demand for shoes grew through the decade, a particular form of vertical integration took place. At the marketing end, some of the more successful companies became quite strongly tied into U.S. retail firms—conforming not just to design requirements but often to particular features of a labor process, and in most cases relying on credit advances from Americans. At the production end, the factory-based labor force was supplemented by short-contract workshops usually making basic primary inputs and located in Elche itself, together with women working at home along a continuum ranging from specialized skills employed steadily to very minor jobs on an entirely short-term and ad hoc basis.

As the distribution system became more sophisticated and union organization in Elche drove up urban wages, the dispersal of production began to spread outward toward towns farther from the center, and this was soon followed by the construction of factories in towns of the Vega Baja. Simultaneously capital dependence on the United States was reduced as entrepreneurs sought to develop a broader array of markets for their goods. As a result, a far more complex set of relationships between factories, workshops, work distributors, and homeworkers came into existence.

To a great extent, what was happening in Elche was but one variation of changing patterns of manufacturing production throughout Europe. Though clothing production is the best known, exemplified by Laura Ashley in Britain and Bennetton in Italy, closer to our own site the Ford Motor Company, after careful and much publicized research, had located its Fiesta assembly plant immediately south of the city of Valencia.

This was regarded as a major coup for Spain versus the more prominent industrial nations in Europe, and for the País Valenciano in particular, so how was such a coup carried off? Apart from the anodyne point that the site was well located at the nexus of key communications axes, the decision seems to have been based on the realpolitik of national and

regional power and class structures. Francoist technocrats went out of their way to assure Ford of the future continuity of the authoritarian regime (Lluch, 1976; Picó López, 1976). In doing so they undoubtedly stressed not only local workers' long-standing familiarity with manufacturing techniques but also the absence of collective militancy associated with mass production factories.

The Fiesta plant represented a significant shift toward renewed capital interest in the broad area of the Levante or Valencia, otherwise popularly known for its oranges and market gardens. Increasingly relatively well-off yeoman farmers began to shift to less labor-intensive crops, either themselves becoming pluriactive families[4] or clustering together as seven or eight family farms and contracting out all the care and harvesting of their citrus crops to "machine-contractors." As Arnalte Alegre (1980) noted, a subtle and complex new social system was coming into being that would both industrialize agriculture and ruralize industry.

What then was the imagery techocrats used to represent these processes? Beneath the bucolic rurality of an area superficially known for its rich, irrigated agriculture and directed toward international markets were revealed important segments of the population skilled with manufacturing machinery or proficient in commercial activity. The result was a culture especially suitable to Ford's needs: directing their attention to the daily pragmatics of making their small enterprises respond to changing opportunities, these people were economically adaptable while having no inclination toward redemptive politics. Faced with some shift or other in their socioeconomic environment, their response would be to seek out some change in the economic targets to which they could direct their labors, not to simply down tools and complain or, like the French farmers across the border, demonstrate in Paris, conduct lightening attacks on supermarkets selling foreign agricultural produce, or highjack the Barcelona–Paris express. (Lem, 1999).

We should remember that we are speaking of the early seventies here. In the press and in policy documents, industry was certainly seen as a major issue for Europe's future, but there was also the question of the family farm, its viability and survival. Valencia appeared to be offering a way forward through the introduction of industry into rural areas. Among academics two other images were being employed, both originating in recent studies of the Third World. Largely inspired by Marxist work, writers noted the superimposition on a preexisting mode of production (albeit itself a variant of rural capitalism) of a new mode of production that took advantage of elements of the older form, though

thereby distorting many of its elements (Servolin, 1972; Faure, 1978; Vergopoulos, 1978). Anyone who knew the Valencian case well was quite aware that industry was far from new, much of it aided and abetted by the processing work that formed the crucial value-added on many of the agricultural products traditional to the zone: hemp, esparto, cotton, silk-worm breeding, and vines.[5]

A second body of literature, best captured in *The Informal Economy: Studies in Advanced and Less Developed Countries* (Portes, Castells, and Benton, 1989; see also Redclift and Mingione, 1985; Pahl, 1984, 1988), began to draw attention to the particular features of work that were crucial to the survival of many, perhaps even most, European working people and certainly of growing significance to the well-being of national economies as a whole. Castells and Portes, in the introduction to their collection, showed what brought the issue of the informal economy to prominence in the West. The issue of how to define something called "the informal economy," they said, was far less important than recording the process in which Western economies were becoming increasingly informalized—sectors of the economy hitherto functioning through relatively stable, hierarchical, and bureaucratic institutions being replaced by less visible, less permanent, and less stable alternatives. That such a characterization was well suited to the Valencian reality was reflected in the publication by the Institució Valenciana d'Estudis i Investigació of *La Otra Economía: Trabajo Negro y Sector Informal* (Sanchis y Miñana, 1988) as well as the translation by the institute of texts dealing with rural industry and submerged economies (e.g., Houssel, 1985). Especially notable figures in this work were Enric Sanchis (1984) and Josep Ybarra (1986). What began to occur in this second kind of characterization of economic processes in Valencia was a shift of inquiry from the nature of capital to the nature of labor and of work and livelihood.

Despite their different focuses, when taken together the effect of these images was a paradigm shift in theories of capitalist development. Studies showing the historical embeddedness of a form of capitalist production in southern Europe that had its own characteristics quite distinct from the hegemonic models of northern industrialization combined with studies showing systematically, not just that informal forms of work were taking on increasing importance throughout Europe (as indeed they were), but that in different degrees and forms they had been part of people's livelihoods and hence of national economies throughout the so-called industrial period.

Whether by chance or design, shoe firms in Elche, furniture manufacturers in Castellón, or the Ford plant near Valencia were able to take advantage of a whole series of sociological and cultural features that came with a society many of us had been told no longer existed—one in which a relatively effective commercial agriculture operated alongside rural artisan production.[6] For the economic historians of the region, the crucial question was why this path had not developed into a highway; for those working on the informalization of the regional economy, the pressing issue was to record the social costs of the transformation of older social arrangements for the purposes of what appeared to be an especially rapacious kind of capitalism.

Yet the convergence of these two intellectual currents—beyond Spain and Valencia—was to produce an entirely opposite reading. The nightmare scenes of Grimm's fairy tales were to be given a Disneyesque new life by reinventing the articulation of modes of production and the undeniable informalization of the European economy in the form of dispersed production chains, social markets, plus flexible firms and workers, all packaged together spatially in successful regional economies. In the hands of Piore and Sabel (1984), it turned out that the path of regionally intertwined small-scale dispersed systems of production had not failed in the Darwinian sense. Their early demise had been urged on by the godfatherly attentions of a deeply antiregional state (see also Sabel and Zeitlin, 1984). Where these attentions had been especially thorough, budding utopias had been disappeared, lost to historians and silenced in the discourse of industrial development programs. Luckily, where the state had been more inept, or perhaps too preoccupied elsewhere, notably in Italy, there were signs of the resilience of this kind of upside-down economy—where trust was as important as competition, where market strategies were rendered "impure" by actors' persistent retention of social calculi in their decisions, where closely guarded and well-walled formal firms gave way to clusterings of operations that dovetailed into networks that formed around longer- or shorter-term projects.

Clearly the implications for policy were devastating. Where an older school of thought had sought to discover why an economy like nineteenth-century Valencia's had failed to take off because of local elements that distinguished it from the more successful northern Manchester model, now it turned out there were jewels hidden within the Valencian crown, only to be discovered. Where some people might see child labor in Italy, for example, Sabel was able to identify the careful nurturing of a family-based apprenticeship system.

It would be naïve to imagine that these changing images of more or less the same reality had no effect on ordinary people trying to make a living from day to day, as well as trying, where possible, to imagine what a realistic future might be for them and their children. Early writing on the informalization of the European economy took a generally critical stance toward the phenomenon and encouraged policies directed against its spread. By contrast, the newer regional economy literature is itself invariably developed to produce policy that will enhance the features of social life that render the regional economy more competitive.

HISTORIES OF THE PRESENT

Absent from both of the aforementioned sociological images—the informalization of economic life or its conceptualization in terms of a socialized regional economy—is a historical exploration of the role of class relations and the changing vectors of power that ensured the ongoing extraction of surplus value from people's labor. While assessments of local resources of social capital or the suppleness of flexible labor may have some practical policy payoffs, more critical is the need to explore, through a history of the present, the various leverages, restraints, movements, and roadblocks that were the expression and constitution of power and the linchpins of differentiations: not one neat and ordered history of a regional economy with an appended local culture but multiple histories and a heterogeneity of actors with quite different notions of what might be celebrated in the local culture.

As it turns out, the history the technocrats had drawn for Ford with respect to politics was convenient, abbreviated, and superficial. There was nothing natural—or even cultural—about Valencianos' disinclination toward revindicative politics. It is just possible that Franco's technocrats were entirely unaware that the first anarchist international was held nearby, in Alcoy in the 1870s, but they can hardly have forgotten that Valencia was the final seat of the Republican government in 1939, or that the province of Alicante to the south had shown strong support for the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores. Even so, the denial of working people's political past has a long history in the region (if not in Spain more broadly), which extends to the present.

Still, firms like Ford were onto something when they sought out and found a body of people who were prepared to work that extra sweated hour, were forever scanning the horizon for the vector of economic change that would call for a quick shift in their tactics, and whose rela-

tion to family and friends reflected the picaresque necessities of such livelihood projects. But the histories of this present are complex indeed.

When the shoe industry became such a strong presence in the Vega Baja, it was by no means the introduction of a new product or process onto a social and economic tabula rasa. The region had long been Spain's major producer of rope sandals *(alpargatas)* used by the vast majority of working people in the early part of the twentieth century (Bernabé Maestre, 1976).[7] Relying on the agricultural production and processing of hemp fiber, *alpargatas* too did not arise ex nihilo. Prior to being Spain's major supplier of footwear, the region had been the major producer of sails—in huge demand by Spain's vast seagoing fleets—and subsequently rope and fishnets, all relying on hemp cultivation and processing into fiber. Even in the present, shoes are by no means the only manufactured item produced in the region. Crevillente performs an analogous role in the production of carpets and rugs to Elche's role in the production of shoes; dolls, dolls clothing, and other toys are also produced throughout the area.

All this might suggest that manufacturing was complementary to agricultural development. And though this may have been so with respect to agricultural produce, it was certainly not so for labor, nor to a lesser extent for land. When placed within the broader rubric of Spanish agriculture in the nineteenth century, the Vega Baja was in many ways neither fish nor foul—neither the site of viable small farms found in some parts of the north nor monopolized by the latifundia system of Andalusia. The beneficiary of an ancient irrigation system based on the Segura River, the area had not been very successful in using this system for the intensive agriculture that could have produced medium-sized farms, as for example in Catalonia. This is explained in part by the holding of much of the Vega Baja by large, aristocratic landlords, similar to Spain farther south. These owners used the resources of power deriving from a hierarchical society to keep the cost of labor low and thereby reduce the need for investments in fixed capital (including soil and irrigation maintenance and seed and fertilizer experimentation as well as machinery).

The result was that every advance in industrial production within or on the periphery of the region, while apparently almost incidentally producing a useful demand for some agricultural crop, much more obviously and threateningly also produced a demand for labor. Indeed, while a steady demand from local manufacturing for commercial agricultural produce was useful, much more notable has been the huge swings from

one export-driven crop to another. Long a producer of olive oil and, to a lesser extent, wheat, the area was affected by the phylloxera crisis in France at the end of the nineteenth century, which produced a goldrush-like shift to vine production. Olive trees were ripped out and replaced by vines, though in many cases by the time the five-year maturity of the stock had been reached the boom was over and the demand for wine declined. Then, after 1939 and the civil war, Franco's policy of autarchy for Spain gave rise to a hemp boom more thorough than the earlier wine boom. Again, with the opening of Spain in 1959, hemp quickly became a relic and the skills and occupations associated with it became obsolete.

We can learn two things from these historical threads. Perhaps the most important is the extreme volatility of the economy, responding as it did to national and international currents. Translated into the world of working people, such shifts in direction over periods much shorter than a generation translated into persistent and chronic uncertainty. When combined with attempts by the landed classes to resist the commodification of labor through the use of hierarchical and personalistic work contracts and tenancy relations, this uncertainty itself becomes inherent in the system of value-production and appropriation—a crucial gear driving the mechanics of the social reproduction of local agricultural capitalism.

The second thing we learn has to do with the long but uneven history of the role of manufacturing in the region. The simple fact of a presence of nonagricultural livelihoods in the rural setting has frequently been noted by writers on other regional economies (for a critique, see Ghezzi, 2001), but we need more dimensions in the picture. Manufacturing was not just everywhere in the regional setting and was by no means consistent in its growth or decline or in the way it affected ordinary people in the towns of the Vega Baja. For many it was in a sense an absent presence.

And this leads us to our third strand in the history of the area—the question of movement. For many years day labor costs could be minimized by a simple manipulation of insecurity: day laborers needed work, and by playing with the hazards of the daily labor market in each town's plaza, farm owners, their managers, and large tenants were able to satisfy the varying demands of the agricultural cycle. Yet even in the best of circumstances such a world could not be entirely contained. The need for wheat harvesters in La Mancha each year, or for vine pruners in Catalonia, was always a draw. This remained largely seasonal and, like the army service experienced by young men, travel was individually

experienced. Still, the satanic mills of Elche, Crevillente, or Callosa de Segura, not to mention more distant lures, put continued pressure on the extraction of absolute surplus value from agricultural workers, and the major way of dealing with this was to control movement. The facilitator in such a strategy was insecurity. We have seen how volatile the economy was, and to this must be added the natural hazards of an extremely uncertain climate, by no means offset by irrigation. Simply being able to ensure food enough for one's family was a goal in itself.

The tensions and contradictions contained in movement, then, were felt quite differently by different members of the region. Over time this fetish of fixity and suspicion of movement took on a far wider and metaphorical sense. For both traveling worker and well-established local patron there was inevitably something fearful and unknown about the world that awaited as close as Elche or Crevillente, still more fearful in Barcelona or perhaps even farther away. The sense that one returned "touched" in some way became widespread. For many workers this was to be touched by experience. Sometimes these experiences were, in the short term, unpleasant, even a setback, but taken on the whole and through the years they could amount to an education, a move to a more worldly-wise kind of maturity. By contrast, for those left behind—not just the patrons and their agents but their more subordinated dependants—this was to be touched by something unknown and almost inevitably threatening and impure—impure in the sense that it disturbed the known ordering of the local world, bringing in new variables for decision making and wider possibilities for a future.

If we were to ask how a culture of locality came into existence in this area, or what the specific texture of its structure of feeling might be, then it could well be worth reflecting on these features.

HISTORIES OF REGULATION

As for politics, like the Ford Motor Company we could easily have been misled. Working as we have been in the post-Franco era, we found that most people had little interest in national politics and very little more in their local institutional offshoots at provincial or municipal level, and we were inclined to assume that this demonstrated a long-standing perception of a rural people. Yet, though there was a strong Catholic and conservative movement in Valencia during the Republic, the Vega Baja in general was sympathetic to the government, and the towns we knew best became entirely controlled by the Socialist Party union and subse-

quently combined their efforts with the anarchist union. Once the war began, many large landholdings *(fincas)* were expropriated through local initiatives, local money was printed, and these *fincas* were run collectively. As Republican forces retreated at the end of the war, toward the port of Alicante, and the Nationalists together with their various political appendages and vigilantes advanced into the region, a new regime of daily life was to begin.

The war (1936–39) was followed by a vast array of state-controlled systems of rationing. This was certainly in part to manage an extremely debilitated economy but, more important, it was a means for selectively punishing and rewarding members of the new Francoist society. Both repression and the black market were crucially, almost by definition, selective. The repression of the Franco years was so effective in closing down a collective sense of alterity (let alone resistance) and more generally any sense of a public political field by being highly personal and highly selective. It was individual personalities holding positions of power who selected targets of repression, and they did so from day to day on an almost random basis.[8] Moreover, these were explicitly supposed to be positions of power used for the personal profit of the holder. Franco gave his stamp of approval to this personal fattening up of the victors at the expense of those without power by likening it to the rights of pillage and rape traditionally awarded to victorious armies in olden times.

One effect, intentional or not, was for the daily desperate search for food to drive out concern for, or interest in, anything else. Another was that many who had been sympathetic to the Republic, being unable to acquire the documents necessary for a normal life, were now forced into the black market. This in turn rendered them the more vulnerable to momentary discovery and punishment, but it also made people particularly aware of the palms that need greasing, the rural byways that were less guarded, the "crimes" that were in reality not so much crimes at all, thus producing a further wrinkle in the twisted rope of selectivity.

The differentiations resulting directly from political power were also amplified by the advantages that lay in the Right's participation in the *estraperlo* (black market). Here arose huge opportunities for quick profits. Indeed, property changed hands to such an extent that one might refer cynically to the *estraperlo* as Franco's land reform. An older class of landlords, many of them absentee, faced with a stripped-down agricultural sector and perceiving opportunities in the big urban centers, sold off their land to their larger tenants, who often then sold parcels to

those newly enriched by the *estraperlo*. Subsequently, with the coming of the fifties, new opportunities arose as the area became increasingly committed to the lucrative hemp fiber market.

Thus, the forces of economic, social, and cultural differentiation shifted directions numerous times over the hundred years between 1890 and 1990, as no doubt they had before that. But the forces that took hold in those deadening years that followed the civil war in which Franco placed his iron stamp on Spanish society can hardly be overestimated. It is hard to see how one might talk of the informal economy of the 1960s without some reference to this earlier period, and is it impossible to talk of the "natural" disinclination of local people for public politics without some reference to what made such attitudes so natural.

When through the 1980s ordinary people in Spain were being asked to give voice to a renewed public politics, and when through the 1990s the Vega Baja was being reframed as a regional economy, these moments were surely conditioned in some way by the absent presence of this crepuscular history. More immediately striking, however, was the way they were framed—more obviously—by current political discourse. We have noted already how the sociological language used to invoke regional economies employs descriptions of phenomena that situate them within notions of functionality and competitive advantage while minimizing references to class relations and the role of power in social reproduction. This kind of framing—which obviously plays its role in marginalizing the history we have just been talking about—is itself situated within context: the political-economic, institutional, and discursive field of neoliberal corporatism. We hope that the evidence of the ethnography contained in this book allows us to return to a more exhaustive critique of the historically particular conjoining of capitalist forms with regulatory practices. Here we want to demonstrate the value of historical ethnography by exploring the way the past we have just described facilitated this specific kind of conjoining.

We have called it "neoliberal corporatism." Hitherto corporatism and neoliberalism have been understood as mirror images of each other, the one placing priority on the health of the overall social body, the other stressing the health of the individual actor, there being no such thing as society (as Margaret Thatcher famously remarked). Yet more recently writers have begun to cross these differences with such terms as "the new paternalism" (Mead, 1997) and "liberal authoritarianism" (Dean, 1999, 2002), at least in part to address the issue of practices of governmentality in the European Union generally, and more particularly

in states where some kind of "third way" is being invoked. Corporatism places high priority on the proper functioning of society as an integrated and coherent whole. Conflict internal to the system is a pathology, like suicide or delinquency, which must be addressed by reengineering the overall package being targeted. These packages were usually thought of as national societies, as in Durkheim's France or Marshall's Britain, but they need not be.

While both corporatism and neoliberalism are concerned with the overall productivity of the polity in an internationally competitive world, they differ most specifically in that for neoliberalism this goal is achieved by outsourcing a major part of governance to the market and other institutions of the so-called civil society. In so doing it recasts in terms of "contracts" the functional interrelations of these institutions and what is normatively expected of their practices—from municipalities, to hospitals, to law courts, to universities. Far from pathologized, conflict here nonetheless is validated only in its specific Darwinian variant: competition between units—individuals, firms, and the like. For this reason among others, regulation, as Polanyi insisted (1957), always remains an issue to be dealt with; neoliberals are as afraid of anarchy as anyone else. So the question that arises concerns the relationship between order and management—in short, government—and that element of society now being relied on for its competitive productivity—marketized civil society. The particular history of stewardship in continental Europe (Holmes, 2000), while taking a variety of forms, has nevertheless answered this question with various versions of neoliberal corporatism.

Productivity and government, then, are the two perpetual partners of modernity. And though the two are as paired as hands locked in cordiality or combat, Marx had a lot to say about the one, Foucault about the other. While acknowledging their profound differences, we can get a handle on neoliberal corporatism when we explore their complementary views of productivity and government. To make this point we draw an analogy between Marx's distinction between absolute and relative surplus value (and, by extension, his distinction between the formal and real subsumption of labor to capital) and Foucault's distinction between monarchical rule and modern government. This can be seen by noting an essential feature of expropriation within capitalism and another feature of regulation in modern societies.

As to the first, investments in better machinery and improved ways of organizing labor result in greater overall productivity. This particular dynamic was termed by Marx the production of "relative" surplus value.

For Marx the emergence of this dynamic understanding of advances in productivity was in real history a rocky and uneven road, as capitalism at times took on only the formal elements of these relationships, often slipping back to a less dynamic form he called the production of "absolute" surplus value (*Capital,* 1: app).

When we shift to Foucault's work on rule, we see something quite similar in his understanding of the shift from older forms of monarchical power toward modern power—from absolute to relative power, if we were to retain Marx's terms. The notion of power being preeminently about restriction, the "power of the sword" was replaced by what we might call the (horse-)power of the machine. From absolute to relative surplus value, from monarchical to modern power—each had the effect of forming quite different ideas of first the material and social world (the factory and society) and then the social subjects to be found therein.

Seen in this way we might propose that Marx's equivalent of monarchical power was absolute surplus value, and in the appendix to volume I of *Capital* he tried to work through the uneven ways relative and absolute surplus value are, in real life, complexly combined. Especially where capitalists try to expand the amounts they can derive as profits but do not invest in the technical means for doing so, one is likely to find a vast array of "extra-economic" means for turning value (labor) into profit. And these were precisely the features being employed in the social relations and practices in the Vega Baja after the civil war. This in turn meant forms of regulation that pervaded families, friends, neighborhoods, and communities—resulting, it might be tempting to argue, in a quite specific kind of local culture. Yet, given what we have said, the stress on "culture" seems evasive; more important are the practical relations of exploitation facilitated by specific and identifiable kinds of power through which the whole was regulated.

Perhaps this comes as no surprise, but if we are talking about processes of production and the forms for its regulation and find ourselves called on to resort to class relations and fields of power, why should these latter fall away when we talk about the same things—production and social regulation—but now in the new regional economies invoked by scholars caught in the web of neoliberal corporatist discourse?

Let us take neoliberalism first. The ideal of neoliberalism is for the state to farm out governance to economic and civil institutions (Dean, 2002). Why should these institutions be immune to the same ideal—sourcing out as well, until the buck finally stops at the self-controlled so-

cial subjects who conduct themselves in a way appropriate to a social project understood in the productivist terms we have described above. If the Taylorist expert kept his vision largely within the enterprise, while his Fordist successor colonized suburban lands beyond it, for the neoliberal expert social subjects *are* enterprises. Workers possess a kind of capital—human capital—and they or their predecessors have invested in that capital, producing physical strength and skills, of course, but also love, affection, morality, and so on (Burchell, 1993). Foucault prompts us to note that the result might be a quite fundamental shift in the way power is thought about and exercised. For example, our new expert working on behalf of this kind of profit-seeking system may come up with the idea that the more workers feel free and untrammeled as they work—more flexible hours, a wide range of work sites, and so on—the more they might contribute to the overall power of this modern society. Power then, far from being about restriction and restraint, might be made to appear to rest in their opposites. As Adam Smith had noted 250 years earlier, "those [places] that have the most security are not necessarily those where the greatest number of police regulations exists. Rather they are the ones in which the 'common people' are independent and employed in manufactures. . . . Manufacturing labour can thus be recommended to foster good police" (Dean, 2002: 51; see also Hindess, 2001).

Within such an imagined social world all practices and relationships can be understood in terms of two potential beneficiaries—the social subject himself or herself and, by extension (through its increased productivity), the overall social project in which the person is inscribed (family, firm, nation, etc.). Here hegemony works through the payoffs of active collusion. Collusion arises from a trade-off in which participation in the social project promises to empower those recognized as legitimate members through the intensified productivity of the overall corporate body politic.[9]

It is not difficult to see where the corporatist element creeps into this otherwise classic neoliberal agenda. But what is an "overall corporate body politic" with which I can sufficiently well identify so as to see my inputs and my rewards? Certainly not membership in a neoliberal kind of state, from all we have said above; still less the vast and impersonal European Union. Here regions become key. The reworking of the relationship between labor and property ownership in terms of human capital relies on quite particular understandings of personal responsibility that are tied to recontouring the paths of participation in the broader so-

cial project. With appropriate interventions by intellectuals, regions offer the kind of local scale that allows members to assess return on investment (of human capital) while at the same time measuring that participation in economic rather than political terms. On the other hand, as regional economies can increasingly be given recognizable form, for example through allusions to the distinctive and positive features of the local culture, so a closer identification of the neoliberal entrepreneurial worker with the enrichment of an identifiable social unit—the region and its social capital—can be achieved, though at the price of redrawing the conditions of social membership.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

In this chapter we have taken a schematized and selective path—from the post–civil war interface of coercion with a shadow economy to the embedding of regional development programs within neoliberal doctrine—not so much to assert a truth as to illustrate how historical ethnography can raise questions. Much of the remainder of this book looks very different from this schematized path. There are so many crosscutting histories to be dealt with. There are bends and dead ends along the various paths we take, belying the possibility of a single history so central to both Spanish governance today and the project of building a coherent European Union into the future. When these projects are pursued through neoliberal corporatist understandings of the social world, a politically vacuous history results.

Yet it is surely difficult to deny the salience of class differences in what we have been discussing, and if we accept class we must also accept the facts of expropriation inherent in capitalist relations of production. And this in turn makes it hard to accept an image of social dynamics that denies the salience of conflict. There is, then, a connection between the way expropriation takes place and the way society is regulated, on the one hand, and the way people think about themselves as social subjects and hence the possibilities for praxis, on the other.

In chapter 2 we explore the regional space as a historical site. It emerges less as a bounded territory, more as a series of force fields such that any one place—we centered ourselves on the town of Catral—appears to be at the intersection of several historical currents, be they the relatively unpolarized rural households of neighboring Dolores, the highly polarized communities closer to the old city of Orihuela, or the manufactories of Callosa, Elche, or Crevillente. What emerges is not so

much a clearly demarcated map as a congeries of crisscrossing pathways and temporally unstable landscapes.

Turning from space to social relations, we find another history of variation—sets of social bindings that had force in one setting but in their real outcomes generated ill-fitting combinations, so that the stability of one structure was undercut precisely by its positioning proximate to another. Irrigated agriculture does not spread homogeneously through the area but is interlarded with barren scrublands *(saladares)*. The richness of intensive agriculture at first apparently offers an ecology for autoconsumption, but we then see it to be set within the wavering calls of international commercial demands: vines pushing out a potato harvest, hemp thirstily drinking up the water for wheat, and so on. Far from offering the kind of clearly distinctive site that might lead to a well-ordered ethnography, we are faced with a kind of incoherence, a sort of placeless space crisscrossed with the multiple paths of historical discontinuities.

Chapter 3 is set in the 1940s and 1950s. Perhaps a result of the long English fascination with the Spanish civil war (see especially Thomas, 1977; Fraser, 1979), Gavin expected to find the occasional vivid discovery about the period; Susana, because she comes from a generation who have queried the appearances of the Spanish past, likewise expected the occasional revelation. Neither of us was prepared for the "totalness" of that awful period. For some, this post–civil war period was the end of an era; for others, a period of frenzied opportunity; for still others, a period of hunger and fear—and all of these were layered one on another. The period was captured in the odd trinity of personalized repression, underground economy, and the ambiguous bounty of hemp cultivation and processing. Some of the figures, like the landlords of old, or the trope of the sleazy trader, were quickly and easily visible for the outside investigator. Others were not. The world of the tied laborer and the almost inverse world of the ostracized ex-Republican were more difficult to unearth. As we see later, in chapter 8, these kinds of occlusions and distortions in the rear-view mirror, aided by the encouragement of the "official version," were reproduced in the form contemporary political culture took.

In chapters 4 and 5 we shift scale from the region and municipality to the everyday world of interpersonal relations and practices of ordinary people. As we do so, we find that a crucial component of social regulation had to do with movement and its denial. It was the very nature of social dependencies and the absence of such dependencies that gave reality to place. And what gave the currency of this kind of regu-

lation its gold standard was insecurity; without the perpetual presence of uncertainty amid scarcity, regulation would have lost its essential leverage. This meant that onto the natural uncertainty of climate and the volatility of the commercial economy there was grafted a purposeful politics of insecurity that was (again usefully) unevenly felt both quantitatively and qualitatively. We try to show that the embeddedness of dependency on the one hand and the exhausting pursuit of niches of opportunity on the other were both simultaneously made up of the structural conditions that positioned a person or household at a given time and the agency that inheres in each person's character.

Part II brings us to the present (or recent past). In chapters 6 and 7 we see how these multiple trajectories and the unfolding patterns that give rise to various kinds of social subject—various socially reciprocated notions of self-awareness—produce the flexibility, self-exploitation, intrafamilial exploitation, and wider social exploitation that make possible the present-day regional economy and its reproduction.

In chapter 6 we look at smaller entrepreneurial figures and, in doing so, cover the transition of the area from a predominantly agricultural economy in which manufacturing and services played important complementary roles to one in which industry begins to occupy the center of gravity. Then, in chapter 7, we introduce the wide variety of actors who are entangled in the contemporary "flexible" industries of the region. We believe that this history—economic, political, social, and cultural—engenders relationships between people that are classlike and thereby produces people who relate to each other as members of classes. In the conclusion of this chapter, therefore, we begin to address the ways class is simultaneously obscured—in part by the multiple nature of household and individual work-career occupations—and yet elusively grasped at by some of those younger actors whose experiences have given them some degree of mobility. Despite immediate appearances, it is impossible to imagine the social character or cultural figure of the homeworker, or of the tied laborer or jobber and his wife (or daughter), beyond the history of the relations of exploitation from which each generation emerges and on which each individual negotiates his or her present. We do not say this dogmatically or happily. We believe it is the essence of what makes for the dispersed and erratic kinds of regulation inherent in regionalized flexible production regimes, of which the Vega Baja is just one example.

In the final ethnographic chapter (chapter 8) we turn to politics. We show how, far from regional economies relying on local culture in the

sense that most anthropologists would understand culture, in some sense there appears to be a kind of cultural deficit—a failure in the dialogical possibilities of collective culture. The vacuum such a deficit leaves makes possible the invention, the super-imposition, of something else—something quite different from anything that in our view should be called "culture" but is nevertheless called just that. Such an ersatz kind of public culture is by no means successful in inscribing everybody within it, however.

Culture as the old socialists saw it, for example, invokes a critical awareness of their lived reality—consciousness almost in a classical Marxist sense. But this more ersatz culture is imagined rather ephemerally—as an "atmosphere," a dehistoricized abstraction, a "worldview" floating superorganically above the material forces and ambivalences of real life. This pageant of dehistoricized performative classification (winners and losers, insiders and outsiders, etc.), vividly exemplified in the fiesta of Moros y Cristianos or in the marketing of the region's native entrepreneurialism, may well warrant a study of its own. Our focus, however, is the various factors that appear to have leached the ground of any possibility for a public culture of collective intercourse—something that has sometimes been glossed as "community," a sense of place and belonging-ness. We believe that a particular history of livelihood practices and political repression combines with current neocorporate liberalism to produce this result. A particular dialectic has arisen between intimate and public spaces and practices in the context of forms of regulation always articulated with and through an underground (or perhaps better put, close-to-the-ground) economy. Because regulatory practices have varied through history and, despite these variations, operated selectively and haphazardly, they have affected people in widely different ways and thus constituted a multiplicity of social subjectivities.

In the concluding chapter 9 we draw on the evidence of the earlier chapters to revisit the images of society and the economy that are hegemonic in the European Union today. In so doing we not only interrogate the now vast literature of regional economies and regional development but also explore the way institutional structures arising under neoliberal regimes have affected the intellectual production of these particular images of today's social world.