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The ideological squeeze: “casa”, “family” and “co-operation” in the processes of transition¹

The object of this article is to analyse the way in which ideological concepts are active in the transition toward fully capitalist relations of production. The area where fieldwork was done is the dry-farming, smallholding, olive producing region of Les Garrigues in inland Catalonia. Spain. This area was of particular interest for the proposed study for several reasons.

1. Relations of production and ownership of the means of production — at least at the beginning of the twentieth century — referred to the capitalist realm. Family farms were producing a specialized crop (olives) for the national and international market. The question was: had the full transition to capitalist relations taken place and how had it come about?

2. A strong ideology of “casa” was acknowledged throughout the area as a whole (Assier-Andrieu, 1984; Iszaevitch, 1981; Terradas, 1984; Bestard, 1986: 121–47; Harding, 1984: 99–110) and this was the factor which integrated production and reproduction — the division of labor, the transmission of property, marriage alliances and so on. The question was: what was comprised in the concept of “casa”, how was it transformed and linked to the process of transition?

3. Producers’ co-operatives for the elaboration and commercialization of oil were present in the area from the beginning of the century (Castaño, 1987), increasing after the 1906 Law of “Sindicatos Agrarios”. The question was: how were these agricultural co-operatives related to the transition to a capitalist mode of production?

4. The expanding participation of rural women in this area, in

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garment production for the national and international market within the “underground” economy pointed to the integration of specific members of the domestic group in the capitalist labor market. The question was to articulate this situation with that of the small-farming family enterprises and to study it as a unique process of transition rather than a set of different sectorial transformations.

5. Finally, very recent expansion of women worker co-operatives in garment manufacture runs parallel to the increase in government policies seeking to control and to give a legal framework to the decentralized organization of production. This raises the question of the ideological significance of the concept of “co-operation” in the transition process.

The analysis is organized around two key concepts: “casa” and “co-operation”. Their transformations in meaning and in context from 1900 to 1987 are the ideological materials studied here. This does not presuppose a “traditional” static situation for these concepts before 1900, but the scope of this study is limited to the twentieth century.

The main objective of this paper is, as stated, to study the transition toward fully capitalist relations of production through historically constructed ideological concepts (Godelier, 1978). A second objective is also intended: to understand the exploitation of women’s labor and the means by which ideology defines a specific segment of the labor-force and devalues the abstract labor it provides. Both concerns are linked in the hypothesis that the full transition to the capitalist mode of production in the smallholders’ case is related to the separation of female labor power from agricultural tasks and its integration into the labor market. And ideology is crucial to this transformation.

A case study

“Cal Xic” is a “casa” of medium landowner farmers in Les Garrigues. The principal agricultural produce is olives. Almonds are the second crop. The domestic group consists of a middle-aged couple, the husband’s mother and two single daughters aged 24 and 27. Residence has been patrilocal and all property is owned by the husband, an only child and heir.² The husband is a member of the agricultural co-operative. This gives him the right to take his olives to the co-operative oil mill and have his oil production commercialized

collectively through the co-operative. His mother gets an old age pension monthly. His two daughters work at home for the garment industry in the “underground” economy. His wife takes care of the house and still often works in the fields and in the vegetable garden. Income from the annual agricultural campaign is directly deposited in the co-operative’s Credit Union. If necessary, a woman of the domestic group, generally the wife, goes to the co-operative to draw some cash for everyday expenses. However, cash income from the old age pension and the piece-rate wages earned by both daughters from garment production are pooled together in a purse under the control of the wife. This cash is used for everyday expenses such as food, clothes, electricity and water bills; some extraordinary expenses such as house repairs and purchasing of electrical appliances; some personal expenses such as going to the beauty parlor; some social network upkeep such as present-giving; and the constitution of a trousseau for the daughters. There is a difference between the two daughters’ income pooling: the elder daughter contributes part of her wages and keeps the rest in a personal bank account; the younger gives all of her earnings to her mother who keeps some aside for her. Both sisters say it comes to the same, but it seems to me to be related to the fact that the elder daughter is going to marry “out” — a high school teacher — whereas the younger one is going to marry “in” the village — a baker and prospective heir to a medium-sized land property — and she is the one who will continue the “casa”, inherit the land and so on.

It is important to underline that members of the domestic group *live* on income *other* than that earned in agriculture — that is to say, on income earned by old and/or female members of the domestic group. Farm income is used to cover production costs and to invest in maintenance and modernization of technical agricultural appliances whether in the private farm or in the collectively owned co-operative. At present the co-operative is engaging in costly modernization of the transformation technology — it has bought a new oil mill that can be computer controlled — impelled by quality demands stemming from the entrance of Spain into the EEC. Only when female earned income is insufficient is the farm income of the “casa” used. The excedent is kept as a “reserve” for bad agricultural years and as money to be used in prestige expenses and social mobility objectives when required.

When asked about their work, both daughters say it is “help” for the “casa”; that garment production conditions have always been

“bad” and “badly” paid — even though they think piece-rates have been getting worse every season. When asked why they refer to the income they in fact *live* on as “help”, they say that the basic income of the “casa” comes from the farm. They also say work on the farm is more important for the “casa” than their garment production work. They insist that the principal family income comes from their father’s work on the farm.

If we analyze the situation of this particular domestic group — which is typical of medium landowners — we observe that (1) agricultural production is market oriented; (2) co-operative membership is crucial for production of and control over a *commodity* (olive oil) and its commercialization in the capitalist market; (3) labor power used on the farm is that of the domestic group and only during the harvest are day laborers hired; (4) income for everyday expenses comes from sources other than agriculture; (5) women earn this income through their work in “underground” garment production; (6) agricultural income tends to be reinvested in technological improvements to the farm and the co-operative; and (7) women feel their work in garment production is “help”.

From a diachronic perspective, we see that in order to maintain the reproduction of the unit of production medium landowners have had to diversify their economic basis so as to be viable in a capitalist environment. At the beginning of the century medium landowners produced olives but did not own the means of transforming them into oil. They were forced to sell their produce to the big landowners who controlled market relations through their control of the oil mills. Private property was the economic basis of peasant relations of production. Medium landowners, however, were eager to bypass big landowners and sell their oil on the national and international market.

In 1914 they set up an agricultural co-operative with an oil mill to service members. Collective ownership of the oil mill facilities was a second economic basis which introduced new relations of production into the process of oil making and its commercialization. In fact, the co-operative is the element that enables the medium landowners to become independent production units and enter fully into the logic of capitalism through market relations. At this stage, the articulation of two economic bases, one of private property and the other of collective property, is necessary for the reproduction of the production unit, the “casa”.

This integration into the capitalist logic carries the farm into an

“enterprise” orientated to production and the maximization of profit. Increased productivity through technological improvements, and higher returns through reduction of costs are necessary if it is to become an economically viable enterprise. This produces a disjunction of functions within the “casa”: the units of production and reproduction become separate. Reduction of costs forces the farm to cut the costs of labor power. This is done by employing only family labor and moreover by drawing on other sources of income for the reproduction costs of the domestic group. This brings us to a third economic basis: that of women’s waged work in the garment industry.

Thus we can see that it was the impossibility of having direct access to the capitalist market that impelled the production units based on private ownership of the land toward a collective organization of the relations of production in the form of an agricultural co-operative. It is the impossibility of reproducing the labor power of the production unit (domestic group members) and still having a viable “enterprise” that impels female members of the domestic group to enter into waged relations of production in the “underground” economy. The reproduction of the production unit, the “casa” with its farm and its family members (the farm’s labor power), is made possible through the articulation and integration of three different economic bases: private ownership of land; collective ownership of the servicing facilities (oil mill, etc.); and the alienation of the labor power of female members of the domestic group.

The ideologies of “casa” and “family”

The concepts of “casa” and “family” are fundamentally different and should be clearly defined if we are to understand peasant domestic groups in Les Garrigues. The “casa” (household) structures an ideology of production. The group of people under the same roof changes with farming requirements and access to resources (Berkner, 1972, 1973, 1976; Mitterauer and Sieder, 1979; Terradas, 1984). Co-residents in the “casa”, whether kin or not, have production as their principal objective. However, this occurs in the context of an agricultural economy of small- and medium-sized property holdings in which production and reproduction are two sides of the same coin and are not conceived as different facts. To

the individuals who integrate the “*casa*” this means “working for the *casa*”, and the “*casa*” is that fluid group of members that results from the tension between the labor power needs of the farm and the existing labor market opportunities.

The present-day concept of “family” structures an ideology of physical and social reproduction of the labor-force. It is the expression of a system where production of commodities is ideologically separated from other social relations and is aimed at self-expansion. During the industrialization process, reproduction comes to be increasingly the kernel of the new concept of “family” (Ehrenreich and English, 1979; Narotzky, 1988). Simultaneously, work which produces commodities is identified as belonging to a sphere distinct from that of the household. The biological element of procreation within the wider concept of reproduction (Edholm et al., 1977), tends to naturalize all the activities involved in the family unit’s reproduction. The break between an outside world of production conceived as public, and an inside world of reproduction conceived as private, is one of the basic facts in the constitution of a capitalist ideology of work. A sexual division of labor is established within the ideal reproduction unit of the “family”. The husband–father provides the material means of subsistence, while the wife–mother is in charge of everyday maintenance, procreation and socialization of family members. The ideology of the “family” as something distinct from the production process, and, frequently, of reproduction as the principal object of any group (even though it may be productive) formed as a “family”, is often present in the uncritical use of these concepts as analytical tools (as is the case, for example, in Chayanovian interpretations of the peasant household).

The concepts of “*casa*” and “family” are ideological expressions of different organizations of production. Through them, social relations of production are reproduced but can be transformed and manipulated in the process.

In the particular context of Les Garrigues, the peasant domestic group is the reference unit of the farm enterprise and of production when it is conceptualized as “*casa*”; it is also the reference unit of a kin group centered around a married couple with the object of reproduction when conceptualized as “family”. The farm is orientated to the production of “extra virgin” olive oil for the market. The explicit aim of its managers is increased return on investments. At the same time the domestic group as a “family” assumes maintenance and reproduction of labor power through the consumption of

commodities; this requires that a cash income be earned.

The casa/family ambivalence does not imply a complementary view in the interpretation of the domestic group's functions. However, the activities of the domestic group's members acquire a different meaning depending on whether they are interpreted within the ideological framework of the "casa" or within that of the "family".

Capitalism introduces a concept of "family" as a domestic group exclusively aimed at reproduction while production is relegated to a specifically different and outside realm. This brings a clear distinction between work related to the production of commodities — "extra virgin" olive oil in the case of Les Garrigues — which takes place on the farm, and work related to the reproduction of labor in the domestic sphere. With the onset of mechanization since the 1960s, women have been excluded — except for the olive harvest — from the agricultural work they used to do throughout the annual agricultural cycle. Household tasks — especially cleaning — have increased greatly throughout the same period. Thus the concept of "casa" has suffered a decisive transformation (Harding, 1984: 161–8). Instead of a collective productive–reproductive endeavour where all able household members invested their labor power — the "jornal" — the "casa" is now increasingly identified with the farm enterprise and agricultural production. Also, the agricultural production objective of every "casa" has become progressively conceived as the men's work where they obtain an income related to the production realm. This perception gets closer to the "family" concept of a sexual division of work along gender lines, than to the "casa's" ideology of common work. The lesser input of female labor power directly into agricultural production tends to identify the profits of the farm with a male-earned income. The farm is still related to the different members of the domestic group through the ideology of "casa", but it is increasingly seen as a place where the men of the family go to work. This expresses a progressive break between a production sphere which refers to the farm business and aims at increased returns, and a reproduction sphere which refers to a kin group — the nuclear family — and its maintenance.

Men, women and work

However, women re-enter production — in the garment industry — at a time when emphasis is placed on their reproductive “family” responsibilities as distinct from a commitment to the productive–reproductive “casa”. A close analysis of different household member’s income and its allocation will help us to understand how the combination of the ideologies of “casa” and “family” are crucial to these women’s consent to specific decentralized conditions of production.

First, a distinction should be made between the labor input or “jornal” invested in the productive–reproductive “casa”, and income earned by household members in different activities. There is a different conception of work when it is perceived as a contribution to the common economic project of the “casa” — the farm — and when it is perceived as a contribution to the income needed to support the “family”. In the context of the ideology of the “casa” the responsibility of each member of the household is to contribute a “jornal”. Women’s “jornal” is housework, not because of a naturalized female responsibility toward “family” welfare, but because it represents the highest economic value of the labor power for the “casa”. Thus, women’s “jornal” varies: during the olive harvest the highest value of labor is in the fields and women neglect housework; the former is, then, their “jornal”. During the rest of the year a woman’s “jornal” is housework because, as one of them explained: “If they [men] had to hire a woman they would have to pay her 300 ptas or 400 ptas an hour and I cannot earn that with garment making, because the pay is miserable. To earn what I earn at home I should have to work night and day and I still wouldn’t earn it”. This quote brings up two important facts: first, the “jornal” is valued at its price on the labor market. That is true for men’s agricultural labor input in the “casa’s” farm, as well as for women’s housework input in the “casa’s” home; but in both cases the value is not realized on the market. It is labor power directly applied to the production–reproduction objective expressed in the “casa” ideology. The value of labor power is always referred to its market price, which, however, is not the same for all productive or reproductive activities. Second, everybody’s “jornal” is “working for the casa” but somehow the farm enterprise and agricultural production is what the “casa” is about, and it is increasingly and explicitly becoming men’s responsibility. That is why women’s

housework “jornal” is seen as a contribution to *them*: men.

This ambiguity in the present ideology of “casa” becomes clearer if we analyze income earned by household members and its allocation. Income is money. What are the sources of money for a small- or medium-sized (10–30 ha) landowning peasant domestic group? Agriculture — market-orientated olive oil production — produces cash income once or twice a year: the co-operative sells all the oil, then makes the balance of the production/commercialization process and distributes the profits to the members. This income is directly deposited in the private accounts of the members in the co-operative’s Credit Union. Every account is in the name of *all* the members of the household. The farm’s profits are the income of the “casa”. However, male members of the “casa” are seen as the direct factors of that income: it is as if their work produced that income. Women’s work in the maintenance of the labor power is not taken into account.

In fact, the income earned on the farm is becoming less and less the monetary expression of the “casa’s” objective. It is acquiring an ambivalent character (Barthez, 1982). On the one hand it is perceived as the male-earned normative “family” income that the husband–father gets with his work in the production realm. It represents his responsibility toward the “family’s” reproductive objective. On the other hand, it is perceived as the profits of the farm enterprise, under the control of its managers, to be invested in its expansion and in increasing returns. The allocation of this income expresses its ambivalence: first and most frequently, it serves basic agricultural investment purposes; second it serves the family members’ social mobility purposes such as, for example, university careers for studious children.

However, this situation is only possible because other cash incomes can be used for everyday reproduction expenses: cash that women earn at piece-rates in garment production at home, in sweatshops or, recently, in worker co-operatives; and social security income obtained from old age pensions. It is this money that buys food, clothing, basic household goods and, not infrequently, household electrical appliances. Many home improvements could not have been done if that “extra” income had not covered basic subsistence needs.

Finally, there is a last type of income: that earned by individual household members outside the realm of the “casa” farm. Agricultural wage labor for other “casa’s”, paid at labor market rates; work in the service sector — in the hotel industry, for example —

during the summer and winter seasons at sea or mountain resorts; unskilled temporary work in the construction industry and so on. This is a common pattern for the male children of the “casa”, and these individually earned salaries are not pooled in a collective domestic group income but remain under the exclusive control of their earners. Women, wives and daughters, earn their personal income through garment production or, in a few cases, through small-shopkeeping. In any case female members of the household tend to pool — at least partially — their individual incomes. Not infrequently these are the result of co-operation in small mother/daughter, sister/sister, mother-in-law/daughter-in-law sewing groups.

Individually earned and controlled incomes are conceived, in the ideology of the “casa”, as the ones to be used for private needs — not for the benefit of the “casa”. It is pocket money for the *malgastos*. For young men this means money to buy themselves drinks at the bar, or, more recently, to pay for a hi-fi, a motorbike or a car. For women it is perceived as money to pay for fine clothes and the hairdresser. In fact this female “pocket money” is the cash used to buy food and everyday clothes. But it is also the means for assembling the trousseau for young unmarried girls and for buying them fine clothes. The same money also buys presents at important festive and ceremonial situations such as Christmas, christenings, First Communion days, birthdays, namedays and weddings. The reproductive function of women’s income is obvious. On the one hand, it is allocated to the physical maintenance of the members of the household (food, clothes, household goods and repairs). On the other it serves social reproduction through its allocation to marriage valuables and to the maintenance of the social network through present-giving.

Thus, the income women earn through garment making is ideologically assimilated to individually earned, personally controlled “extra” “casa” income — pocket money — but is in fact allocated to reproductive ends. As one woman put it:

Garment making is economically a small help . . . Yes, we [mother and daughter] have always kept it aside, we’ve made a small savings with it. If the washing machine doesn’t work, I don’t mind calling the repair man. Whatever the cost, it is me paying . . . And for my daughter if she wants nice shoes or a coat, we don’t have to ask anything from anyone. We can take care of ourselves, because, there are lots of expenses in the “casa”, and we don’t want to be a burden for them, for the men, because they already have expenses with the tractors and the rest of the machinery.

This statement makes several points clear. First, the assimilation of the expenses of the “casa” with male productive expenses. Second, the assimilation of reproductive expenses with “extra”/private expenses of the women. And last, the perception of income earned through garment production as an economic “help” to the domestic group.

This last point is of interest because it expresses an ideological coincidence of the different concepts of “casa” and “family”. Within the framework of the “casa” concept, women’s work in garment production is defined as “help” because, economically, the most valuable labor power input of women is that of domestic housework; from this standpoint garment production is a second “jornal”, second to the first one of housework. Within the framework of the “family” concept, women’s income earned in productive work is always perceived as a complement to the main normative income brought in by the husband–father to support the family in its reproductive objective. Women’s “naturally” normative work is not income-earning in the production realm, except through its transformation into consumption in the reproduction realm. Thus female-earned income is a “help” to male-earned income. This confluence of the different ideologies of “casa” and “family” contributes to the devaluation of women’s production work in the garment industry.

On the other hand, the farm enterprise, which remains the nucleus of the “casa” ideology (even if it is now exclusively production- and male-centered), can only increase its economic returns if it is able to reduce costs and increase profits. To reduce costs means investment in the rationalization of the production process, essentially the oil extraction part of the process, through the acquisition of new and costly technology by the co-operative, and the reduction of labor costs. The cost of labor in the process of production is reduced by the tendency to use less hired labor in all stages of production and make do with household labor, as well as by reducing the reproduction costs of labor power. The latter is what women are doing for the “casa” by working a “second jornal” in the garment industry and using that income for the reproduction of the “family” — that is to say, the reproduction of labor power. It is their commitment to the “casa” ideology which impels women to work in garment production. They help to free the male main income from its reproductive “family” objective so that it can be invested in the farm enterprise of the “casa”. However, it is women’s increasing commitment to

“family” reproductive responsibilities, as “naturally” ascribed to them, that pushes them to assume reproduction costs. But because they are the ones that spend the money, it is sometimes perceived as a private expense. This paradoxical combination of the productive–reproductive “casa” ideology and the reproductive “family” ideology is crucial to the problem of transition.

Ideology and transition

By ideologically breaking up the production–reproduction continuum, the capitalist mode of production in fact separates production of labor power from production of other commodities. This is the ideological fact that enables the real subsumption of labor to capital. Production of labor power is the sole end of a specific institution — the “family” — and is perceived as a “natural” biologicico-social process that does not relate to production as a part of its process. People go to the production sphere to earn an income to support the family. Ideologically, members of the labor-force are not producing commodities but producing income, individual income or “family” income, but always *reproductive* income. In fact they are working to produce labor power while producing commodities. It is this perception of the production process that enables the capitalist to set up the extraction of surplus value.³ The real subsumption of labor to capital depends also on this ideological break.

Labor as the instrument of valorization of capital within a specifically capitalist productive process depends on the extraction of relative surplus value through a specific organization of the production process that reduces the proportion of variable capital. This is done through the reduction of the amount of incorporated labor needed for the reconstitution of a certain amount of labor power. This can be done either by increasing labor productivity through technological change and the expansion of constant capital; or by reducing the reproduction coverage paid for the labor power and having it assumed “outside” of the realm of “production”.⁴ Or both. Labor is forced into the logic of capital when the means of *reproduction* of labor power are not in the hands of the direct producers, even when the means of production might still be. Transition to the capitalist mode of production occurs *then*.

The case studied illustrates this. The “casa” as the expression of a

productive–reproductive labor process does not exist anymore even if its ideology partially remains and can be manipulated or used in the interpretive mode. The farm enterprise, however, is now the productive expression of the “casa”. Within the logic of the valorization of capital, relative surplus value must be achieved. Both ways, increase of labor productivity and reduction of reproduction charges are put into practice. In fact, because the farm is a “family” farm and its manager–worker–owners are members of one family, this is done at once. By reducing reproduction coverage — labor costs or variable capital input — investment in constant capital (mechanization) and, consequently, prospective increase of labor productivity is made possible. But this means that the labor power’s reproduction is not covered by the farm enterprise. Now, this may be good for the “casa” (farm enterprise) but it is not good for the “family”, and the “casa” is and is not the family.

In the larger capitalist process where these production units are integrated, their economic viability is dependent on a dramatic extraction of non-paid labor. Thus, the means of reproduction of the labor power is no longer in the hands of the direct producers. They own the means of production but under capitalist conditions of production they cannot reproduce the labor power which is essential to the valorization of their capital. In fact, the “family farm” is not a capitalist “enterprise”, but the extraction of surplus value that it permits is accumulated in capital. However, this is only possible if the reproduction of labor power is achieved from other sources — old age pensions and women’s work in the garment industry. This income covers the reproduction of the farm’s labor power. Paradoxically, the “family” ideology makes men (not women) and young adults (not old people) responsible for contributing the main support income. The latter should, as in the “family wage”, cover the reproduction of the entire family: the reproduction of labor power over time. Thus, in the effort to reduce their input in variable capital — their labor costs — industrial capitalists of the garment industry sector tend to play on that element of the “family” ideology to pay less than the value of the labor power, less than the labor incorporated in the reconstitution of the labor power, to women workers. In this situation the labor power of the farming domestic group is reproduced below its reproduction value.

Underground economy and worker co-operatives

Women work for the garment industry within a decentralized structure of the production process. Within the underground economy, middlemen are the key figures of a hierarchical network. Here, strictly professional economic relations in the top ranges of the hierarchy — those between firms and regional middlemen — rely for the direct production stages on pre-existing social relations such as kinship, friendship and neighborhood ties to pool and control the labor-force. This organization of production escapes fiscal control by the state in some intensive labor stages of production. It enables regional and national competition in production within the increasing international division of labor. The underground economy is also part of a larger process tending to restructure the capitalist organization of production — a process aimed at the transformation of the relations of production.

In the case of Les Garrigues the restructuring appears with the increasing expansion of worker co-operatives to replace, at least partially, the underground production structure. This is the case for all of Catalonia and this movement is sponsored both by the central Spanish government and by the autonomous Catalan government (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1986a, b; BOE, 8 April 1987; Generalitat de Catalunya, 1984). It is directly related to state policies aiming at the control of the underground economy through the value added tax (IVA). Middlemen in the garment sector are choosing the worker co-operative as an entrepreneurial form in order partially to uncover the underground network. The worker co-operative presents clear advantages. First, it can immediately apply for state subsidies and fiscal benefits, but, most important, it transforms the ideological framework of production. Co-operative ideology places a strong emphasis on common objectives and responsibilities. As an underground middleman, turned “co-operative” entrepreneur, put it:

If the business doesn't work I am not the only one held responsible. They [women workers] have to understand that it is everybody's business and they must work hard and make sacrifices so that it works.

This creates a strong drive toward the increase of productivity through self-exploitation and structurally prevents unionization. Finally, worker co-operatives benefit from a very flexible legal

framework which enables them to bypass the co-operative norm of profit derived from labor input instead of from capital investment.

The worker co-operative I have studied in depth is in fact a front for a subcontracted workshop. Even if women workers are legally “members” of the co-operative and should benefit from the return of profits, they are in fact working at piece-rates and paying Social Security contributions out of their wages. The co-operative does not have profits because it rents its constant capital — machinery and space — from a legal workshop owned by the middleman and his wife. Thus all profits are absorbed by the rental of the means of production. The middleman, a member of the co-operative, is the capitalist and the women workers (not all of them members because of the legal possibility of hiring an unlimited amount of temporary labor) are the labor power. As the middleman-entrepreneur puts it: “We co-operate: I supply the capital and they supply the labor”. So, although this worker co-operative keeps within the letter of the law it does not seem to be within the “spirit” of co-operation . . . or does it?

The principles of co-operation which have inspired this type of workers’ organization of production are those of solidarity and mutual aid (Ballestero, 1983). They are mentioned in legislation (Ministerio de Trabajo, 1986a: 11, 55; Generalitat de Catalunya, 1984: 8, 10) although their presence has been considerably reduced in the 1986 Spanish government project and 1987 law (Ministerio de Trabajo, 1986b: 16; BOE, 8 April 1987). These principles expand into the basic normative co-operative structure that comprises: (1) equal rights in the control of the business; (2) limitation of interest paid to capital; (3) participation of every member in the net profits in relation to the activity he/she realizes, not in relation to participation in the social capital; (4) investment of a 10 per cent minimum of the profits in a social and educational fund. Worker co-operatives, however, are clearly defined as “enterprises within the capitalist system of production”.

The legislative framework is only egalitarian in its programmatic structure. In fact a number of elements enable it to assume a classic capitalist enterprise organization: (1) the possibility of an unequal participation in the social capital (limited to 25 per cent for a single member in the Spanish Law 3/1987, Art.72.4 and in the Catalan Law 4/1983, Art.48); (2) the possibility in Spanish legislation of including “associate” members, who only contribute capital (the sum of “associate” members’ capital being limited to 33 per cent of

the total social capital), not labor and have the right to vote (the sum of “associates’ ” votes is limited to 20 per cent of the total votes), (Law 3/1987, Art.40.3; Law 52/1974, Art.15; Reglamento 1978, Art.39); (3) the possibility for the co-operative of hiring temporary labor, without any restrictions as to the proportion of members to hired labor. Except for the last point, these are phrased in the law as limitations to the capitalization of the co-operative and as an enforcement of the basic norm of an organization of production where capital is explicitly subsumed to labor (Barrera Cerezal, 1985). In fact, it reveals the ambiguity of the law and explicitly permits the concentration of capital in a few hands. For example, two members can accumulate 50 per cent of the capital. And members are often relatives: husband, wife, parents, children, in-laws, etc. Co-operatives can be, in fact, a useful and uncompromising framework for certain family enterprises that work as subcontracted intensive production workshops and are used to canalize production through underground networks.

This is the case in the Les Garrigues area. Small middlemen-entrepreneurs — not workers themselves — are at the origin of worker co-operatives in the garment industry sector. These are the same middlemen who distributed home piece-work to the same women, who now enter their worker co-operatives as worker members, or, frequently, as temporary hired labor. Also, these middlemen-entrepreneurs continue to partially give out home work. Women that enter these co-operatives have experienced only the underground economy where there is no formal or legal framework and no institutional protection. They are conscious of the fact that the co-operative structure does not mean “co-operation” but only the same piece-work rates in a workshop environment. However, it does mean *some* legal protection.

Co-operation ideology and the new capitalism

It is interesting to keep in mind, however, the agricultural oil production co-operatives that emerged at the beginning of the century and are still one of the key elements in this area’s farming. Agricultural co-operatives were a central factor in shaping the present-day independent family farms as enterprises fully integrated in capitalist market relations. Through co-operative oil mills small and medium landowners gained access to the means of transforming the

agricultural produce (olives) into a commercial product (oil). They were then able to free themselves from oppressive relations of production with the big landowners who, up to then, had been the only owners of private oil mills, and thus had control over production through the exclusive ownership of the means of transforming olives into a *commodity*.

In this context, a concept of co-operation exists which expresses a democratic, independent producer's ideology of the mutual benefits of co-operation in capital intensive stages of production. Thus, the experience the women of Les Garrigues have of co-operation within the agricultural co-operatives is very different from what they are experiencing within the worker co-operatives and they are perfectly conscious that these two forms are different structures for organizing production. However, an ideology of "co-operation" is at work in the construction of the relations of production. This ideology is summarized in two principles; (1) solidarity and mutual aid; and (2) precedence of labor over capital. The entrepreneurial structure of worker co-operatives uses these principles as a basis (Ballesterio, 1983). With the explicit backing of government policy makers and legislators, industrial firms are transforming the production process. This is not only aimed at the decentralization of production, it is also meant to be the transition to a different set of relations of production.

The need for a restructuring of the capitalist mode of production has been felt since the late 1970s in the USA, and increasingly within the last decade. Confronting the successful Japanese model of capitalism, scholars (Foote Whyte, 1983; Lindenfeld and Rothschild-Whitt, 1982; Zwerdling, 1984; Helland Hammer et al., 1983; Greenberg, 1986; Russell, 1985), policy makers, unions and legislators, have been trying to resolve important structural problems of the Western model of capitalist production, namely: (1) lower productivity; (2) lower quality; (3) more labor conflict; (4) more social unrest and unemployment. The need is felt for the construction of a new capitalism (Rothschild-Whitt and Lindenfeld, 1982; Foote Whyte, 1983). The question is what should be new in this capitalism? The main problems seem to be people and power. New capitalism proponents aim at changing the hierarchical relations of production. Foremost, the structural relation between labor and capital should be inverted. Not capital, but labor would have precedence in the relations of production. All this is summed up in the present emphasis on "human capital" — which is an ideologically charged

concept in itself — within management strategies. It is also expressed in the need to include workers in the process of management decision making, the need for — as ideologists put it — “workplace democracy”. Concepts used are important: “human capital” makes labor no different from capital: “workplace democracy” speaks of micro-politics, power and decision making in an ideological context — democracy — positively valued by all. There appears to be a drive to ideologically merge people and things, as well as people of different classes. But how is this to be done?

These transformations need a radical change in the ownership of the means of production (Russell, 1985). This *new* system can only take place within a change of the ownership relation. On the one hand, the ownership of labor power must disappear: capital will not buy labor power. On the other hand, capital ownership must be distributed. Legislation has made available two paths toward these revolutionary ends: employee stock ownership firms (for example ESOP’s in the USA or SAL in Spain) and worker co-operatives.

The first form distributes capital but does not subvert the capital/labor relation. There is no real structural change: ownership of capital is unequally distributed, concentrated in the hands of management, and control and decision making hierarchically organized. This system tends to reduce conflict and increase work productivity by ideologically integrating workers in business management objectives through the concept of ownership. The second form is that of worker co-operatives. From the start this form gives precedence to labor over capital in the production relation. Capital is viewed solely as the means of production equally shared by the members of the co-operative and collectively owned. In theory, shares of capital cannot be alienated. Ideologically, what usually remains of the co-operative principles is hard work and shared responsibility for deficient production — blame for low quality and low productivity — and management’s non-commitment to workers in case of business failure. Most of the worker co-operatives arising with the new legislation in the area I studied are very far from corresponding to the model of the “new capitalism” revolution. They are, however, part of a serious attempt at restructuring the fundamental basis of capitalism. But is this restructuring a real revolution in the capitalist structure of the production process, or is it only a strong and new ideological influx to overcome an economic crisis? In any case, worker co-operatives are not only a local phenomenon, but part of a larger movement

aimed at restructuring capitalist organization of production via decentralization; and maybe at transforming the relations of production.

Social reproduction and transition

In the small-farming situation we have analyzed, transition to the capitalist mode of production seems to be directly related to the difficulties of reproducing labor power. Social reproduction of the productive-reproductive "casa" becomes impossible. Production fully integrated in capitalist market relations through agricultural co-operatives forces entrepreneurial decisions on the part of the male household members. This renders more and more difficult the reproduction of the domestic group's individual members (i.e. farm labor power) through farm-earned income. The ideological separation of production and reproduction expressed in the local concepts of "casa" and "family" is central to the transition to the capitalist mode of production. Assimilation of the "casa" with the farming enterprise's production objective, its separation from the family reproduction realm and the gendered separation of spheres, creates a paradoxical situation for these "family farms". Either they are farming enterprises and then must reduce labor reproduction costs for the sake of increased productivity; or they are families reproducing on income obtained from farming and in that case the economic viability of the smallholding business is at stake. In any case the members of these households and families are entrapped in the capitalist mode of production. Farm business is only possible if female members of the household enter garment industry production and sell their labor power so as to be able to reproduce the "casa's" labor power. But the value of their labor power is under-priced due to the ideology of the male "family" income earner. This enables an over-exploitation of female labor by capital. However, male farm manager's labor power is also exploited by capital. They are not capitalists themselves, because they cannot buy labor power or even reproduce their own. These farming enterprises function with a minimum of variable capital costs, thus incorporating in circulation a reduced amount of labor power and increasing surplus value. The same happens with women's work in the garment industry. Both are bound and squeezed by the intent of household members to accomplish the social reproduction of the productive-

reproductive “*casa*”, which has now become, in fact, a concept with a double and ambiguous meaning: farm and family.

The process of transition is not to be assimilated into the economic transformations of a particular branch of production. It is related to social reproduction and the dispossession of the means of reproduction of a social system. The pressure to conform to the logic of capital makes it impossible to assume reproduction. Transition in the case analyzed is expressed by the need for women to enter the capitalist labor market so as to enable the farm to become a viable “capitalist” enterprise.

A new paradox comes up with the so-called “new capitalism” and the expansion of “front” worker co-operatives: the legal formalization of the old capitalist labor/capital relationship takes place for these women within a structure of production that, in theory, pretends to subsume capital to labor. It is an open question whether the ideology of co-operation can be a key factor that allows the necessary flexibility to bridge the transition toward a “new capitalist” mode of production, or if it is merely another device — part of the old capitalist strategy. The local case I have studied seems to point in this last direction. The broader international picture, however, may be pointing toward the former.

Conclusion

A theoretical problem can be raised in view of the present return of capitalism to strategies that make an increasing demand on labor. Increased surplus value tends to be obtained less by investment in productivity factors than by the reduction of labor power reproduction costs (this is true mainly in traditional labor intensive branches of production, but not exclusively). Both systems reduce the value of labor power incorporated in the commodities. However, the latter puts a heavier burden on labor because it strains its reproductive capacity within the system and makes the labor-force more vulnerable. The importance of ideological factors in the social restructuring of reproductive needs and responsibilities is paramount. It must be considered not only in the context of small farmers and women “underground” workers, but in its different and wide-ranging manifestations. A perspective is necessary that articulates production of commodities and reproduction of labor power in a single process where women and men, young and old, try to live as best they can.

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Notes

1. The Research Group on Forms and Processes of Transition between Economic and Social Systems began to take shape in 1982 and was formally created in 1984. It brings together researchers from France, Spain, Portugal and Greece in an international network. Within each country national teams have been set up. Address: Groupe de Recherche sur les "Processus de Transition", c/o Prof. Maurice Godelier. Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 54 Bd. Raspail, 75270 Paris Cedex 06.

In an earlier issue, 26(2) 1987, other articles emanating from this group have appeared: an introductory text by M. Godelier "L'analyse des processus de transition", two articles on contemporary Portugal: J. Ferreira de Almeida, "Structures agraires et migrations pendulaires: une région du nord-ouest du Portugal"; M. Villaverde Cabral, "Pluriactivité et stratégies paysannes d'abandon de l'agriculture", and one on the changes in a Mexican municipality from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the present: D. Dehouve, "La communauté indienne, une survivance?".

2. This area is one of preferred impartible inheritance. Males are favored over females but in fact women inherit often. The general residence pattern is for the younger couple to reside in the domestic group of origin of the spouse who will inherit from his or her parents.

3. This view stems from Marx's distinction between labor power — what the worker *sells* — and work — the use value that the buyer of labor power gets (*Le Capital*, Livre, I, Ch. XIX). Marx's interpretation is that the mystification that expresses the retribution of labor power as the salary of work, the appearance that the capitalist pays the value of work and not of work power, is the clue to the misinterpretation of the origin of surplus value as a creation of capital, not work. My viewpoint seems slightly divergent but is not, I think, contradictory. I contend that there is an additional mystification of the relations of production in that the work wages form changes into the family *income* form: wages in the realm of production, income in the realm of reproduction.

4. It is not very orthodox to consider this second way of obtaining "relative surplus value". Marx only refers to relative surplus value in the context of labor power alienation and the resulting relations of production. I am here "extending" its use to a situation of independent producers. In fact what I analyze is how capital extracts surplus value by reducing variable capital by means other than increased

productivity. This other means (i.e. reduction of reproduction coverage) ideologically reduces in "relative" terms the value of the means of subsistence necessary to reproduce labor power. The value of labor power incorporated in the value of commodities decreases. In the case presented, this occurs through the farm-enterprise logic of increasing returns *and* through the family ideology of gender linked support-income responsibilities that devalue female labor power. It is articulated in the "casa" ideology and it is materialized in the process of circulation. The commodities produced by men and women in Les Garrigues (agricultural and industrial) incorporate a lesser amount of value of labor power. Thus, "relatively", the amount of work not paid for increases in the system.

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