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CT>The Payoff of Love and the Traffic of Favours: Reciprocity, Social Capital and the Blurring of Value Realms in Flexible Capitalism

CA>Susana Narotzky

In an inspiring critique of 'flexibility', Anna Pollert (1991) pointed both to the ideological aspect of the concept of flexibility as it was voiced by proponents of industrial restructuring in the 1980s and early 1990s, and to its force as a reality performing the transformation of relations in the labour market and in the labour process. She also underlined how the argument of change that dominated the flexibility debate often presented the saliency of new flexible organizational, work and labour-market arrangements against the background of a particularly simplistic characterization of the past (that is, Fordism), where these types of relations were deemed to be absent. In this chapter I want to engage with this critique by trying to address 'flexible capitalism' not as something 'new' but as a persistent aspect of capitalism that acquires different expressions depending on history and place. Moreover, I will try to show how concepts that become part of a particular structure of the social reproduction of capitalism, and give form to a dominant moral economy at a particular moment and place, have to be articulated to the material transformations of relationships of exploitation and domination that structure the political economy of that time and place (see also Neveling, this volume). From this perspective, the alienable aspect of labour power in capitalism is always dependent on its inalienable ties to a social environment that constitutes its specificity (Narotzky 2009; see also Garsten, Knox, this volume).

This chapter is based on two ethnographic experiences in Spain, the first in a farming area of rural Catalonia (where I undertook research from 1986 to 1988), the second one in a regional economy in the south of the autonomous community of Valencia (where I carried out research in 1995/6 with Gavin Smith). A historical perspective, central to both analyses, has enabled a better understanding of historical transformation, particularly in relation to changes in production relations and to related emergent conflicts. By comparing these two instances, I wish to underscore the productive tension between two apparently distinct domains of social and moral obligation: that of personal and intimate relations (in the home, among friends and kin), and that of production relations (clearly linked to a market logic). Although in both cases a similar entanglement of values pertaining to different realms occurs, the degree and manner in which this situation seems to become structural to capital accumulation differs. I will propose that we need different categories from those that have characterized the social sciences since the rise of modernity. Instead of discrete, differentiated abstractions often opposed in pairs, we need methodological instruments that allow for pervasive ambiguity in order to understand present-day processes of value production, circulation and accumulation. Instead of an evolutionary understanding of temporality, we need historical complexity devoid of any form of teleology.

The general theoretical argument I want to make is about a shift away from distinct confronted realms of value creation, material production and social organization (reproduction/production; emotional/rational; non-capitalist/capitalist) that would be dialectically intertwined or 'articulated'. I suggest we think instead in terms of an ambivalent value realm, predicated on the ambiguity of simultaneously experiencing these domains of social interaction. This value realm allows agents greater flexibility and opportunism, and a wider scope for reconfiguring relations according to tactical needs. It is also highly arbitrary, and morally shifting and contradictory.

By using both the framework of ‘moral economy’ and that of ‘political economy’ in approaching the ethnographic cases, I intend to point to the ambiguous logic that sustains economic practice. Thus my contention is that this overlapping of realms of value enables a particular form of exploitation by capitalist firms and a particular mode of governmentality that continuously shifts and blurs conflict locations and obscures knowledge about the localized and globalized processes of capital accumulation.

### **A>Moral Economy and Political Economy**

In present-day anthropology, moral economy is making a strong comeback in the conceptual arena, with analyses stressing the centrality of moral values, practices and emotions in channelling economic and political behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Scott’s argument for reconfiguring ‘moral economy’ as a central concept for understanding the emergence or lack of peasant rebellion was strongly based on a critique of Marxist political economy’s idea of exploitation (Scott 1976). Scott criticized the abstract universal aspect of the concept of exploitation that produced a measurable value (surplus value), itself a result of relations of production based on forced cooperation (expressed in terms of contract and exchange) between owners of the means of production (capital) and a workforce (labour) lacking the means of livelihood. From the perspective of a Marxist critical approach to political economy, then, this situation would account for inevitable class conflict, unless ideology obscured this reality with the veil of false consciousness. What Scott (and before him E.P. Thompson and Moore) underscored was the historical and place-bound specificity of social relations in actually existing social formations on the one hand, and the centrality of diverse modes of obligation that sustained the structure of social reproduction in a particular place and time on the other. What was especially interesting in Scott’s view was his insistence that the social and cultural framework of subjective experience and obligation was not an ideology producing false consciousness. It

was instead a concrete reality, the *only* reality, and had to be explained in its own terms. He then produced the two moral principles of ‘securing subsistence’ and ‘claiming reciprocity’ as the basis of his moral economy concept, in turn making it a universal explanatory tool for understanding conflict.

However, this did not explain why social relations of production changed in such a way that a disjuncture appeared between the existing moral economy framework of expectations and the new practices of landowners and middlemen, which did not follow traditional forms of behaviour and then triggered rebellion. In sum, it did not explain the logic of the economic transformations that led to exploiters going against the grain of moral economy practices. In order to understand these, a Marxist political economy framework was still much more useful. Here, the logic of transformation was based on an abstract objective law: capital accumulation, a particular form of increasing wealth production and appropriation through exchange. The finality of capital accumulation seemed to constrain equally, although in different and unequal ways, both the owners of capital and the owners of labour power. This objective structured production physically, spatially and ideologically. Workplace and home were increasingly separated and gendered: producing goods and obtaining an income became commoditized and contractual, while housework and caring for kin and dependents was defined as emotional and natural activities. The realm of commoditized value was disconnected from that of non-commoditized values. Ideologically, if not always in practice, industrial capitalism established clearly defined and opposed realms of life: the private domain of household reproduction, with its internal hierarchies and power differentials; and the domain of commodity production, public in its aim of providing an optimal allocation of resources, although private in its authority structure. This narrative was couched in a teleological time frame, but was often disproved in the here and now by the many expressions of capitalist accumulation that did not conform to it. Indeed, a number of

conceptual instruments were produced in order to explain the pervasiveness of instances where capitalist exploitation hinged on the blurring of commoditized and non-commoditized relationships of exchange.<sup>2</sup>

In theory, the need remained to bridge the abstract dimension of the economic structure developed through the logic of accumulation and the concrete dimension of the practical processes that enabled its continuity in real life situations (political institutions, culture and so on). This dilemma has produced some of Marxism's most interesting recent contributions to political economy. While the abstraction of a logic of accumulation has proved very useful in explaining historical transformations through the production of a theory of the laws of motion of capitalism, in order to connect this general movement with concrete historical locations other concrete, on-the-ground institutions and practices have to be considered.

Here Gramsci's stress on the power of reflexive culture to produce the tools for transforming the 'good sense' of concrete historical experience into a 'historical bloc'<sup>3</sup> capable of confronting hegemony expresses the need to resolve the tension between abstract and concrete movements (Gramsci 1987). In his definition of a 'philosophy of praxis', the general problem that Gramsci tries to address is how to produce a coherent conception of the world that empowers subaltern classes as agents of history. This is also set as a necessary superseding of a mechanical determinism that would fatalistically reproduce subaltern positions in a particular structure. To underscore the activity of the will present within subaltern classes was in itself a political act: 'if yesterday the subaltern element was a thing, today it is no longer a thing but an historical person, a protagonist; ... an agent, necessarily active and taking the initiative' (ibid.: 337). For Gramsci (ibid.: 323–77), the forces defining the arena of struggle are: first, a particular structure of the economic and social forces that constitutes the environment of people's practical activity and produces in them, through that

practice, a latent conception of the world; second, a ‘philosophy’ becoming the norm of collective action for a historical epoch which expresses ‘nothing other than the “history” of that epoch itself, nothing other than the mass of variations that the leading group has succeeded in imposing on preceding reality’ (ibid.: 345); and third, a ‘creative philosophy’ critically emergent from practical activity and corresponding to the objective historical necessities of ordinary people (‘the many’) (ibid.: 345–46). This creative philosophy’s strength is predicated on its ‘rationality’, on its correspondence with ‘objective historical necessity’, which makes it acceptable to the many:

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It comes to be accepted by the many, and accepted permanently: that is, by becoming a culture, a form of ‘good sense’, a conception of the world with an ethic that conforms to its structure ... [It is] diffused in such a way as to convert itself into an active norm of conduct. Creative, therefore, should be understood ... as thought which modifies the way of feeling of the many and consequently reality itself, which cannot be thought without this many. Creative also in the sense that it teaches that reality does not exist on its own, in and for itself, but only in a historical relationship with the men who modify it, etc. (ibid.: 346)

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As a consequence of this insight, Marxist social scientists found a way to articulate scale, thereby encompassing intimate experience in relation to institutional transformations and structural movements. Raymond Williams (1977) spoke of ‘structures of feeling’ in order to capture the tension of emerging understandings tied to immediate experience that were simultaneously structured at intimate and institutional scales. Bourdieu (1980a) developed the concept of ‘habitus’ while trying to resolve a similar breach between structure and concrete practice. Anthropologists in particular (e.g. Wolf 1982; Roseberry 1989, 1994; Roseberry and

O'Brien 1991; Smith 1999, 2004) were able to underscore the agency of concrete subaltern positions within hegemonic frameworks.

While all of these approaches were trying to make sense of the tension between abstract and concrete realities simultaneously reproduced at different scales, the moral economy/political economy divide was set in a historical-evolutionary framework that entailed a particular teleology. As it appears in Thompson (1971) initially, and later in Scott (1976, 1985), the moral economy is captured in the historical process of its demise, when its breach by the powerful classes causes the subaltern to revolt, demanding the return of a *status quo ante* that provided relative security in times of crisis (see also Hobsbawm 1965). The moral economy, then, as a historical reality and as an analytical concept, is construed in opposition to classical political economy (also as both a description of historical reality and as a concept). It is defined as a situation where moral obligation (forms of social and political dependencies), rather than contractual obligation (individual autonomy to engage in a commitment freely), set the framework for the transfer of resources and structure the economy (including surplus extraction) (see also Neveling, this volume).

This dichotomous and evolutionist view has been challenged by various scholars, starting with Thompson himself pointing to a methodological problem (Thompson 1993; see also Zelizer 1988; Booth 1994), one which has been mostly resolved by granting an abstract status to the analytical concept and detaching it from its original concrete historical basis, enabling it to float freely as an intellectual commodity. Instead, in my opinion, we need to preserve the tension between the various scales of analysis that are in fact simultaneously experienced by actual historical subjects, and which emerge more clearly in moments of rupture. These moments underscore a mismatch between the processes of surplus extraction and the moral frameworks of obligation that sustained the continuity of particular forms of

production and unequal distribution. Moreover, we need to keep the tension between abstract and concrete realities in our analysis instead of choosing one or the other.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, I want to point to the key articulation between the concrete historical manifestation of the moral economy on the one hand, and the concrete historical manifestation of processes of so called ‘primitive accumulation’ on the other. Both in Thompson’s (and Scott’s) original analysis, what causes the revolt of peasants is tied to the emergence of a new hegemony that, while eroding some types of paternalistic reciprocal obligations, supports a different set of obligations – mostly between an incipient bourgeoisie and power elites – which become central to the development of capitalism. For Thompson, “The “nature of things” which had once made imperative, in times of dearth, at least some symbolic solidarity between the rulers and the poor, now dictated solidarity between the rulers and “the Employment of Capital”” (Thompson 1971: 131). Moreover:

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The breakthrough of the new political economy of the free market was also the breakdown of the old moral economy of provision ... One symptom of its final demise is that we have been able to accept for so long an abbreviated and ‘economistic’ picture of the food riot, as a direct, spasmodic, irrational response to hunger, a picture which is itself a product of a political economy which diminished human reciprocities to the wages-nexus. (ibid.: 136)

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It has been cogently argued by other scholars (Perelman 2000) that the intellectual construction of the corpus of classical political economy was a central aspect in the production of particular institutional frameworks that supported capitalist development. Likewise, various paternalistic institutions and practices of Ancien Régime moral economy in pre-capitalist Europe were supported by a corpus of discourses, mostly but not only religious



ones, which never completely disappeared (Clavero 1990; Hespanha 1993; Guerreau-Jalabert 2000).

The analytical concept of ‘moral economy’, therefore, cannot be separated from its concrete emergence as the expression of a clash of material forces and cultural constructs vying for hegemony at a particular historical conjuncture of primitive accumulation. It is interesting to note, moreover, that the present-day resurgence of the ‘moral economy’ discourse parallels what some scholars have underscored as a new primitive accumulation process (De Angelis 2007), the persisting relevance of processes akin to primitive accumulation such as accumulation by dispossession being recognized as central to capitalism (Harvey 2005). Therefore the ‘moral’ aspect emerges with force again in the concrete conjuncture of the neoliberal expression of present-day capitalism which seems to have shattered a certain moral arrangement of capitalism based, first, on relatively Keynesian distribution of wealth policies, and, second, on the belief that the process sustained by the capitalist objective of expanded accumulation was part of a process of political ‘democratic’ inclusion and relative social ‘convergence’ (Smith 2011). The framework of capitalist morality was supported by the enlightenment liberal project of equality and freedom for all.

The perspective I will use in this article is one that attempts to understand moral aspects of economies as integral to political economy processes and to the drive to expand capital accumulation, a methodology close to Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis.

In particular, what seems to emerge from the two ethnographic cases I present is a situation where moral obligation is an asset for capital accumulation. It is also a situation where ‘embeddedness’ and ‘reciprocity’ are central to the operation of capitalist social relations of production (see also Cross, this volume). In these two cases, we observe a growing tension between two apparently contradictory processes. On the one hand, the technical aspects of productivity and competition focus on enhancing skills through endless

training and obtaining a flexible labour market through the elimination of legal or institutional protection. This is viewed as the necessary liberalization of the labour market, and produces a particular moral environment where responsibility is shifted to the entrepreneurial self of the worker. Flexible capitalism is about enhancing the individual qualities of the worker (adaptable skills for flexible organization) and fully disembedding the labour market from society as expressed by state regulations. On the other hand, requirements of trustworthiness and good character are simultaneously at work in the labour market, relying on embedded social networks or patronage links (see also Garsten, this volume). These are integral to work relations and employment opportunities, and are the other face of flexible capitalism.

The classical concept of 'reciprocity' as developed in anthropology presents an interesting inroad into the observed practices of embeddedness in capitalism. I will explore this avenue in order to underscore two issues that have emerged from my ethnographic experience: first, ambivalence in subjects' evaluation of responsibilities, and, second, anxiety in assessing and judging appropriate moral behaviour. The concept of 'reciprocity', stressing the social value of exchange relations, will be contrasted to that of 'social capital', stressing the exchange value of social relations. These two concepts appear as the mirror image of each other, and stress different aspects of real life experiences that blur various value domains.

After a brief review of the concepts of 'social capital' and 'reciprocity', I will present these issues as they appear in the ethnographies of my two different field sites in Spain. Here, the anxiety caused by the clash or the blurring of boundaries of different value regimes (structures of obligation) becomes apparent. Historical specificities add nuances to the modalities of tension, however. It seems to me that both the generality of the tensions arising from ambivalent responsibilities and the specificity of their localized expression need to be

understood as active principles of capitalism's social reproduction in different historical conjunctures.

### **A>Two Concepts: Social Capital and Reciprocity**

The concept of 'social capital' as defined by Bourdieu (1980b) originally refers to one of the various fields (*champs*) of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Capital is here understood as a social relation, a social energy that can be put to play and accumulated in different fields by social actors constrained by their habitus but free to strategize. Each field has a specific logic to it that determines the incorporated and 'objectified' capital resources to be used efficiently in each field's 'market' (Bourdieu 1988: 112–13). The concept of social capital, here, seeks to explain the specific logic of the social field and its articulation with the system of social reproduction. It highlights how certain forms of sociability are knowingly used and produced as long lasting, non-contractual mutual obligations.<sup>5</sup> As such, they create a particular sense of belonging to a group that will recurrently provide access to valuable resources (material, symbolic). These in turn will be articulated to other forms of capital, within a general logic of accumulation specific to each field. Although it appears as an abstract concept of universal applicability, social capital in Bourdieu is tied to a concrete economic system, namely capitalism, and its social reproduction (Bourdieu 1980b, 1988). Bourdieu's methodology is linked to his critique of capitalism. Nevertheless, Bourdieu's work is partially guilty of the extension of capital as a metaphor to all fields of social interaction, creating the potentiality for the misappropriation of the concept of social capital that subsequently took place.

The concept of social capital that has become hegemonic in the social sciences is based on the premises of rational action theory – a theory that was explicitly rejected by Bourdieu (see Wacquant 1989: 42–43). Coleman's social capital concept seeks to reintroduce

‘social *context*’ in rational action, premised on the autonomous individual and freedom of choice. Indeed, he asserts, ‘the conception of social capital as a resource for action is one way of introducing social structure into the rational action paradigm’ (Coleman 1988: S95). Following this trend, social theorists have developed a concept of social capital attuned to a new development paradigm, one where community relations and values are used as productive ‘capital’ to forward economic development.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the work of Putnam (1993) is key to the articulation of an instrument of economic development – social capital – with the development of civic political responsibility, in a new governance agenda. For Putnam, the kernel of the concept expresses two elements: ‘norms of reciprocity’ and ‘networks of civic participation’ (ibid.: 167). Here, ‘social capital refers to those aspects of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that might improve the efficiency of society through enabling coordinate action’ (ibid.: 167). Putnam’s work has been strongly criticized, and I will not go over the extensive literature here (see e.g. Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Landolt 1996; Tarrow 1996; Newton 1997; Putzel 1997). However, it is important to note that in this political project the state is to be substituted by social capital as the main regulatory instrument.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, the concept appears as part of a neoliberal governance agenda. Indeed, social capital as an instrument of power points, firstly, to instances where moral obligation (‘reciprocity’) substitutes for the legal or contractual obligation sanctioned by the state as a guarantor, and, secondly, to instances where unelected private networks of individuals (‘networks of civic participation’) set the objectives of the ‘common good’ and exercise control over their implementation.<sup>8</sup>

Ben Fine (2001) presents a devastating critique of the concept of social capital and of the use international agencies such as the World Bank have made of it in their post-Washington Consensus development policies. His main critique, from a political economy

point of view, is that the concept rests on a previous conceptual separation between the realms of 'economy' and 'society' and a refusal to understand capital as a set of social relations of production. In that context, the concept of social capital is used to recapture the social and cultural component that had been previously conceptually expelled from capitalism, but was always there. The idea of social capital, on the one hand, adds to the reification and fragmentation of the concept of capital (that is, natural, production, human, social) and obscures our ability to understand our present day political economic reality in terms of connected social relations. On the other hand, as an ideological concept, it points to the direct value of social relations and moral obligation for the purposes of capital accumulation.

Reciprocity is a concept almost as vague and undefined as social capital, and it is also politically charged (Narotzky 2007). It has a particular history in the social sciences that derives, originally, from Enlightenment views of the social and political community as a pact between individuals. Subsequently it has been somewhat elaborated by anthropologists seeking to explain patterns of resource circulation and social cohesion in non-capitalist societies.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of reciprocity has been central to anthropological analyses of social interaction for a long time (e.g. Mauss 2002a; Polanyi 1957; Sahlins 1965; Malinowski 1961, 1971; Weiner 1992; Godelier 1996), and has been revived recently as a sociological concept with an 'alternative economy' political agenda through the writings of the Mouvement Anticapitaliste en Sciences Sociales (MAUSS) group (Godbout 1992; Caillé 2007). The concept describes and seeks to explain transfers that are embedded in social and cultural domains. Cultural values defining moral obligation are crucial to the production of the relationships that support these transfers. In the realm of the economy, reciprocity refers to exchanges taking place within decision-making processes other than those guided by market

logic (that is, gift, charity, solidarity, mutual help, filial care). Reciprocal transfers are supported by previously existing social bonds that they in turn strengthen (Sahlins 1965; Gregory 1982). In the realm of politics, reciprocity refers to relations of mutual obligation that are supported by conceptions of justice and injustice, and moral imperatives (Hobsbawm 1965; Thompson 1971; Scott 1976, 1985; Moore 1978; Bourdieu 1980a). In most societies, transfers of resources and sentiments of mutual obligation (legal, customary, moral) depend on multiple and different logics (material accumulation, prestige increase, religious duty, kinship obligations, love) that contribute to simultaneously reproducing a particular system of domination.

For Gudeman (2001), reciprocity occurs at the boundaries of communities and between communities. It is a means for 'extending the base' by creating commensurable value out of the incommensurable value that is shared by the members of a community, and produces the 'base' for reproducing the community. In this sense, reciprocity could be said to correspond to 'binding' social capital, while sharing the base corresponds to 'bonding' social capital (Woolcock 1998). Social scientists, however, have alerted us to an excessive optimism regarding the nature of reciprocity as invariably expressing a positive aspect of social relations. Indeed, the highly contested and extreme relativity of moral domains of reference that support these transfers are especially subject to unequal, exploitative and speculative social processes such as patronage, corruption and mafias, or to be interpreted as unjust by a part of society that holds different moral frameworks (Bourdieu 1980a; Bugra 1998; Narotzky and Smith 2006). In my view, reciprocity does not represent a communitarian mode of beneficial social interaction found in small, closely knit locations or social environments such as local communities, neighbourhoods or ideologically bound communities. Rather, the concept expresses a particular dimension of social relationships that is found in any kind of society. What seems interesting in Gudeman's perspective on

reciprocity is the tension between incommensurable and commensurable values as they emerge prior to, or unconnected to, commoditization, but always connected to exchange. This tension, however, might be the foundation that enables non-market regimes of value to be co-opted by capital accumulation.

Reciprocity has both a material aspect expressed in the actual transfers of political and economic resources that take place between people or groups, and a cultural aspect expressed in the discourses that support diverse morals of mutual obligation. From this perspective, it attempts to capture the ambivalence in the construction, legitimization and practice of mutual obligation and responsibility in economic and political terms. It seeks to unpack social relations located simultaneously in market and non-market circuits of provisioning, in universal and particularistic modes of claiming, and between beneficial and predatory outcomes of redistribution processes.

Reciprocity, however, is also the concept that describes the personal and concrete quality of social relationships that build up into social capital in Putnam's view (Narotzky 2009). While economists and sociologists trying to use a (post-Washington Consensus) social capital approach to development policies have tried to measure discrete elements of these useful social relationships, they have admitted to the inadequacy of the results, explicitly pointing at the qualitative and embedded nature of most of the elements under scrutiny. Their inability to fully approach these 'other' forms of regulation and obligation that sustain material transfers stems from a flawed methodological proposition: that social relationships can be cut into discrete pieces, and their concrete qualities described as measurable categories subject to aggregation and disaggregation. That is, it stems from positing that social relationships can be treated as 'things'.<sup>10</sup> Instead, a concept of reciprocity, in contrast to social capital, expresses an irresolvable entanglement of social values and material interests that need to be addressed in their ambivalence and tension.<sup>11</sup>

The concept of reciprocity seems to address exchange from a moral economy perspective. However, for our purposes we need to link the concept of reciprocity to a political economy framework while retaining its moral economy aspects. From this perspective, several questions emerge: How do we analyse social relations that sustain flows of transfers (of goods, information, services) that become incorporated in the value of commodities but are not commoditized in market exchange?<sup>12</sup> How are these ‘other’ relationships incorporated in capitalist relations while at the same time being reproduced as something different,<sup>13</sup> more primordial and emotional than contract or market relationships? Are all present-day social relations subsumed in a capitalist global structure of articulations and dependencies? Should we think of them as distinct from or, on the contrary, as a fundamental part of the social reproduction of capitalist accumulation? Would reciprocity be better than social capital for the understanding of how mutual obligation is produced and sustained between individuals, groups and institutions while giving us an insight into how it serves surplus value extraction? Would it help us make theoretical sense of the often ambivalent evaluation that ordinary people make of the social relations they depend on for obtaining a livelihood? What I find most appealing in the reciprocity concept is its underscoring of a generalized system of mutual dependencies and obligations that contribute to forms of collective social belonging. However, as these get thoroughly subsumed under capitalist imperatives, we might find that the social capital concept is a better description of what is taking place.

### **A> Two Ethnographic Vignettes**

I will now present two ethnographic vignettes from different field sites. The first will consider the ‘payoff’ of care giving in a rural setting in Catalonia, where love and interest are the two sides of a morality of domestic social reproduction and petty commodity production



facilitated by land inheritance and access to family labour. This case shows how the entanglement of moral obligation and value production change with the demands of an increasingly liberalized market and the pressure for competition.

The second vignette will consider the ‘traffic’ of favour networks in an informal semi-rural regional economy where providing work in a context of high unemployment is perceived simultaneously as a gift of support, as a market transaction or as a form of exploitation by the subjects involved in the relationship.

In both cases, flexible capitalism is based not only on the opportunistic use of existing reciprocal relations and moral obligations for the purpose of capital accumulation, but on their transformation into a new kind of ambivalent reality.

### **B>** *The Payoff of Love*

The area where I did fieldwork in the mid 1980s is the *comarca* of Les Garrigues in the interior of Catalonia. This is a dry-land farming area specializing in olive oil production. Small and medium landownership (5 to 20 hectares) is the main form of access to land, and property enables membership in the processing cooperative producing olive oil for export.<sup>14</sup> Relations to the means of production within the family farm household (*casa*) show strong differentiation even as the cultural concept of *casa* stresses the common objective of all members of the household toward the collective family farm project.<sup>15</sup> In the 1980s, the pressure of entry into the European Economic Community (Spain joined the EEC in 1986) forced investment to be made in the agricultural means of oil production and transformed social relations of production in order to increase productivity and enhance quality.

Traditionally, the collective productive and reproductive endeavour of household members was not based on a naturalization of mutual obligations: *casa* members were bound by contract, often a notarized document.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, they explicitly set in commensurable

terms the value of their various activities, some of which are strongly entangled with affects. The institution of marriage contracts in this area expressed access to the means of production: it explicitly set material returns for labour invested in the *casa* project, including the loving care of elderly parents. Although few *casas* drew up marriage contracts after the 1950s, every household with some landed property (over 90 per cent of the total) referred to it as the local framework of moral obligation.

The heir's marriage contract served to re-establish privately and explicitly the cultural assumption of a community of interest and *casa* identity as the basis of social reproduction.<sup>17</sup> Simultaneously, it created lines of differentiation between generations (predecessors versus successors in ownership), between siblings (heir versus non-heirs) and between genders (male and female spouse obligations, and male preference in inheritance). These lines constructed specific power relations and revealed intra-household differentiation embedded in the meanings of such words as work, care and love: they defined what 'working for the *casa*' meant for different household members, and what they would get for it.<sup>18</sup> Within this framework, support networks were developed, often full with tension and contradictory objectives and meanings, especially when urbanized, nuclear-family-centred, domestic moral economies become hegemonic in the late twentieth century as the competitive injunctions of the EEC came into play. Institutionalized modes of defining economic responsibilities and exchanges between household members (through customary law) and of producing the *casa* as an economic unit (a family farm) are increasingly overlapped by non-institutionalized modes of defining filial responsibilities (through affects and flexible moral obligations) and by technical modes of organizing the agricultural business.

Still, recent informal support and care practices must be understood against the background of the institutionalized process of past marriage contracts (Narotzky 1991). The commitment to reproduce the *casa*, constrains the younger couple into dependent, sometimes

exploitive relations with an older couple in exchange for a sharecropping income and other resources such as shelter, babysitting or food-produce donations. Care of the elderly predecessor couple is, in the end, the factor determining the transfer of property assets to the next generation, and is the responsibility of the woman of the younger couple. This creates opportunities for non-inheriting siblings that take care of propertied elders without direct heirs. As time goes by, the priorities of the elderly couple change with care work becoming increasingly important as compared to farm labour. The power balance between younger and older couple, and between genders in the younger couple is thus transformed. Property ownership is the definitive sanction of the transfer of control between generations, and the transfer is not completed until the older couple both die.<sup>19</sup> Property transfer is also the proof of 'love' coming from the older couple, and reciprocates the caring 'love' given by the younger couple. The marriage 'love' bond between the younger couple presents the young woman's care work as a joint endeavour and glosses over her exploitation as a care giver, especially when she is not the daughter and will not inherit. The *casa* will benefit from her work as a care giver which will be acknowledged as a contribution to that collective aim.<sup>20</sup>

The picture that is drawn here is one where support provided in the language of love and moral obligation consolidates claims on material resources that are conceived of as part of entrepreneurial assets oriented toward the capitalist viability of the farm, while maintaining a family centred reproduction priority.

In the mid 1980s, the effort to make farms viable and competitive before entry into the EEC pushed women into informal garment production networks, producing for such international brands as Benetton, which provided additional income for the household. Capitalization of the farm was supported by work that relied heavily on personalized social networks. This work went mostly unaccounted for in terms of the moral framework of the *casa* project. In contrast to the traditional institutionalized care work of household women

that provided access to farm assets, income from garment work was viewed as individual and aimed at personal consumption, and the term used for it was the morally tainted *malgastos*, literally ‘bad expenses’. But women used this personal income for family and household expenses (food, clothing, minor repairs) that had previously been covered by agricultural income.<sup>21</sup> This practice freed farm income from being used for household reproduction and transformed it into capital for investment in the agricultural business. Love and care for the family channelled women’s personal income into ‘working for the *casa*’ without properly being acknowledged doing so (Narotzky 1990). The embeddedness of women’s moral commitment to the *casa* became the reason for their work in informal garment manufacture. Their labour was simultaneously incorporated and exploited in the agricultural and the garment commodity chains of capital accumulation, while their aim was to ‘work for the *casa*’.

### **B>** *The Traffic of Favours*

The fieldwork for the following vignette was carried out by Gavin Smith and myself during 1995/6 in the Vega Baja, a region in the autonomous community of Valencia. This is a predominantly shoe-manufacturing area with over 40 per cent footwear production in the informal sector and declining agricultural production of citrus and other garden produce for export (Bernabé 1975; Ybarra 1991; Ybarra et al. 2004; Narotzky and Smith 2006; Narotzky 2009). The structure of production is fragmented and decentralized, and it relies heavily on family, kin and neighbourhood networks that alternatively provide access to income and labour. This takes a form resembling the Italian ‘industrial districts’, although with a clear hierarchical subcontracting articulation nested in networks of personalized relations centred on large commercial firms that often only retain marketing and packaging processes (Sabel 1989; Ybarra 1991; Becattini 1994; Ybarra et al. 2004). The traffic of favours is ubiquitous

and permeates the entire social fabric. Here I wish to highlight the tensions that arise when feelings of shared belonging, structured by values and obligations (kinship, friendship, other forms of mutuality) that are not referred to in terms of the market become crucial to the organization of production in a very competitive global footwear market. Here, the experience of work is deeply embedded in other social relations and regimes of value that are distinct from market values. What happens, then, when labour and capital relations forgo 'contracts' and, instead, rely heavily on the personal attributes and social circumstances of workers, middlemen and sweatshop owners? What happens when different regimes of value overlap in such a way that a pervasive ambiguity seems to be the basis of the local structuring of production? The situation in this case seems to mirror that of the previous case: instead of drawing up a contract of relations of production supported by affective ties (rendering commensurable the incommensurable), here theoretically contractual ties – such as the wage relation part of the labour market – eschew contracts and are substituted by personalized ties (rendering incommensurable the commensurable).

For the small shoe-manufacturing entrepreneur or middleman in the Vega Baja, subject to the demands and tensions of a highly competitive global market, the use of affective relations for the construction of production relations is a necessity. Their claim over other people's work are based on shared notions of belonging and mutual responsibility that refer to non-market domains (family, neighbourhood, friendship) and are morally qualified (Narotzky 2004). However, these claims occur in a context where the hegemonic model for labour relations is the contractual model of the free labour market. This ambiguous situation generates strong tensions and anxiety, both in the realm of the organization of the labour process as well as in the realm of affective relations and the structuring of personal and collective responsibilities. Deep tensions are generated or aggravated by the present-day embeddedness of production relations in the social fabric of the community, the family and

the self. These tensions arise from conflicting obligations towards those around whom personal and collective identities are constructed and security against uncertainty is intimately built. Conflicting responsibilities are experienced as part of a unique morality with two clearly differentiated and potentially contradictory aspects: firstly, economic interest; and second, care responsibilities. Both aspects are experienced as simultaneously part of the substance that builds proximity relations between kin, neighbours and friends, but the danger of their incompatibility is always lurking and emotionally stressful (Narotzky 2006). The moral aspect of the obligation both supports and contradicts exchange relations and exploitation. The permanent articulation of these split responsibilities is similar to that described for patronage moral economies and clientelist systems of power. This is often rendered in the language of ‘favours’, where people situated in very different social and economic positions try to make sense of the moral obligations that frame responsibility (Wolf 1966).

#### **A> Ambiguous Responsibilities between Care and Profit**

The two cases sketched above bring out different articulations of economy and morality. The first case exposes the entanglement of different levels and meanings of provisioning, linking love and care to the material devolution of property and production work for the farm. It shows how domains of morality, exchange and power overlap in the social reproduction of the family farm, where the moral obligation to give care secures the right to property, and where positioning in regard to property legitimates power cleavages and exploitative relations in agriculture within the *casa*. The situation has changed in the context of growing involvement by local family farms in competitive global markets that demand increased investment, shifting family income to capital. This in turn has led to a diversification of income provisioning strategies, such as informal garment manufacture. As a result, the

clearly defined obligations of past marriage contracts (moral obligations sanctioned by law) have become blurred. In local discourse, the reproduction of the *casa* is still acknowledged as the most important objective of all household members. However, the idiom of value has shifted almost unnoticed from the kinship-oriented reproduction of the *casa* to a market-oriented idea of the farm's viability in market (money-making) terms.<sup>22</sup> In the context of the farm as a market enterprise that has to produce an income for the family and reproduce or accumulate capital in order to ensure viability in market terms through investment, two complementary sets of responsibilities emerge as indissolubly tied, one that addresses the creation of profit, the other that of family income and care (Narotzky 1990). But the two contexts have fuzzy boundaries in practice: care has to be given for capital assets to be transferred, and farm viability needs to be maintained for family income to enable urbanized forms of consumption. Simultaneously, women's personal income from wages needs to be lovingly devoted to domestic consumption in order to enable capitalization of the farm and its viability.

The overlapping of these different domains of value seems central to the creation and appropriation of surplus value both in agriculture and the garment industry. Stephen Gudeman speaks of 'debasement' when the 'base' of community reproduction is co-opted by the 'market'. He defines this process as one where 'joining the un-priced and the priced, or community resources, labor and relationships, with capital, can lead to debasement' (Gudeman 2001: 126). The Catalan farmers' case that I have just described could be interpreted as 'debasement' (ibid.: 121-143), where shifts between different value regimes effect a conversion of value that is appropriated by and accumulates in the market realm (the incommensurable 'base' being dispossessed by the commensurable 'market'). It seems to me, however, that these differentiated 'regimes' appear as the consequence of our categories of analysis, but are not relevant in practice to real subjects. Instead, what seems to be relevant

for practice is the ambiguity that we can capture in the ‘love’ idiom that links care, moral obligation and material transfers, which are central to involvement in the market by farmer entrepreneurs and to the provisioning of cheap and docile labour in garment manufacture. Base and market appear as two faces of the same coin, and ambiguity becomes the stuff of social practice: we seem to be closer to Gudeman’s concept of reciprocity, which incorporates the tension between incommensurable and commensurable values in exchange. Here, the social value of exchange structures and takes precedence as the argument for social organization: working/caring for the casa.

The second case study would seem to involve a much clearer case of ‘debasement’. However, I would like to address these ambiguous categories directly instead of thinking in terms of different value regimes (gift and commodity) or distinct domains of the economy (base and market). Indeed, what seems to be happening in the Vega Baja’s decentralized and heavily informal footwear production industry is that social actors cannot easily separate their everyday practices into distinct value regimes. Thus my contention is that this overlapping of value regimes is precisely what enables a particular form of exploitation by capitalist firms. The blurring of value boundaries also produces a particular mode of governmentality that shifts conflict locations and obscures knowledge about the localized and globalized processes of capital accumulation. In the present conjuncture it might be useful to think about a regime of value constituted by both incommensurable and commensurable kinds of value, with personalized, affective, moral obligations and rational, contractual ones operating simultaneously. Reciprocity turns into social capital as an asset for accumulation. The moral economy arena is losing the sharp boundaries that seemed to differentiate a non- or pre-capitalist ‘moral economy’ based on reciprocity from the ‘political economy’ of capitalism based on free contractual exchange relations.<sup>23</sup> Rather than a process of ‘conversion’ between distinct value domains, as Gudeman proposes, we might be witnessing a process of value



creation within an ambiguous value regime that enables accumulation in present-day capitalism, and simultaneously the reproduction of social and identity values through commodity consumption.<sup>24</sup> If the central tenet of the Marxist labour theory of value is the dual nature of labour in the commodity – the *form* of exchange value and the real use value *content* – then the unity of opposites of this dual reality results in a situation whereby, ‘the transaction between the capitalist and the worker is as much an exchange of equivalents as of non-equivalents’ (Grossman 1977: 36). In the case of the Vega Baja, mystification directly addresses the ‘form’ of exchange: the form of relations between capital and labour is that of non-equivalent, personalized, localized and unique reciprocity ties, but it is simultaneously that of a commoditized, labour-market exchange equivalent. Here the ‘exchange of equivalents’ aspect of the commodity of labour power is in turn mystified by a non-commoditized form (social capital). The content remains its use value capacity to produce concrete goods (see also Knox, this volume).

In the present conjuncture, forms of market value extraction seem to increasingly favour a fully embedded labour force, one whose economic alienation is predicated on its linkage to other forms of reciprocal obligation and value regimes (in fact, to its non-alienation). It is often embedded in such a way that ‘love labour’ and wage labour are impossible to separate, different moralities are not easy to distinguish, and the tensions of the constant overlapping of value realms produces useful forms of cooperation but often also acute distress (see also Cross, Garsten, this volume). It is also embedded in such a way that capitalist firms directly or indirectly rely on the growing ambiguity of the relation between capital and labour to extract surplus value. Keane has described the ambiguity involved in exchange processes as a result of semiotic volatility and the temporal dimension of most exchange processes where ‘the boundaries among regimes of value are always vulnerable to slippage and retrospective re-categorization’ through the mediating role of metalanguages of

action, reflexively characterizing and disciplining systems of exchange (Keane 2008: 33).<sup>25</sup>

This is an insightful perspective on the variability of value regimes, but it rests on the assumption that actors operate shifts between set categories of value regimes that can be discursively defined and are often discrete. Instead, I propose that present-day values are increasingly ambiguous as categories and ambivalent as moral guides for action, but seem to have become central in the discourse of capitalism and in its practice.

## **A>Conclusion**

The argument I want to make is about a shift in perspective away from conceiving distinct, confronted regimes of value producing antagonistic forms of moral obligation that would guide practice according to dissimilar categories of good or bad, clearly apparent to the social actors concerned and potentially producing struggles over value. Rather, I suggest we listen to the anxiety of the subjects in our ethnographic experience and to their inability to define their actions in terms of stable categories and moral options regarding their economic practices. The entanglement of care and profit values might not be a novelty, as our Catalan farmers know from their past moral economy of the *casa* and the reciprocal obligations of ‘working for the *casa*’. But care and profit then appeared as complementary aspects of a coherent morality centred on the household as a social entity and identity to be reproduced.<sup>26</sup> It was a household moral economy, instituted in customary law, that created its own anxieties, but was unambiguous as to its objectives and obligations. In present-day farming households, this clarity is disappearing as market capitalization obligations compete with family reproduction obligations (and individual consumption becomes the main driving force of younger generations) within the apparently stable and coherent idiom of the *casa* project.

For the footwear manufacturers of the Vega Baja, the informal structure of production and subcontracting that replaced large Fordist factories in the late 1970s has strongly re-

embedded production relations in personal networks of reciprocity, in turn embedded in market-oriented objectives. Sabel (1991) has described this as a Möbius strip-like situation, where different value regimes form the obverse and reverse sides of an undistinguishable continuum.

We must now ask what characterizes this new ambiguous value regime. First, uncertainty: the semiotic volatility described by Keane has materialized in Sabel's Möbius strip-like framework. As a consequence, the reconfiguration of actions according to different idioms is not so much an instrumental discursive shift that develops in time; for many, it is a permanent ambiguous reality producing anxiety, while for others it remains mostly an opportunistic arena where this ambiguous value regime becomes an instrument of exploitation within a clearly defined market value orientation.

Second, class demobilization: it is increasingly difficult to understand market imperatives as different from livelihood ones, so that the entrepreneurial self appears as the universal identity model (see Garsten, this volume). It is increasingly difficult to experience commonality in the practices of exploitation and dispossession, as every individual takes responsibility for their social position and sees it as crucially embedded in their personal assets, now transformed into 'capital' assets ('human capital' and 'social capital' being classical examples). The collapsing of a 'household morality' into 'capitalist morality', two realms of value that had initially been carved out as different with the rise of industrial capitalism during the nineteenth century,<sup>27</sup> impedes the production of spaces of autonomy, convergence and dissent around moral values such as 'respect' or 'responsibility' not directed by money-making objectives (Sennett and Cobb 1972; Rancière 1981).<sup>28</sup> Following De Angelis (2007), it is worth keeping in mind the discursive and practical production of distinct regimes of value in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the outcome of a value struggle. However, the situation I am describing seems to be one of value collusion, which is

different from that of social movements that attempt to create values distinct from capitalist-driven ones through value struggle.

Here I want to make a brief excursus around the value concept as differently framed by moral economy and political economy approaches. From a political economy point of view, value is inextricably linked with the commoditized aspect of social reproduction through the production and exchange of the commodities that are needed to sustain life. The double aspect of value (use value and exchange value) emerges as a consequence of this, and the simultaneous exchange of equivalents and non-equivalents gives rise to the Marxist labour theory of value. Thus value is a fundamentally contradictory dimension that human relations adopt in capitalism. Worth is what accrues as profit individually and socially from this fundamental contradiction. From a moral economy viewpoint, value relates to responsibility and mutual obligation in a social and cultural environment that appears as coherent, albeit unequal. Worth comes from seamless compliance to formally instituted or tacit norms that contrive to ensure social reproduction. In the classic moral economy approach (Thompson 1971; Scott 1976) and the newer version of value struggles (De Angelis 2007), what is analysed is the clash between these two modes of measuring value in particular historical conjunctures of primitive accumulation or the expansion of enclosure.<sup>29</sup>

In my hypothesis, present-day capitalism rests on a new moral hegemony based on the blurring of value regimes that were previously clearly defined and instituted.<sup>30</sup> If, as Marx and Engels envisioned it, the ‘constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones’ (2010:16), we might be witnessing one of these revolutions in the Möbius strip-like compression of value regimes that increasingly pervades social relations of and in production, and guides the reproduction of the system. The uncertainty and anxiety that is thus produced in ordinary people becomes a powerful

ideological means of domination for economic and political elites. Marxist political economy understood that the exchange value of labour power realized in the market obscured the concrete aspect it had as a use value able to incorporate concrete value into commodities and produce surplus value through exchange. An important part of the concrete aspect of labour power stems from the various moral obligations set by a historically produced cultural and social reality. This is used as an asset by capitalist firms both large and small in a global conjuncture. As a result, the equalizing aspect of the market exchange form of labour power is obscured with the underscoring of its extremely particularized assets. Present-day capitalism destroys society not so much through disembedding the economy from other social relations and value realms, but rather through pervasively embedding capitalist objectives in all spheres of responsibility, blurring distinctions, inhibiting the emergence of alternative value spaces and preventing struggle – in fact, by turning reciprocity (a nineteenth-century concept) into social capital (a late-twentieth-century concept).

In the Catalan farmers' case, the *casa* moral economy is not devoid of contradiction and anxiety. It is strongly articulated with the money-making realm through labour and produce markets, farm investment needs and family and individual consumption patterns that express social position in a class-based society. Even so, value is strongly oriented toward family-*casa* reproduction rather than capital accumulation, although this is mediated by the competitive market. What the Vega Baja case seems to show more clearly perhaps is that capitalist relations of production often co-opt spaces and networks of intimate belonging directly for profit-making objectives, and entangle moralities of a very different sort in a unique practice of earning a livelihood. This situation should be compared to the proto-industrial entanglement of merchant capitalism and independent producer figures, which has generally been described as petty commodity production patterns of capitalist encroachment (or the articulation of different 'modes of production'). If we free ourselves from the

‘transition’ model framework and look at these realities as paradoxical, non-rational, albeit reasonable aspects of capitalist production relations, we might be in a better position to analyse some of the mechanisms that sustain capitalist reproduction in the long term. Ambivalent value regimes and ambiguous categories increase the ability of both discretionary and arbitrary decision making by those in power.

As the ambivalence of moral regimes grows, so does the totalitarian aspect of capitalist relations expand into the intimacy of the entrepreneurial self, closing spaces for thinking and acting according to other sets of obligations. This is closely related to a round of accumulation by dispossession, whereby enclosure attacks the most intimate boundaries of personal support and solidarity, and uses these relationships as assets in the market. As a result, non-equivalent exchange in the labour market gets incorporated into the surplus value extraction process in production. While this has been described and theorized at the ‘formal subsumption’ stage of capitalist development, I would suggest that it is central to present day flexible capitalism as well. Flexible capitalism appears to refer to a situation where ‘real subsumption’ often adopts the mystified form of personalized, reciprocity-based, non-commoditized relations for the labour power commodity. This is a process of ‘paradoxical alienation’ where capitalist exploitation – the accumulation of surplus value – hinges on not fully commoditizing the labour force.

Rather than presenting a totally new phase of capitalist accumulation, flexible capitalism can be described as ‘change within continuity’, a situation where some practices of entanglements and moral obligations that sustained work transfers and work organization (kinship, patronage, ritual, customary law and so on) in other circumstances (for example, merchant capitalism, proto-industrialization, Fordist capitalism) are transformed into something similar yet different in present-day globalized free-trade capitalism. The tension between the concepts of reciprocity and social capital as they can be used to describe the

present-day situation of flexible capitalism seems to capture both the ambiguity of the value of social relations in exchange and the ambivalence surrounding the final objective of exchange.

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## A>Notes

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1 Although some authors have proposed an extension of the concept to other domains of life (e.g. Fassin 2009), stressing the moral in the ‘moral economy’ concept and adopting a very general understanding of ‘economy’, I think that the particular force of the concept rests in the articulation of moral values and obligations with material provisioning and resource allocation.

2 In the Marxist tradition, concepts such as ‘formal subsumption’ and ‘articulation of modes of production’ are examples of this difficulty; in the neo-classical tradition, ‘modernization’ and ‘underdevelopment’ are also attempts to address this difficulty; more recently the concepts of ‘informal economy’ and ‘social capital’ also tackle the issue.

3 In Gramsci’s terms, the ‘historical bloc’ refers to the articulation of material realities and



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ideological constructs. He stresses the need for organic intellectuals to produce knowledge that corresponds to the actual feelings of the ‘popular element’ and to the material structure they live in. The historical bloc thus formed can then become a force of change (Gramsci 1987: 360, 366, 377, 418): ‘If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation ... is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge ... then and only then is the relationship one of representation. Only then ... can the shared life be realised which alone is a social force – with the creation of the “historical bloc”’ (ibid.: 418).

<sup>4</sup> For expressions of this tension, see both Garsten and Knox (this volume).

<sup>5</sup> The concept is defined as ‘the ensemble of actual or potential resources that are tied to the possession of a durable web of relationships, more or less institutionalized, of inter-acquaintance and inter-acknowledgement’ (Bourdieu 1980b: 2).

<sup>6</sup> See the Social Capital Initiative at the World Bank

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTSOCIALCAPITAL/0,,contentMDK:20194767~isCURL:Y~menuPK:401035~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:401015,00.html>, accessed May 4th 2010. For a critique, see Fine (2001).

<sup>7</sup> ‘In all societies, to summarize our argument so far, dilemmas of collective action hamper attempts to cooperate for mutual benefit, whether in politics or in economics. Third-party enforcement is an inadequate solution to this problem. Voluntary cooperation (like rotating credit associations) depends on social capital. Norms of generalized reciprocity and networks of civic engagement encourage social trust and cooperation because they reduce incentives to defect, reduce uncertainty, and provide models for future cooperation. Trust itself is an emergent property of the social system, as much as a personal attribute. Individuals are able to be trusting (and not merely gullible) because of the social norms and networks within

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which their actions are embedded' (Putnam 1993: 177). For a critique of the perverse effects of the application of the social capital concept in the development programmes of international agencies, see Bretón (2005).

<sup>8</sup> For a critique, see Greco (1996), Bologna (1997), Supiot (2000) and Bretón (2005).

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that the concept of reciprocity is ambivalent from the start. First, it relates to 'organic solidarity' (Durkheim), that is, to heterogeneous societies (*sociétés polysegmentaires*, or complex societies) and explicit norms and obligations, while, second, it is assumed as the main characteristic of 'primitive' closely knit societies, of communities sharing a 'base' homogeneously glued by 'culture' (Durkheim 2008); but see Mauss (2002b) for an early critique.

<sup>10</sup> See Knox (this volume ) for the case of skill.

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note in this respect that Lévi-Strauss's reading of Mauss was particularly harmful to the idea of reciprocity as developed in the latter's essay on the gift. Mauss's proposition (one that has been subsequently recaptured by many Melanesianists, e.g. Weiner 1992) is tied to his idea of the 'total prestation' – that is, to a mode of social interaction where people and things are not detached from each other a priori, often are never fully detached even when changing hands in circulation, and where the movement of objects participates simultaneously in different value regimes in the society as well as being key to the social reproduction of the total structure. In Lévi-Strauss's reading, there is instead an 'exchange' which means that individuals or groups are detached from the things they give to each other, and that it is the action of giving and taking things that produces social cohesion (Lévi-Strauss 1989).

<sup>12</sup> This debate brings to mind the domestic labour debate of the 1970s, which attempted to understand how domestic housework was incorporated as value through the commodity of labour power (Dalla Costa and James 1972).

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13 This brings to mind Harvey's idea of the centrality of the process of accumulation by dispossession in capitalism, and how an 'outside' has to be produced and reproduced in order to keep the process of accumulation going (Harvey 2005).

14 During the nineteenth century, however, large numbers of day labourers (up to 50 per cent) and a substantial number of sharecroppers constituted the productive structure, although the size of properties was on average similar. Private oil mills were then the only means available for transforming the crop into oil and, patronage relations with large land- and oil-mill owners were pervasive.

15 The same concept – *casa* – is used by Catalan political representatives as a metaphor of the nation, building on a nineteenth-century corporatist and Catholic understanding of the social body, but simultaneously based on the contractual tradition of the Catalan customary law of medieval origin (Terradas 1984; Prat 1989).

16 This system of household production and impartible inheritance developed in relation to a particular emphyteutical organization of feudal production in this area of Catalonia (Terradas 1984). Emphyteusis is a usufruct system whereby rights to land are hereditary held on a piece of land that is the property of another person.

17 This identity includes all people originally belonging to a certain *casa*, even after founding another *casa* in the case of non-heirs.

18 'Working for the *casa*' is a formula found in all marriage contracts, and the central argument justifying transfers of property and services.

19 As the death of the propertied parent approaches, a notarized donation *inter vivos* will probably transfer the main property assets to the younger couple, reserving use rights to both parents until their death, in order to make sure that they will receive proper care.

20 A man in his late sixties told me the following about his father, who had died aged ninety: 'I loved my father very much and I respected him ... But I never knew if he really loved me

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until he died and left me all the property. I thought he didn't love me because he had never demonstrated it, he had never said, "I will leave you everything". But he did, and this proves that he loved me. I thought he didn't love me, you understand, he never expressed it'. In a further elaboration of the intertwining of love, morality and material transfers of care and property, this man, whose wife had taken care assiduously of his father 'until the last minute', explained: 'That person who takes care of you until death is the one who should get a compensation (*recompensa*) ... The heir (*hereu*) has to care for his parents until the last minute, that is the reason why then the parents give the biggest share to the one who stays with them, who is good with them. Being good (*portarse bien*) means one should take care, and if the parent is sick [it means] to keep company and cook the food, to wash the clothes, to take care of the house – that is being good ... The person who is with you in the house (*casa*), who has to clean you if you dirty yourself, has to clean the bed, do everything for you, feed you in the mouth and push the wheel chair. I suppose this is the one who should get the larger part'.

<sup>21</sup> For a similar case, see Neveling (this volume).

<sup>22</sup> I refer here to Gudeman's concepts of the 'base' as oriented toward the reproduction of the community's resources, and the 'market' as profit oriented (Gudeman 2001). Here the concept of petty commodity production used in the peasant studies literature might be particularly appropriate.

<sup>23</sup> Here I am using Hann's definition of moral economy: 'moral economy is primarily a nexus of beliefs, practices and emotions among the folk, rather than an analytical concept designed to register only those beliefs, practices and emotions which conduce to action which the observer considers to be progressive...' (Hann 2010: 195).

<sup>24</sup> For buyer-driven commodity chains such as footwear, clothing and so on, Foster speaks of a 'value chain' that encompasses two poles of value creation, part of a unique process. He

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points to branding in consumption processes, in the context of commodity chain structures of production as a form of value creation and accumulation that is based on the articulation of surplus value extraction in a classical labour–capital relationship, and a ‘work of love’ in consumption practices which also produces value that is extracted and accumulated by capital (Foster 2008: 20). A similar argument is made by Thrift about the centrality of ‘affects’ in the added value creation process (Thrift 2005) and in politics (Thrift 2004).

25 Keane has argued that ‘the boundaries among regimes of value are always vulnerable to slippage and retrospective recategorization. This is due both to the semiotic ambiguity inherent in material things themselves, and in the temporal dimension of virtually any exchange that extends beyond barter for immediate use. Both the ambiguity and temporality provide openings for social intervention and individual opportunism. For instance, a loan that is never returned can become a ‘gift’ – or a ‘theft’. Goods given by one party in an ethos of generalized reciprocity (‘we never calculate among brothers’), if never reciprocated, may in time become subject to a bitter reckoning of accounts after all. An incomplete marriage exchange may register as the Maussian debt that creates solidarity among affines – or, in time, produce a shameful relation of subordination. If transactions are events, they are geared to exerting control over definitions and outcomes in the future, beyond the event. They thus contain within themselves metalanguages of action, that is, reflexive characterizations (explicit but more often implicit) of the kind of event now taking place, and the kinds of participants entering into it. Distinctions among regimes of value require indigenous forms of objectification and self-consciousness that tell people, for instance, “this now is a case of swapping, not selling”, and so forth’ (Keane 2008: 33).

He adds: ‘It is, I want to suggest, in the very nature of social institutions and actions that the mediating role of semiotic forms in systems of exchange, of the metalanguages that discipline them, and thus of the social relations they continue to reflect and even reproduce, should play

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a critical role even in the newest economic formations' (ibid.: 36).

26 People were known through the name of the *casa* they were born into, or by the name of the *casa* they married into.

27 This was often conceived as a 'natural economy' or a 'pre-capitalist economy' by Marx, one that set the conditions of possibility for primitive accumulation through enclosure and formal subsumption. This carving out of clearly differentiated value regimes seems to be as much the result of confrontation and struggle between the powerful as the result of organic intellectuals' strategies of defending spaces of autonomy (Humphries 1977; Reddy 1987).

<sup>28</sup> See also Humphries (1977) for labourers' struggle to maintain a 'separate' space in the home).

29 Enclosure is defined as 'The action of surrounding or marking off (land) with a fence or boundary; the action of thus converting pieces of common land into private property.' OED

30 This can also provide a useful perspective on the related transformations of the liberal state into its present form of overlapping responsibilities, and its fuzzy – rational-emotional – justifications for regulation (devolution of responsibilities, overlapping of jurisdictions, legal pluralism and the cunning state). Cf. Randeria (2007).

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