

FACTORY, FAMILY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INFORMAL LABOUR IN SHEFFIELD

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This article explores the experience of formal and informal steel labour in the contexts of the factory, the family, and the neighbourhood in 'Endcliffe', an ex-industrial district of Sheffield, UK. The article reiterates Claude Meillassoux's claim, in his book *Maidens, meal and money*, that the informal economy is an ideological space for the cheap reproduction of labour in the interests of capital. Nevertheless, it also examines subjective and ethnographic understandings of the meanings of 'capital' and 'labour' and of the political nature of their shifting boundaries. In Endcliffe, capitalist subcontracting, state welfare, and economic policies of local regeneration have increased the informalization and casualization of steel labour and blurred the social spaces of the factory, the family, and the neighbourhood. The increased permeability between formal and informal economic processes and the re-embeddedness of production in the social and political texture of the neighbourhood tangles idioms of kinship and capitalist ideologies of production and turns the structural conflict between 'capital' and 'labour' into a generational and gender conflict within the working class. The article shows that the 'New Labour' government's attempt to transform Britain into a post-industrial and classless society has paradoxically fostered the re-emergence of ancient modes of production and forms of bonded labour.

Endcliffe

'Endcliffe' is an ex-industrial area in the East End of Sheffield, UK.¹ The length of Endcliffe Road, which leads up the hill to Endcliffe Cemetery, is punctuated by a hotchpotch of premises, some of which we will return to below: scrap-yards, derelict Victorian shop-floors, Gypsy sites, call centres, boarded-up community centres, electrical shops, the Sheffield Arena, the Bingo centre, Johnny's 'swap shop', the second-hand tool shop, the 'Greek' and Elysium brothels, Khaled's pub, and Milly's 'Black Sparrow'. In the cemetery the gravestones of dead steelworkers turn toward the valley overlooking big steel plants and small workshops dotted along the river Don. Inscribed with sober statements and facing each other in a circle as though for a business meeting, the gravestones of local entrepreneurs and MPs turn towards the street. Described by Marx in 1865 as the outcome of the new despotic capitalism, the many now derelict mills reflected on the surface of the river Don have endured a long history of expansion, nationalizations, rationalizations, and closures before reaching the calm state of desolation in which they may be

found today. Since the 1980s, local council development policies have created a leisure paradise from what was Endcliffe's industrial landscape with its 'visually polluting and obnoxious scrap-yards, car-breakers and less capital-intensive businesses in the local steel and metal industry' (Sheffield City Council 1986: 153). The river Don has been cleaned up, re-landscaped with exotic plants, and repopulated with trout and salmon.

In official statistics Endcliffe is classified as an 'area of urban deprivation'.² It is one of the twenty-five poorest wards in England, with an average recorded income of £4,000 per family and an unemployment rate of 25 per cent.³ Relative to Sheffield as a whole, Endcliffe has high rates of mortality and divorce, drug use, prostitution, and crime. Despite this picture of extreme poverty and economic stagnation, my fieldwork shows that the people of Endcliffe manage to create what they would call 'a decent life' by complementing wage-work with informal economic activities. My research reveals, for example, that one person in four is informally self-employed, that half the population has multiple jobs, and that, contrary to the official statistics, the average family income is around £17,000.⁴

The informal economy of Endcliffe relies on four kinds of activities: first, illegal activities – trade of drugs, sex, and stolen goods – and mutual exchanges of services and goods organized in the local pubs and households; second, wage-work paid off-the-books and subcontracted locally by the main steel and building contractors, moonlighting, and trade of steel scrap, machines, and tools; third, work subcontracted off-the-books by local petty capitalists; and, finally, transfers of benefits from the state. These four strands of informal economy are located at the level of the state, the factory, and the neighbourhood.

Informal economy

A number of studies on the informal economy claim that informal economic processes develop as a consequence of de-industrialization (Lupton 2001; Mingione 1983). These studies emphasize the gulf that separates formal and informal economic processes, the increasing marginality of those people involved in informal or illegal economic activities, and the function of these latter in redistributing resources from the state and the middle classes to the socially disadvantaged.

Other studies stress interdependence between formal and informal economic processes. Some authors (Leonard 1998; Portes & Walton 1981; Standing 1989) frame this interdependence in the context of capitalist restructuring. Others frame it in the broader context of the relationships between 'core' and 'peripheral' countries (Quijano 1977) or between capitalist and non-capitalist societies (Meillassoux 1981). These authors claim that the exploitative potential of the informal economy arises from the fact that the informal economy comes to provide cheap, non-unionized, and flexible labour to main contractors in the formal economy.

A third strand (Fortunati 1995; Redcliff 1985) considers the domestic and informal economy as a form of capitalist appropriation of unpaid female and child labour through bonds of kinship.⁵

So-called 'means of livelihood' scholars (Gershuny & Miles 1985; Hart 1973; Pahl 1984) dismiss analyses focused on macro- and formal economic processes taking place in the realm of the factory and highlight instead local, individual, and informal strategies of production and reproduction taking place in the realm of the family and/or the community. Keith Hart, for instance, in his seminal article 'Informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana' (1973) shows that the formal and the informal economy of Accra, Ghana, are indissolubly linked. He deconstructs folk Western images of informal economy as being marginal and residual to show the rich social networks that support informal activities, the intense diversification of Accra's informal economy, and the personal freedom and 'magnetic' attraction (Hart 1988: 190) associated with life in the slums. Hart's article highlights the redistributive effects of the informal economy and shows that 'unemployment' and 'wage-employment' are statistical abstractions that do not account for the variety of economic activities located between the wage and the dole.

More recently, 'means of livelihood' scholars have claimed that post-modern and flexible economic processes imply a shift from formal employment and the wage economy to informal work and the communal and household economy. They generally agree on the empowering effects of the latter *vis-à-vis* the hierarchical and exploitative relationships that develop in the realm of commodified wage labour. For instance, Pahl's (1984; 1990) and Pahl and Wallace's (1985) detailed empirical studies show that most of the people involved in the informal economy in the UK are wage-workers. Pahl reads this evidence against the claim by Marxist scholars that informal labour is exploitative in nature and suggests instead that people might wish to engage in informal activities rather than being forced to do so by unemployment and poverty. 'Means of livelihood' scholars rightly focus on the way in which people actively combine formal employment in the factory and informal work in the household and the community. In so doing, they problematize the very distinction between formal and informal economy. Nevertheless, they deny the exploitative potential of the informalization of previously industrialized labour and of the reproduction of capitalist social relations in the domestic realm. More generally, with few exceptions (e.g. Geertz 1963; Goddard 1996; Hart 1988), studies of informal economy oscillate between macro and micro levels of analysis, between the factory and the household, and between emphases on capitalist exploitation in the realm of production and wage economy, on the one hand, and on the strategies of labour in the realm of reproduction, on the other hand.

In this article I reconcile micro and macro analyses by locating my shop-floor ethnography in the broader politico-economy of the neighbourhood and the state. Like Meillassoux, I focus on the organic connections between domestic and informal economies and the wage economy as well as on the role of domestic labour in reproducing capitalist interests. Nevertheless, as Redclift (1985) shows, Meillassoux's over-emphasis on the power of capital in exploiting domestic labour neglects the different forms taken by capitalist relations in different social and historical contexts as well as the different ideologies and cultural constructs that legitimize the capitalist exploitation of female and child labour. In Sheffield, changes in the labour market, in the organization of the manufacturing sector, and in national and local economic and

social policies have reinvigorated the extended family. What is of interest is not ‘the fact’ that the ideology of the extended family reproduces the interests of the capitalist state, but the form taken by this ideology as well as the process through which male wage-workers become, in the words of Fortunati ‘the representatives of the capitalists’ (1995: 33) in the household. This transformation of wage labourers into domestic capitalists suggests that capitalist relations take different forms in the different contexts of the factory and the family. In my article I focus on the variety of informal economic arrangements taking place in the different contexts of the factory, family, and the neighbourhood that obscure capitalist relations of production and labour’s real subsumption to capital. My emphasis is on the variety of forms through which capital subsumes labour in the different contexts of its utilization rather than on the fixity of its exploitative function.

The state

According to the Autonomist Marxist Negri (1989), late capitalism is characterized by flexible, casual, decentralized, and de-territorialized forms of labour organization that transcend the factory walls. The author claims that late capitalism subsumes labour outside the factory and permeates the entire form of life, unlike industrial capitalism, which subsumed labour through the organization of production in the factory. In distinction from the mass workers of industrial capitalism, the socialized workers of late capitalism are subject to value through the entire span of production and reproduction not only in the factory but also and at the same time in the family and the community.

Negri also claims that the state plays a fundamental role in the tertiarization and socialization of work and in the creation of ‘factories without walls’ (Negri 1989: 105). In the UK, the Labour government’s vision of weightless, knowledge-based economy and classless post-industrial society has been enforced through national and local legislation that has informalized, fragmented, miniaturized, and progressively concealed the steel industry, its shop-floors, labour processes, and workforce from the public gaze. For instance, the PAYE (Pay-As-You-Earn) scheme, in which tax is deducted at source from employees, shifts the tax burden from the employer to the employees and fosters informal arrangements that overlap with or replace the wage relations in factories. In addition, the law that grants to so-called ‘family firms’ (firms with fewer than twenty employees) tax relief and exemption from the legal duty of ‘public accountability’⁶ and from responsibility for workers’ welfare formally de-regulates the use of casual labourers and fosters small-scale capitalism and informal entrepreneurship, which thrive on tax evasion, undeclared profits, and un-unionized labour. At the regional level the tertiarization of labour was achieved by diverting funds from Research and Development and training in the manufacturing industry into community-based associations and the voluntary sector.⁷ Finally, as Beatty and Fothergill (2004) convincingly argue, the state’s ‘generous’ policy of sickness benefits hides the real extent of industrial unemployment and encourages strategies of incapacity benefit claiming rather than industrial re-training.⁸ As a

consequence of the rise of sickness claimants *vis-à-vis* the industrial unemployed in Sheffield, de-industrialization is increasingly discussed as a medical issue rather than as an issue of industrial policy.

An increasing commodification of family relations parallels this legal ‘domestication’ and informalization of work. In Endcliffe, extended families and domestic working groups emerge as new providers of social and economic services following the disappearance of local job, health, and welfare centres. Welfare legislation, as I show below, enhances individualistic economic strategies among the members of these extended households.

These sets of economic and social policies, combined with extensive subcontracting, have turned Morris, a small tool factory in Endcliffe, into a ‘factory without walls’ whose spaces and times of production expand into those of the family and the community. In fact the owner of Morris, Mr Reed, benefits from the legislation on small firms and transfers profits and workforce between Morris and CISCO, a small ghost factory⁹ – also owned by him but not formally registered – that was built during my fieldwork inside the Morris shop-floor under the worried glances of the workers. Mr Reed is interested in the invisible profits of CISCO and not in the profits of Morris, whose balance sheet he keeps at the break-even point and whose wages he keeps below the legal minimum. As the owner is not interested in the firm’s profits, he does not enforce supervision on the shop-floor. The workers are left free to develop a variety of informal activities that parallel the main production process and are embedded in the social and economic texture of the neighbourhood. Some act as self-employed subcontractors and develop their own businesses that parallel the main production process. Others combine wage-work with self-employment and entrepreneurship in the sex, drugs, or building industries or with casual work in the steel factories located nearby. After Christmas, when orders decrease and the company closes down, the workers are forced to exchange welfare and economic services with other households in the neighbourhood.

In this article I show that, owing to the opening of the spaces of production onto the spaces of reproduction, kinship ties and patriarchal hierarchies penetrate into progressively domesticated shop-floors and capitalist relations of production expand into the increasingly productive realm of the family and the community.

Negri claims that this parallel process of informalization of labour in the factory and of valorization of labour in the realm of the family and the community is a consequence of the flexible organization of labour under late capitalism. Meiksins-Wood (1991) rejects this teleological claim and argues that capitalism has, since its early stages, entailed an internal dialectic between the wage and the informal economy, production and reproduction, work in the family and in the factory. In the article I assess the validity of these claims.

In the next three sections I show that the informal economy of the neighbourhood intermingles with the formal production process of Morris, where I worked as a forge apprentice for eighteen months. In the second section, I describe the social interactions taking place at Khaled’s, a pub located a few metres from Morris where its workers meet at weekends. This section frames the economy of the factory in the wider socio-economic context of the

neighbourhood. In the final section, I focus on the families of Endcliffe and describe the inter-relationships between the economy of the factory and the economy of the household.

Morris

Morris is a small workshop located along the river Don. Employing eighteen workers, it was founded in 1860 to produce wood-boring tools for railway construction, cutlery, and augers. Today, Morris produces about twenty different kinds of wood-boring tool. The production process is as follows. The seven workers of the 'hot' department (the forge) heat bars of steel inside small ovens and forge them into rough drill bits by using ancient hammer machines. The rough bits are left to cool down for a few hours in the cooling area before the eleven workers of the 'cold' department (the machine-shop) finish, grind, and polish them and pack them into boxes that go into the warehouse.

In the 'hot' department the production process is organized and controlled by the workers, and it follows the slow pace that the men impose on their machines. Forging relies on skilled knowledge that is communicated silently, by doing and through apprenticeship. Apprenticeship involves a personal and hierarchical relationship in which the economic component is played down and moral aspects are emphasized. Normally, apprentices are kin and children of friends of the elder workers. Hot workers blame younger workers for not valuing apprenticeship enough. For instance, Tony, a hot worker, complained to me that

today young lads come here and expect to be paid without serving apprenticeship like their mates working in some mechanized factory. Forging is a form of art, not a simple act of production. It requires 'mechanical aptitude', a firm touch, and knowledge incorporated into the body. Forging is like sex, you learn it only by doing, possibly with someone more experienced than you ... (*he laughs*). Money don't teach you the job ... you can only learn it through physical discipline, self-sacrifice, and education.

Hot workers – on average above 50 years of age and long-standing Endcliffe residents – control not only the system of apprenticeship but also the recruitment process, so that ties of kinship and friendship isolate the hot department from fluctuations in the labour market.

The workers of the cold department are generally younger and live in working-class suburbs on the periphery of Sheffield. In the cold department work is fast, repetitive, and regulated by the pressure to produce more and maximize bonuses. The cold department is organized to maximize the flexibility of the workforce in responding to market demand. In fact, the workers rotate their jobs on different machines and adapt their production to new orders every morning. Recruitment of cold workers follows formal channels (newspaper adverts, job centres) and is supervised directly by Mr Reed, whose only concern is that the workers are not members of any union.

There are three levels of wage in Morris. At the first level there are the staff, with a basic weekly wage of £220. At the second level the skilled and semi-skilled workers earned £180. Big Dave – the only unskilled worker –

earned £160. On top of basic earnings, a bonus is added to the weekly wage. Bonuses varied from £5 to £50 per week, according to the different kind of bits produced. Owing to the rigidity of the labour process at the forge, the cold department is responsible for the firm's variable outputs and hence bonus levels. Bob, the fitter, fixes the piecework rates by deducing them from the standard qualities of the machines. Cold workers constantly complain to John, the manager, about the fact that his piecework rates are too tight, especially the piecework rates of the chisel bits that are sold by the owner through CISCO.

The workers' different attitude to labour and their different degrees of control of the production process emerge in their conversations at break-times. For instance, Bob often laments that

cold workers are not skilled. They use hammers to set up the machines and burn the milling machines' mechanical arms in their drive to over-produce and to gain more bonuses. They lack the mechanical knowledge ... the 'eye' that looks inside the machines and the touch that sets them into motion. Cold workers think about their labour in terms of bonuses and money and not as man's productivity incorporated in the machines ... that is, in terms of the firm's capital.

Steve, a cold worker, would reply to Bob that 'hot workers are like Mr Reed. They only care about the machines and about the company's profit. They don't care about the workers' labour'.

Through their mechanical knowledge the hot workers control the formal labour process and, informally, the labour of the younger cold workers, as I show below. Machines become, in the words of Marx, 'fetishes' (1976 [1867]: 983) that hide the workers' common subsumption and fragment the workforce along generational lines with different moral values and attitudes towards work. The younger cold workers consider the hot workers capitalists because of their care for and control of the machines, which they see as a materialization of the capitalist process and in deadly competition with their labour. The hot workers see the machines as symbolical extensions of their bodies, metaphorical appendages of their male sexuality, and markers of social status. They read the young workers' lack of mechanical skills as a consequence of their greed, physical weakness, and moral degradation.

During my fieldwork, Morris stayed closed for sixty days, which was, according to John, due to 'cash flow problems'. In the rest of this section, I show how the workers of Morris complement their low wages (£7,200 per year) with informal economic activities.

Informal economy in the factory

The lack of visible authority on the shop-floor surprised me on my arrival in Morris. The Morris workers often complain that there should be more management of the shop-floor and criticize John for his lack of authority and for spending most of his time at CISCO.

Tony and Bob seem to have more authority over the rest of the workforce than does John. In fact, Bob, as the firm's fitter, organizes the layout of the machines, fixes the firm's piecework ratio, and keeps a copy of the key of the

company clock, which he made himself, so that when the workers are late in the morning he generally agrees to put the clock's hands back provided that they have good reasons for their lateness. Tony and Bob and a few other older workers of the forge have *de facto* control of the shop-floor, not only because of their technical knowledge of the machines but also because of their social and kinship ties with customers, steel producers, scrap merchants, and second-hand machine-dealers of Endcliffe. As I show later, the hot workers exploit this informal network to produce and trade scrap steel, tools, or mechanical parts informally during the working day. This stable network of subcontractors, customers, and suppliers is also an asset to the owner, who is therefore willing to delegate his control of the shop-floor to them, as long as the production of chisel bits for CISCO runs smoothly. The owner prides himself that Morris is a family business with informal working relations and management 'from below'. In the next section, I claim that this ideology of 'family business' and informal social relations on the shop-floor fragments the workforce.

The formal wage structure highlighted above is a loose indicator of the way in which labour is remunerated in the factory. In fact, on payday, at the end of the month, formal wages and bonus levels are renegotiated between workers and owners and among the workers themselves following their different criteria of accountability.

During payday, a dual labour market – one controlled by the elder workers and the other controlled by the owner – emerges on the shop-floor. First, the value of monthly production that emerges from Graham's fragile recollections and uncertain calculations is matched against the value of the stock in the warehouse. After the counting of the bits in the warehouse, a complex negotiation on the final amount of the bonuses takes place and a variety of informal agreements are made between the owner and individual workers. The owner assesses the workers' personal circumstances and second incomes when he pays some of them in cash and off-the books. For instance, Big Dave, who is also on welfare benefits, is paid more than Teddy and Steve, who have second jobs as builders and transport workers.

On the other side of the shop-floor, Tony and Bob redistribute within the workforce the income from the trade of the company's steel scrap and machines and from the informal subcontracting of production that they organize in the neighbourhood. These payments reflect the involvement of the workers in the informal production process, rather than in the formal one. Elder workers also reinforce their hierarchical grip over their apprentices through cash paid in the form of gift.

Thus, in Morris, wage relations coexist with a variety of other informal arrangements: piecework remunerated at a fixed rate; part-time work paid in cash; and moonlighting. These various informal arrangements split the workforce between the younger workers, who are really subsumed to capital, and the elder workers, who are not and act as self-employed, paying a rent to the owner for the use of the machines. Owing to Mr Reed's absence from the shop-floor and to his informal style of management the elder workers become the heads of the 'family firm' who train and recruit as well as reward or punish 'the young lads' according to their personal contribution to the formal and informal labour process.

Informal production

The workers of Morris externally subcontract the production of the types of bits that attract low bonuses and work themselves as subcontractors for other firms to supplement their wages. These informal productive networks run parallel to the main production process and take place without the involvement of the management among individuals who are socially connected in the neighbourhood. Hence this form of subcontracting entails not only short-term economic returns but also longer-term effects such as investments in building social relations in the neighbourhood.

Morris workers participate in the informal process of production in two ways. Firstly, decisions about outsourcing or about accepting outsourced work are taken following rules agreed upon by the whole workforce. The basic economic rule for this kind of transaction is to swap the production of tools with low bonuses for tools with high profits. This web of outsourced production among the different firms of the area is made possible by three factors. First, these small firms lack formal supervision on the shop-floor and their workers can deal at the same time with the 'formal' and the 'informal' production process. Second, they are physically close to each other and located in Endcliffe, a notorious off-limits area. Physical proximity increases the economies of distribution between producers, and their location in dangerous areas – generally avoided by people not belonging to the neighbourhood – minimizes the risks of visibility from police, managers, dole officers, and tax investigators. Finally, this informal productive network is stratified along generational lines.¹⁰ At the bottom of the hierarchy are the small sweatshops run by or employing exclusively unskilled children,¹¹ like the forge in Fowley Road, whose five teenage workers produce steel axes for Morris at a very low price. At the top of the network are bigger firms, like Morris, run by elder workers and self-employed artisans who act as subcontractors for big engineering firms by exploiting the labour of younger kin and apprentices. Owing to their status and connections in the neighbourhood, the elder workers control this informal productive network and are the main beneficiaries of informal incomes that derive from it. This pattern of extensive subcontracting by steel corporations is widespread in the UK. For instance, Fevre (1987) shows that in the 1980s the BSC (British Steel Corporation) in Port Talbot subcontracted production to local 'sweatshops'.

The second pattern of participation in the informal productive network of Endcliffe involves more restricted spheres of exchange and individualistic tasks. In fact, some productive transactions are restricted to the workers of the hot department only. This is due to the fact that the hot workers enjoy longer unproductive times during the working day than do the cold workers, own the tools, and control the labour of the apprentices. During the working day Bob produces tools for his personal clientele and often leaves the shop-floor with his tools to service the conveyor belt of the chicken slaughterhouse located on the other side of the street or the oven of the old Fletchers bakery. Other hot workers are employed off-the-books in local steel factories either as seasonal service workers (furnace bricklaying, maintenance jobs, cleaning, fitting) or as part-time contractors (in the coke cavern, furnace, or rolling mill). These contracted jobs offer no welfare or health and safety provision

and are remunerated at an hourly rate of £2-3. Endcliffe is a major centre for recruitment of casual labourers for the steel industry¹² in Sheffield and South Yorkshire for three reasons. First, its residents are not in long-term unemployment and are more willing to accept casual jobs. Second, casual workers are highly skilled and are able to operate and repair the obsolete rolling mills, old furnaces, and decrepit milling machines used by 'modern' steel corporations. Finally, the cost of reproduction of the Endcliffe workforce is extremely low, as I show below.

The informal activities of the hot workers are not totally unknown to the owner, who nevertheless does not openly discourage them, since Bob's business networks in the neighbourhood are fundamental to increasing production for the local market when the orders of the firm's stable customers decrease.

In the context of Morris, elder workers act as petty capitalists, either exploiting – on behalf of the owner – the labour of the apprentices and of the young lads on the shop-floor or exploiting the labour of small subcontractors in the neighbourhood. However, they also work as subcontractors, casual labourers, and unskilled service workers for multinational steel corporations.

Owing to their mechanical knowledge and their social connections in the neighbourhood the hot workers acquire the triple role of surrogate capitalists in the local economy of tools, labourers in the global economy of steel, and mediators between the formal economy of the factory and the informal economy of the neighbourhood.

The construction industry employs 8 per cent of the male working population in Sheffield. In Endcliffe the real scale of employment in the industry is around 20 per cent. Morris workers often complement their wages with some building work as well as related jobs of interior decorating, demolition, heavy gardening, painting, and landscaping located through their kinship or social ties with local subcontractors. Demand for building, gardening, decorating, and painting skills come from middle-class home-owners in the western suburbs of Sheffield, whereas re-landscaping is subcontracted by the city council. Since the building sector relies on the same extended social networks and forms of labour organization (subcontracting, piecework, and daily labour) used in the tool industry, local metalworkers are also often self-employed in the building industry.

The formal transactions of tools produced in Morris constitute only a small fraction of the overall exchanges of objects made in the factory. In fact the workers organize a variety of informal transactions embedded in the social texture of the neighbourhood.

The most lucrative of these informal transactions is the scrap trade. There are two kinds of scrap traded in Morris: small scrap and machine scrap. Small scrap – mechanical parts of machines, copper television wires or clasps – is generally traded by small local family firms. These firms pay a sum of money according to the weight of the objects brought by customers, who tend to be Gypsies, tramps, or local delinquents. Although the Morris workers claim that the scrap they sell is of a superior quality to the scrap traded by these firms, Bob often deals with such scrap merchants, buying mechanical parts and selling small scrap that he collects on the shop-floor during the working day.

Machine scrap – smaller cutters, twisters, and hammers – is generally located in Bob's fitting area and can be easily removed without Mr Reed's awareness. It is sold to Ned, a local scrap merchant.

Ned made a fortune out of the closures of the Endcliffe steel firms during the 1980s and today he dominates the local scrap market. He is said to have good connections with the business community and police officers due to their past common involvement in the business of contaminated scrap.¹³ Ned also subcontracts the supply of scrap to local merchants and employs several unskilled workers off-the-books such as 'Shot-Hand' Billy.¹⁴ Billy also makes good money from the business selling to Gypsy traders the small scrap that he smuggles from Ned's warehouse. Merchants like Ned also trade second-hand machines between small-sized firms. This market is extremely profitable in Endcliffe. In fact, Ned buys machines at 'scrap value' and sells them as 'second-hand' machines, thanks to the repairs and servicing provided by experienced fitters like Bob. Bob and some other hot workers strongly rely on the scrap trade for extra income, and the manager and the owner of Morris do not discourage their informal transactions with Ned given the firm's need to replace old machines with 'newer' ones. By disguising old machines as new machines, the owner inflates the firm's depreciation costs and hence increases the company's hidden profits.

Second-hand machines have long and interesting lives. They travel thousands of miles, adapt to different shop-floors, and change their value according to the contexts of their utilization. For instance, in the 1980s, 'Brown Bayleys' – a renowned firm in Endcliffe – closed down. Ned bought the company furnace and sold it to a Turkish businessman shortly after the closure. In the 1990s the furnace migrated from Turkey to Sweden, where it was spotted abandoned in a field by the manager of an Encliffe firm. The manager took the furnace back to Endcliffe in 1995, fixed it, and used it for the next three years until the firm closed down and the furnace returned to Ned's courtyard again. Wholesale scrap, overpriced rolling mills, and dismantled furnaces fly from Sheffield to Egypt or Yemen, following the trajectories of international development, where they are traded through subtle diplomacy and financial rationality.

The forgers, who own the tools in the factory, make specialized tools – hammers, chisels for dies, cutters, tongs for press-hammers – that they sell to tool shops or to local workers. They also modify some drill bits and sell them to 'interior décor' shops in Endcliffe Road which re-sell them as drill bits for masonry. Aside from these informal transactions of tools, the workers exchange stolen goods, fishing kits, drugs, and cheap gin. These informal exchanges connect the factory to the illegal economy of Endcliffe, revolving around the local 'swap shop'¹⁵ and the pub 'Khaled's'.

I have highlighted above the variety of informal economic arrangements that coexist with normal production at Morris. I have also pointed out that the elder workers, through their social connections in Endcliffe, control the informal labour process and the market for second-hand goods and casual labour gravitating around the factory. The younger workers fully rely on the wage of Morris for survival and accuse the elder workers of being capitalists and of making profits through their informal activities. This generational conflict hides the fact that the elder workers are at the same time petty

entrepreneurs in Morris and casual labourers in the steel industry, where they are subsumed within a different set of capitalist relations. Thus, the informal economy of Morris fragments the workforce into a 'core' and a 'periphery' and hides their common subsumption to capital by incorporating relations of production in Morris into capitalist relations in the steel industry.

Khaled's

I now turn to 'Khaled's', a local pub, to frame the economy of Morris in the broader social and economic texture of the neighbourhood. Khaled's is one of four Endcliffe pubs where I conducted fieldwork at weekends with four workers from the hot department. Owing to the closure of local job, medical, and welfare centres and their relocation in the city, Khaled's is not only a space from leisure but also an economic and welfare institution.

At Khaled's, the different strata of what used to be the local working class – now segmented into 'unemployed', 'workers', and 'self-employed' – mix together. The pub consists of three main rooms opening onto a central area where the local ale is served. One room is reserved for women to play pool, in another Yemenis watch television and play darts, and the third room is taken by the 'Cliff lads'¹⁶ for their snooker matches. In the past, Yemenis have shared many political and economic struggles with the local population and have been considered as 'Cliff lads' themselves. Nevertheless there are still invisible boundaries between the three rooms so that Yemenis rarely end up in the snooker room, the lads rarely bring their beers into the television room, and women never engage in direct confrontation with the lads around the snooker table.

The 'unemployed' are people like Steve who live only on state benefits. Steve drinks throughout the week and when he arrives at Khaled's he has no money left to enjoy his night out, and is therefore cut out from the exchanges of drinks and jokes among the rest of the customers. The 'unemployed on the dole' are people like 'Shot-Hand' Billy who supplement their state benefits with a variable income deriving from their casual labour. Billy can buy drinks and is therefore offered drinks and the same respect due to the 'workers'. The category of 'workers' includes wage-workers with stable single jobs, wage-workers with multiple jobs, and wage-workers claiming unemployment benefits. The 'self-employed' or 'owners' are ex-workers who used their redundancy money and local connections to deal in scrap, steel, or coal. The workers are split between the respect they have for these self-made men and the distaste they have for entrepreneurs, whom they call 'middlemen' who 'exchange but do not produce'. Finally, the permanently disabled – like Terry 'the Gardener' and 'Mad' Jack – follow the activities of the pub in slight isolation given that they lack fingers to support their snooker cues. Nevertheless, they are respected for their generosity. In fact, because disabled people on income support cannot have more than £3,000 in savings for the whole year, they often spent half of their compensation money buying drinks for the lads.

Khaled's provides several welfare services. First, it functions as a local job centre. In the 1980s, the Endcliffe 'Labour Exchange', once facing the Police

Station, was relocated in the town centre and a private 'job-link' was opened. As I soon realized in my first interview, the job-link offers clerical jobs in leisure (bingos, shopping malls), service (call centres, marketing companies), and community sectors, but no jobs in the manufacturing industry. Local unemployed do not even bother to go to the job-link because they believe its job offers do not reflect the real economy of a neighbourhood still strongly rooted in the steel and tool industry. Rather than working in the service sector, the Cliff lads prefer casual jobs or to claim state benefit. Khaled's functions as a job centre where manual jobs are allocated and pay negotiated during snooker matches between the 'owners' team' (composed of Ned, the scrap merchant, Mick, the steel merchant, Fred, the building general contractor, and Joe, the coal merchant) and the 'workers' team' (Tony, Teddy, Brian, and myself). At Khaled's, informal and illegal economic arrangements are also discussed. These include the transportation and storage of spirits, tobacco, and drugs in the storage containers along the river Don, the trade of stolen goods, and the recruitment of children as drug couriers, builders, or metalworkers. The cash from the illegal economy – administered by Khaled and by the other members of the Committee¹⁷ – is re-invested in other businesses, given as loans either to local workers who want to set up their own business or to local people in financial hardship, or presented as 'gifts' to local police officers or tax inspectors.¹⁸

Khaled's also functions like a community centre. Single mothers working on night shifts drop their children and infants at Sally and Peggy's line dance course on Friday and Saturday nights. Alf, who is 83, goes to Khaled's every evening to have a chat with Jackie, the pub stewardess, and on weekends to play bingo and dominoes with Teddy, Brian, Tony, and me. His age and lack of relatives – as well as the condition of his 'rusted' pacemaker, which sometimes fails and causes him heart attacks – are constant concerns around the table when Alf does not show up at the pub. Jackie, by her sympathetic presence, often acts as a counsellor to the bereaved and lonely, while Terry 'the Gardener' provides legal help on welfare issues and is always willing to share his vast knowledge of the intricacies of the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) with some pub mates in exchange for a few pints. The homeless, drug- and alcohol-addicted as well as people 'on the run' are also offered shelter in the pub's cellar.

The snooker room is a male space where muscles and gold rings are displayed, important decisions are taken, and local politics are animatedly discussed. Topics range from the recent death of a Yemeni labourer crushed under 200 kilos of steel bars at 'Special Steel', the disappearance of the big carp from the Darnall fishery and the dodgy deals of its owner, the decline of the heroin market linked to the rise in the consumption of crack among the local lads, through to the increase in prostitution in the city centre which threatens the precarious survival of the local brothels. News of the neighbourhood – job cuts, fights, police raids, fishing matches – constitutes the core of Khaled's political discussions and, with the exception of 'Mad' Jack, people never got involved in 'high politics'. 'Mad' Jack is the only person in the pub allowed to make general political statements. When 'Mad' Jack talks politics he swears loudly, smiles diabolically, and challenges his audience by pointing his half-finger at it: 'I hope that I go to hell 'cause I am sure that I will meet that ...

Lady Thatcher – her face black like a miner’s face – and I will spend my eternity poking her arse with a big fork’.

In spite of the fact that at Khaled’s women provide most informal social services and the younger lads provide most of the informal manual labour, white male elders and Yemeni community leaders control the local economy and the pub’s Committee, where major economic and political decisions are taken. Around the snooker table the conflict between the owners and the workers is ritualized and de-politicized; Teddy’s allegiance to his snooker mates hides the broader interests he shares with the owners in the Committee room. The male elders’ control of the local economy and local politics increases their perceived agency in spite of the increased poverty that fragments and divides their households.

Informal economy in the family

In Sheffield, state welfare and housing policies have fostered the transformation of nuclear families into extended ones and increased the role that these latter play in the local – informal and formal – economy. For instance, the fact that the state grants higher disability, income support, and child allowances to lone persons and individuals who declare themselves as independent (from their partner or from their parents) discourages marriages and the formation of stable nuclear families and encourages individualistic economic strategies and fissions within the household.¹⁹ On the other hand, the fact that state housing benefits do not cover the costs of living (gas, electricity, water, household repairs) pulls individuals back into extended families. In addition, the closure of local schools as well as medical and job centres in Endcliffe has increased the importance of informal support networks in times of illness, drug or alcohol addiction, and financial hardship as well as for the care of newborn babies and the elderly. In the UK, the New Labour government has continued the Conservative Party’s policy of cutting welfare provisions to ex-industrial communities, thereby *de facto* forcing the families of ex-industrial workers to provide that support.²⁰ In the 1980s the relocation of working-class families from Endcliffe and the demolition of locally owned houses and council flats forced the residents who refused to leave the area to rent derelict maisonettes or rooms in Bed and Breakfast (B & B) accommodation owned by local entrepreneurs or community leaders.²¹

Social policy studies (Bowman 2001) and official statistics emphasize the collapse of the nuclear family that followed the closure of the steel factories in the Sheffield East End. These studies tend to focus on the social fragmentation of ex-working-class families made of lone women – working part-time in the service industry, with children who are out of school and with partners who are absent and unemployed. My study emphasizes not the fragmentation of the local nuclear families but their transformation into extended families, consisting of cohabiting step and lone parents, a high number of children,²² and non-resident biological fathers. Biological fathers still provide for most of the incomes of these extended families, employ their children in local industries, and manage the pool of incomes of their wives and kin, who stably or temporarily live in the household.

One example of such patriarchal extended families is Teddy and Freda's household. Teddy – a forger in Morris – is 58 and lives in Endcliffe. Teddy divorced five years ago when Freda, his 'partner', moved in. Teddy and Freda met at Firth-Brown, where Teddy was forger and Freda worked at a milling machine. Freda stopped working as miller when she discovered she had breast cancer. She is now stewardess at the Endcliffe Liberal Club on Saturday nights when women are admitted to the club, and works part-time at the milling machine of a local firm when Teddy's income shrinks and the family faces serious financial hardship. Freda reconciles her part-time jobs with the tasks of cleaning, washing, child-caring, food-preparing, and clothes-mending for the members of the household. Freda also contributes to the complex network of exchanges of stolen durables (televisions, dishwashers, cars, washing machines, and bicycles) in the neighbourhood. She collects orders from her friends and places them with Johnny, the owner of the local 'swap shop'. When the required 'second-hand goods' arrive she collects them from Johnny and distributes them to her friends, making small profits. Teddy's daughter and son live with Teddy and Freda, together with their partners and children. They bring into the household money from their welfare cheques and incomes derived from part-time jobs. They also provide free labour for household provisions (painting, roof-repairing, building) and are employed in several business enterprises controlled by Teddy (landscaping, catering, metalworking, drug-dealing, prostitution). For instance, Charlie – Teddy's grandson – works in a local forge, as builder for Brian (Teddy's best mate), and at Khaled's, as drug pusher. Claire (Teddy's daughter) works as general manager at the Elysium brothel facing Morris in Wall Street. Claire deals with orders on the telephone, fields bad customers, markets the sex workers, and collects preferences, which she orders in a weekly schedule. Claire is also rumoured to offer her services to 'posh' people coming from 'the West'. The brothel consists of four Eastern European girls, all teenagers, who work in the two massage rooms located on the ground floor. They receive only 20 per cent of their weekly revenues; the remaining 80 per cent is split between Claire and the owner of the brothel. The girls spend most of their non-working time sitting on the long sofa of the waiting room watching television. Claire says that the Elysium is like a small family and that she is more attached to the girls than to her real family, with whom relations are often fraught. In fact, often Claire shows up at the pub with a blackened eye, complaining to her friends that Teddy has stolen her salary again. Teddy moans about his daughter's lack of gratitude and commitment to the family.

She got the job [at Elysium] thanks to my personal friendship with Khaled and half of her customers are my personal connections and workmates. Claire don't understand that the family is like a factory. It needs team-work and scientific management by the more experienced ones. At the time of the cutlers,²³ women and young lads worked for the household-head who was also the boss. These young lasses today are selfish and greedy. They don't value the family and don't feel any moral obligation to contribute to the family's common pot. Women are like machines. You've got to get a grip on them ... to dictate them your own rhythm.

Yet another kind of extended family – in which members are not related by blood or by law – is Milly's 'Black Sparrow'. The Black Sparrow is a

boarded-up pub whose back-garden wall runs along the fences of the Sheffield Leisure Centre. Today, a scrap dealer owns the Black Sparrow and lets it to Milly, the 72-year-old ex-stewardess of the pub. When her husband died, Milly transformed it into a B & B and started to sub-let its rooms to a core of fixed tenants – old friends and ex-customers of the Black Sparrow pub – and to a variety of young immigrants and runaways who pay their £20 weekly rent and disappear after a while. Milly lives in the attic of the building; Jim, ‘Shot-Hand’ Billy, and Terry ‘the Gardener’ live on the first floor and Hamed and Georgy on the second floor. On the ground floor, Steve occupies ‘Room number 3’, where once the pub Committee met. The division of labour in the Black Sparrow follows rules that have been consolidated over the last seven years of cohabitation by its tenants. Milly prepares breakfast in the morning, washes, irons the clothes, and cleans the toilet. Steve repairs the electrical and mechanical appliances while ‘Shot-Hand’ Billy buys cigarettes and drugs from Khaled’s and deals with Johnny’s ‘swap shop’ for the supplies of stolen goods, furniture, and clothes. Jim walks and feeds Bob (Milly’s dog) and supplies the home with the fish he catches in the Don. Terry ‘the Gardener’ cultivates his powerful connections with the dole office, thanks to his diplomatic *savoir faire* and his deep knowledge of the intricacies of the DWP’s bureaucratic rules, due to his permanent disability. Apart from Terry, who is well off due to his permanent disability allowance, the other members of the household are casual labourers who spend their time between the local steelworks or scrap-yards, the dole office, and the several pubs of the area, where they start drinking early in the morning. Georgy worked at the scrap-yard owned by the landlord. When he disappeared from the household, various rumours circulated at the Black Sparrow. Some claimed that the merchant killed him due to major economic disagreements and that he is now buried under the pile of scrap in the courtyard. Others claimed that Georgy found a 10-kilo bag of heroin inside the body of an old Ryder hammer machine and that he migrated back to his home country, where he is now a renowned drug baron.

The Black Sparrow is an example of a peculiar domestic arrangement that developed as a consequence of state welfare policies and the de-regulation of the labour market. The extension of housing benefits to Bed and Breakfasts and temporary accommodation provides migrants, runaway children, and lone persons with affordable accommodation. The de-regulation of the labour market facilitates their casual employment in the local informal or illegal economy by local petty capitalists. The Black Sparrow also exemplifies the link between production and reproduction in Endcliffe. Local petty capitalists are often also home-owners who employ their tenants and thus increase their control over the workforce by combining the role of employer with the role of landlord.²⁴

The closure of local factories has not only entailed the collapse of nuclear families highlighted by social policy scholars; de-industrialization in Endcliffe has also fostered household pooling, inter-household production and trading arrangements, and networks of ‘relatedness’ (Carsten 2000) that extend outside the boundaries of the nuclear family. Sometimes, as in the Black Sparrow, stable bonds of friendship and attachment develop from economic necessity that resemble the friendships that arise among sub-proletarians in the slums of Accra (Hart 1988). However, in most cases, conflicts develop in the

households between women and children and the male elders, who, as Teddy would put it, 'must act as burglars in their own family'. Yet, when Teddy supervises the domestic economy and optimizes the productivity of his family, he is only acting as a representative of Mr Reed and ensuring a cheap cost for the reproduction of the conditions of his production. In the eyes of his relatives, however, Teddy is the exploitative boss and the capitalist profiting from their labour.

Conclusion

The inhabitants of Endcliffe have reacted to de-industrialization and state welfare and economic policies by pooling their incomes in extended and flexible households, embedding economic transactions in the social hierarchy of the neighbourhood, and mixing informal exchanges and production with the formal organization of the factory.

Pahl's positive assessment of the liberating effects of the informal economy in Britain needs qualification. In fact, if it is true that state de-regulation of labour has increased the informal activities of the neighbourhood and hence redistributed resources and stimulated entrepreneurship locally, it is also true that the wealth generated in the informal economy is distributed unequally in the neighbourhood. First, big steel subcontractors benefit the most from the de-regulation of the labour market because they can rely on an army of non-unionized casual workers paid off-the-books. Secondly, petty capitalists like Ned can command the labour of workers like Bob and Teddy through informal relationships cultivated at Khaled's or control over the capital and housing market. Thirdly, Bob and Teddy can exploit the labour of younger cold workers and apprentices and of the teenagers of Fowley forge. Finally, men control the labour of children and women in the household.

Michael Burawoy, in his influential book *The politics of production*, claims that the state affects social relations of production by determining the conditions under which labour power is reproduced and by which it is used on the shop-floor (1985: 126). According to Burawoy, hegemonic capitalism relies on the workers' consent, unlike despotic capitalism, which relies on their coercion. Under hegemonic capitalism the state reduces the workers' dependence on the sale of their labour power through welfare policies that guarantee a minimum level of living independently from their participation in production and through industrial relations policies that guarantee basic workers' rights. The state's guarantee of basic workers' rights and level of subsistence turns capitalism from despotic into hegemonic, that is, into a regime that exploits labour through consent rather than coercion. On the shop-floor hegemonic capitalism co-opts the workers into production by allowing them increased control over the production process and therefore fostering an informal shop-floor culture that reproduces the capitalists' values and intensifies their profits.

Burawoy's analysis is important in that it highlights the role of the workers' subjectivity in reproducing the interests of capital. It is also important because it links state policies to the micro-sociology of the shop-floor. Nevertheless, Burawoy stresses primarily the workers' consent that emerges at the point of production. In my view, consent and coercion are dialectical terms to be

studied both in the realm of production and in the realm of reproduction and at the micro- and macro-economic level.

At the macro-economic level, the state promotes de-industrialization in the steel sector by shifting employment from wage-work to subcontracted and casual labour and by cutting social and welfare provisions. Elder workers and skilled artisans are forced into casual labour and have no choice but to complement their low wages in the steel industry with informal activities, self-managed enterprises, and volatile business ventures such as Morris.

On the shop-floor, these workers are co-opted into production through their involvement in the managerial function of the firm and their entrepreneurial activities that overlap with their wage-work. Through their power and authority, embedded in the social hierarchy of the neighbourhood, they coerce the younger workers of the factory and external subcontractors into production. Outside the shop-floor, the elder workers coerce their children and wives into informal production and control the flow of money and labour of the extended families that have developed in Endcliffe following the council's withdrawal of social and welfare provisions to the area.

The informalization of labour dissolves the walls that separate the steel factories from the tool workshops and the spaces of home from the spaces of work. As a result, capitalist relations of production are reproduced through kinship relations. In the factory, the elder workers of the hot department organize production around kinship ties and control the labour of the young lads and apprentices. In the household, they exploit the labour of the family members by enforcing their patriarchal authority. Thus the informalization of labour and the dissolution of factory walls entail experiences of labour subsumption fragmented along gender and generational lines. To the young and female labourers, the elder kin are the capitalists due to their control over the labour process, the firm's machines, and the household finances. To the elders, the youngsters are the capitalists due to their drive for money and independence and their lack of respect for ancient values and family-based bonded labour.

In Endcliffe the informalization of labour increases the income generated by local small-scale firms and by the patriarchal businesses controlled by elder workers like Teddy. Nevertheless, this patriarchal economy also reproduces the invisible trajectories of global capitalism. In fact, when Teddy recruits cheap labour and disciplines his working mates during the weekly snooker tournaments he believes that he is increasing his leadership, entrepreneurship, and grip over the local economy. In fact, he is reproducing within the neighbourhood the managerial and organizational capitalist functions from the factory. In addition, Teddy's patriarchal grip over the unpaid labour of the family reproduces his condition of exploited casual labourer in the steel industry.

From the discussion above, two conclusions can be drawn. The first conclusion is that the informal economy acquires different functions and meanings in time and space. In some contexts informal economic activities are strategies of survival by marginal labourers who have been cut out of the dynamics of late industrialization and operate outside the formal economic boundaries set by the state, as Keith Hart (2004) has recently argued. My

ethnography shows that the informal economy can also be a tool of economic policy used by the state for tuning the local labour market to the fluctuations of the steel industry. By drawing boundaries between the formal and the informal economy, the state controls the flow of subcontracted labour between local subcontractors and the steel corporations. In times of economic expansion hegemonic states interrupt this flow by increasing social and welfare provisions to the wage-workers and their nuclear families and by ossifying the boundaries between wage-work and informal labour and between work and home. In times of economic stagnation so-called 'neo-liberal' states increase this flow by cutting welfare and social provisions, legalizing the use of casual labour, medicalizing industrial unemployment, and blurring the boundaries between family and work.

The second conclusion is that late capitalism does not entail a radical process of de-industrialization and of transformation of manual and waged labour into unwaged and immaterial labour, as for Negri and other post-industrial scholars. Rather, late capitalism, like its early version, relies on a tight embrace between a number of couplings: wage-work and household production; real and formal subsumption; core and peripheral labour; the wage economy of the factory, the economy of the household, and the illegal economy of the neighbourhood; and the money that the state transfers to the poor and the money that it takes away from them.

In emphasizing the function of informal labour in reproducing capitalist profit, I also stress the culturally and historically specific form taken by capitalist relations in Sheffield today. Extensive subcontracting, combined with the withdrawal of labour protection, the flouting of the law on the minimum wage, and the abrogation of health and safety regulation and of basic welfare and union rights develop a new 'despotic capitalism' (see Burawoy 1985: 149). This contemporary despotic capitalism, like the capitalism of the early nineteenth century, relies on artisanal workshops and sweated domestic work subcontracted by large firms. In early capitalism the workers were dependent on the employers and ruthlessly coerced into production, whereas today the workers of Morris are co-opted into production through an articulation of coercion and consent. In fact, on the one hand, the state de-regulation of casual labour and the absence of capitalists on the shop-floor offer new economic opportunities to individuals with entrepreneurial skills and contacts in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, the state dismissal of basic union and welfare rights has increased the dependence of the industrial workers on non-unionized, unsafe, and gruelling work to survive. New despotism also involves experiences of de-industrialization and casualization of labour that are fragmented along gender and generational lines rather than being homogeneous within the working class. Elder and skilled workers read de-industrialization in terms of increased agency, entrepreneurship, and control over the domestic community. Younger and female labourers experience the same process as patriarchal exploitation.

Contrary to the futuristic visions of New Labour politicians and Autonomist Marxists, capitalism does not entail great transformations, teleological revolutions, and linear developments but, rather, paradoxical involutions, local adaptations, and temporary incorporations. Post-modernity in

Sheffield has not given way to immaterial forms of production, fluid social relations, and flexible subjectivities cutting across idioms of class and gender. Rather, post-modernity has materialized as a hybrid mixture of industrial wage-work and bonded labour, nuclear families and patriarchal ideologies of male productivity, mass production and cottage industry, mechanization and hard and wearing manual labour.

NOTES

¹ I lived in Endcliffe and worked as an unskilled labourer in Morris from September 1999 to March 2001. I have disguised the real names of the area where I lived, of the factory where I worked, and of the informants due to the confidential nature of the information disclosed in the article and in order to avoid putting my informants at risk.

² Sheffield Ward Statistics.

³ In addition, half of the local population – 14,700 during my fieldwork – receives housing benefit and almost 50 per cent of the households are on income support (Sheffield Ward Statistics).

⁴ My sample includes all the inhabitants of Endcliffe, approximately 4,000 people.

⁵ This strand variously follows up on Engels's *The origin of the family, private property and the state* (1972 [1884]).

⁶ Companies must make available their balance sheets for public consultation to the local Chamber of Commerce.

⁷ See the 'South Yorkshire Objective One Programme' (<http://www.goyh.gov.uk/objective1/>).

⁸ Their study shows that there are more than 1.2 million sickness claimants in Britain who would work if they found a suitable job.

⁹ Illegal business people locate new businesses inside old industrial premises in order to make them invisible to the inspectors of the Inland Revenue.

¹⁰ The existence of unequal relationships of production in Endcliffe contrasts with the horizontal informal relationships that develop in the context of small-scale production in the Italian industrial districts (Triglia 1990).

¹¹ The age of the working children whom I have encountered varies between 10 and 18 years.

¹² According to an Iron and Steel Confederation officer, there are 10,000 contractors in the Sheffield steel industry. In Endcliffe, one-third of local residents are officially employed in the steel and tool industry and at least 1,000 men and women are informally employed in these industries (Sheffield City Council Statistics).

¹³ In the 1980s, the presence of uranium- and plutonium-contaminated scrap in the main steel companies fostered a series of investigations by the police and revealed collusions between marketing managers and scrap merchants.

¹⁴ A drug-dealer's shotgun blast deformed Billy's hand when he was 13.

¹⁵ 'Swap shops' are shops where stolen durables are sold at a cheap price.

¹⁶ The local white population.

¹⁷ The most senior and influential residents of Endcliffe.

¹⁸ The official function of the Committee is to nominate the pubs' members, collect their fees and manage their funds.

¹⁹ Leonard (1998) claims that the new legislation on Job Seeking Allowance and Family Tax Credit that replaced the legislation on Unemployment Benefits has increased individualistic economic strategies in the low sector of the economy.

²⁰ Dicks, Waddington, and Critcher (1998) show that in Wales social service providers foster the creation of extended kinship networks and intra-household exchanges among ex-mining families in order to cut formal provisions of health, welfare, and education services.

²¹ The law that extends housing benefits to B & Bs and temporary accommodation was intended to tackle the problem of the lack of council housing provision in areas of 'urban deprivation'.

²² Almost 50 per cent of the families of Endcliffe have two or more children. This is above the national average (1.4 children per household).

²³In the Sheffield cottage industry the cutlers supervised the work of their household members and sold their production independently from merchants or lords.

²⁴The role of the employer-landlord was common during the cottage industry in Sheffield, when apprentices lived with the master-cutlers in cottages along the river Don.

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Usine, famille et quartier : économie politique du travail informel à Sheffield

Résumé

Cet article explore le milieu de la main-d'œuvre formelle et informelle des aciéries, dans le contexte de l'usine, de la famille et du quartier à « Endcliffe », un ancien quartier industriel de Sheffield, au Royaume-Uni. Il réitère l'affirmation formulée par Claude Meillassoux dans son livre *Femmes, greniers et capitaux*, selon laquelle l'économie informelle est un espace idéologique où le travail est reproduit à moindre coût dans l'intérêt du capital. Cependant, l'auteur examine également les connotations subjectives et ethnographiques du « capital » et du « travail », ainsi que la nature politique de leurs frontières fluctuantes. Sous-traitance capitaliste, aide sociale et politiques économiques de régénération locale ont rendu davantage informel le travail dans les aciéries à Endcliffe, et brouillé les frontières sociales entre usine, famille et quartier. La perméabilité accrue entre les processus économiques formels et informels et la réintégration de la production dans le tissu politique du quartier brouillent les cartes de la parenté et des idéologies capitalistes de production. Elles transforment le conflit structurel entre « capital » et « travail » en un conflit de générations et de sexes au sein de la classe ouvrière. L'article montre que les tentatives faites par le gouvernement de New Labour pour transformer la Grande-Bretagne en société postindustrielle sans classes a favorisé, paradoxalement, la ré-émergence de modes de production et de formes de servitude qui appartenaient au passé.

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