

Chapter 7



'Wage Is Male – But Land Is a Woman'

The anti-mafia co-ops' division of labour is solidified by the most unexpected external factors. Gossip in the specific sense of *who is talking with whom* might be one of the most surprising: it became a major resource for administrators, in its capacity to identify people with whom the cooperatives could collaborate. This further separated the administrators from their local co-members in the cooperatives, as it forged an anti-mafia cooperativism suspicious of local practices – including kinship (as seen in chapter 5) but with some appropriation of local practices to police the moral borders of the co-ops, as discussed in the previous chapter.

But distribution and hierarchy of labour in the co-ops is mainly about *labour* – and indeed, I shall argue here, labour taking place *outside* the co-op environment. This book opened with a vignette on the standardisation of labour that co-ops brought to Spicco Vallata. Here, I discuss the interactions between the 'standardisation' of people's registered work status (i.e., the legal regularisation of labour relations) in the anti-mafia cooperatives and their supplementary informal activities in pursuit of a better livelihood. Local practices aimed at guaranteeing households' livelihood security have evolved alongside the cooperatives' standardised employment. These practices involve 'ghostly' activities (Smith 1987); these activities, as shown later, are often illicit and indeed in line with the local mafia's 'ideologies' (Lupo 2015: 161–84). People's struggles to maintain the regular, cooperative wage work alongside these local practices make the official, visible political economy converge with an invisible and strongly gendered realm of local livelihood practices.

Local co-op members' 'mixed' statuses as employee/wage earners and independent peasant proprietors are at once reinforced *and* contested by the standardisation promoted by cooperatives. Their informality is exacerbated by the legalistic regulations of a work culture brought in from the co-ops, presenting their members with new problematics in the lives of their households. In the case of registering land in wives' names, standardisation, ironically, facilitated the flow of unemployment benefits that could be classified as illicit.

'Standardisation' and Work in the Fields

Most cooperative administrators were convinced that the process of formally valuing agricultural waged work and promoting labour rights would be accompanied by ideological change. Luca told me that 'once a labour regime is standardised, it would drag peasants away from mafia sympathies. . . . Their ideas will follow their conditions of living'.¹ This normalisation/standardisation involved a net pay of at least 51.62 euros per day (plus an extra 7–9 euros for specialised skills such as 'tractor driver'), as well as taxes plus national insurance contributions accumulated towards pensions.

The *braccianti* of the cooperatives were also smallholders alongside their cooperative employment. They earned wages from the cooperatives by working in the confiscated land plots and also worked on their own land tracts (*pezzi di terra*), mostly vineyards.² Most of them, when I asked, acknowledged that the pay from the cooperatives was 'pretty good' – but they always added that it was 'not enough'. A part of their income came from selling their own grapes to the local wineries, such as the Santoleone, of which they were also producer-members. As independent producers, they called themselves *contadini* ('peasants'), a term that encompassed all landowners, regardless of the production scale (their mean landholding was a modest 3.5 hectares).

Loredana, a thirty-five-year-old female administrator for the Borsellino cooperative, was sceptical about the extent to which the standardisation of labour 'could work', querying whether local workers took it seriously. She complained to me, mocking the Sicilian dialect of cooperative workers:

When local people applied to join the cooperatives, they expected *the* stable job,³ . . . integration into a system of a stable monthly wage [*u trabbagghiu fissu . . . a sistemazione*]. . . . I have discussed with all members about their views . . . of what the pay and the overall remuneration might be like. People think that by entering the co-op they have found a steady wage. This condition is an expected Sicilian disease.

Silvio, the president of the cooperative, shared this view of his colleagues, and indeed he thought the workers' attitude to demand a steady wage was counterproductive.⁴ The production-team members regarded these two young and educated administrators as ignorant of agricultural matters despite the fact that they were the cooperative's agronomists and the only members with a degree. They thought that the administrators'



Illustration 7.1: Workers in the vineyards, applying wire over the vines. Photo by Diego Orlando.

insistence on 'promoting the standardisation' was naïve if they could not back it up with a full monthly wage for all members, administrators and workers alike. The explanation administrators gave for the fact that they – unlike everyone in the manual cooperative workforce, apart from three member-workers of Falcone – received a monthly wage was that agrarian work was seasonal, unlike their work, which necessitated their constant presence in the office throughout the year.

Unlike Gianpiero, Silvio, Loredana and other cooperative administrators and representatives, whose views on pay were often disliked by local workers, I was frequently invited to homes of *sangiovannari* to spend time and discuss their experience of wage work with the cooperatives. I soon found that what people mostly wanted to talk about, perhaps heated by the flow of their homemade wine at the dinner table, was their experiences of working their own plots rather than their paid work for the cooperatives. I spent large parts of my fieldwork working alongside them in the cooperatives' vineyards, joining teams of five to fifteen men every other morning throughout December, April, August and September (months of intense agricultural work). In that context, I witnessed their sense of pride in working on ex-mafia confiscated land.⁵

The cooperatives modelled the recruitment strategies for their manual workforce teams on the gendered distribution of labour common in



Illustration 7.2: Falcone workers about to take a cigarette break in the vineyards. Photo by Diego Orlando.

Spicco Vallata. The absence of women on every plot of the cooperative land informed the manual workers' work identity. Manliness in turn was fundamental to the definition of their worker subjectivities and was also a form of loose celebration of their class identity. Men experienced working the soil of the cooperatives' plots as an expression of masculinity. Their work discourse often evoked stamina and courage – here seen as especially masculine characteristics – which they thought were needed to undertake not only the labour process but also the 'anti-mafia burden'. In both the manual and the anti-mafia aspect of their labour as fieldhands, they distinguished their work experience sharply from those 'of the office'.

Working on the confiscated land was thus 'even more masculine', Enzo noted.⁶ These understandings formed bonds of camaraderie among workers and established their practice of calling each other '*compare*' (godparent, but also metaphorically, comrade). This condition also underlined the distance between the administration and manual workforce teams, marking the cooperatives' division of labour. Often, men working in the vineyards recited sexist jokes to contrast themselves to the 'kids in the office' or to celebrate the manual labourer's manhood compared to the ambiguous manliness of the 'pen pusher'.

Through masculinity, the *braccianti* emphasised the moral superiority of their work experiences, which they brought into their new identities as wage workers in the cooperative ambience. Phrases like 'one poor man's cock is better than that of one hundred rich men' celebrated the presumed sexual capacities of 'the peasant' and the abilities of manual labour, while associations between their own work making the land fertile were also rife. At the same time, they often used self-mockery to ridicule the exclusively male work of the countryside and derided the exclusively male world of the fields ('In the village you get pussy, in the plot arse'). Men asserted that promiscuity and sexual potency were 'naturally' stimulated by work in the open air, whereas they considered the 'closed' environment of the administrative team's office unhealthy and emasculating.

Despite this overt manliness, they emphasised their fidelity and family-oriented ethics, which 'anchored' them, as they said, to their homes (and anti-mafia family idioms). As Pippo Pitrè put it, 'in the village, we refrain from these jokes: we are faithful to our wives and honour their presence in our households'.⁷ Men's experience of their employment in the cooperatives was not only masculinised as a daring political activity but it also fed into their family-oriented livelihoods.

Male workers hardly ever talked about their wives' contributions to their household income. Importantly though, the idea that the wages earned in the co-ops' field-work were a manly endeavour was juxtaposed to what they saw as their wives' 'land property'. Pippo had put it perfectly in a telling phrase: 'Wage is male – but land is a woman'. The phrase symbolically indicates that what the men called the position of 'the wife' (*'a mughieri'*) was fundamental for the constitution of the household economy. They also alluded to 'other income sources' coming from 'the position of the wife', which helped with their households' financial needs.

Pippo and his cooperative colleagues, second- or third-generation plot owners, had become mainly wage earners. The factors at play in this process stemmed from the coexistence of farm earnings with wage income. This was itself the consequence of the recent transformation that the cooperatives had brought about, as they hired peasants under standardised contractual employment terms. But I did wonder what these 'other income sources' were that men kept mentioning. Were they linked to the standardisation process that cooperatives brought to waged work, introduced into local discourse by the administrators? The clue to answering these questions seemed to lie with the status of land tenure for the cooperative workers' households.

Registration of Land to Wives

The Pitrè and Riceli Families: Work, Plots, Benefits

I became increasingly aware that households had other sources of income alongside daily wages from the cooperatives and their earnings from selling the grapes from their vineyards to the local wineries. Many informants mentioned unemployment benefits and wages from other sources of agricultural work. From discussions, therefore, I identified a fourfold income for cooperative workers' families: cooperative wages; the trading of their grapes to wineries; waged work; and, exclusive to daily workers, unemployment benefits. At the beginning, I thought it odd that people were cooperative workers *and* landowners and yet eligible to claim benefits, as they told me they were. In Italy, being registered as unemployed while owning and running a firm, such as a farm, however small, is prohibited by law.

As noted, domestic arrangements in Spicco Vallata were usually organised around a nuclear family with landownership as the central feature of familial economic life. In the majority of the households I studied, I visited the homes of cooperative workers or people affiliated to the cooperatives who were all members of nuclear-family-based households. Commensality and co-residence of a family were the primary factors denoting the limits of the households, which were consequently conceptually identical to the limits of the family. There were cases of both virilocal and uxorilocal households among the twenty-five for which I have detailed data, but the fact was not central to people's own understanding of family life. Inter-generational co-residence was also surprisingly rare, occurring in only three local families where the cooperative member was not married.

Most households were composed of a husband (the effective land proprietor and waged worker), a wife (housewife and sometimes in irregular waged employment, and also the nominal landowner, as explained below) and children, whether of school age or slightly older (studying, working in waged employment or helping with the family plots). Despite women's absence from agricultural work and their restriction to the domestic sphere, the households' 'family firms' (*aziende*) were registered to wives who routinely appeared as *capoaziende* (i.e., owners of the family's land). Conversely, husbands, who were the actual managers of the plots, were called *capofamiglie* (family heads), a title descriptive of the domestic sphere rather than that of economic enterprise. The econo-

misation of the domestic and the domestication of the economy cannot be missed here.

Male power is vested by the state: male heads are made answerable to the state, since the household as an institution becomes visible to the state through the identification of one person who represents it. Harris calls this process 'a partial devolution of power to adult males' (Harris 1984: 59). In Spicco Vallata, this devolution has been forged in terms of wives, as those who are accountable for the household's landownership, although this condition did not reflect a matriarchal organisation of the household.

Pippo and Maria Pitrè, a couple from San Giovanni, were the first to explain to me the details of the gap between legal title and the actual practice of land tenure, as I spent a considerable amount of time in their home. This ethnographic data confirms Jeff Pratt's findings from Italy, where he notes, "Those who do have joint property rights in land do not necessarily produce together" (1994: 104).⁸ Of course, the term *property rights* in Sicily does not reflect the actual ownership of the plots and is only nominal. My findings are also in line with Pratt's on how agrarian transformations (in his case in Tuscan agriculture) led to wage labour eventually becoming the main source of income for rural families (1994: 66). Pippo and Maria's story can help elucidate the point here.

Pippo, a *sangiovanaro*, fifty-eight years old when I met him, used to be a member of the Borsellino cooperative but had resigned a few months earlier (due to conflicts with the administration over the fact that, as a member-worker, he did not receive a monthly wage). He eventually decided to go back to work as a daily labourer for the Falcone, as he needed the money. I rented the apartment he owned at the centre of the village.

Elena, Maria and Pippo's daughter, always left dinner early to study for the university entrance exams in her room. The fact that she had chosen Parma (an Emilian city) for her studies reflected her father's involvement in the cooperative, ideologically inspired by Emilian 'red cooperativism'.⁹ However, when talking about how the family would finance Elena's studies, Pippo barely mentioned his cooperative pay. Rather, the plan depended on the year's harvest turnover: he talked more about harvest expenses, including wages paid to friends who would help, than his own wage from Falcone.

Maria was a return migrant to the village. Her parents had left San Giovanni at a young age as landless peasants, before the agrarian reform of 1953. They had immigrated to Argentina,¹⁰ where Maria was born and raised. She went to live permanently in Sicily in 1985, marrying into the

Pitrès, to whom she was related, hardly knowing anyone else and having no family assets to her name. When she married Pippo (her second cousin), her dowry did not include any land at all. The Pitrès themselves were a relatively poor family, whose assets included a house and four hectares of vineyard that Pippo had inherited from his father, acquired initially through the 1953 reform. Nevertheless, she appeared on the title deeds as the owner of the Pitrè family's plots. 'I had nothing waiting for me here, when I emigrated,' she clarified. 'It was my husband who sort of gave his plots to me. . . . We agreed for him to transfer them to be registered in my name, and here I am, owning four hectares today'. The transfer had taken place as soon as the couple married in 1986, as happened with most peasant families. The scheme was widely practised in the area, and the reason for it, I was told, was tax avoidance. Registering land to wives minimised the couple's joint tax liability, as the assets were shared between husband and wife.¹¹ The practice of female landownership, discussed below, rather than being 'traditional' as it was called locally, dated back to when tax avoidance started around the mid-1950s (in the post-agrarian reform impetus) for most local families, as it did with the Pitrès.

On several different occasions I asked Pippo the same question I asked both manual daily workers and member-workers: what were the specific sources of his family's income, given that Maria was not in waged employment? Like most other daily workers, Pippo worked for the Falcone cooperative for about one hundred days a year, earning an annual net income of about 5,200 euros. The wage he received from the cooperative for those workdays provided the basic subsistence for the family. The Pitrès budgeted around that 'family wage', as they called it. Unlike the steady wage from the cooperative, farming involved risk and unpredictability and therefore could not be reliably determined. Pippo, like others, calculated that the cooperative wage provided for roughly 40 per cent of their annual income, while farm earnings yielded around another 20 per cent. He was disappointed about the fact that, with the dire prices of the grape varieties he cultivated (Cattaratto, Viognier and Nero D'Avola), he had to sell a kilogram of grapes for 0.20 euros to the big Santoleone winery of the area (see table 7.1). The rest of their income came from 'other sources', apparently related to his wife's position in the household economy, on the one hand, and to his relations with other peasants on the other. This is what he initially told me as we worked together at the cooperative's vineyards. Working at his friends' vineyards, exchanging labour and cash with them, provided another 20 per cent of his earnings. Therefore, the family's livelihood was planned according to a multi-source income, sources that seemed connected to each other.

Table 7.1: Santoleone Grape Prices, in Eurocents

Prices of Harvest 2009	
SANTOLEONE WINERY	
MERLOT	26.50
SYRAH	25.00
NERO D'AVOLA	24.00
CABERNET SAUVIGNON	26.50
SANGIOVESE	21.50
NERELLO MASCALESE	21.00
PERRICONE	21.50
CHARDONNAY	30.00
VIOGNER	30.00
CATARRATTO	20.00
INZOLIA	20.00
TREBBIANO	18.00
GRECANICO E DAMASCHINO	20.00

Source: Santoleone cantina cooperativa, 2008

Figures: eurocents per kilogram

At our third dinner, he finally disclosed that the rest of the family's income (the final 20 per cent) stemmed from the fact that the plots were registered to Maria and had been since 1986. What he, like other men, had mentioned to me while working in the vineyards about 'other sources' now made sense: it was state welfare provision. This came in the form of unemployment benefits for Pippo, who legally appeared as unemployed for roughly 250 days a year. The fact that his waged work was now officially registered with the state made him eligible for benefits for the days of the year he did not work. In fact, a good 20 per cent of the Pitrè household's income came from this source. However, if Pippo had the farm registered to him, he would not have been eligible for these benefits, as he would have appeared to the state as a professional farmer. When Pippo started to engage in registered waged employment for the cooperatives in 2000, he immediately became officially employed and therefore entitled to security, pension and welfare benefits. When asked about this, he commented that 'here in Spicco Vallata, everything is a bluff' (*é tutto una truffa ccà*).

The incorporation of local male peasants into daily waged employment for the cooperatives thus consolidated the pre-existing informal practice of 'traditional' female landownership, grafting on further positive attributes. What was already a widely deployed practice by peasant households, apparently for tax purposes, had become an unexpected source of additional income. Locals thought that state policies imposed structural

constraints on their households (taxation) and therefore felt justified in using these strategies, pointing as well to the lack of welfare provision for housewives. In Spicco Vallata, as in the rest of Italy, women working as housewives were not recognised as workers in the state's employment registers. Hence, they could not claim unemployment benefits, although, according to state regulations they were not in employment;¹² in fact, they were eligible to claim only the lowest, 'pauper', 'social pension' of 160 euros a month when they reached sixty years of age. For this reason, the Pitrès planned ahead, taking advantage of the couple's sixteen-year age difference to improve Maria's pension. With Pippo due to retire in a few years, they planned to arrange a reverse transfer of the land's ownership, from Maria to Pippo; he would then head the *azienda* himself and 'hire' her as an employee until she became entitled to her pension. This way, she would be able to put together some years of registered employment, over this time paying the minimal state contributions to be eligible for a pension when she 'retired'. She did not actually intend to work on the farm in her fifties; in fact, like most married women in San Giovanni, she had hardly visited the plots she owned.

Similarly to the Pitrès, other anti-mafia families with this household livelihood pattern also followed the strategy of nominal female land-ownership. In the Riceli family, from the village of Bocca, all three of the male family members were employed by the cooperative. The father, Enzo, after years of cooperative employment, had brought his sons into the cooperative through his *raccomandazioni*. Santa, Enzo's wife, did only petty jobs for the co-op on a daily contract basis and never worked in the fields. 'Agricultural labour is not for us women – everyone knows this in Spicco Vallata,' she clarified when I asked her.

Santa was proud, however, to be the *capoazienda* of her 'anti-mafia family'. The Ricelis owned a couple of vineyards that they had bought when they returned from Switzerland, where they had lived for twelve years, between 1985 and 1997. Enzo had initiated the idea of moving to Switzerland because, he said, hard as he had tried, he could not find work in construction jobs in Bocca; Santa had agreed, and two years after they married, when they were both twenty-four, they emigrated there. The 1980s saw a sudden burst of public works construction in Spicco Vallata, where a significant amount of Cosa Nostra's heroin profits was invested, for money-laundering purposes¹³ (Sterling 1991; Stille 1996). Such works included the Palermo-Sciaccia highway, which today passes just outside San Giovanni. Enzo told me that workers were paid cash-in-hand by *mafiosi* middlemen, precisely to facilitate the *mafiosi's* money laundering.

Table 7.2: Two Families’ Incomes (numbers are approximate)

	Pitrès	Ricelis
Family members	Pippo: working in co-op Maria and Elena: not working	Enzo: member-worker on <i>permanent wage</i> Lino: member-worker on <i>daily wage</i> Ciccio: <i>daily worker</i> working in co-op Santa: working occasionally
Wages from co-ops	5,200 euros annually [shared among members]	Enzo: 13,200 euros Lino: 7,200 euros Ciccio: 7,200 euros Santa: 1,800 euros [each member kept most of his or her own earnings]
Privately owned land: earnings from grapes [agrarian profit only]	3.5 ha 2,500 euros annually [shared among members]	4 ha 2,700 euros annually [shared among members]
Wages from informal work	2,300 euros annually	Enzo: 2,000 euros Lino: 1,000 euros Ciccio: 1,000 euros
State benefits	Pippo: 2,200 euros annually	Lino: 2,000 euros Ciccio: 2,000 euros Enzo: no benefits, as he was in permanent, continuous employment, on a monthly wage Santa: no benefits, as annual workdays to make her eligible did not suffice

Most of the workers on such schemes were peasants: grape prices were dropping in the mid-1980s, and construction work was more profitable than cultivating vines. Enzo himself had worked on the Bocca reservoir construction project but became disillusioned with how much the project was controlled by the mafia, and so he sold the two-hectare vineyard that he had inherited from his father and went to Zurich with Santa. Their son Ciccio was born there shortly after, and Lino three years later. When they returned to Sicily in 1997, they immediately bought four hectares of healthy vineyard close to Bocca, with the official purchase being registered in Santa’s name for the usual tax reasons.

In the case of the Pitrès, the transfer of land from husband to wife took place at the time of their marriage in 1986. For the Ricelis, the family’s investment in land, after their return migration, was directly registered to the wife, Santa, in 1997. She was therefore, from 1997, a *capoazienda* in a

household with three men who joined the wage employment of the cooperatives; this conscious family plan began with Enzo in 2000, and the sons followed in 2005. Although Santa appeared as the landowner, Enzo and Santa clarified, when sharing their life stories with me, that the money for the land purchase came from Enzo's waged work in Switzerland, and it was his idea to buy land in Bocca in the first place. Santa's landownership 'produced' benefits in this 'anti-mafia family' *only* for the daily worker Lino, as Ciccio and Enzo, who were cooperative member-workers (indeed, Enzo was one of the very few member-workers on permanent wage), were never registered as unemployed.

Wives as Landowners in Anti-mafia Families: State, Mafia, and Local Codes

The case studies of the Pitrè and the Riceli households are characteristic of the broad pattern among anti-mafia families in Spicco Vallata: in all households for which I have data, where at least one member worked for the cooperatives, the married woman, as the nominal *capoazienda*, had all the landed property in her name.¹⁴ This not only includes land brought to households of anti-mafia families through the wife's marriage dowry (as was the case with Tano, a Falcone cooperative worker, and his Tarini family) but also households where the wife brought no property at all to her new household.

Registering land to wives was established practice for both anti-mafia families *and* mafia-affiliated families. These strategies are therefore continuities of practice in which local cultural codes are sustained under anti-mafia cooperativism, despite the cooperativist model, and solidified in a standardised political economy of waged employment as proposed by administrators.

Married women embraced their exclusion from working in the fields: Santa and Maria felt that joining men in farm work would be 'absurd'. Rita Giuffrè also emphasised to me that, although her brother Carelli, her husband Paolo and her future son-in-law Donato worked in the cooperative's vineyards, she was very happy that her paid work for minor tasks within the cooperative kept her away from the fields. The cooperatives also, as mentioned earlier, employed women for work in the *agriturismi*, the co-ops' two country houses that operated as boutique hotels (as well as, of course, in the administrative teams).

There is an interesting issue here regarding the mafia's role in shaping this gendered division of labour. Local people pointed to mafia proto-

col specific to Spicco Vallata as a significant factor: the cultural influence of the monosexual mafia had led to the historical phenomenon of women being excluded from working in the fields. The example of Antonia Barbeto, analysed in chapter 9, may be taken as indicative of San Giovanni mafia norms: when her three male children were arrested and charged with being Cosa Nostra members, her stance on those of the family's vineyards registered in her name accorded with the model of women's absence from farm work – she simply abandoned the fields. Further evidence in support of this argument can be found through a local comparison. Workers such as Pippo or Enzo often contrasted the male monopoly on agricultural work in their Spicco Vallata villages with the neighbouring town of Alcamo, where women did work in the vineyards. Visiting the fertile Alcamo valley, just outside Spicco Vallata, I witnessed women working as field hands alongside their male family members myself. Importantly, in Alcamo, informants suggested that there had historically been different mafia configurations. Evidence from the local press confirmed these oral informal communications: seemingly women did have leading roles in Alcamo mafia. As soon as local male clan leaders were arrested, they were replaced by their wives, who thus moved from occupying roles in the home to fulfilling roles in the local mafia: 'from family to clan', as the local press noted ('S' 2009: 15).¹⁵ This could suggest that there is a correlation between female work activity in the fields and contingent characteristics of the Alcamo mafia.

In fact, directions of causality should be left open: it is probably the historical interaction between cultural codes local to Spicco Vallata and the mafia that explain this situation. Such practices are rooted in localised labour regime histories that spill out of a framework of local political economy influenced to a degree by the mafia. In Alcamo, for instance, a different historical development of the mafia produced conditions where gender had different implications from San Giovanni. Despite the lack of grounded ethnographic data from Alcamo, there is evidence of women being active in the local mafia, fulfilling roles traditionally adopted by men, which relates to the fact that, in Alcamo, 'female labour in the fields was not devalued' ('S' 2009: 14).

Anthropology supporting a shift 'from structure and agency to livelihoods' (Rigg 2007: 29–39) 'draws on families' strategies to position land-ownership in an opaque status in order to guarantee their 'livelihood security' (Chambers 1998: 121). I have talked at some length in chapter 5 about how cooperativist and familist idioms merge in the context of the Sicilian anti-mafia. But household-based accounts may be too blunt an instrument to explain why families in villages so close to each other, San

Giovanni and Alcamo, follow such differently gendered tactics regarding work. Pointing to the complexity of both internal and external factors, in Spicco Vallata women's main income contribution to the livelihoods of their families was their position as 'firm owners' (*capoaziende*) – referring to the household land – largely through transfers of land that men had acquired through inheritance or purchase or as dowry in marriage and not through work in the fields. Ethnographic work from southern Italy, interestingly, confirms that the exclusion of women from farm labour is not a general characteristic of Sicily or of the greater area (Schneider and Schneider 1976; Assmuth 1997; Pratt 1994). Pratt notes that in sharecropping, women's work was not 'exclusively concerned with [home-based] activities', and in fact [women] were not 'isolated from a public world' (Pratt 1994: 38; similarly, Silverman 1970). Their domestic work is integrated in a wider system of political economy and indeed is organic to the functioning of its structure (Goddard 1996).

Joining anti-mafia cooperatives constituted a double mechanism for local families. On the one hand, it impacted on their status in the village as anti-mafia families. For local men who worked as cooperative *braccianti*, this had further positive implications by boosting their feelings of manliness. On the other hand, participating in the cooperatives' regulated employment offered a surprising opportunity to sideline state regulations, as it was done in the face of the administrators' claims to legality and regularisation of the local work regime.¹⁶ This widely adopted livelihood strategy entailed assuming the known risk of a state fine for benefit and pension deceit, since the government pursued legal enforcement on benefit fraud.¹⁷ Registering land to wives continued, nevertheless, as it now entailed a wide range of financial benefits for families related to state welfare policies.

This informal economy appears as a combination of employment and informal livelihood in the interweaving of the domestic with the broader political economy. Work is one example. Examining the PAYE (Pay as you earn) scheme in Britain, Mollona argues that the benefits provision, based on definitions of what counts as valid work, allowed and implicitly encouraged informal labour opportunities (2005). This logic also applies to the earlier discussion on the boundaries of home and work, which in this case also prove blurred, both within *and* outside the cooperatives' framework.

The introduction of registered wage work in Spicco Vallata via the cooperatives (the 'standardisation'), almost unprecedented for the lives of many, affected the relations of their families with welfare state provisions and policies. The sociological literature on labour regulation alludes to the Fordist security and stability of employment framework and the

accompanying labour rights (Beynon 1984), although this framework has long been abandoned in most EU countries. The normalisation that administrators talked about resonates with ethnographies of Eastern Europe describing people's aspirations to become part of a 'normal society' or sometimes speaking of 'a return to normality' (Rausing 2002: 127; see also page 17).

However, local people's livelihoods were not 'normalised' or 'standardised'. This is the point on epistemological priorities that Chambers underlines: we risk error when institutional categories such as 'employment' count more than people's actual livelihoods (2000). Men and women in Spicco Vallata negotiated the visibility of their 'real' roles vis-à-vis the state in such a way as to claim more income from its welfare policy. Continuing with the practice of land registration to women, they were able to accommodate the legal normalisation of the cooperative employment. One is reminded of the unintended consequences that arise when the 'normative discourse' of development agencies and the state fail to take local categories seriously – a James Ferguson (1994: 26) point as well as a leitmotif in our Sicilian story.

Formal, informal and no space in between

While formal employment remuneration through cooperative wages was not sufficient, people's involvement in cooperatives added a surprising further source of annual income to families through unemployment benefits, negotiated through the informal practice of registering wives as *capoaziende*. The forms of waged work in the cooperatives, articulated together with other, informal means of livelihood (made possible, indirectly, through involvement with cooperatives) did bring transformations in people's lives. This was not only because of the financial gains that labour standardisation brought to households but also because the regulation regime shifted the meaning of informal local practices.

This chapter has elucidated this interrelation of informal and formal economic practices, where 'political economy' and 'livelihood practices' are each an element *within* the other. Overall, participation in the cooperatives thus floods into people's livelihoods in ways that cannot be contained in the political economy of waged labour entailed in cooperativism. The rhetoric of a (single) model of anti-mafia cooperativism, assumed by administrators and state agents (the Consortium), failed to encompass the implicit model of cooperativism practised by workers – the experience of participating in cooperatives for their anti-mafia families.

In these gendered household practices there are continuities in ‘cultural codes’ between local and mafia contexts, as Schneider and Schneider (1976: 84) have suggested. Michael Blim provides a neat account of the Schneiders’ argument, claiming that, while they sought to

disassociate themselves from [Banfield’s] blaming of underdevelopment on the Southern Italian and Sicilian people and their familist values . . . , they did so ambiguously by arguing that . . . the cultural values so nearly the same as Banfield’s familist values were the consequence of as well as the response to powerlessness and economic failure. (Blim 2006: 9)

In other words, the problem was that a political-economy-focused analysis did not fully displace the ‘honour and shame’ literature, as it kept the premise of ‘cultural codes’. But such codes inspire practices that co-articulate with anti-mafia cooperativism (see chapter 5). The contemporary relevance of local codes lies in their dynamic character and development in a new context, alongside regulated wage labour. Just like how anti-mafia families formed, articulating conjugal household idioms to co-op employment, here the gendering of informal income opportunities outside official labour also articulates with co-op employment. This work outside labour, with its strongly gendered attributes, signals a survival of local codes associated not with honour and shame but with the shady figures of political economy – the fragility of people’s livelihoods. This implies looking at the salience of the informal economy to determine the ways people pursued their income sources alongside registered work. Their livelihoods articulated with both informal and standardised means of income in order to guarantee a decent living, mainly because of the low level of the cooperatives’ wages, since most workers, as already noted, were not paid a monthly wage, unlike administrators. Workers’ interlocked condition ‘between’ informal and regulated activity became a matter of gendered household plans and political mobilisation – as will be seen in chapter 8. Defending the informality of such codes as a matter of community became a vital political idiom that mobilised *sangiovannari*, often alongside *mafiosi*.

The integration of male peasant-workers of Spicco Vallata into a regime of standardised regulation/registered work (‘employment’), then, affected the established livelihood practices of local households in different ways. On the one hand, it reinforced the practice of legally registering land to wives, and facilitating unemployment benefits for their husbands. On the other, the regime formed part of a broader state strategy to regulate and standardise labour relations, which resulted in the penalisation of local ‘mutual aid’ labour schemes – the matter of the following chapter.

NOTES

1. Luca's account here seems like a slightly 'vulgar', simplified Marxism or, indeed, the discourse of modernisation as changing mindsets through imposed restructuring of economic activity, as explored in post-colonial contexts in relation to moral economies (e.g., Taussig 2010 [1980]).
2. The co-articulation of waged labour and land cultivation meant that informants were at the same time both workers and independent peasant producers. There is a vast literature on people whose livelihoods combine peasant and worker statuses, including ethnographies of Italy (e.g., Pratt 1994; cf. 2003). This experience has been identified as a 'mixed' one according to the Portici school of sociology; in Emilia, the combination of farmer and labourer identities was incorporated within broader development plans (Mingione 1994). In Sicily, it has been linked with household subsistence but has not contributed to broader growth (Centorrino et al. 1999). Instead, this 'mixed' mode has remained in place as a way of sustaining the livelihood of local households, precisely due to the 1953 land reform, which fragmented land in small tracts, a situation reproduced in inheritance patterns.
3. Ethnographies of western Sicily stress how 'the stable job' was an idiom of the non-productive middle classes of the city rather than a characteristic term of the rural workforce (Cole 1997; Chubb 1989).
4. As noted (see table 4.1), of the manual workforce's members, only four out of ten in Falcone and none in the other cooperatives had a monthly wage; although all of them had permanent contracts, they were paid on a daily basis.
5. I refer to both daily workers and member-workers as 'workers' in this chapter, unless otherwise stated.
6. This echoes ideas on the articulation of anti-mafia activity in terms of bravery (as hinted historically in chapter 3).
7. Because of the gendered nature of my fieldwork, the fact that I am a man meant that I was not exposed to some of the gendered contradictions in households (Morris 1992), about which researchers should be cautious. I have not been able to draw much data for analogies with women's get-togethers. The ethnographic discussion here does contribute further work on the significance of men's proverbs (Brandes 1980) in understanding husband-wife relationships. There are, indeed, many points to be made by studying these symbols, gestures and sayings among men in public spaces (such as the workplace) to yield an idea of relations in the private space between husbands and wives (for Sicily: Blok 2000). Herzfeld underlines the performance of masculinity in Crete (Herzfeld 1985).
8. Admittedly, a different history of land tenure (sharecropping as opposed to latifundia) as well as a more rigorously attentive exploration of a large household sample by Pratt (1994) in Tuscany are key factors accounting for this marked differentiation. Having acknowledged this, I should stress once more that my research focused only on families of anti-mafia cooperative members.

9. The consumer co-op representatives from Emilia who often visited San Giovanni influenced anti-mafia cooperative members, describing the wealth of Emilia.
10. This toponym, like all others, has been changed to anonymise the case.
11. This is an interesting 'diverging devolution' (Goody 1976: 21), implying inter-spouse trust. As with the Pitrès, I have tracked an additional sample of twenty-two married families who followed this tactic; I have not heard of any couple who had separated, so I regrettably have no data to explore what happens in case of divorce.
12. The fact that they were not 'actively seeking waged work' (understood as regular employment) is not relevant in this context; their husbands (and in some cases, like the Ricelis, their sons) while not seeking regular waged employment either, were receiving unemployment benefits.
13. San Giovanni *mafiosi*, especially Barbeto, were the key figures in international heroin trafficking at the time.
14. It was not possible to use the Italian Land Cadaster (the national land registry) to establish the exact picture of land tenure in the village overall: one can refer to the Cadaster for details about *any one specific plot* but not all the plots of an area. When I consulted it, to establish the ownership history of some plots confiscated from *mafiosi* and bestowed on the cooperatives, I found that in fifteen out of nineteen cases the plots of the *mafiosi* were registered to women: wives or straw-women.
15. I quote from the actively anti-mafia periodical 'S', an investigative weekly. The editor, whom I met, was a hardliner regarding mafia. For instance, he once told me that capital punishment should be introduced for *mafiosi*. Many articles, like the ones cited, for fear of mafia retaliations, were anonymous.
16. Pointing out contradictions in informants' positionalities is not intended to somehow delegitimise them or diminish the importance of their efforts to improve the workings of the local economy. Highlighting the discrepancy between discourse and practice is useful because only by acknowledging it can we – anthropologists and informants *together* – start to understand the constraints and possibilities under which economic endeavours such as cooperativism take place.
17. This discussion proliferated later, related to the international discourse on the sovereign debt crisis, where it has been said that Italy's (assumed) immense public deficit and adjunct sovereign debt are largely due to such schemes of employers' contribution avoidance.