

LABOR'S CRISIS AND NEW EXPERIENCES IN EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME GENERATION: DIFFERENT FACES OF ASSOCIATIVE LABOR AND GENDER ISSUES

Marcia de Paula Leite

Faculty of Education / State University of Campinas (Unicamp)

FAPESP Process 2006/61142-3 | Term: Apr 2007 to Mar 2012

Main researcher: Angela Maria Carneiro Araújo, Jacob Carlos Lima



Above, Campinas Recycling Coop, 2009. Below, file of the project, 2009 (photo by the research team)



This project aims to discuss the main features of the current labor crisis, emphasizing the diffusion of new forms of precariousness, such as self-employment, no contract or fixed-term contracts, that are used to lower labor costs. This project also seeks to analyze the contradictory use of associative labor arrangements. On one hand, these arrangements are used to lower costs and diminish labor rights; on the other hand, they are used as an employment and income alternative based on principles of self-reliance. This project seeks to analyze the ways in which these new labor configurations, called Solidarity Economics, are a viable alternative for employment and income generation. The gender issues involved will be examined in a transversal way in all of the occupational arrangements examined.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS TO DATE AND PERSPECTIVES

The findings may be classified along three thematic axes.

- 1) Informality and precarization. We identified the stability of traditional informality and the emergence of a new informality as a result of the processes of productive restructuring, outsourcing and subcontracting. The old informality persists in the form of peddlers in the downtown sectors of large cities, in household employment, in self-employment, in home-based work in the shoe and clothing industries and in other forms of underemployment. Since the 1980s, however, a new informality has emerged that is related to specialized and educated workers, especially women, who are either excluded from formal employment or have never had formal employment, with new or reshaped activities through their insertion in productive chains, subcontracting, and the diversification of products and forms of peddling.
- 2) Solidary economy. We found that a large part of the cooperative experiences promoted by both governmental policies and civil organizations result in precarious insertion. Although employment in these cooperatives tends to ease workers' poverty and extreme vulnerability, the lack of continuous training and of minimal capital for autonomous survival in the market create significant difficulties for the cooperatives, especially with respect to their practices of self-management and solidarity. Consequently, these experiences do not always result in the improvement of life conditions and of social and political insertion for those involved. Nevertheless, most of the experiences of a solidary economy must be seen as a result of labor resistance vis-à-vis unemployment and/or more precarious forms of subsistence.
- 3) Subcontracting and cooperatives. We observed an increase in subcontracting through cooperatives that organize manpower, whether through frauds aimed at a reduction of costs for contracting firms or through cooperatives organized and supported by NGOs and unions committed to strategies of self-management and democratization at work. Problems of inspection and various court interpretations of a true cooperative raise difficulties for these labor experiences because labor courts tend to distrust them. Other issues, such as the lack of capital, technological obsolescence, and problems with the market, make cooperatives partially dependent on subcontracting. However, even when workers control the productive process and own the means of production, subcontracting hampers a cooperative's autonomy, maintains its subordination in the market, and may jeopardize the entire project of self-management.

MAIN PUBLICATIONS

- Araújo AMC. 2011. Empresas recuperadas pelos trabalhadores: entre o rural e o urbano. In: Araújo AMC, Oliveira RV (orgs). *Formas de trabalho no capitalismo atual: condição precária e possibilidades de reinvenção*. Pp: 161-191.
- Araújo AMC. 2011. O trabalho flexível e a informalidade reconfigurada. In: Oliveira RV, Gomes D, Targino I (orgs). *Marchas e contramarchas da informalidade do trabalho: das origens às novas abordagens*. Pp: 161-189.
- Araújo AMC. 2009. Terceirização e relações de gênero. In: Dau DM, Rodrigues IJ, Conceição JJ (orgs). *Terceirização no Brasil. Do discurso da inovação à precarização do trabalho*. Pp 129-147.
- Araújo AMC, Oliveira RV (orgs). 2011. *Formas de trabalho no capitalismo atual: condição precária e possibilidades de reinvenção*. 215 pps.
- Leite MP. 2011. El trabajo en el Brasil de los años 2000: dos caras de un mismo proceso. *Revista de Trabajo*. Año 7, 9: 115-129.
- Leite MP. 2011. El trabajo en el Brasil de los años 2000: dos caras de un mismo proceso. *Sociología del Trabajo*. 70: 25-44.
- Leite MP. 2010. Igualdade de gênero e raça no Brasil: uma discussão sobre a política pública de emprego. *Revista Dados*. 53(1): 195-231.
- Leite MP, Araújo AMC (orgs). 2009. O trabalho reconfigurado. *Ensaio sobre Brasil e México*. 303 pps.
- Lima JC. 2010. A terceirização e os trabalhadores: revisitando algumas questões. *Cadernos de Psicologia Social do Trabalho (USP)*. 13: 17-26.
- Lima JC. 2009. Os paradoxos do trabalho associado. *Tempo Social. Revista de Sociologia da USP*. 21: 113-132.
- Lima JC. 2010. Participação, empreendedorismo e autogestão: uma nova cultura do trabalho? *Sociologias (UFRGS. Impreso)*. 12: 158-198.
- Lima JC. 2010. Selbstverwaltete Armut. Müllkooperativen in Brasilien. *Informationsstelle Lateinamerika(ila)*. 336: 13-15.

Marcia de Paula Leite

Faculdade de Educação
Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp)
Cidade Universitária Zeferino Vaz
CEP 13083-865 – Campinas, SP – Brasil

+55 19 3521-5682
mpleite@uol.com.br