

*THE MEANS WHICH MISSED THE ENDS: FINS: MANUFACTURING COOPERATIVES
AND WORKMEN'S SELF-MANAGEMENT.¹*

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Abstract

As from the nineties, in Brazil, several experiences of self-management of workers began to influence the course of the labour struggle against structural unemployment. Such experiences appear to be a solution to the survival problem and an alternative for the workers' autonomy before the domination of capital, in the domain of production. In this article, we analyze the foundations that guide the experiences of self-management, in the sense of examining if, in fact, they can be constituted in an autonomous power and sovereign before the capital. Or if, self-managed companies reproduce, essentially, relationships of competition and exploitation of labour, now effected by workers themselves without having employer.

Key words: self-management, struggle of classes, human emancipation.

I. Introduction

The theme of the current article is the analysis of the possibility of reaching the workers' emancipation through the creation of democratic participation mechanisms within the landmarks of the capitalism. We have opted for using as reference the proposals, in Brazil, for direct control on the capital, searched in the cooperative experiences and manufacturing self-management by the workers.

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The emergence of the democratic organization movement of the popular forces retrace the immediate following years after the end of the military dictatorship in the late eighties. The experiences of workers' self-management in factories, in our estimation, a particular variation of such movement, and coincide with the evolutions of the structural crisis of the capital and the neoliberal reaction to the explicit crisis in Brazil, mainly, from the nineties on. Such experiences have shown up as a possible reaction to the harmful effects of the structural crisis of the capital over the capitalist accumulation and the individual capitalists' profitability rates. They contribute to the attenuation of the resultant problems of the capital structural crisis, saving businesses and jobs. Thus appearing as a remedial mechanism in fighting unemployment, as well as ending up in deviating the focus of the struggle of classes from the confrontation with the logic of the capital, when putting workman against workman, generating new forms of auto-exploitation of labour.

Having this set of questions as reference, we have searched, within this article, for presenting the theoretical basis and the practical and political evolutions of the self-management experiences.

In order to do so, we have used the experiences reported in the 1st National University-Business Symposium about Self-management².

With these notes about such experiences, in which it can be identified the main questions involved within the discussion about manufacturing cooperative and workmen's self-management, we intend to contribute to the critical deepening of the recent past, so as to advance the building of popular power alternatives which aim at the capital overcoming, to the extent that, according to Marx, it is an uneliminating condition to accomplish the absolute equality among men.

The history of the 20th century showed that the working class made little progress towards building its class autonomy and independence, since, sometimes they remain vulnerable to co-opting by the State against the class mediation ideology, and sometimes they submit themselves to the cumulative and expansionist imperatives of the capital and the enhanced exploitation of labour, in capitalism crisis times.

The proposal of new experiences of participative democracy, and the analysis of the possibilities of placing the capital under the control of the workmen's interests, therefore, has acquired significant historical importance, mainly if we consider the defeats the struggle for human emancipation has faced, under the terms stated by Marx in *On The Jewish Question*, in the

² The 1st National University-Business Symposium about Self-Management was held at UNESP- Marília, State of São Paulo, Brazil, in 1996.

last centuries in attempts of similar nature. In fact, would we be innovating, or retaking old class struggle paradigms formulated by the 19th-century reformism, already renewed by the European social democracy during the *Welfare State*, and, who knows, currently, renewed again so as to meet the demands of the structural crisis of the capital and its neoliberal facet? To what extent do the manufacturing self-management experiences allow the working class to accumulate forces and build the way towards human emancipation? That's what we will discuss next.

II. The self-managerial control of labour over the capital

Various political participation tools with different forms and institutional spaces (Participative Budget³, Managing and Social Control Councils, Production and Service Cooperatives) are constituents of a movement of democratic innovations whose intent is to increase the civil society control over the State and the market, constituting a workmen's new hegemony of power.

The importance of such experiences of participative democracy and the imputed innovative nature (economical, social and institutional) to them by their political and class organizations (Genro & Souza, 1997; Raichelis, 1998; Sánchez, 2002; Gohn, 2003), and by other relevant theorists (Santos, 2002), arouse the investigative curiosity so as to verify whether, in fact, they have moved towards workers' release from the subordination and dependence on the capital and decision autonomy from their emancipating destiny, or whether they have revealed themselves as renewed capital domination tools, either in the State or in the market spheres.

The analysis of the workers' cooperatives in self-management or co-management regimes, among the other participative democracy experiences, are the ones which show the contradictions of the capital-labour contradictions more clearly, when compared to democratization initiatives of the power in organizing the production within the market society boundaries. We have set our interest in focusing the analysis on the basis and expectations defended by their very creators, thus allowing us to trace some tendencies observed within this recent social phenomenon in Brazil.

³ See Genro (2000), theoretical-political formulator of the proposals to combine direct with representative democracies, like the Participative Budget, which has guided the city governments of the Workmen's Party. Making use of Frederico's (2000) words, when referring to Tarso Genro's book and proposing it to be more conclusive, when it is critically examined, to leave the epistemological discourse and take heed of the ontological criticism. Politics and its institutional innovations, without considering the ontological basis of what is intended to transform, become pure reflection of desire and well-meaning subjectivities.

1. Conceptual approach

We have found some reports in the 1st National University-Business Symposium about Self-Management, from the very workmen, about various concrete experiences⁴ which have allowed us to observe a very real and representative picture of the means used so as to set up a “Business without a Head”⁵.

The self-management businesses may be characterized, according to Vieitez (1997, p. 911), by a set of goals which they try to accomplish, such as:

- . workers become owners and managers of the new shops
- . capital resources are obtained from the selling of goods and services
- . “maximizing profit is not the motive force of the enterprise”
- . autonomy in management and democratization of the decision making process
- . primacy of people and labour over the capital in the distribution of the profits.

Facing the need of “creating or saving jobs”, according to the same author, self-management appears as an alternative for popular enterprises which don’t require large capitalization. The workers start getting involved with such type of private property of the production means because of the lack of option facing unemployment – “the motivation is pragmatic”. Vieitez (1997, p. 27)

Such mobilization for a pragmatic and emergency alternative, apart from the emancipation obstacles imposed by the hierarchical and unequal nature, is what characterizes the set of reported experiences, as follows.

2. Unemployment and self-management

Exclusively aiming at “defending the job”, it is inherited the organization in the conditions and structures which it had been performing within the market. According to Sinal

⁴ It consists of statements given by nine workers who represent six cooperatives (Skillcoplast, Hydrophoenix, Conforja, Coopervest, Contramonte and Cobertores Parahyba). It was also analyzed the information from the ANTEAG (Workers in Self-Management and Share Participation Organizations National Association) representative, among other texts.

⁵ Title of the book published in 1997, after the 1st University-Business National Symposium about Self-management was held.

Ferreira's statement, from Skillcoplast⁶: "we are what was left of Abrecofica". (...) "it has passed us that assembly and finish production. We were getting the compensatory breach with a finishing line within the proper organization". (*in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 58) The defense of the job is the main reason of the self-management experience at Coopervest⁷ and Contramonte⁸ as well. According to José Paixão, "The Cooperative was set up in order to create its own jobs". Self-management has come "because the business had a very serious problem." It wasn't planned, "we accepted it because we were unemployed" and "we had nowhere to run to". It is said in another statement about setting up a labour cooperative that it has appeared "from the unemployment and questioning about the outsourcing process we have lived within the country." (José Paixão Lemos de Aquino – Coopervest, and José Réus do Nascimento – Contramonte *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 66-68)

No other option was left to the workers, because companies were going through financial crisis, and they felt no longer able to comply to the labour rights. So as not to lose their rights acquired in years of work, the workers accepted as an alternative taking over either part of the company, separating and specializing themselves in a sector of the production line, or at a first moment becoming the old bosses' partners in a co-management relation, in order to, then, when getting the public financing needed, set up the self-management regime and create a new company. That is what Martiniano has reported us. Due to the fact that the auction of all the equipment and properties hadn't reached the sum of the already acquired rights, 31 employees "agreed on taking part in that transition phase, still remaining within the company, in an illegal way for a year and a half, at least, waiting for the arrival of the capital from a loan project we had applied for from BNDES⁹." (José de Oliveira Martiniano – from Hidrophoenix¹⁰, *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 63)

The management character which is pointed out seems to us that it has a lot to do with a procedure of responsibility transference, to the workers, of social losses provoked by the old bosses' inabilities to survive in the capitalism in crisis. It has been observed that the growing

⁶ Skillcoplast- Indústria e Comércio de Plásticos – was founded in 1994, in the State of São Paulo, by the Staff Association who remained from the former Abrecofica.

⁷ Coopervest – Cooperativa dos Trabalhadores de Confecções Limitada – belongs to former employees from Vila Romana S/A, former owner of the brand names Pierre Cardin and Yves Saint Laurent in the State of Sergipe.

⁸ Contramonte is a Civil Construction and Industrial Mounting Workers' Cooperative Partnership in the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

⁹ BNDES – Social Development National Bank – is a governmental incentive bank to the industrial policies in Brazil.

¹⁰ Hidrophoenix is a company which produces equipment for vehicle wheel shop use. It was taken over by an Administrative Board made of old employees and a Sorocaba Metallurgical Union representative in a bankrupt situation in the late 1993.

occurrence of self-management experiences in the 90s coincide with the deepening of the economic crisis and its most perverse development, from the social perspective, which is the structural unemployment. Aiming at diminishing such losses to the labour as well as providing a more profitable way out to the crisis of the companies through an “inner” factory solution when reaching the repayment of the labour liabilities with sums of capital already immovable, self-management has shown itself as a remedial action facing the effects of the capital crisis. It works as a means of socializing the onus of the crisis next to the workers, and not as an act of conquering the labour autonomy from the hierarchical subordination of the capital. Therefore, it is an alternative imposed by the circumstances and not an emancipating strategic option which intends to promote substantive alterations in the subordinating relation to the capital and in the dominant relations in the capitalist market.

3. New collective personifications of the capital– the judicial-legal illusion

The capital system, as a continuous self-valorization process of the accumulated work, needs the capitalist action in order to play the controlling role over the living work. The capitalist is supposed to do the “mediation” (and impose) its [the capital] imperative objectives as consciously feasible commands to the most potentially recalcitrant real subject of the production” – the work. (Mészáros, 2002) The owner of the capital, “aware of such move”, so as to remain as capitalist, must have the value valorization as “subjective aim” – search for the “incessant multiplication of the value”.(Marx, 1983) If he doesn’t manage to play this role effectively he is no longer a capitalist, or, in our case, he gets rid of those enterprises in which he can’t obtain the needed profitability anymore. Still, according to Marx, “As a Capitalist he is just personalized capital. His soul is the soul of the capital. The capital has one only vital impulse, the impulse for valorization, to create surplus value, to absorb the means of production with his constant part, the largest mass as possible of surplus labour.” (Marx, 1983, p. 188)

At assuming the role of impersonating the capital, despite being from the working class, these new capital owners, currently in associative or cooperative regimes, will be further too committed to the objectives of the amplified reproduction of the capital than their former individual owners. According to Mészáros (2002) after Marx, the causative relation goes from the capital to its specific type of personification, and not the contrary. Therefore, the capital and its expanding requirements, which imply the hierarchical subordination of the capital and the

increasing appropriation of the product of other's work, have got no reason to disappear just because the personification of the individual capitalist also vanishes. He keeps on acting, adopting other forms of personification.

Based on the mentioned statements, we can observe that the changing of the former bosses' property titles to the new associated workers is everything but free or self-determined. It is an innovation in the forms of subordination to the capital in times of crisis. The capital is a social relation of production and not a "material entity" or a "neutral mechanism" which can be holding possession of another individual randomly, whatever his legal title is, an individual private owner or a collective owner, or a state one. For implying a living work subjection process, for needing to guarantee its self-valorization through the as effective extraction of surplus value as possible, it is accumulated, object labour, and it hasn't got any form of existence which can do without the worker, whatever its judicial-legal appearance is. (Mészáros, 2002)

The mere substitution of the subjects to occupy the personification role of the capital, keeping the objective conditions of the reproduction and expansion of the capital while a dominant system, does not alter in any way the antagonically structured relation in which the exploitation of the capital over the labour is based. As with the cooperatives, the mystic collective appropriation of the capital by the workers only alters the means of such exploitation and accumulation. On one side, in disadvantageous conditions facing the former bosses, because what is turned into initial capital, or working capital, are the credits or the small surplus receipts from the very work, without any possibility of reinvestment or diversification of its capital, aiming at increasing the opportunities of accumulation, just like the old bosses did to remain capitalists.¹¹ On the other hand, in concordance between the accumulative and expanding imperatives of the capital, more advantageous, because they become their own boss, as the source of increasing their capital is currently the "self-exploitation of the labour", and they are the managing subjects of the work intensification in the sense of accomplishing a larger productivity and guaranteeing its positioning within the market.

The cooperatives remain subordinated to the capitalist competitiveness, it doesn't matter which collective property relation is established. Therein, according to Luxemburg (1975, p. 52),

¹¹ According to the Cobertores Parahyba worker's comment, the capitalist businessman's money is used to buy breed cattle and horses, farms, etc., nevertheless, from now on, the very General Assembly of the new factory workers is the one which decides about the expenditures. They are not going to authorize such kind of misspending investment. At self-management "this sum is kept working within the circle", we reinvest it in the factory, therefore "we are going to try to work the capital so as to benefit the workers here (...). It is not a matter of becoming rich. It is about earning a good salary, it's about living decently." (José Clementino de Faria - *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 72)

the competitiveness is imposed through the “need of intensifying the work the most”, “reducing or lengthening the working hours according to the market status”, to sum it up, “all the ways to confront within the competitiveness” are put into practice, without getting not even a millimeter closer to the transformation of the capitalist way of production in behalf of the workers’ autonomy.

That is what can be noticed within the cooperatives. It is highlighted the fact that the relation among workers at Skillcoplast is not “a pat on the back thing”. It is conflicting and difficult, “because there is a daily and continuous search for having results so as to survive as an organization and as a citizen. (...) You have to kill two or three lions a day”. (Sinval Ferreira and Manuel Alves da Paz – Skillcoplast *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 58-61)

The relationship with the other fellows changes due to new duties while personifications of the capital, and, now, they’re responsible for the success of the business. Some of them give up; others have to impose the new criteria of individual productive participation on their fellows, as they are the producers of the surplus value after all. At the Assembly, the worker identified who wasn’t working properly and asked to take them out and we had to agree with that.” “Chances were given” to these workers “but this is not a playing game.” Therefore, “we cannot have paternalism within a productive process, nor in a self-management process, otherwise it will inevitably be a failure.” (Manuel Alves da Paz -Skillcoplast *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 61-62)

4. Worker against worker – self-exploitation of the work

When the cooperatives are a success, according to Luxemburg (1975, p. 55), they become a means of reducing the capitalist profit, “thus enriching the workers”, while they show a “hybrid character”, as the associated workers under these conditions are nothing but personifications of the capital in the list of capital owners, and workmen in the production sphere (of the floor of the factory). Such hybridism has a very serious political consequence, as it leads the involved individuals to resign from the “struggle against the capitalist production model”, restricting it to “struggle against the capitalist distribution model”.

At acting directly, without the mediation of the capitalist class, into the operationalization of the labour exploitation and the appropriation of the surplus value, workers keep the “contradictory need to govern themselves with all the absolutism required, and perform the role of the capitalist boss among themselves.” Based on such contradiction, highlighted by Luxemburg

(1975, p. 52-53), the cooperative experiences have no way to survive within the inner capitalist production model, and its termination occurs ‘either because of its return to the capitalist business; or by its dissolution, when the workmen’s interests are stronger.’”

When the workers’ demands threaten to place themselves on the foreground, such attitude is seen as immaturity and lack of commitment with the self-managerial goals. That is what can be seen at Coopervest, as it is said that a considerable number of associated members “resist to accept the cooperative reality”; “the cooperates always behave as if they were employees.”; “they resist the implementation of a vision turned to everybody’s initiatives, orientated towards the common ground, behaving itself and sometimes demanding advantages which is only conceived to be given in an environment regulated by an eminently employing relation. This is not our case.” (José Paixão Lemos de Aquino – Coopervest – *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 67)

When accomplishing the imperatives of capital profitability, all the strictness and effort are expended, nevertheless, in the relation with the work, all the resistance or the misunderstanding to the new way of exploiting work is seen as a hurdle and must be overcome through persuasion and qualification, through re-education (“deculturalization”) or by imposing the most committed with the idea. It is observed that even the pedagogical benefit, according to Singer (2000), a “vital concernment” objective¹² for such democratic innovations in the capital-labour relation, it is seen subordinated to the imperatives of the capital, which doesn’t spare the worker’s subjectivity, forcing it to adequate itself (and justify) to the tyranny of profit as a condition to the survival of the business.

The relation between capital and labour is structurally hierarchical and antagonistic, and it survives all variations of property relation (personifications of capital) which tries to innovate. Even though the emancipating notion appears in the reported statements a less precise form, all of them are shown as alternatives to the salaried work and means of overcoming the social-economic iniquities that have been more and more highlighted by the capital dominant system. It is searched (as if it were possible) to accomplish equality in the organization of work among the associated members, together with the acceptance of the impositive inequalities of the criteria for economic effectiveness of the logic of profit which oppose such equality. They are thus transformed into regulators of their own self-exploitation, increasing the inequality of the distribution of the exceeding product outside the factory and the intensification of the work (that

¹² “The importance of these experiences is the learning which they promote to segments of the working class of how to take over the collective management of productive enterprises and to operate them under democratic and equality principles.” (Singer, 2002, p. 44)

is, the increase of the produced surplus value) within the factory, as in the accumulation, concentration and expansion of the capital remain the indicators of the success of the enterprise.

Besides the various difficulties in keeping the workmen's productivity because of the varied degrees of subjective involvement and the certainty about the validity of the experience, there is no way of not recognizing immediately the imperious power of the market. In one of the statements, the market is seen as "extremely aggressive and difficult", as factors such as "competition, price and time" act on it simultaneously, being the case that the "client has become our boss". The despotism of the market, in contrast to the "democratic" relations among the workers, appears through a new subject – the client. According to a statement, the "client is the boss as we accept it because it's him the one who pays and keeps the business going round." (Manuel Alves da Paz *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 62)

The submission to the exchange relation within the capital system is as important as the property relation. Mézáros (2002, p. 629) warns that the

exchange relation to which the labour is subjected to is no less enslaving than the separation and alienation of the material conditions of production from the workers. By reproducing the established exchange relations on an extended scale labour can only multiply the power of the alien wealth over against itself. The sad history of the co-operatives movement in capitalist countries, despite their once genuine socialist aspirations, speaks eloquently in this respect.

The onus of facing the competitors under disadvantageous conditions due to the shortage of capital, to the low technological level¹³, to the administrative-financial inexperience, to some workmen's resistance to increasing the work intensity without the correspondent improvement in the income, to the production scale, to the arrival of imported products at lower prices, weighs still even more in a globalized market. That's how such questions are expressed in the vision of one of the persons who made the statements: "The economic conjuncture confuses our market relationship, it makes us still work within this salaried precariousness. And the globalization of economy, this other factor which is another executioner of our market nowadays, hitting small businesses just like ours." (José de Oliveira Martiniano – Hidrophoenix - *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 65)

¹³ "We cannot have an obsolete technology". It is recognized that "so as to be in the market, (...), in order to introduce our product, we need to prepare our staff to cope with." And the factory ground staff shows a "certain rejection (...) in acquiring some technological knowledge". (José de Oliveira Martiniano *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 65)

In the case of Cobertores Parahyba, as it is a bigger-sized self-managed business¹⁴ than the others (400 workmen), the problem of relationship with the market appears in a different way and implies in a diverse power of reaction in defense of its market segment. According to the statement, workers suffered, at a specific moment, threatens of “disloyal competition” coming from a Mexican blanket factory. While its product was sold for R\$ 26.00 each, the Mexican product was introduced in the Brazilian market for R\$12,00. The concern about maintaining the market for its good was immediate.

The president of the factory started acting. Cobertores Parahyba has got a president, who was hired by the workers under the payment of a good salary (“We have made a contract with him”; “he earns a good salary”), whose aim is the maintenance of a good performance of the business in the market. Facing such problem, his experience and political and business relations were mobilized promptly (“Our factory president has got capitalist spirit”; he asserts “that [here] there isn’t self-management”; “But at least he has got one thing: he is smart.”). The president moved “heaven and earth”, talked to ministries, Treasure Secretary and we obtained a surtax of 70% on the Mexican blanket. (José Clementino de Faria – *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 71)

The factory found itself altered in its own inner hierarchical structure, making use of extra-class qualifications as requirements for the successful working in the market and in facing the competitors. That is what they have done effectively, as, according to Faria, they can make up to 12 million dollars a year (“is it viable or not?”). The alterations in the property relation of the capital near by the socialized functioning (?) in the production, when facing the market laws in the distribution, reveal the capitalist nature of the cooperative experience. Such contradiction appears clearly when the factory representative in the Symposium claims that “our factory is *sui generis*. The Association is socialist. However, the factory is capitalists, because it Works just like any of Antônio Ermírio de Moraes’s companies, any of them.” (José Clementino de Faria, *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 72)

The smaller-sized factories (40 people) still manage to keep an inner organization without hierarchy, once, according to Paz, “Hierarchy – leaderships, this kind of thing – practically don’t exist. The decisions are taken together, as well as the objectives.” The revenue is about 120 thousand reais a month, with a profit margin of 20%., which has allowed the factory to consolidate itself in the market as a transformer of plastic and to qualify the workers to operate in

¹⁴ Based in the Argentinian social self-management experience (companies occupied and recuperated by workers), Lucita (2004) highlights that “The old proverb that the bigger the success of the cooperative is the more capitalist they become is not wrong, there are already too many experiences about it.”

the market: “nowadays we start knowing the other side of the coin, to retain a means of production. How prices are supposed to be, because nowadays the worker discusses salary in another way.” (Manuel Alves Paz - Skillcoplast - *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 60)

The needs imposed by the capital and the market are the ones which guide the production and distribution strategies of the product of the cooperative work. After all, the success of the experience is measured by the revenue success. The capitalist accounting structure must be kept, once profit is guaranteed in the same way through the appropriation of the workers’ surplus value (now bosses).

III. Final Considerations

The yearned democratization of the power¹⁵, therefore, finds itself compromised by the illusory autonomy of the labour facing the capital. An agenda that isn’t autonomous in any way is imposed to the deciding “autonomy” of the workers-bosses over the course of the company, once it is conditioned by the structural crisis and the neoliberal deregulation of the markets and the labour relations. The flexibility of the limitation of working hours and the salaries are part of the current agenda, among other things.

The spokesman of the experiences of the self-managed companies in Spain, Lozano, draws the attention to the fact that “a cooperative associate sacrifices his timetable, salaries, concrete work position, and so on, when the economic perspectives advise them to do so”. Thus, the organization of the production into workers’ cooperatives becomes more practical and less conflicted facing the classes’ struggle, “because the labour and capital factors live within the same persons and it is always difficult for a person to discuss with the self, and in any way to get an agreement. After all, “nobody shoots against their own goalkeeper.” (Antonio Manchado Lozano – president of the Spanish Business Confederation of Social Economics – *in* Vieitez, 1997, p. 131)

It is observed a bigger deepening of the submission to the capital and a more perverse exploitation over labour. Instead of autonomy, equality, freedom and democratization of the power, it is only found more subordination, and what is worse, it is ideologically disguised by the possibility of, holding a factory property title, put some control over the capital in favour of the workers’ historical needs. The new controllers of the capital turn out to be controlled by it,

¹⁵ Two important self-management requirements are the democratization of Power the the autonomy over the property. (Vieitez,1997, p. 15)

without being aware of such turning, and having the additional advantage of deviating the energy needed to the class struggle of labour against the capital for the space of the cooperative labour (the worker split between boss and employee) inside the factory.¹⁶

It's inevitable that the "perverse circularity of the capital"¹⁷ remains acting, in which circulation the object work, alienated, turns itself into capital and this labour, while personified capital, dominates the worker – it takes its historical force from the living work and uses it to dominate. Much more than getting closer to a democratization of work, it provides new forms of domination, now with the adherence of the workers. It is ignored that in order to obtain any substantive change that transfers the power over the production and the distribution of the social wealth for the work, it requires, according to Mészáros (2002, p. 711), that "the capital [should] be overcome in its totality from its relations, or else its way of social metabolic reproduction, which dominates everything, won't be able to be moved even in relation to relatively less important matters."¹⁸

In a more critical line of thinking about the workers' cooperatives in Argentina, Lucita¹⁹ (2004) warns about the same risk:

No matter which judicial form the workers adopt, if they turn all their ability, all their creativity, exclusively for the inner part of every company, searching for the solution of their everyday problems – something totally understandable by other part – will be inevitable that they fall back into the earlier social relations and link themselves to the market as one more capitalist company.

There is no possibility of a pacific coexistence among interests of antagonist classes inside the same company in which the worker starts to perform alternately, now the personification of the capital, now the personification of the salaried work, as they can't get away from the pressures of the expanding accumulation of the capital and the market laws. Therein the experiences related in the Symposium and the experiences of Argentinian cooperatives coincide, as, still according to Lucita (2004), "Sooner than later such pressures are made to be felt inside the managed companies by their workmen and workwomen. The salary differences, the inner

¹⁶ A synthesis of the ontological basis of the uncontrollability of the capital, exhaustively dealt by Mészáros in his work *For Beyond the Capital*, can be found in a book which has been recently published by Edufal – Federal University of Alagoas Press. (Paniago, 2007)

¹⁷ See Mészáros (2002, p.707-708)

¹⁸ As for Marx, the capital is not only a simple social relation, but a "process, in whose various moments it is always capital". (*Grundrisse apud* Mészáros, 2002, p.711)

¹⁹ Eduardo Lucita is the director of the marxist magazine *Cuadernos Del Sur* and member of the collective of the *Economistas de Izquierda (EDI)*.

hierarchy, productivities and rhythms of self-exploitation, appropriation of the exceeding, autonomization of the Administration councils, etc., are the most common manifestations.”

Even in historically more advanced experiences, such as the Chilean Industrial Threads, the worker didn't obtain a big success in the democratization of the power and in the control over the capital in the occupied factories. During Allende's government, the self-management experiences of the factories faced serious problems in the relation between the State under Allende's the Popular Unit's rule, and the workers' organizations. The inner democratization and the autonomy of the workmen's power ended up subordinated to the external criteria imposed to the production, once the workers assembly (“the supreme instance of decision”) remained “artificially apart of the execution, left to the new management of the company”, whose major participation in the administrative council belonged to the State. The workers' democratic participation was mainly guided to the need of increasing the profitability and the productivity of the companies in the “production battle”, whose aims were guaranteeing a “progressive extension of the worker's conquests” and the increasing of the “poorer classes' purchasing power.” Finally, it was observed an increasing workers' dissatisfaction with their representation instruments and the proposed participation model, subverting the building of autonomy and independence of the working class in the Industrial Threads. (Gaudichaud, 2004, p. 30)

It was searched to alter the political control over the capital in the Chilean experience, but not to overcome the reproductive logic of the capital which continued to rule from the outside to the inside, through the productivity indicators and the accomplishment of the capital extracted from the collectively organized working mass. After all, they fought a “production battle”, which had to succeed at showing the advantages and the efficiency of the workers' organization in the Chilean socialist society facing the capitalist market.

What is observed in all the reported experiences is that capital is kept and reproduced within the self-managed companies, and, according to its nature, from the exceeding labour appropriated from the worker, in other words, from the living labour subjection, and not from an equalitarian and democratic balance between capital and labour. This is the capitalist objectivity; it works like this in the material basis of the system, and, thus it has affirmed its hegemony through the centuries.

The transformations occurred in the capitalism since the second half of the twentieth century, specially the worsening of the social inequalities and the chronic unemployment which were resulting from the neoliberal intervention, highlight the relevance of searching for all sorts

of alternatives for the quotidian survival of thousands of workers subjected to unemployment. Within this context, the self-management experiences acquire a huge importance as the fight to defend employment, although finding in it germinating cells of a new democratic and equalitarian working relation in the production of the material richness is disconsidering the empirical evidences and the theoretical contributions of the past.

The pretension of practicing a social control over the capital through a juridical legal regulamentation, according to Luxemburg (1975, p. 29), “Far from being a limitation of the capitalist property (...), it is, on the contrary, a protection for such property. Or else, to approach from the economic perspective, it isn’t a strike against the capitalist exploitation, but simply a regulamentation of such exploitation”. And nowadays, contenting ourselves in being apologists of all sorts for social control, such as councils, participative budgets, cooperatives, etc, in the attempt of transforming the impotence of the control over the capital in a virtue, or objective limits which can’t be surmounted in gradual progress, resulting in even more perverse social and political damages.

The effects of the structural crisis have penalized hard the working class either in the centre as well as in the periphery of the world. The defensive fight has proved itself being insufficient for the progress of the workers’ emancipating fight, and the defeat of the WS is a decisive example in the recent history. (Mészáros, 2002) Insisting on the defensive struggle, just like in the cases of the cooperatives related to the jobs, won’t make us reduce not even in an only degree the causal basis of the social instability and inequality. On the contrary, it has meant inflationing the Third Sector actions (neither market, nor State) as an strategy of transferring from the social to the civil responsibilities, in the case of the social policies, and for the workers, in the struggle against unemployment, leaving the State and the market freer in order to act in defense of the capital gains which are threatened by the structural crisis.

Fighting for the emancipation of the labour implies not complying with the need to stimulate an attacking class struggle in all spheres of the human sociability, without any attenuating constraints of the antagonisms of the confronting classes, either of conjuncture order, or through the tutelage of party and electoral ends²⁰.

On the contrary, all of the innovative democratic experiences, it doesn’t matter how well-intentioned they are, they will nothing but the re-edition of the class surrender strategies from the

²⁰ In Brazil, the Lula government and the co-option relations accomplished on some representative organizations of the working class (such as CUT), and other social movements, represent this risk of losing combativeness in the emancipation struggle by the working class.

reformist past. If we let us be taken by the hyper valuing of a means which doesn't lead us to the intended end, or if we provoke the "institutionalization of the means", in which "the means become the ends in themselves", the accomplishment of the emancipating task will transform itself into defeat.

The means without a determined end, in agreement with the history which it is intended to make, ends up in taking us indefinitely to reach "unwanted results".(Mészáros,1981, p. 257) Therefore, it is up to us to recuperate the emancipating purpose of the socialist project, which implies the overcoming of the capital and all sorts of inequalities among men and creating the adequate means for its accomplishment.

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