

Media Workers Co-ops: possibilities, contradictions and Argentinean scenario¹

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Abstract

The paper aims to situate the debate on media workers co-ops. Thus, the article: a) discusses flexibilization and individualization of labor in the world of work of media workers; b) discusses the actuality of co-ops, between possibilities of real utopias and radical projects and contradictions involving the capitalist mode of production; c) describes some media workers co-ops, with emphasis on the Argentinean scenario, where the communication area was the one that grew the most in cooperative economy in the last two years.

Keywords: Communication. Co-ops. Labor. Argentina. Alternatives.

Introduction

Flexibility, precariousness, and individualization of labor relations and contracts: this has been a central diagnosis in studies on media workers, for example, in McKercher and Mosco (2009) and in Figaro, Nonato and Grohmann (2013). This means that, despite possible idealizations, the media workers' labor is part of the logic of productive restructuring of capital, as an indication of the production and communication processes that occurred in the "macro" of society. A scenario with freelance jobs, home office, precarious contracts, decline in formal jobs, increase in working hours and in requirements to hold job positions. In addition, there is a blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure, where flexibility is less a choice than a norm imposed and prescribed.

These denominations justify the ways of being and appearing of capital, with the circulation of a "grammar of the capital": entrepreneurship, innovation, disruption, compliance, inspiration (CASAQUI, 2016). Communication, as a process, acts as an auxiliary arm of financialization (SODRÉ, 2014), whose circulating signs also impact the media workers' discourse and work activities.

In previous studies, we analyzed (GROHMANN; ROXO, 2015, GROHMANN, 2017) the discourses of entrepreneurship as salvation to the precariousness of media

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workers' labor, through "heroicized" and positive narratives, calling the subjects to adjust to these prescriptions. There are discourses on innovation which operate as discursive formulas, prescribing and crystallizing modes of being media workers. These circulate with hegemonic meanings related to technological innovation and entrepreneurial discourse, along with statements of alleged "affectivity" at work and the "do what you love" ideology (ILLOUZ, 2011).

Concomitant to this diagnosis, studies have emerged in Brazil about "alternatives" for this scenario, that is, initiatives that do not reproduce entrepreneurship and startup models prescribed by neoliberal rationality (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2016), such as alternative arrangements to media corporations (FÍGARO; NONATO, 2017, GROHMANN; ROXO; MARQUES, 2019) and social governance for journalism (MICK; TAVARES, 2017).

The focus of this article is the context of alternatives to the hegemonic scenario of the media labor, aiming at: a) situating the debate about the media workers' co-ops among possibilities of "real utopias" (WRIGHT, 2010) and radical "projects" (SANDOVAL, 2017), involving contradictions of the capitalist mode of production; b) describing some experiences in the area of communication, mainly focused on the current Argentinean scenario, in which at least five media workers' cooperatives were created in the past two years (RUGGERI, 2018) being the fastest-growing area of the cooperative economy in the country.

Cooperatives: possibilities and contradictions

When we talk about worker cooperatives, we refer, in a panoramic way, to a self-managed and collective work organization, thus not related to any form of "cooperation" or "collaboration" at work. Facing the individualization of work situations, it is about thinking collective work organizations. Thus, we normatively understand cooperatives as a way of confronting "capitalist realism" (FISHER, 2011), in the sense of seeking alternatives or "real utopias", in Wright's (2010) terms, as a tension between dreams and practices, with a sense of real possibility of social change. As Wright (2010) defends, this view has "a strong normative vision of life beyond capitalism, but acknowledges the limitations of our scientific knowledge of the real possibilities of transcending capitalism" (WRIGHT, 2010, p. 108). The author states that, among the different possible institutional designs for cooperatives, we need to value democratic governance and workers' property principles.

We can also understand co-ops from the "common" (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2017) that involves co-activity as the foundation of political obligation, not as a "managerial" category or simulacrum of collective participation, but as a principle of the emancipation of work. The authors consider "cooperative resistance" and "resistant cooperative" as types of the "common". Thus,

bringing the issue of work organization back to the heart of political struggle is the only answer that can be given to the neoliberal management political

strategies. ‘Enriching the tasks’ or ‘consulting’ employees from time to time about their working conditions is not enough: they must participate in the elaboration of rules and decisions that affect them (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2017, p. 518 – Our translation).

This means bringing the democratization of labor relations and a democratic policy in the workplace to the forefront of our analysis. Dardot & Laval (2017) and De Peuter & Dyer-Witthof (2010) bring cooperatives closer to the politics of the common, as long as they are inherent in class and labor issues. Thus, they conceive five ideal types involved in cooperative practices: a) associated labor; b) workplace democracy; c) surplus distribution; d) cooperation among cooperatives and e) links between worker cooperatives and socialist states — and these ideal types will help us to guide cooperative parameters in our investigation more broadly.

In the same way, Sandoval (2017) lists many possibilities for organization of co-ops, from those best suited to capital management. Thus, she understands cooperatives in a normative way, as a radical prefigurative project. In her view, radical cooperatives “are based on collective or common ownership and democratic decision-making” (SANDOVAL, 2017, p. 119).

However, it is not a matter of thinking “common” or “real utopias” in a vacuum, considering the connection between the circulation of the common and the circulation of capital. This shows contradictions in the organization of work on cooperatives. Between changes in the “micro” of work organization and reproductions of the capitalist system, Luxemburgo (2015) considers that cooperatives could be considered reformist at most. As Sandoval (2017) shows, we cannot idealize the work in cooperatives, because “turning workers into capitalists might improve the individual workers’ conditions, but does not solve other structural problems of capitalism that lead to huge social inequalities and to economic and environmental crises” (SANDOVAL, 2017, p. 118).

The challenges of self-managed work and of “solidarity economy”² arise from their contradictions, not necessarily meaning a confrontation with the capital (WELLEN, 2012). Workers’ cooperatives also stand as a *locus* of contradictions involving the logic of capital, among expression/expropriation in work activities (HUWS, 2014), democratization/hierarchy in production processes, changes/reproductions in relation to hegemonic capitalist prescriptions.

After all, cooperatives are not outside, but within the same world of work that involves the flexibility logic. Therefore, these initiatives “still need to rely on markets and clients who might use their market power to put a downward pressure on pay rates, demand free work samples or set impossible deadlines” (SANDOVAL, 2018, p. 123). The author states that

2 We consider cooperatives as organizations within the broader debate on solidarity economy. However, meaning disputes in the field of cooperativism occur in Brazil, and this definition is not peaceful.

labor exploitation does not disappear but becomes more invisible. From their contradictions, we can say that

Working in a co-op does not necessarily warrant an escape from precarity, stress, overwork and underpay. Neither does it eliminate all boring and unpleasant work or guarantee meaningful and supportive work relationships. However, individual cultural workers getting together to start a co-operative that is commonly owned by all of them, that practices democratic decision-making and aims to be mutually beneficial for everyone involved already is an act of resistance and a refusal to accept that one person's success depends on another's failure (SANDOVAL, 2018, p. 126).

As the author states, it is a matter of fighting against precariousness through cooperation. Thus, between “real utopias”, possibilities of the “common”, and adjustment to the prescriptions of the capitalist mode of production, cooperatives are (re)made. Sandoval (2016) then calls for cooperatives to go beyond “micro” changes. However, “going beyond the level of micro-initiatives and small-scale prefigurative islands requires connecting individual co-ops to create a bigger co-op movement” (SANDOVAL, 2016, p. 109).

As we can see, the production processes, the work organization, and the communication processes in the work environment are part of the analysis of workers' cooperatives. As De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford affirm (2010, p. 46), “the communicational moment in the common involves the dialogic interaction necessary for democratic planning and the economics of association”. Talking about interaction or relation from a communicational viewpoint means not only thinking consensus, but also conflicts and disputes in the production and communication processes, which means understanding the contradictions and the circulation of meanings around cooperatives. Thus, it is about understanding workers' cooperatives from the production and communication processes (WILLIAMS, 2011).

Communicators' Cooperatives

We consider communicators' cooperatives as a specific type of “alternative arrangement to media corporations” (FIGARO; NONATO, 2017), which is understood by the authors referring to “local production arrangements”, not necessarily as a “system”, and being outside the structures and logic of the media conglomerates. Thus, other possibilities of media framing are also at stake, which makes us reflect on the impacts of work organization on the media content produced and its contribution to the democratization of communication. This work organization is associated with the ideal types proposed by De Peuter and Dyer-Witthoford (2010).

In the Global North, a reference in cooperatives in the communication field is the German newspaper *DieTageszeitung*, which has existed since 1979. Spain has more than

ten media worker cooperatives, some of which are *La Marea*, *Critic*, and *Diari Jornada*, the latter two are initiatives of the city of Barcelona. The Catalonia region has an important scenario of media workers cooperatives, including cooperatives of audiovisual producers, communication managers, advertisers, among others. Some examples are *Megafon.Coop*, *La Tremenda*, and *Compact.Coop*.

The British website *Bristol Cable*, from the United Kingdom, and the Scottish *Media Co-Op* perform many activities in audiovisual production and digital media. In Canada, the *Vancouver Media Co-op* is a local journalism initiative. In the United States, one of the highlights is *Means TV*, an audiovisual streaming cooperative, launched in 2019, which considers itself the “socialist and cooperative Netflix”³.

Greece has some journalistic cooperatives such as *Efimerida Syntakton - EFSYN*, *Altherthess*, *The Cricket*, and *Flash FM*. According to Siapera and Papadopoulou (2016), the first and the last are “cooperative reincarnations of old commercial media, while *Altherthess* and *The Cricket* represent efforts of a young generation of journalists” (SIAPERA; PAPADOPOULOU, 2016, p. 185). To the authors, journalistic cooperatives outline another journalistic model, prioritizing social issues over profit. According to them, in the Greek case,

the foundation of cooperatives occurs when social, economic, and creative need arises; operate as flat hierarchies; value and prioritize collaboration; consider and reframe journalism as a social process of building and maintaining relationships; are organically linked with society (SIAPERA; PAPADOPOULOU, 2016, p. 192).

There are also initiatives related to what Scholz (2017) calls “platform cooperativism⁴,” such as *Member’s Media*, “a cooperatively owned media platform dedicated to producers and fans of independent films. The people using and producing for this site — the “producers” — own most of the platform along with the original founders and investors” (SCHOLZ, 2017, p. 71). Other media cooperatives on the official platform co-op website are *Bryan Project*, *Co-operative News*, *Demcra*, *Design is Political*, *NewScoop YYC*, *Positive News*, and *Shareable*. Most of these initiatives are from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

In Latin America, a scenario involving newspapers, magazines, websites, and radios is unfolding, as shown by the study *Hacer Rádios Cooperativas*⁵, which identified 24 cooperative radios in Argentina alone, showing interfaces between cooperativism and community media. Other countries have their own initiative, such as Uruguay (*Brecha* and *La Diária*), Chile (*Rádio Cooperativa*), Mexico (*La Cooperacha*), and El Salvador (*Diario Co Latino*). Argentina — as we will show in the next section — has most of the initiatives in the region.

3 Available at: <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/01/means-of-production-video-ads-ocasio-cortez>. Accessed on: 31 jul. 2019.

4 Cf: Grohmann (2018b).

5 Available at: <http://haceradioscooperativas.redelivre.org.br>. Accessed on: 31 jul. 2019.

In Brazil, a pioneer initiative in relation to cooperativism in communication was the newspaper *Coojornal* from Rio Grande do Sul, which operated from 1974 to 1983, during the military dictatorship in the country. Currently, we could identify the following cooperatives in the country: *Cooperativa Comunicacional Sul* from Florianópolis, which edits the *Desacato* website, and *Cooperativa dos Jornalistas e Gráficos do Estado de Alagoas* (Jorgraf), which edits the *Tribuna Independente* newspaper and the *Tribuna Hoje* website. In the introductory text of the *Desacato* website, the cooperative's objective is the "popular communicational sovereignty". It also considers that "given the communication monopolies, the cooperative intends to be an option that goes beyond the internet-characteristic individual projects" (Desacato – Our translation).⁶ We also registered the beginning of the activities of *Cooperativa de Jornalistas de Pernambuco* in 2019.

Jorgraf was Santos' (2016) object of study and, for her, "the participatory management project has contributed to local development by spreading a cooperativism culture, an experience that emerged in the context of a crisis, from the mobilization of print shop and newsroom floor of a bankrupt newspaper company (SANTOS, 2016, p. 6 – Our translation). Scarce information about other cooperatives is found, such as radio broadcasters from Sergipe, which operated until 2016, and *Cooperativa de Trabalho dos Profissionais de Fotografia, Imagem e Audiovisual da Bahia* (COOFIAV). These semi-invisibilities/inexistences regarding media workers cooperatives in Brazil also reflect in the "*Mapa de Jornalismo Independente*" (Independent Journalism Map⁷) by *Agência Pública*, since none of the listed initiatives is a cooperative.

Surely these are not the only cooperatives of media workers, but we can see at first glance how most of the initiatives listed are from journalism. We also observed several histories of the institutions. However, the diagnosis of Siapera and Papadopoulou (2016) seems to predominate, with many cooperatives being either companies recovered by workers or born in digital platforms, such as initiatives related to platform cooperativism and initiatives such as *Altherthess* and *The Cricket* in Greece.

This universe also prescribes how to best work with cooperatives, such as the *Co-operatives UK* report for the media industry (BOYLE, 2015). The cooperative sector is placed as "*good news*" to tackle the media crisis. The tone of the report is less a radical or a real utopia project and more suited to capitalist prescriptions: "The means of communication are hungry for more financially resilient productions, whilst the public are hungry for a news media they can trust. Co-operatives can do both" (BOYLE, 2015). *Co-operatives UK* 's discourse views cooperatives more as a "business model" — or from the organization and logic of the capital — than from the world of work and its resistance policies.

In her study on cultural sector cooperatives in the United Kingdom, Sandoval (2016) identified that workers' discourses are more politicized than the prescriptions mentioned in the *Co-Operatives UK* report. Identification with alternative and cooperative values and

⁶ Available at: <http://desacato.info/a-cooperativa/>. Accessed on: 14 apr. 2018.

⁷ Available at: <https://apublica.org/mapa-do-jornalismo/>. Accessed on: 14 apr. 2018.

dissatisfaction with the labor market in general, as well as a feeling of lack of democracy, are part of the workers' discourses in the results of Sandoval's investigation (2016, 2017, 2018). As well as in cooperative work, media workers' initiatives generally express contradictions about what means to work cooperatively, between the logics of creation/expression and exploitation/expropriation. Communication and production processes, thus, express the struggles in circulation (DYER-WITHEFORD, 1999) among real utopias, radical projects, and adjustments to the logic of capital.

The Argentinean scenario

Within the limits of this article, as an example of the discussions about media workers' cooperatives, we describe the Argentinean scenario, giving some prominence to the *Tiempo Argentino* newspaper. Why is the Argentinean scenario relevant to understanding communicative cooperatives? Beyond the numbers — the country with the largest number of initiatives, at least 27, in Ibero-America —, the legislation encourages such organizations and the country is considered, by the cooperative literature (RUGGERI, 2009, 2011, HENRIQUES, 2014), as a worldwide example regarding cooperativism. These organizations have been present in the country since the nineteenth century and are marked nowadays since the country's economic crisis in 2001 with the intensification of experiences of “companies recovered by workers” that occur in different areas of the economy. Brazil, as Henriques (2014, p. 80 – Our translation) says, “since the 1980s, has shown relevant cases of this type of workers' struggle and a reduction since the mid-2000s”, and the predominance of initiatives in the agrarian sector⁸.

In the Argentinean communication area, some cooperatives emerged since then, and in the last two years (2016-2017), at least five media companies have been recovered by workers and became cooperatives, with the economic sector having the largest increase in such initiatives in the country (RUGGERI, 2018). One of the pioneers was the *lavaca* cooperative from Buenos Aires, which appeared in 2001 at the height of the country's economic crisis, from the anti-copyright struggle. They edit the *MU* magazine, the *Decí MU* program, and even have a communication chair, with free courses, and a bar, *MU Punto de Encuentro*. *Lavaca* also produces content that enhances, in its own words, the autonomy of people and social organizations. According to their website description, autonomy refers to: “self-management of personal and collective projects; free flow of new forms of thought and action; the exercise of freedom, understood as a form of social power” (Lavaca – Our translation)⁹.

In 2009, the *Federación Asociativa de Diarios y Comunicadores Cooperativos de la República Argentina* (FADICCRA) was created, which today has 24 cooperatives of

⁸ In Brazil, cooperative public policies are directed to the agrarian sector and other service sectors, which has not involved the area of communication strongly. Difficulties regarding cooperative legislation are also present in the country.

⁹ Available at: <http://www.lavaca.org/que-es-lavaca/>. Accessed on: 14 apr. 2018.

associated communicators, among which we can highlight: a) *Cítrica* magazine, a cooperative formed by former employees of the *Crítica* newspaper; b) *El Independiente* website, from *Cooperativa Periodística de Trabajo y Consumo - Copegraf*; c) *El Diario CBA*; d) *El Diario de la Región*, from *La Prensa Cooperativa de Trabajo y Consumo*; e) *Redacción Rosario*, and f) *El Mensajero Diario*.

Most of these initiatives are in the districts of Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Rosario, but one of the founders (*Copegraf*, which edits *El Independiente*) is from La Rioja. Besides work cooperatives, consumer cooperatives and some companies that have been recovered by workers, such as the *Cítrica* magazine cooperative, with 12 journalists, also exist. *Cítrica* newspaper closed in 2010 and a conflict occurred from April to October, until the cooperative formation. The description of the initiative on its official website highlights some of the contradictions of the process: “Since 2012, *Cítrica* has been publishing newspapers from different Argentinean provinces and has been distributed in various parts of Buenos Aires. It was not, of course, a bed of roses: there were victims, despair, and struggles. But also joys and pride” (*Cítrica*)¹⁰. According to the description, what unites cooperative journalists is the belief that “self-managed journalism is a real option for these times” (*Cítrica* – Our translation).

According to Ruggeri (2018), in 2016 and 2017, the economy sector that had the most companies recovered by workers was the communication sector. In this period, at least five initiatives have become cooperatives and one is in development (*El Correo de Firmat*, from Rosario). The early years of President Mauricio Macri’s government had a revival of the turn-of-the-century neoliberal rationality, this time further adjusted to the “new reason of the world” (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2016). From 2010 to 2013, only one communication company was recovered by workers.

Initiatives that have become cooperatives in the last two years were: a) *Infonews*, which became the first news website in the country to be recovered by workers; b) *El Ciudadano*, from the *La Cigarra* cooperative; c) *La Mañana*, transformed into *La Nueva Mañana*; d) *La Portada*, created by former employees of the newspapers *El Oeste* and *Pages del Sur*, from the *Prensa Unida* cooperative; e) *Tiempo Argentino*, from the cooperative *Por Más Tiempo*. *Por Más Tiempo*, which edits *Tiempo Argentino*, has the largest number of workers, 105, and somehow perhaps best represents the current moment in the country regarding communicative cooperatives.

The newspaper was founded in 2010 and has been managed by its workers since April 2016, with the creation of the *Por Más Tiempo* cooperative. In December 2015 — the month of the current president’s induction — the group that controlled the vehicle, formed by allies of former president Cristina Kirchner, stopped paying salary to employees after the initiative lost the government advertising accounts, and left the newspaper. The workers united, took control of *Tiempo* and launched a special publication on March 24,

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.revistacitrica.com/info-quienes-somos.html>. Accessed on: 14 apr. 2018.

2016, about the 30th anniversary of the 1976 *coup d'état*, which sold 30,000 copies. About a month later, the first edition of *Tiempo Argentino* was launched as a cooperative, this time in weekly format, in addition to the website. In July 2016, the newsroom was attacked by a businessperson who claimed to be the new owner of the vehicle, which resulted in the newspaper's physical destruction and the expulsion of workers. Of the nearly 200 newspaper employees before the end-2015 crisis, 105 workers remained in the cooperative. Since then, the newspaper's *slogan* is: "owners of our words". Throughout this context, the *Tiempo Argentino* can be considered as an exemplary case of the current Argentinean scenario of media workers' cooperatives.

From January 5 to 9, 2018, we visited the *Tiempo*'s newsroom and interviewed 12 workers, based on the communication and production processes listed in the previous sections. In this article, we will only briefly contextualize the experience in the Argentinean scenario, based on some statements¹¹ by three members who work in both the editorial and administrative part of the newspaper: Javier Borelli, cooperative president, Federico Amigo, general secretary, and German Alemmani, responsible for the social organization of work, a denomination coined by the newspaper to refer to the area of human resources¹². Therefore, this is not a case study, but an example of media workers' cooperatives and the importance of the Argentinean scenario. We published a case study of the *Tiempo Argentino* in Grohmann (2018a), including methodological details.

In general, from the interviews, we can emphasize the workers' struggle and resistance to "recover" the newspaper, in a period of uncertainty: "we had no newspaper to make, we had no cooperative, we had no salary" (Federico – Our translation). Before the official formation of the cooperative, a period of training occurred, involving cooperatives from various areas, from dairy to the communication area:

That was a company of about 200 employees, of which around 100 stayed in this battle. Thus, for about two months, different cooperatives or cooperative networks approached the newspaper to tell us their experience at different levels: on how to go through such a traumatic experience and generate actions that would give us some money to support ourselves, think, and buy time (German – Our translation).

From there, we can explain the name of the cooperative, *Por más tiempo* (For more time). Time to think and act collectively, both journalistically and in the newspaper's self-management. From then on, they would become what the newspaper's later slogan says: "owners of our words"— signs that are work and commodity (ROSSI-LANDI, 1985).

¹¹ In an exploratory and initial manner.

¹² The three form the basis of the administration of the newspaper, which is elected and has a mandate. In a later article, we will explain in detail the work organization of the newspaper.

As Javier Borelli says, “here, journalists decide about the editorial line and where the newspaper goes”¹³.

For those interviewed, self-management of journalistic and business decisions is one of the biggest dilemmas of the cooperative, which also involves associated work and democratization of labor relations: “They are not the president’s decisions, but the council’s, endorsed by the assembly. There was no major decision discussed in the assembly” (Javier – Our translation). Today, assemblies — which are part of production and communication processes — are weekly. According to German, to be able to transform management structures, the decision for a while was to maintain the previous journalistic routine structure: “we were not in a position to debate and reformulate an entire work system. We supported each other regarding what we knew and dedicated ourselves to assembling all those parts of the company that did not exist” (German – Our translation).

Among dilemmas and contradictions, workers say that the newspaper’s biggest challenges, on the one hand, are those of non-bureaucratization and non-stratification of management — not reproducing an individual work process – and, on the other, those of digitalization and monetization: “We, as a traditional newspaper, knew how to make a journal, and the web was a novelty for the cooperative” (Federico). Regarding the “cooperative-newspaper” and its possible specificities, on the one hand, Javier considers the newspaper a “journalistic enterprise such as *La Nación* and *Clarín*, but in a cooperative” (Javier – Our translation); On the other hand, Federico evaluates that, possibly, what would differentiate a media workers’ cooperative from other cooperatives would be “the content, the information, the ideology, with a style” (Federico – Our translation), but also considers that the specificity would be somewhat small, given very similar problems of self-management and cooperative work in other areas. They are the communication and production meanings in circulation regarding the cooperative experience.

In general, we found in *Tiempo Argentino* most of the characteristics raised by De Peuter and Dyer-Witthof (2010), mainly associated work, democracy in the workplace, redistribution of surplus value (with a system of monthly withdrawals from the annual distributable balance) and cooperation between cooperatives. The media workers reveal that all these characteristics are present but not fully. Dilemmas and contradictions happen: journalists have said they chose to overhaul the whole organization of work regarding (self) management, but that this is not fully effective in the journalistic structure of a newsroom, which always has editors and reporters concerning the daily decisions of a newspaper. Other dilemmas are: what are the fairest forms of redistribution of surplus value, considering the hours worked by journalists, but without “over hierarchizing” as in a capitalist journalistic enterprise? What are the limits of this? What are the boundaries between democracy in the workplace and too many “assemblies”? What are the indicators for this democratic environment? How to intensify cooperation between cooperatives — which has already

¹³ Javier is both president of the cooperative (one-year term) and general subeditor of the newspaper.

existed, in some way, since the newspaper’s “recovery”, especially with graphic and textile sectors — with self-managed media workers initiatives from all over Latin America? The temporal dimension is another suffering factor for the workers: Even if they wanted more time to execute the agenda, the fast pace of contemporary journalism eventually imposes on the productive logic.

The study in *Tiempo Argentino*, in-depth in Grohmann (2018a), shows, in short, what confronting precariousness at work without the idealism in a context of “privilege of servitude” in the world of work is (ANTUNES, 2018). Becoming a cooperative was not an option for workers: it was either that or unemployment. First, what is at stake is the “management of survival”, between expression and expropriation of work in a cooperative.

Final thoughts

We aimed to show, in this article, the importance of cooperatives to communication studies, considering the imbrication of communication and production processes and the relevance of this specific work organization to the area, not as a “professional opportunity” or a heroicized discourse, but as an attempt or a possibility of critical confrontations regarding neoliberal rationality, including the individualization of work situations.

Thinking of cooperatives as possibilities of “real utopias” or “radical projects” is to consider both their potentialities and their limits, in a dialectical dance of expression and expropriation of work, since workers need to manage their own survival as subjects in a context of an economic crisis.

Media workers cooperatives have arisen in many countries, throughout the globe, especially in the last decade, with a multitude of “places of enunciation”. Argentina presents a fertile scenario to observe these initiatives due to the quantity and relevance of the cooperative scenario in the country, which also occurs in communication. The *Tiempo Argentino* newspaper can be an example of the media workers’ co-ops regarding a sample of dilemmas and contradictions faced by workers amid attempts to struggle against the individualistic logic of work organization acting in a scenario of neoliberal rationality spread throughout social life, between the circulation of capital and the circulation of the common.

The next steps of the study foresee: a) mapping of media workers cooperatives around the world; b) analysis of the “places of enunciation” from what they say they do, considering the official websites; c) sample selection for interviews with workers.

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