

Workshop "Empresas Recuperadas por sus trabajadores" Pathways to a Cooperative Market Economy, *Real Utopias Project*

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, October 2015, IIGG UBA

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The presentations about *empresas recuperadas por sus trabajadores* (ERT) in Argentina can be grouped into 4 types:

1. **Quantitative analyses of economic information and employment in ERT**
2. **Psychological dimensions and well-being at work in ERT**
3. **Social and cultural projects of ERT**
4. **Economic and productive projects of ERT**

Some reports of this Workshop pointed out key considerations for the future of ERT and factors that helped them achieve a self-management model and survive for approximately 15 years.

My aim is to contribute to the collective discussion. I will focus this brief on some of the contributions around the following question:

What are the main difficulties and challenges in ERT?

Maurizio Atzeni remarked on the difficulties of small cooperatives that are facing obstacles related to market pressure. This situation push to self-exploitation in daily work in order to survive in hard times.

Miguel Orellano pointed out that workers over-estimate the psychosocial risks at work in ERT. Nevertheless, ERT workers have positive social relations with the community and liberty in their jobs.

Erik Olin Wright noted the high cost of innovation. Society sees some forms of organization of work and decision making as useful and efficient but not others. Forces of inertia influence human beings to reproduce what we know and have seen in action.

Julian Rebon analyzed management challenges in ERT. He argued that cooperatives have difficulties in the decision making and the integration of new members in the political life. In this point we can see Michels's classic dilemma of the iron law of oligarchy in horizontal democratic organizations. Another challenges in order to create a large cooperative economy that Rebon remarked are, in a group dimension, the prevalence of social divisions based on the number of years in the ERT, founders vs. young people, etc.

Hector Palomino discussed the concept of the cooperative itself. There are some differences between new self-management ventures in which the idea of working in teams has a collaborative sense and the ERT in which the collective dimension is also political. ERT has remained in a semantic and political discussion with the traditional cooperatives' movement in Argentina. In part because of

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the divided universe of cooperatives in Argentina, that ERT and small cooperatives have difficulties in financing their activities and diffusing their products. These difficulties have encouraged them to create federations and associations to promote their production, founding rates, and political rights.

More studies and discussions that integrate workers and different involved actors will clarify ways of solving these challenges.

I would like to thank the organizers from Universidad de Buenos Aires and the University of Wisconsin for leading this project that helps us keep thinking and acting for a different society.