

# The Self-Managed Work Program: A Public Policy Oriented Towards Sustaining Worker-Owned Projects — A Secondary Publication

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**Abstract:** The Self-Managed Work Program is a public policy of institutional strengthening implemented by the national state in support of worker-managed production units. Based on this policy, the article aims to review the objectives and actions of the program, analyze its management during the pandemic, the scope of its current implementation, and suggest possible improvements.

**Keywords:** Self-Managed Program; Public policies; Self-management

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## 1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to recount the experience in the management of public policy. The Self-Managed Work Program. This policy is implemented continuously by the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEySS), within the orbit of the Secretariat of Employment. It was implemented in 2004 and continues to this day.

In addition, the idea in this work is to propose possible improvements for its implementation, which is oriented to the income support of people who develop activities in productive projects, organized in a self-managed way, and who come from both business recovery processes and work cooperatives.

The program was created to contain and accompany workers expelled from the formal labor market as a result of the great economic crisis of 200, in order to assist workers who have been integrated into productive units that come from both business recovery processes, and worker cooperatives that developed economic activities oriented to the private sector.

There is a continuity of the program in the implementation of the lines of financing to this sector of the social economy. However, we will make a summary of what has happened during the Macri administration 2015–2019, and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summary, a description of the program, its scope, and a review of the general regulatory framework that

governs it will be provided. In particular, the regulations that governed its implementation during the pandemic will be reviewed. Next, we will analyze some moments of the program since its implementation, and finally, we will look at the current situation to reflect on possible improvements.

## **2. Scope of management of the Self-Managed Work Program**

The Self-Managed Work Program was implemented in 2004. It was created through Resolution MTEySS No. 203/2004 and its operating regulations were established in

Resolution No. 194/2004. The target population consisted of companies and/or factories that were recovered by the workers, regardless of the legal form they adopted, work and/or production cooperatives that bring together workers in conditions of high labor precariousness, as well as entities with legal status that brought together worker cooperatives.

The purpose of the program is to strengthen these productive units for the development of associative production processes, through the allocation of non-reimbursable resources to strengthen their marketing and value chain. The use of these resources These resources are aimed at improving competitiveness, sustainability, productive and managerial capacity, and occupational health and safety health and safety at work. In this way, a program is developed that seeks to comply with the provisions of Chapter 4 of the National Employment Law No. 24.013/91 in its Articles 90 and 91. This law assigns the responsibility for promoting employment to the MTEySS. This program is part of a broader policy, the Integral Plan for the Promotion of Employment.

The Self-Managed Work Program is a national public policy, managed in each provincial jurisdiction by workers of the agency. Due to the decentralization of the agency in each province, with specific guidance and parameters established by the program's coordination, these technicians promote, through participation in territorial meetings, the articulation and integration of local actors to strengthen the social sector of the economy in each jurisdiction.

At the same time, technical assistance and/or training actions are defined through agreements with organizations, federations, and confederations that group worker cooperatives and in coordination with institutions and organizations recognized by the community. According to Hintze <sup>[1]</sup>, it is therefore essential that public policies create the conditions for these economic activities to develop, aiming at the promotion and sustainability of a horizontal and dynamic subsystem. They should also reflect the relationship between social actors, economic actors, and the State.

The Social and Solidarity Economy sector is made up of a broad spectrum of organizations. The program is aimed at strengthening productive units that develop an associative experience in a specific economic activity. These productive units are governed under the principles of solidarity and democracy, and with social and political objectives oriented to the community. These organizations, self-managed by employees, represent a specific type of entity and configure a specific type of labor relationship. The aim is to generate an alternative to the prevailing mode of neoliberal capitalism: dependent wage labor. Its members are not only workers, they are also owners of the means of production and they assume, without the self-management of their business without the will of others. In order to generate new jobs and income, this is the activity to which they dedicate most of their time and energy. The aim is to sustain the material basis of a business that is sustainable and allows each member to live off the income it generates <sup>[2]</sup>.

## **3. Conceptualizing public policy**

Hintze <sup>[1]</sup> states that, in Argentina, during the 2003–2008 phase, the idea of the insertion of workers into the

formal economy and salaried work prevailed. This idea acted as an ideological matrix determining public policies in and in the design of plans and programs, including the one analyzed here.

Coraggio <sup>[3]</sup> distinguishes three currents of thought and action in the social and solidarity economy. The first is aimed at generating social integration mechanisms, through the reintegration of people excluded from the market into the labor market in associative projects and acting at the microeconomic level. The second current seeks to generate the formation of a more articulated and interdependent sector of the Social Economy. A subsystem that responds to the context and that is not achieved only with the articulation of microenterprises but depends on other networks in addition to economic ones. The third current of thought is proposed as a change of paradigm, more systemic and oriented to the construction of another economy. Following the author, we could say that this policy, which has been influenced by different social and political contexts, fits within a combination of the first and second currents of thought and action.

The different lines of the program aim to collaborate in the construction of an integral economic process, strengthening productive units from the State. It seeks to address issues related to production, distribution, and consumption, promoting connections between productive units integrated into the community. Since its inception, and especially since the deep unemployment caused by the 2001 crisis due to the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, the program has been a tool of public policy for the reintegration, containment, and assistance of workers in the face of the void left by the labor market.

The general orientation of the program strengthens the fact that the units produce efficiently and competitively, increasing the production of goods and/or services for the private sector, competing in the market with capitalist-oriented companies.

While the organizational forms supported by the program currently serve a microeconomic function, it is possible to contribute to the formation of an alternative social project. The goal is to build another economy that ensures the reproduction and development of a dignified life and promotes the integration of economic actors into a better society. This requires a dimension of solidarity aimed at incorporating excluded, precarious, or vulnerable workers into self-managed or associative projects and governed by a logic of reproduction and autonomy of the workers, enabling them to develop their capacities and access higher living standards. The objective is to build an emancipatory process separate from the logic of private capital accumulation <sup>[4]</sup>.

From the Kirchnerist governments that developed from 2003 to 2015, without a clear conceptual framework at the time of its design in any current of the Social Economy, the Self-managed Work Program was oriented to respond to workers excluded from the formal labor market. Gradually, this demand was articulated by organizations that referred to self-managed productive units and were constituted within the legal form of worker cooperatives. Concurrently, the process of business recovery began, as workers, in defense of their jobs, took on the administration and management of the production of these units. In general, they adopted the same legal form, and this policy accompanied them, primarily in the start-up processes. Over time, the recovery methodology became legitimized as a process of converting crisis-ridden capitalist enterprises, emerging as an economically viable alternative with the potential for productive sustainability. The recovery processes became a repertoire of actions legitimized by workers and the community. The Program provided a possible response to certain crises, whether originating within the productive unit or generated by the regressive social and economic context <sup>[5]</sup>.

Although the consulted bibliography <sup>[5-8]</sup> refers (though not extensively) to recovery processes prior to the economic crisis, it was from the widespread crisis of the years 2001–2002 that this phenomenon rapidly spread as an alternative for the integration of unemployed individuals into production and work.

One of the ways in which the unemployed were integrated into organizations that were referenced in

the movement of recovered enterprises due to the crisis of their enterprises. This movement was presented as a novel alternative for collective representation, in the face of the lack of and/or pendular response offered by the traditional unions. During the crisis, not only were their forms of organization substantially affected, but the relationship with the actors who represented them was also eroded. The workers went through labor precariousness and loss of social protection institutions. Therefore, these new organizations and the movement they were part of acted as protective and supportive collectives that, in coordination with other social actors, worked as promoters for their consolidation <sup>[8]</sup>.

According to the National Register of Recovered Companies of the INAES, there are currently 430 active productive units. Of these, 47.69% are located in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA), 29.08% in the Pampas Region, 9.98% in the Patagonia Region, 5.58% in Cuyo, 6.56% in the NEA (Northeast Argentina), and 1.11% in the NOA (Northwest Argentina). The first 10 sectors of activity that concentrate the largest number of productive units are metallurgy, food, textile, graphics, gastronomy, meat industry, media, construction, and health and education.

In the same organization, the available registry of cooperatives with active registration consists of 18,602 productive units, distributed among worker cooperatives, consumer cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives, service cooperatives, rural cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives, mixed cooperatives, etc. A continuous and virtuous process, albeit with fluctuations, was implemented from the beginning of the program in 2004 until the end of the Kirchnerist government in 2015.

The program was designed for the reasons below.

- (a) Strengthening these units composed of workers by providing economic contributions aimed at sustaining and supplementing their direct incomes, through transfers to the personal and individual accounts of the workers. When the withdrawals credited by the workers from the distributable surplus among the members generated by the production of goods or the provision of services do not reach the amount established by the minimum, vital, and mobile salary, they are allocated individual financial assistance.
- (b) Strengthening small investment projects through financing for the purchase of working capital and/or the acquisition of capital goods, inputs, or raw materials. This financing aims to increase production volumes, diversify, improve production processes to enhance quality parameters and implement measures to incorporate preventive measures regarding workplace safety and hygiene. In other words, it is a policy aimed at providing resources to a specific universe, with the goal of enhancing their productivity conditions, thereby providing greater competitiveness to integrate into the market.

#### **4. Transformation: From the collective to the individual**

During the management period of the Macri government from 2016 to 2019, the country underwent a process of “decooperativization” or what has been termed “cooperativicide” <sup>[9]</sup>, as social policies prioritized transferring resources directly to individuals, resulting in the suspension of the registration of many cooperatives <sup>[10]</sup>.

In this context, the objectives of the program changed and shifted towards increasing resources allocated to individual assistance for people, providing financial aid to sustain income. During the years 2017 and 2018, this assistance was specifically targeted towards workers of cooperatives, who were also part of grassroots and political organizations. Subsequently, the management of these individuals was transferred to another agency, the Ministry of Social Development, so that they could eventually receive the Complementary Social Salary.

Starting in 2018 and throughout 2019, a significant budgetary adjustment affected the lines of institutional

strengthening for productive units. This adjustment targeted financing lines aimed at increasing their working capital or acquiring productive capital goods, equipment, raw materials, inputs, and/or tools. All of this was in line with what happened with the rest of the public policies for economic, social, and productive assistance managed by the State during the government of Macri from 2015 to 2019.

However, despite the de-financing, the Self-managed Work Program and its different lines of work continued to be active. The demand from the self-managed productive units and the different organizations representing the sector did not cease. They were in crisis due to the economic adjustment policy of President Macri's government.

## 5. A new process begins

At the beginning of the government of Alberto Fernández (2019), a public emergency was declared in terms of economic, financial, fiscal, administrative, social security, tariff, energy, sanitary, and social matters, known as the "Social Solidarity and Productive Reactivation Law," published in the Official Gazette on December 21, 2019.

With the new government administration, the program was reorganized within the new structure of the state agency, which regained its status as a Ministry, ceasing to be a Secretariat of Labor and Employment. This type of organization had been downgraded during the Macri government's administration from 2015 to 2019. Through decrees 801/2018 and 802/2018, which modified the Ministry Law with decree 958/2018, even the Secretariat of Social Security was separated from the agency, which had been part of the structure of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security for years. With the national State reform, the Secretariat of Social Security moved to another agency that had also been downgraded to a secretariat during the Macri era, the Ministry of Health. The new government restored its previous category and named it the "Ministry of Health and Social Development."

A few months later, in the midst of adapting to the new structure and new management, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 virus a pandemic. This prompted central measures, including the expansion of the public health emergency established by the Decree of Necessity and Urgency 260 on March 12, 2020. Decree 297 established the Mandatory Preventive Social Isolation (ASPO), which began on March 20, 2020. Regarding measures to protect employment, Decree 326/20 created the Specific Allocation Fund to facilitate loans to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises for working capital acquisition. Decree 328/2020, published on March 31, authorized the renewal for 180 days of temporary appointments in the National Public Administration. In addition, Decree 329/20 prohibited dismissals and suspensions, and Decree 332/2020 established the Emergency Assistance Program for Work and Production (ATP). This measure provided a series of benefits, including extending or renewing the 95% payment of employer contributions to the social security system, as well as providing a complementary salary paid by the National Government for private sector dependent workers<sup>[11]</sup>.

The socioeconomic context during the pandemic was characterized by a reduction in income levels due to the direct measures of Mandatory Preventive Social Isolation (ASPO), which imposed restrictions on movement to offer products and/or services. This was compounded by a widespread decrease in consumption, as the demand for goods and services from the majority of the population decreased due to regressive policies implemented by the Macri government from 2015 to 2019. This situation, which served as the foundation and was exacerbated by the pandemic, was also influenced by the specific characteristics of each sector in terms of income, the legislation regulating their working conditions, and the prevailing policies<sup>[11]</sup>.

The end of the neoliberal restoration cycle under the government of Mauricio Macri had an impact on employment and income for individuals. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC), in the third quarter of 2019, the open unemployment rate was 9.2%, the underemployed seeking employment was 18.5%, the underemployment rate for those seeking employment was 9.3%, and the underemployment rate for those not seeking employment was 3.7% <sup>[12]</sup>.

## **6. After the neoliberal restoration, the pandemic**

During the ASPO (Social, Preventive, and Mandatory Quarantine), specific measures were taken regarding the social economy sector. The regulatory body for social economy organizations, the INAES, established the suspension of administrative procedural terms through Resolution 37/2020. Previously, on December 10, Resolution 3256/2019 had established that, in order to comply with institutional instances such as board or executive meetings, executive committees or boards, oversight commissions or boards, and internal committees established by statute and/or regulations, remote meetings were authorized. These meetings combined physical presence with simultaneous virtual presence through communication channels that ensured the participation of attendees.

Subsequently, regulations were issued aimed at maintaining the institutional framework of productive units. For example, through Resolution 485/2021, published in the Official Gazette on April 18, 2021, the obligation to hold assemblies in person was suspended. Extensions of the mandates of governing bodies were authorized to prevent productive units from violating legal requirements and thus enable them to access financing and resources for their sustainability. Within the framework of the ASPO, protected by the regulations enacted to safeguard the sector, they were able to access public policies created to sustain them and preserve sanitary conditions.

The milestone produced by the pandemic generated new mechanisms to manage the lines of assistance. The objective was set at the request of the actors in the sector, for which a specific line was created in the face of the health and economic emergency. This was an attempt to respond to the workers' lack of income caused by the ASPO.

Thus, the Self-Managed Work Program created an emergency line in response to the sector's demands, including workers from worker cooperatives and recovered companies. It also addressed the needs of second-tier organizations, such as federations, networks, and cooperative unions representing the sector and long-time program stakeholders. A special emergency treatment modality was implemented under Line 1 of the program, aiming to mitigate the impact of isolation measures on production processes and income generation for workers. A budget was allocated to address income-related crises caused by the health emergency, resulting in an economic crisis in the sector. Line 1 consists of individual financial assistance aimed at sustaining the income of workers involved in economic projects or facing economic crises within their units. Utilizing Line 1 to support incomes was a timely response to the economic consequences of mandatory isolation.

Priority was given to the health of workers, community sanitary conditions, and the sector's economic and sanitary conditions as a whole. The program, with years of implementation, was adapted to an adverse context, with specific instruments developed for application, new evaluation circuits defined, and processing of requests expedited. Public servants in the organization quickly adapted to the new context, working long hours online with limited resources and without salary increases.

## 7. Regulatory framework to address the economic emergency of the sector

With Resolution No. 144/2020 from the Secretariat of Employment (SE) of the MTEySS, published in the official bulletin on April 30, 2020, assistance for two months was established. The objective was to assist members of self-managed productive units whose productive activity was suspended or whose economic income had decreased as a result of the mandatory preventive, social, and compulsory isolation measures.

Later, through Resolution 301/2020, the deadline was extended and the amount of assistance was increased. The amount was lower than what individuals in dependent employment in the private sector received through the ATP. Therefore, an additional amount of \$16,500 was allocated for the last two months of individual economic assistance.

As the isolation and social distancing measures continued to be extended, along with the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic, the assistance periods were extended through various regulations, particularly under the Emergency Line 1. The aim was to extend the coverage period and sustain incomes for workers in the sector, covering a period of 8 to 10 months, depending on the case. With the signing of Resolution No. 473 on September 10, 2020, and in accordance with previous regulations, the monthly amount was set at \$9,000 for the fifth month of assistance. Resolution No. 623 on October 30, 2020, extended the assistance to a total of 7 months, with an individual monthly allocation of \$9,000 for the sixth and seventh months. Resolution No. 127 on January 28, 2021, established a new emergency assistance payment, also set at \$9,000, for members of those production units affected by the aforementioned regulations. Resolution No. 534 on May 12, 2021, added one month and increased the amount to \$11,000. With Resolution No. 673 on June 28, 2021, the emergency assistance concluded with a special allocation of \$11,000 for 5 months. Payment was made in July 2021 to those covered by Resolution 144/2020.

This normative journey reflects the state's containment measures for workers in the sector. Through the Self-Managed Work Program implemented in the MTEySS, mechanisms were continuously promoted and adjusted to facilitate access and support for the sustainability of these organizations. They were ensured a basic income that could alleviate the economic crisis, particularly addressing the loss of income resulting from the halt in their productive activities.

A testimony from Federico Tonarelli, president of FACTA, featured on the Argentine Workers' Central website, highlights the importance of Emergency Line 1:

*“We consider the claim settled because there was a political decision not to include us in the ATP, and we were sort of in limbo, arguing that there was discrimination against salaried colleagues. They resolved this, and we consider it closed, but it will be from August and for two months”<sup>[13]</sup>.*

The testimony of Silvia Díaz from FACTA, one of the organizations consulted for the survey contained in the report “The Popular Economy during the Quarantine, a Survey Carried Out within the Framework of the COVID-19 Labor Monitoring Project” elaborated by CITRA in 2020 <sup>[11]</sup>.

*“After much demanding, we have achieved something that is a significant improvement, a commitment that will be implemented with the payment in July, and for two months, July and August, to increase that payment from \$6,500 to \$16,500 per month for each associate”<sup>[11]</sup>.*

Once the pandemic ended, and having provided coverage to the workers of self-managed organizations, the program resumed and continued its management. A budget was reallocated and redirected towards the initial

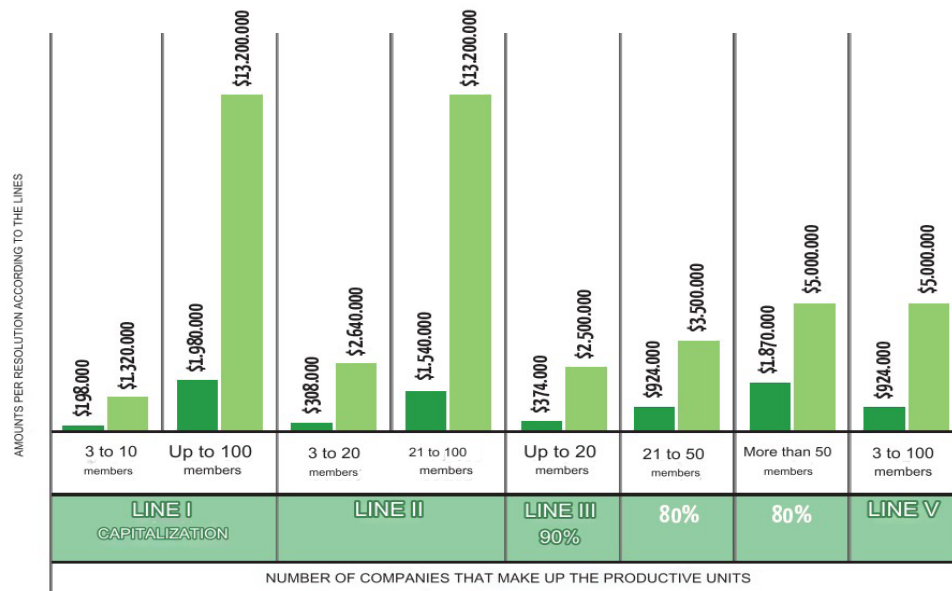
goals of the program, strengthening itself with economic resources for the execution of the 5 strengthening lines currently in force in the regulations.

- (a) Individual Financial Assistance through the Capitalization modality
- (b) Line II of Technical and Economic Support for Improving Productive Capacity with contributions that can be allocated to repair and/or acquisition of equipment, raw materials and supplies, and/or refurbishment of infrastructure and facilities.
- (c) Line III of Technical and Economic Support for Improving Productive Capacity through the acquisition of capital goods and/or conditioning of infrastructure and facilities
- (d) Line IV of Technical Assistance and Training for improving management capacity (e) Line V of Assistance for Hygiene and Occupational Safety

A new scenario for strengthening self-managed productive units.

With Resolution 301, published in the Official Gazette on March 15, 2021, there was an increase in the financing amount for the aforementioned 5 lines. In May 2022, a new increase was regulated with Resolution 439. There, the amounts take on a greater dimension and become more attractive, which generates greater demand.

Graph 1: Resolution No. 301/2021 is indicated in dark green and Resolutions No. 1216 and No. 439 are indicated in light green.



Source: self made

**Figure 1.** Resolution No. 301/2021 is indicated in dark green and Resolutions No. 1236 and No. 439 are indicated in light green. Source: Original

In **Figure 1**, the regulations reflecting budget increases during the last period of 2021–2022 are presented comparatively. For each of the strengthening lines, according to the number of members they include, the amounts of Resolution 301/2021 are indicated in the lower lines, and those of 1216/2022 and 439/2022 respectively are indicated in the higher lines.

## 6. Current status of the program and the mechanism for participation in the funding lines of financing

When a self-managed organization is interested in participating in the strengthening lines, the type and quantity



of resources to be requested are defined by the members as part of the self-management process of their business. Through the holding of an extraordinary assembly, the workers agree on the goods to be requested from the program by submitting a project according to a business plan. The program evaluates that this requirement is in line with the strengthening of their productive project, ensuring that the requested resources are suitable for the development of a business plan that improves and/or expands their productivity and competitiveness. Once submitted, the projects are evaluated and, if approved, a agreement is signed between the parties committing non-refundable transfers that are made to the cooperatives' accounts. Once the transfer of the required non-refundable funds specified in the project is made, the cooperatives acquire the goods, equipment, supplies, and/or raw materials. Or they undertake training actions or improvements to ensure safety and hygiene at work. Subsequently, to finalize the project processing, the cooperatives render an account of the expenses incurred, submitting invoices in a timely manner issued by the suppliers from whom they purchased the goods and/or services.

After the acquisition, through the holding of an extraordinary assembly and in accordance with what is established in their bylaws, those assets are incorporated into the collective patrimony, in compliance with the cooperative principles to which they voluntarily adhere.

## **7. Conclusion**

To achieve the sustainability of worker cooperative organizations, whether they are new ones, those promoted by the State that were able to continue developing a productive project oriented towards the private sector, or those that come from a process of business recovery, it is necessary to consider the quality of public policies. These policies must not only provide goods but also include initiatives that contribute to their sustainability.

Along these lines, several possible improvements are listed below.

- (a) Promoting a systematic process of inter-institutional coordination with other national government agencies to comprehensively address and pursue common goals in the social sector of the economy.
- (b) Supporting the processes of decentralization and territorialization of activities by two agencies, INAES and MTEySS. With the new approach defined by INAES in 2019, today from the Chief of Cabinet of Ministers, efforts are being made to generate associative forums. In this regard, it is important to unite efforts in territorial work. Municipalities can participate, either those that are part of the federal network of municipal public services (a network strengthened by MTEySS since 2004), or municipal representatives working with the social and solidarity economy sector, and various agencies of MTEySS. The agency has offices in each of the provincial jurisdictions, and in some of them, more than one. It is necessary to work together between national agencies and local actors to reach agreements at the municipal level, addressing the sector's issues to strengthen local development and the sustainability of those projects. Participation in these spaces could be positive for both exchange and marketing, strengthening networks at the local level.
- (c) To facilitate access to cooperative information, comprehensive management agreements should be made with INAES. These agreements would enable access to statistical information of the sector as well as specific information about each cooperative with a valid registration. Currently, INAES has provided mechanisms for cooperatives to formalize or update their information through remote procedures (TAD). This includes information specific to each cooperative, such as updating member records, appointment records of authorities, modifications to statutes, etc. While this information is specific to each cooperative, it is documentation they must present when applying for financing through the Program.

Facilitating access to this information would improve the readability of documentation, streamline evaluation processes, and standardize submissions. This information, which could also serve as input for a Socio-Economic Census of Cooperatives <sup>[10]</sup>, would allow for a diagnosis to articulate actions addressing specific needs.

- (d) It is important to promote joint training actions, involving the Cooperative Education Fund, INAES, and universities. The program could provide these institutions with information gathered from the assistance actions it carries out and also collaborate to systematize the various needs raised by cooperatives in their submitted projects. This could consolidate efforts, unify surveys, and address specific demands effectively.
- (e) Regarding the sustainability of productive projects, it is necessary to substantially increase the budget allocated to the program. With allocations similar to those received by the SME sector, new promotion policies could be generated and mechanisms could be articulated to facilitate access to credit, historically denied by the financial system. The goal is to eradicate forced or instrumental associativity, promoting projects strengthened in their self-management that generate dignified income for the associates.
- (f) Capitalizing on the nearly 20 years of management of the public policy that, from the National State, the Self-Managed Work Program contributes with its experience. The strong reference that sector actors have with the program could be utilized, thus harnessing that installed capacity in active participation in a committee that designs a regulatory framework for the cooperative and social, popular, and solidarity economy sector. A regulatory framework that includes promotion actions and allocation of public budget for the promotion and sustainability of productive projects, as well as the protection of individuals working in self-management projects.
- (g) It is crucial to highlight the need for the Program to incorporate concepts from feminist economics into its approach. Inequalities must be made visible and challenged. Most decision-making spaces in worker cooperatives are occupied by men. Economic activities related to care and caregiving are predominantly carried out by women, following traditional and patriarchal parameters. It is necessary to incorporate this perspective into the social economy, which, like feminist economics, advocates for a paradigm shift. Similar to the social economy, feminist economics appeals to a logic centered around life rather than capital, advocating for an economy that is designed and carried out for people. From our position in state management, it is essential to highlight that there is a population group, women, who are marginalized from political life and decision-making, as they take on intra-household care responsibilities, which detracts time from other functions within productive organizations and the broader sector. It is necessary to address these issues in all participation instances: training activities, technical assistance, meetings with stakeholders, etc. It is also important to incorporate this perspective into the tools, regulations, and materials used by the technical staff and officials of MTEySS.

Taking a journey through this public policy implemented by the National Government, and having detailed the support actions for the sector since its inception and particularly during the pandemic, we can affirm that the sustainability of these productive projects does not depend solely on individual economic capacities or the effort or will of their members. It is necessary to support them with public policies and incorporate sector actors into institutional decision-making processes so that in turn they can build and modify the socio-economic, cultural, and political context.

Success will depend not only on the willingness, capacity, and disposition of the workers at a micro level but also on the representation capacities of their organizations, the establishment of networks between

productive units, and the existence of a strong state policy oriented towards the reproduction of the lives of self-managed workers, their protection, social integration, and development.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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