

# Special Presentation

## The Ways of Suffering at Work

The reader finds, in this special issue of *Saúde e Sociedade*, a detailed inventory of the many penalties affecting the world of work, with a view especially geared to the ways of suffering and getting sick. These forms emerge from the age of *lyophilized and flexible* capitalism which occurred with the great productive restructuring of capital, developed in central countries since the 70's, and in Brazil especially as of the 90's.

The issue is broad, encompassing accidents and health at work; the several forms of fatigue; physical and mental violence; absenteeism, among other points discussed. The universe assessed is also multifaceted: metallurgy workers, sugar cane workers, truck drivers, public health workers, military policemen, bank employees and also adolescents with special needs. Workers are covered in their multiple dimensions: their subjectivity, working conditions, presence or absence of public policies, etc.

The social scenario that has led to this inventory, started with the process of productive restructuring of the capital, that was triggered in a global scale, and whose leading motive was to recover the accumulation standard and the hegemony of capital, that had been shaken by the social explosions in the end of the 60's.

Capitalism, from then on, was structured following some trends, that can be summarized as such: 1) the pattern of production from the Taylorism/Fordism has been continuously replaced, mixed, or changed by flexible and deregulated productive forms whose examples are the flexible accumulation, the Japanese model or Toyotism; 2) The social democratic regulation model based on Keynes ideas, which led to the *welfare state* in several countries of the North, has been undermined by the Neoliberal deregulation that is privatizing and anti-social, highlighting the destructive elements of this productive logic.

Therefore, the work force has become more precarious, and people are either unemployed or working at poor jobs. Work is continuous and excessive because

the only way capital can be reproduced is by profiting from over-work, by the intensification of the work of those in the productive world, and by driving away a huge number of people who can no longer be incorporated and absorbed by the productive world.

In Brazil, this picture worsened during the decade of *Neoliberal desertification*, in the 90's, when the Washington Consensus gave rules and prescriptions for a significant productive restructuring of the world of industry and services, as a consequence of the new international division of work, which demanded reterritorialization and deterritorialization of production.

Within this context, the new (and old) modalities of work have been designed, creating a new *productive engineering*, whose objective was to broaden the ways to add value, through a social and technical redesign of production and new ways to manage and control work. From then on, the examples of "lean company", "entrepreneurship", "cooperativism", "volunteer work", "collaborators", "consultants" proliferated. These are expressions disguised as work that, actually, hide their real meaning, that is, the increase in work contracts with no rights, they are deconstructed in their bases and disassembled in their essence.

What we can see from this process is the enormous trend to *make work more precarious in a global scale*, affecting from the United States to Japan, from Europe to Asia, from China to India, with direct consequences in our continent and, particularly, in the working conditions in our country.

This worsening is present in the intensification of labor activity, in the increase in effort, and in responsibility, making work more individual and demanding that it is conducted according to ideas of "goals, "competences" where the human-society logic is replaced by a production mode that is typical from the era of privatizations with a logic geared by the instrumental (de) rationality.

Work, the sole survival space for those who can only sell their work force, has then become the site for exhausting journeys, poor social rights, the constant fear of unemployment, and the stress to keep one's

job, or even for repetitive strain lesion (RSI) and the several work-related diseases. This lesion is typical of the information era.

New consequences can be expected because we are in the middle of a crisis, whose effects and consequences in the universe of work are as hard as they are unpredictable.

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