

Comment on the papers by Carles Muntaner and Graça Druck
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Precarious employment, precarious work, outsourcing, inequity, and risks from the workers' health perspective: a dialogue with the authors

The articles by Carles Muntaner and Graça Druck focus the debate on the flexibilization of labor relations since the 1980s and its direct impact on workers' health.

As Muntaner emphasizes, the discussion on flexibility resumes the historical line of labor exploitation in capitalism, which has always been characterized by clear inequality in its different stages and contexts.

The changes that occurred in the timeline of capitalism in the post-War period (1950 to 1970) expanded the public regulation of labor, conferring a leading role to public representative and regulatory institutions, thereby contributing to a decrease in the historical capital-labor asymmetry.

In the 1970s, new forms of economic organization, combined with technological development and with a direct impact on the organization of production, gained space, resuming the process of flexibilization of labor from the perspective of inequity.

The 1980s were marked by a decrease in the state's participation in the regulatory process, changes in social protection policies, and flexibilization of existing rights. This new scenario reveals a change in the relationship between state and society, marked by a decrease in public regulation, with negative social consequences.

However, the impact and consequences of these changes have differed according to each country's greater or lesser public regulation and degree of institutionality of social policies and democratic mechanisms. As Muntaner highlights, "*what is considered precarious in Norway may not be seen as precarious in Colombia*".

In semi-peripheral countries like Brazil that have still not achieved a wage-earning society and consolidation of social rights in practice, this process of change in labor formats and relations takes on particular characteristics, accentuating the inequality in the capital-labor relationship and hindering access to (and quality of) employment ¹.

The Brazilian experience with flexibilization of labor regulation relates directly to changes in the employment structure, expressed in new hiring mechanisms that include payment by results, flexible workday, downsizing of job and wage structure, service contracts with companies, and especially workforce outsourcing.

Druck's article thus calls attention to two fundamental points: (i) flexibilization of labor legislation, opening room for exponential growth in all areas, including the public sector, through so-called "Social Organizations" (OS) and (ii) the impact of this new workforce hiring model on workers' health.

The results support the hypothesis that differences in employment relations and intermediation of contracts leave workers in a vulnerable situation, since bargaining is done individually, with limited regulation, and contracts are negotiated between companies and workers are only allowed to agree to what has already been negotiated.

Based on the principle of work as a social act, the employment crisis, loss of the collective dimension of work, and exhaustion of the labor contract are the main contemporary challenges in the world of work.

The various dimensions of precarization of employment and work need to be analyzed in this context. To expand the discussion on changes in work assumes rethinking labor relations in all the interactions in the production process, including economic, social, historical, legal, political, and subjective aspects of work.

To reflect on work based on human activity means incorporating the concept of work situation into the analysis, considering the set of physical means, material and symbolic objects, human subjects, technology, and organization as the result of organizational and political choices.

A path towards developing inter-sector policies to confront what Druck calls "predatory workforce exploitation" could be to induce and support new studies on workers' health, promoting interdisciplinary dialogue involving the social, health, and legal sciences.

Expanding the scope of research in this field, with the contribution of new approaches to the labor issue in the context of current changes in the world of work, as done by Druck and Muntaner in their articles, can help understand and deal with the challenges for work management in this complex process in various areas of social life.

1. Martins MIC, Molinaro A. Reestruturação produtiva e seu impacto nas relações de trabalho nos serviços públicos de saúde no Brasil. *Ciênc Saúde Coletiva* 2013; 18:1667-76.