

Call for Papers

"Work in Transition – Transition in Work: Dynamics of Small and Medium Enterprises (PYMES/MIPYMES) in Cuba in a Comparative Perspective."

International Conference, TU Dresden, Institute of Sociology, 14-15.11.2024

Keyspeakers:

Prof. Dr. Idalsis Fabre Machado (Universidad de las Villas)
Prof. Dr. Alexander Abreu Pupo (Universidad Holguín)
Prof. Dr. Magela Romero Almodóvar (Universidad de la Habana)

This conference will focus on Cuba as a laboratory of social change and the social, cultural and gender-specific processes associated with the current crisis. The small and medium-sized enterprises (micro y pequeñas y medianas empresas) created in the course of state reforms play a decisive role in Cuba's social and economic transformation. They touch on essential aspects of the way of life, the relationship with the Cuban state and the revolution, and also on fundamental questions of alternative social concepts, including climate change, combating hunger, access to education and health systems and gender equality. From a comparative perspective, the sociality of the labour process and the experience of work, including forms of ownership, are of particular importance. What are the possibilities and limits of collective forms of work organisation? What experiences, contradictions and challenges arise in private companies within state socialist economies? And in comparison, in co-operative enterprises in capitalist economies?

Based on these questions, the conference aims to promote an in-depth understanding of these transformations and their impact on the work and lives of people in Cuba. We hope to develop new perspectives on the emerging social and ecological transformation processes worldwide through exchange and comparative analyses. The focus will be on a subject-theoretical perspective that is orientated towards the experience and processing of social change by the subjects and examines how individual agency and social or state planning relate to each other. We are particularly interested in the motivation of people who set up small and medium-sized enterprises in the course of state reforms and in the significance of labour in connection with issues relating to society as a whole. The proposed contributions should relate to the title of the conference, "work in transition - transition in work", and in particular shed light on how social and labour-related change influence and condition each other.

We invite researchers, doctoral and postdoctoral students as well as political and economic actors to submit contributions that critically and reflexively deal with the following focal points, but may also address their own questions:

Focal points and workshops:

1. founding motivation and background of the MIPYMES

- What is the initial situation and the resulting political intentions and individual motivations behind the MIPYMES?
- What were the main reasons for their introduction? Which economic sectors were to be promoted and expanded?
- How do demands for privatisation, democratisation and state-economic crisis management relate to and intertwine with each other?
- How do the economic reforms fit into the observable transformation of the Cuban state from a well-fare to a work-fare model?

- Are there conflicts of interest within the state structures between the actors from the military, politics and society? Are the reform processes, in addition to the crisis, also an expression of new social alliances and actors, and if so, how?
- From a comparative perspective: Are these questions perceived in co-operative or commoning movements? How are the historical experiences of other socialist countries taken into account? Is there an exchange of experience with initiatives for socialisation, socialisation or the common economy in capitalist countries?

2. actors, financing models and corporate governance

- What are the differences in financing (private, state, mixed forms) and what impact do they have on corporate structures and employee participation opportunities?
- What actors and interests are there in the current transformation process?
- Who are the main actors? Are there intersectional reflections of management structures along the categories of class/race/gender?
- What influence do gender, geographical origin and funding (state, global institutions, remittances from abroad) have on the leadership and nature of the organisation?
- Is there a particular focus on specific business models (co-operatives, self-managed enterprises, mixed forms, ...) and how are these embedded in the transformation process towards an ecologically and socially sustainable development model?
- What are the specific challenges against the background of economic sanctions?
- How is the reorganisation process of work prepared and accompanied by the state and the private sector? What role do state model companies, exchange with international organisations (WHO, UN, foundations, ...) or the work and foreign experience resulting from ongoing migration in capitalist countries play?
- From a comparative perspective: What experiences and problems are there in intra-capitalist initiatives for the socialization or strengthening of common economy?

3. work experiences, working conditions and resistance in the MIPYMES

- What are new opportunities but also contradictions in terms of co-determination, earning opportunities and workload?
- How do the working conditions in MIPYMES differ from those in state or military enterprises?
- How is the work structured? Part-time or as a main occupation and source of income? Do they earn more? Are the working conditions more stressful (e.g. in terms of time or dissolution of boundaries to leisure)? Are new forms of precarious employment models and self-precarisation emerging?
- Do the new working conditions give rise to new social forms and the organisation of workers' interests?
- Are previously unknown contradictions being experienced and, if so, how are they being dealt with? Does this give rise to new social movements?
- How do the representation and organisation of workers' interests in MIPYMES differ from those in state-owned companies?
- From a comparative perspective: What experiences and problems are there in relation to these questions in intra-capitalist initiatives for socialisation or the strengthening of the common economy?

4. work ethic and quality of work in the MIPYMES

- What influence does the type of company have on the quality of work and the work ethic?
- Do people place a higher value on the quality of their work than in state-owned companies and if so, why?
- How does the MIPYMES change the role and function of work in people's life plans?
- How do the MIPYMES position themselves in relation to issues affecting society as a whole and how is this reflected in the work organisation and/or quality assurance of the individual companies?
- From a comparative perspective: What experiences and problems are there in intra-capitalist initiatives for the socialisation or strengthening of the public economy?

5. Social and economic effects of the MIPYMES

- What is the relationship between the increase in productivity planned with the MIPYMES and the utopian potential of a humanisation of work?

- What influence do the MIPYMES have on gender relations?
- What influence do the MIPYMES have on the socialist model? Do they contribute to a strengthening of grassroots democratic initiatives?
- How do the MIPYMES shift the balance of power between the state and private economic forces, grassroots democratic collectives or neighbourhood help?
- How are the MYPIMES embedded in a socially and ecologically sustainable development perspective for society as a whole?
- Is there an exchange on co-operative and employee-led business models that transcends Cuba?
- How do intra-capitalist initiatives for socialisation or strengthening common economy perceive the changes in Cuba?
- Are there new insights into the planning debate of the 1960s and 1970s?
- What role do the law of value, consciousness, plan and market play in transitional societies?
- How do Cuba's private sector initiatives relate to historical examples such as the New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union or workers' self-management in Yugoslavia? How do Cuba's private sector initiatives relate to the question of the commons, etc.?

Special Call:

- In the week following the conference, individual workshops are planned to take up and deepen the topics of the presentations.
- In addition to the abstract for one of the sections, a workshop concept must be submitted.
- For 2 persons from the Global South, travel costs can be covered (max. 1125€ flight, max. 30€ train) and a lump sum for living expenses (1500€) can be paid.

Submission and funding guidelines:

- Submissions can be written in German, English or Spanish.
- The presentation and conference language is English.
- Submissions should not exceed 400 words, for the Special Call the additional seminar concept should not exceed 300 words.
- The deadline for submissions is 31 July 2024.

Papers will be selected by the end of August 2024 and the selected participants will be invited to present their research at the conference in Dresden in November 2024. Unfortunately, no travel or accommodation costs can be covered outside of the special call.

We look forward to receiving your contributions and to an exciting collaboration!

For further questions and to submit your contributions by 31 July 2024, please contact

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