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Processes of cooperative organization. A look at cooperatives framed in social programs in the city of Corrientes, Argentina (2014-2017)

Procesos de organización cooperativos. Una mirada en cooperativas enmarcadas en programas sociales en la ciudad de Corrientes, Argentina (2014-2017)

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ABSTRACT

This presentation is part of a research project that analyzes cooperative organization processes and dynamics in productive units promoted by social programs in the city of Corrientes, Argentina. It focuses on the specific experience of the cooperative “Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras”, dedicated to textile production, during the period 2014-2017 within the framework of the Ellas Hacen program. The general objective is to characterize the sociogenesis and positioning of the cooperative “Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras”. The theoretical-methodological strategy is qualitative, combining in-depth interviews and documentary analysis. The study is based on the concept of sociogenesis as an analytical category to understand the emergence of this cooperative structure induced by the State, and its positioning from three angles: social, economic, and political. The research seeks to contribute to the debate on the organizational forms of the popular economy and their articulation with public policies.

Keywords: Sociogenesis; Popular Economy; Worker Cooperativism; Organizational Positioning; Social Policies.

RESUMEN

La presente ponencia se inscribe en una investigación que analiza los procesos de organización cooperativa y las dinámicas en unidades productivas promovidas por programas sociales en la ciudad de Corrientes, Argentina, donde se abordará la experiencia específica de la cooperativa “Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras”, enfocada en la producción textil, durante el periodo 2014 y 2017 en el marco del programa Ellas Hacen. El objetivo general es caracterizar la sociogénesis y el posicionamiento de la Cooperativa Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras. La estrategia teórica metodológica es cualitativa combinando entrevistas en profundidad y análisis documental. Partimos del concepto de sociogénesis como categoría analítica para comprender el surgimiento de esta estructura cooperativa inducida por el Estado, y el posicionamiento desde tres ángulos: social, económico y político. El estudio busca aportar al debate sobre las formas organizativas de la economía popular y su articulación con las políticas públicas.

Palabras clave: Sociogénesis; Economía Popular; Cooperativismo de Trabajo; Posicionamiento Organizativo; Políticas Sociales.

INTRODUCTION

Since the return to democracy in Argentina in 1983, the state apparatus has undergone transformations that have altered both practices and conceptions of citizen participation. These transformations intensified after the 2001 crisis, when mass unemployment prompted vulnerable sectors to channel their demands through formal and informal social organizations, which began to occupy the public space as legitimate actors (De Piero, 2010; Arcidiácono, Kalpschtrej & Bermúdez, 2014). Starting in 2003, with the Frente para la Victoria governments, inclusive social policies were implemented that recognized these organizations as valid interlocutors in the construction of public agendas, which favored their incorporation into decision-making processes (Ferrari Mango, 2018; Basualdo, 2020). Within this framework, the Ministry of Social Development promoted socio-productive policies aimed at generating self-managed employment, such as the Social Income with Work Program (PRIST-AT), created by Resolution 3182/09 and ratified by Decree 1067/09. Its first programmatic line, “Argentina Trabaja” (Argentina Works), promoted the formation of worker cooperatives to carry out low- and medium-complexity work in vulnerable neighborhoods, generating income and improving urban infrastructure (Hopp, 2014). In 2013, “Ellas Hacen” (Women Do) was created as a new stage of the program, focused on women in vulnerable situations, with an emphasis on educational completion and training in construction-related trades (Massera, Logiodice & Rey, 2023).

The implementation of both programs had particularities in terms of the origin of their participants, the composition of their mixed cooperatives (Argentina Trabaja) and exclusively women’s cooperatives (Ellas Hacen), and the role of municipalities as implementing units (Ferrari Mango, 2018). In Corrientes Capital, territorial implementation was coordinated with local policies between 2014 and 2017 through the Secretariat of Productive Development and Social Economy, which promoted the development of productive projects in already registered cooperatives to generate complementary income and strengthen self-managed work.

Within the framework of the territorial implementation of the Ellas Hacen program in Corrientes between 2014 and 2017, this work aims to characterize the sociogenesis and positioning of the Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras Workers’ Cooperative. To this end, the processes of territorial formation, the profiles of its members, and the institutional conditions that gave rise to this organizational experience are reconstructed, as are the narratives constructed around the work and the cooperative organization.

The characterization was achieved through a qualitative approach and the recovery of background research on the cooperatives in the program, facilitated by former officials of the municipal administration of Corrientes Capital, who were part of the technical team responsible for managing and executing it. Interviews were also conducted with the same former officials and former members of the Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras cooperative, and a process for constructing narratives was developed to provide primary data to achieve our objective.

From a theoretical perspective, the concept of sociogenesis is taken up as an analytical category that refers to the historical and social constitution of collective structures, as explored by various authors such as Norbert Elias (1939), Pierre Bourdieu (1970), and Michel Foucault (1975), who analyzed how institutional and relational configurations emerge and evolve in specific contexts. In this research, it is applied to reconstruct the processes of emergence and configuration of worker cooperatives promoted by social programs such as Ellas Hacen. Unlike the origin linked to the collapse of private companies, these experiences are part of a particular genealogy, marked by the articulation between the State and territorial organizations of

unemployed workers, whose formation responds to specific historical, institutional, and symbolic conditions. From this perspective, the sociogenesis of the *Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras* cooperative is reconstructed by considering a series of key empirical criteria: the profile of its members (in terms of age, family situation, and educational level), the conditions of insertion prior to the program, the modalities of recruitment and registration, the mechanisms of formation of the cooperative group, and the workspaces assigned for the development of its activities. These elements allow us to understand not only how the cooperatives were formed, but also what material, symbolic, and institutional conditions made their emergence possible and, at the same time, conditioned it.

The concept of positioning, for its part, is problematized from a discursive and relational perspective, recognizing that cooperative actors construct their roles, perceptions, and identities within the discursive frameworks available in political, cultural, and economic contexts. The contributions of Davies and Harré (1990) on the discursive constitution of social identity are recovered here, as is the analysis of Coraggio (2011), who proposes three angles for thinking about cooperative positioning: the economic, social, and political.

From an economic perspective, worker cooperatives are seen as an alternative to the traditional capitalist model, in which private property and profit distribution are redefined, and where the main objective is no longer profit maximization but social welfare, equity, and sustainability. From this perspective, perceptions of income, the sustainability of cooperative work, and the redefinition of informal employment were explored. The social angle invites us to consider that worker cooperatives often position themselves as actors in the solidarity economy, contributing to local development and social inclusion, prioritizing the satisfaction of the needs not only of their members but also of the community of which they are a part. This is based on the principles of solidarity, democracy, and equal internal participation, but also includes living conditions, educational trajectories, family responsibilities, and social contexts that affect individuals. Finally, the political angle concerns cooperatives' ability to position themselves as political actors vis-à-vis the state and public policies. Some cooperatives align themselves with social movements and unions, seeking to influence policies that favor the social economy and self-management. In contrast, others can function as mechanisms for implementing public policies, as in the case of state programs that support cooperatives in Argentina.

Based on this theoretical and methodological framework, we will analyze the processes of formation and positioning of the *Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras* cooperative, recovering the meanings constructed by its members around work, organization, and their relationship with the State, in the context of the territorial implementation of the *Ellas Hacen* program in Corrientes.

DEVELOPMENT

The launch of the PAT and *Ellas Hacen* programs and their implementation in Corrientes Capital

The Social Income through Work Program “AT-PRIST,” launched in 2009 by the National Ministry of Social Development (MDSN), consolidates the creation of worker cooperatives as a pillar of social policy within a set of public policies promoting associative and self-managed work. AT-PRIST is a line of action, together with the “*Manos a la Obra*” (Let’s Get to Work) Socio-productive Projects, Collective Brand, Microcredits, and Social Monotributo. However, it is commonly referred to as the “Argentina Trabaja Program” and later as “*Ellas Hacen*” to designate only the Social Income with Work Program (Kasparian, 2017). Although the cooperatives

created under AT-PRIST have been conceptualized as “state-induced” (Vuotto, 2011), we would like to emphasize that this specific type of worker cooperativism, framed within public policy, like in the case of recovered companies, has its origin and foundation in labor demands. Based on the above, we can say that the launch of the PAT in 2009 represented a set of policies to promote associative and self-managed work with the formation of worker cooperatives as the central axis of intervention within the field of social policy, representing a further step in the direction marked by the *Manos a la Obra* Program. At this point, we would like to highlight the differences between the PAT and the income transfer programs with work requirements that were part of the workfare scheme of the 1990s and early 2000s. First, the PAT is based on the centrality of work as a right and as a means of social integration in the face of inequality. This concept is opposed to approaches that prioritize temporary solutions and the development of individual skills for entry into the labor market (Kasparian, 2017).

Secondly, the formation of worker cooperatives composed of at least 60 people to carry out public works of low and medium complexity to improve infrastructure and neighborhood environments in the country’s “most vulnerable” areas. The program also provided training in trades, cooperative organization, and social, educational, health, and prevention issues for cooperative members. Technical assistance and training grants were provided for this purpose. Thirdly, the program’s beneficiaries were “people without income in the family group, nor pension benefits, national retirement pensions, or plans from the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security or provincial plans.” The members of these cooperatives would therefore constitute the “hard core of unemployment” in Argentina (MDS, 2010). “In the initial stage, it covered approximately 100 000 beneficiaries from the most excluded districts in the areas surrounding the Buenos Aires conurbation.”

Finally, social protection (as opposed to formal salaried employment) through the social monotributo and the AUH, and the relationship between the amount of the monetary benefit and the minimum wage at the time of the creation of the PAT, are increasingly consistent—and in contrast to previous programs—with the notion of “decent work,” that is, work that allows workers to meet their basic needs.

It is important to clarify that the PAT, as a public policy, was promoted by territorial organizations that considered it necessary to generate subsidized work through worker cooperatives. However, Natalucci (2012), as cited in Kasparian (2017, warns that meeting the demands of social organizations was not synonymous with giving them the role they expected. On the contrary, the launch of the PAT led to a renewed questioning of the role of social organizations in social policy. It constituted an attempt to order the implementation of social policy “from above,” including municipalities and social organizations in a differential manner. Thus, no organization participated in decision-making regarding the Program, and the national government stipulated that its implementation would fall to municipal and provincial governments (Natalucci, 2012, cited in Kasparian, 2017). In addition, the participation of the various organizations varied in degree, as evidenced by the number of plans distributed to each. This generated discontent among social organizations that had been playing an important role in implementing social policy in the territories.

In Corrientes Capital, the PAT was implemented in 2010 during the administration of Mayor Camau Espínola, making it the first municipality in the interior of the country to apply the program. Registration took place through a mass call to 3 000 people at a sports club, who were then organized into 75 cooperatives of no more than 30 members each. The first stages included

technical training and productive activities related to improving the urban environment, such as the manufacture of paving stones, signage, and street furniture. In 2012, in a second stage of the program's implementation, new training opportunities were incorporated in coordination with the Municipal Employment Office and the National Employment Management, expanding the range of trades to textiles, gastronomy, and services.

In 2013, Resolution 2176 created the *Ellas Hacen* (Women Do) program, a new stage of the Social Income with Work program that included 100 000 women in a state of extreme vulnerability, single mothers with children under 18 years of age receiving the Universal Child Allowance. The purpose of this new program was to create opportunities for social and occupational inclusion for female heads of household through the formation of worker cooperatives and, on the other hand, to develop human and social skills through the completion of primary and secondary education and training in trades related to production and construction. The aim was to generate a wide range of training opportunities, including textile production, general and regional gastronomy, and service provision, among others. The intention was to promote community participation and improve urban infrastructure, thereby building urban citizenship in slums and emerging neighborhoods.

The first stage begins in the 36 districts of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, where the Social Income with Work program operates, and in the slums where the Comprehensive Approach Plan, *Plan Ahí*, is implemented. The second stage will be for the city of Corrientes and the provinces of Chaco, Entre Ríos, Misiones, and Tucumán. The third stage covers the remaining localities included in the Social Income with Work program in the NEA, NOA, and CUYO regions.

In the capital city of Corrientes, both programs were implemented by the Municipality of Corrientes through the Undersecretariat of Associativism, which is part of the Secretariat of Productive Development and Social Economy. The Undersecretariat administered the program and carried out its activities across its jurisdiction, including municipal offices, production hubs, fresh produce markets, peri-urban areas, and family farms, where beneficiaries of both programs performed various tasks and received training in a range of trades, skills, and activities. For the *Ellas Hacen* program, 3,200 beneficiaries enrolled, and from 2014 to March 30, 2017 (after which they would move to the provincial sphere), with the support of the Municipality of the City of Corrientes, they began a process of continuous learning.

In July 2014, 101 cooperatives were formed, comprising approximately 30 members. The criterion for forming a cooperative was domicile, i.e., that members be from the same neighborhood to strengthen ties and bonds and work to improve neighborhood issues. The search for documentation and background information on the *Ellas Hacen* cooperatives in Corrientes Capital yielded valuable insights into the general profile of the program participants who were part of these cooperative groups. According to the data obtained, 69 % were women over the age of 34, with an age range in all cases between 48 and 49 years old. 81 % worked in municipal offices and agencies, 69 % of the members were in a relationship, and 97 % had at least 3 children. 72 % lived in the same neighborhood or in neighboring neighborhoods. In terms of educational level, 87,7 % were attending secondary school or had completed secondary school. Before the program, 59 % performed caregiving tasks in their homes and 41 % worked as cleaners in private homes without any social protection (Palacios Canteros, 2016).

The call for applications for the *Ellas Hacen* program was made in 2014, and, like Argentina Trabaja, it was held at a club, the "Juventus Club." At that time, those interested came to

the venue, even a day before, to line up, and if they met at least two requirements, such as being single mothers of minor children, not owning their own home, and not having a job, they could be registered. Once the registration process was complete, the formation of cooperatives began, starting with a call for those already enrolled in the program to attend a series of training sessions in the city of Corrientes's waterways halls.

The purpose of the sessions held in the waterways was to train the program participants in cooperativism, since after these training sessions, the different groups of registered participants would begin to form cooperatives of approximately 30 members who were strangers to each other, grouped by a single criterion: belonging to the same neighborhood or area (north, south, east, or west). In addition to the activities planned for *Ellas Hacen*, the Municipality of the city of Corrientes proposed the creation and implementation of two programs, one of which had as its main objective the incorporation of knowledge, skills, and abilities of the participants in the *Ellas Hacen* program in trades related to the construction industry, providing them with the necessary tools to improve their housing conditions under the principles of solidarity and mutual aid. This program was named *Ellas Pueden* (They Can). The other was intended to provide the *Ellas Hacen* cooperatives with a productive activity that would generate income to improve the beneficiaries' quality of life. Since June 2015, the municipality has worked hard with a group of cooperatives to develop its productive project. The program consisted of three components: technical training, technical assistance, and financing, and was named *Ellas Producen* (They Produce). It should be noted that these initiatives were conceived and implemented by technical teams from the Municipality of the City of Corrientes and financed exclusively with municipal funds.

Presentation and Characterization of the “Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras” Cooperative

The presentation and characterization of the “Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras” textile cooperative were based on analyses of the participants' age and educational level, the call for the program, the process of forming their cooperative, and the district and workplace. In addition, the social, economic, and political dimensions of cooperative members will be presented to understand their positions and perspectives within the cooperative.

In addition to the search for documentation and background information, interviews with the members of *Mujeres Valientes* provided valuable information for reconstructing their profiles, allowing for the comparison and identification of common traits and processes that all the program participants had experienced in their previous careers, as well as the conditions for joining *Ellas Hacen*. All former *MVyE* members were women aged 34-50, an intermediate age group, all of whom were mothers of 3-5 children, but only some were heads of household, given that the vast majority lived with their partners. As Palacios Canteros (2016) points out, before joining the *Ellas Hacen* program, more than 59 % of the women performed caregiving tasks in their homes, while 41 % worked as cleaners in private homes. These predominant profiles were also observed in the *Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras* cooperative, where all the members shared similar work backgrounds, and only one of them—who later assumed the role of president—had previously engaged in independent productive activity. Finally, in terms of education, all had completed primary school, and almost all of the members (80 %) were attending secondary school after entering the program. In terms of work experience, they engaged in informal cleaning work in private homes, without access to labor rights or social protection.

It should be noted that the call for applications for the program was made in 2014 at the

Juventus club, and the admission criteria included being a single mother of minor children, not owning a home, and not having formal employment. Once accepted as members, future members of Mujeres Valientes were required, like all other program members, to attend training sessions on cooperativism in the Vías Navegables halls, where the cooperative group was formed. The Mujeres Valientes group was formed based on geographical proximity, like all the other cooperatives, with almost 80 % of its members residing in the Serantes neighborhood, which made it easy for the members to get to know each other, as many were neighbors.

The Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras Workers' Cooperative was formed with 30 members, all women selected at random based on proximity within a neighborhood or sector of the city. However, this criterion was not applied to the organization of the tasks assigned by the program. As a result, the members of this cooperative and many others often ended up working in different municipal and public spaces, alongside participants from other groups. The program required all members to perform a mandatory work activity in these spaces, even though the central purpose of "Ellas Hacen" focused on education and training. In addition, in order to remain active in the program, participants had to undergo training and/or complete their education (at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level, as appropriate).

When it came to choosing the president of the cooperative, a requirement for registration, belonging to the same neighborhood, and knowing each other beforehand carried significant weight. Thus, through the determination of one of the women (who wanted to be president of the cooperative) and the votes and support of others in the Serantes neighborhood who knew her, she was elected president of these brave women entrepreneurs for two years. One of the cooperative members recounted this moment: "...I wanted to be president, I am not going to lie or deny it, but it was the girls from the neighborhood who knew me who nominated me. It was a responsibility, and they chose me because they considered me a responsible person, and that is when I said yes, because they chose me..." (former member of Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras, October 14, 2024).

Obtaining registration also required defining the other board of directors' roles. These were chosen at random, not based on the profiles of the cooperative members or on the possibility of a relationship with a potential productive project.

During this formation stage, the cooperative's name was chosen for registration with INAES and for obtaining the license. All of its former members recalled that the name Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras (Brave and Entrepreneurial Women) came about because, when they met and introduced themselves on the waterways, many of those present had been victims of gender-based violence. Likewise, many had expectations about the program and the possibility of forming a cooperative so they could get ahead with their own income.

In this context, and after a brainstorming session and exchanges, the name of the cooperative we knew as Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras was born, where each word that composed it had a specific meaning: mujeres referred to all the members of the cooperative, valientes for having survived situations of gender violence, and emprendedoras for their initiative to get ahead. Later, when they started the production project, they also developed their logo and T-shirts, and created a flag to further strengthen both the cooperative and the production project, giving it its own identity.

Most MVyE members carried out the program's activities at the Serantes neighborhood

office (where many of them lived, including its first president) and at other municipal offices. Since joining the “Ellas Hacen” program, their main activity was known as “basureo” (garbage collection), and to carry out this task, they would meet at the delegation with participants from other cooperatives, organizing themselves into teams to collect and sort waste, as well as clean the neighborhood and its surroundings. It was in this space that the Mujeres Valientes began discussing the possibility of starting a business, as well as at the home of one of the members who lived in the neighborhood, which would later become the cooperative’s headquarters and production unit. The concept of positioning allowed us to understand how each member viewed their membership in the cooperative, as well as the meaning and significance they attributed to their participation in the program, in light of the political, social, and economic axes that comprise our concept. From a social perspective, many participants enrolled in the program without a clear understanding of its content, while only a few managed to inform themselves and understand both the program’s objectives and the cooperative organizational model. This contrast reflects differences in access to information and in some interviewees’ previous trajectories, revealing a degree of heterogeneity that may have influenced group dynamics and the consolidation of commitment.

Other elements that emerged in the narrative were family and gender dynamics, which emerged as determining factors in women’s participation in the program and the project. Many expressed that their domestic responsibilities—caring for children, parents, or other family members—along with cultural limitations, such as the need to obtain “permission from their husbands” to work, became difficult barriers to overcome. These realities not only limited the time available to participate in the cooperative actively, but also created tensions within the group.

Some believe that one of the reasons the project they developed did not work out in the long run was the realities of their own households, where, for many, the lack of commitment was involuntary, as they had to be at home caring for their children or parents. They did not have the time or “their husbands’ permission” to go to work, which also caused friction within the group. Others felt that the women themselves were actually the cause of the friction, because they were all women, it was very difficult to reach an agreement. From an economic perspective, we should remember that, beyond the economic alternative offered by the umbrella of a cooperative, the Ellas Hacen program offered a transfer of income conditional on a consideration. In this sense, for the vast majority of the beneficiaries, joining a worker cooperative meant having a secure income, and only in the imagination of some of these women did it represent a concrete opportunity to enter the labor market. For many of them, joining the cooperative represented a concrete possibility that, through it and productive activity, they could guarantee an income to support their families. This income, generated by the program’s monthly stipend and the productive project, would offer them a new sense of empowerment within their family and social circles, as they would no longer have to engage in activities such as scavenging or weeding. However, it should be noted that at that time, some of them were unclear about their personal and family goals. A situation that was mentioned with notable recurrence in the stories is that, as many had never had a business venture and had never worked independently in an activity other than domestic service, they were unable to understand the time needed to make a profit. They lacked the “necessary patience” and wanted to see results and profits in the short term. This situation also generated complaints in many women’s homes and ultimately led to a lack of responsibility regarding production schedules, absences, and late arrivals.

From a political perspective, for some members, belonging to a worker cooperative was not only a form of participation in a collective organizational model but also a stance against the dynamics of exclusion and marginalization experienced by many women. In this sense, the choice of the name that would represent them was an act of resistance and reconstruction of their identities as women, as workers, and as citizens, a response to the need to claim their rights due to the situations of violence they had experienced and still suffer, but also due to the economic vulnerability they were going through. In other words, they were participating in a form of solidarity economy that was aligned with the demand for labor and social rights. However, in this same context, many did not perceive their participation as a demand (because they were not clear about the program's objectives, nor did they see it that way), but rather as a way to secure a regular income by being part of the program.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the sociogenesis and positions of the *Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras* cooperative enabled the reconstruction of the processes of territorial formation, the profiles of its members, and the institutional conditions that gave rise to this organizational experience within the framework of the *Ellas Hacen* program. It also made it possible to investigate the individual and collective perceptions members had about the roles and the cooperative as a space for work, development, and organization.

The sociogenesis accounted for how the cooperative emerged, allowing us to characterize the profile of its members (in terms of age, family situation, and educational level), the conditions of insertion prior to the program, the modalities of recruitment and registration, the mechanisms of formation of the cooperative group, and the workspaces assigned for the development of its activities. In this regard, we saw that the call for applications and registration for the program was massive, as were its mandatory training sessions, and that the only criterion for grouping and organizing the cooperatives was neighborhood proximity, without considering productive affinities or common interests, which resulted in an initial structure marked by heterogeneity. On the other hand, all the members were women over 34 years of age, with children under 18, with informal work histories linked to domestic service, and only one of them had previous experience in an independent productive activity.

The positioning was analyzed from three interrelated axes. Along the social axis, a notable coincidence was observed in the profiles of the members, who shared informal work histories in domestic service, similar educational levels, and family conditions marked by caregiving responsibilities. This relative homogeneity in their previous experiences did not prevent differences from emerging in their access to information about the program and in their degree of ownership of the cooperative model. While some understood the program's objectives and how the cooperative worked, others joined without a clear understanding of its purpose, which affected their commitment and active participation. Added to this were factors such as family and gender dynamics—caring for children, parents, or other family members—and the need to obtain “permission from husbands” to attend activities, which limited available time and generated internal tensions.

From an economic perspective, the cooperative was perceived as a source of regular income rather than a self-managed enterprise, and the lack of prior experience in independent activities undermined the project's sustainability. For most members, the monthly income offered by the program provided economic stability in highly vulnerable contexts, and in only some cases was it seen as a concrete opportunity for entry into the labor market. Obtaining

registration and starting the productive project was interpreted by many as a real possibility to support their families, improve their living conditions, and leave behind tasks such as garbage collection or weeding. This income would also offer them a new position of empowerment within the family and social nucleus. However, many cooperative members did not understand the time required to build a productive enterprise, and the expectation of immediate results generated frustration, complaints in the domestic sphere, and difficulties maintaining responsibility for working hours, which affected work planning and the sustainability of the enterprise's income.

From a political perspective, the cooperative was initially perceived as a space for organization and the assertion of rights for some of its members. This is demonstrated by the choice of name, which arose from shared stories of gender-based violence and the desire to overcome it, constituting a symbolic act of identity construction. However, not all members fully embraced this meaning, and different positions coexisted, some more conscious and politicized, others more instrumental or pragmatic. The experience of *Mujeres Valientes y Emprendedoras* highlights the structural challenges faced by some cooperatives, induced by social policies in contexts of vulnerability, especially regarding the construction of autonomy, collective identity, and organizational sustainability. The coexistence of diverse positions between the political, the pragmatic, and the symbolic reveals the complexity of these processes and the need for policies that recognize this plurality.

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