

The Social and Solidary Economy and the Objectives of Sustainable Development

La Economía Social y Solidaria y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible

Yamira Mirabal González

Centro de Estudios de Dirección, Desarrollo Local, Turismo y Cooperativismo (CE-GESTA). Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales. Universidad de Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Pinar del Río. Cuba. Email: yamira@upr.edu.cu



The social inequalities aggravated under the process of neoliberal globalization have led to profound transformations in the political, economic, social and cultural order that in its beginnings, laid the foundations of the philosophy of cooperation and contributed to the emergence of the first manifestations of cooperativism, focused on achieving a better distribution of income that would strengthen the quality of workers life. On this basis, different models are configured in which the principles of justice and equity prevail, which aim to contribute to the improvement of its members quality life, and which have been called and defined indistinctly as Social Economy, Solidarity Economy, Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), Popular Economy, Economy of Good Living or Third Sector Economy, attending to different theoretical positions and social contexts.

The SSE sector has managed to deal better than other sectors with the economic crisis, this plays a fundamental role in social transformation, as it differs from the conventional model of economic activity, placing people, their needs, capabilities and work in the center of the

economic system, its purpose being oriented towards social benefit and improvement of the quality of life and development of people.

In the course of time and as a response to the social crises that have arisen in the historical evolution of humanity, the SSE has been responding to different theoretical definitions. Within these, it is worth mentioning those that define it as:

1. The interrelation of enterprises and associative participative organizations, dedicated to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services without profit aims and in a solidary way (Labrador Machín, Alfonso Alemán, & Rivera Rodríguez, 2017).
2. The set of social mechanisms promoted by civil society that adopt contractual forms to try to resolve the gaps between unsatisfied aspirations and needs, on the one hand, and the institutionalized economic rules that prevail in one society, on the

other. They promote the following principles: democracy, collective property and heritage, solidarity, autonomy, citizenship (Roitman, 2016).

3. The set of resources and activities and institutions and organizations that operate according to principles of solidarity, cooperation and legitimate authority, the approval and disposition of resources, in the realization of activities of production, distribution, circulation, financing and dignified and responsible consumption, whose meaning is not profit without limits but the resolution of the needs of workers, their families and communities, and the environment, to achieve a more just, inclusive and egalitarian society (Law for the Promotion of the Social and Solidary Economy, 2012).

The SSE promotes values and principles that focus on the needs of people and their community. In the spirit of voluntary participation, self-help and independence, and through the media of companies and organizations, it seeks to balance economic success with fairness and social justice from the local to the global level (ILO, 2010).

A wide variety of organizational forms make up the SSE sector, these share common values, characteristics and objectives, combining sustainable economic activities with a positive social impact; and vary in correspondence with different currents of thought, however, there was a period in which there was greater consensus in this sense despite different theoretical conceptions.

According to the most dissimilar criteria within the actors that make up the SSE are found: worker cooperatives, labour enterprises, foundations, mutuals, insertion enterprises, associations, special employment centers, business groups, non-financial companies, agrarian transformation companies, fishermen's guilds, non-financial mercantile companies, community enterprises, companies recovered by workers, family microenterprises, barter spaces, popular fairs, fair trade or solidarity networks, joint buying spaces, microcredit and social banking, institutions that promote business incubation, territorial cultural spaces, trade unions of employed or unemployed workers and associative, business, economic and financial initiatives committed to the principles of: the primacy of people over capital, equality in relations, stable employment, respect for the environment, cooperation within and outside the organization, non-profit character, commitment to society and the environment, continuous training and development of creativity, democratic management and improvement of the quality life.

It is valid to specify, in relation to individual entrepreneurs, that they will be considered actors of the Social and Solidary Economy insofar as part of their activity is carried out in an associated way (whether in production, marketing, financing and/or consumption) (Roitman, 2016).

The theoretical study on the Social and Solidary Economy makes it possible to determine the particularities of the sector:

- The primacy of people and work over capital
- Autonomous and democratic management
- The adoption of associative forms (whether or not legally formalized)
- Voluntary and open membership

- Non-profit character
- The conjunction of the interests of members, users and/or the general interest

In this sense, the International Labor Organization in search of broadening the characteristics of the definition of Social and Solidarity Economy proposes the following as defining criteria (ILO, 2010):

- The social and solidarity economy is people-centered
- Their organizations are hybrid, in the sense that they combine profitability, social change and social values, the first not being fundamental.
- They operate on the basis of negotiated rules and guaranteed reciprocity, particularly by social control.
- Work within the framework of an economic democracy
- Include among their objectives the maintenance of social links
- They may also aim to reduce the gap between individuals and authorities (in community associations)

Different studies state that there are 2.6 million SSE organizations worldwide, to which around 1,000 million people are linked and these employ 250 million of them, highlighting the agro-industrial, insurance, financial services and trade sectors (Gallero, 2017).

The SSE organizations have the strength conferred by the harmonious combination of their economic, social and environmental objectives and their operating principles, to contribute to the policies and challenges of development, to the reduction of poverty and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDS).

This new alternative development model, which focuses on active citizenship and participatory democracy, is linked to the ODS, through the promotion of inclusive and sustainable local development based on the practice of social, institutional and technological innovations and experiences; provides innovative solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges; and is called upon to become a full agent of inclusive and just economic growth that fosters social cohesion.

This issue of the journal *Cooperativismo y Desarrollo* (COODES), in its scientific articles and experiences of good practices, as a result of the contributions made by recognized national and international authors, addresses topics related to: Ecuadorian small and medium enterprises as seen from their entrepreneurship, productivity and competitiveness; comparative analysis, business modality with a focus on Popular and Solidarity Economy, rural productive associations; Corporate Social Responsibility, reverse logistics and development of cost accounting; evaluation of compliance with Social Responsibility in livestock enterprises; Agrarian extension activities and their contribution to environmental management in the cooperative sector; closure of production chains in livestock entities; strengthening of local actors from a local productive arrangement and their contribution to the agricultural sector; measurement of local development from different Cuban experiences and the internationalization of the business system as a function of local development and the training of actors as a function of Community Social Responsibility.

The topics addressed in this issue represent experiences materialized in the Social and Solidarity Economy and also contributions from different institutions to the achievement of Sustainable Development Objectives, by reorienting their activities in order to generate

opportunities for development and welfare based on economic growth.

Fostering knowledge about the SSE and its role in the realization of the ODS, is a challenge for all actors who in one way or another are linked to these issues, convinced that a better world is possible.

REFERENCES

Gallero, A. (2017). *Guía didáctica de economía social y solidaria*. Madrid: MARES Madrid.

Ley de Promoción de la Economía Social y Solidaria. (2012). (No. 8435). Mendoza, Argentina.

Labrador Machín, O., Alfonso Alemán, J. L., & Rivera Rodríguez, C. A. (2017). Enfoques sobre la economía social y solidaria. *Cooperativismo y Desarrollo*, 5(2), 137-146.

OIT. (2010). *Economía social y solidaria: Construyendo un entendimiento común. Documento de trabajo*. Turín, Italia: CIF-OIT.

Roitman, R. D. (2016). *¿De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de economía social?* Mendoza, Argentina: Marcos Mattar.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License
Copyright (c) Yamira Mirabal González