

Original article



Solidarity economy: context of its institutionalization and development in Latin America, Colombia and Boyacá

Economía solidaria: contexto acerca de su institucionalización y desarrollo en América Latina, Colombia y Boyacá

Economia solidária: contexto de sua institucionalização e desenvolvimento na América Latina, Colômbia e Boyacá

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ABSTRACT

The solidarity economy in Colombia is still an emerging concept in social studies, there are opportunities to study the economic and social relations of organizations that operate under this logic; therefore, a research project was proposed to address these aspects. In this document, the results of the first research objective of this project are presented; it is expected to contextualize the concept of solidarity economy, as well as the advances in its institutionalization in Latin America, Colombia and its development in the department of Boyacá. This, through a qualitative methodology, based on the documentary analysis method, with a systematic technique. Among the main results, it is found that this current studied has had a development in the region and in Colombia mainly from the agricultural sector, with characteristics of cooperation and social roots predominantly in peasants

and indigenous groups, collectively organized in rural areas. In Boyacá, studies have been carried out on administrative aspects of the organizations, the socioeconomic impact they generate, and the determination of the most representative economic sectors, as well as the benefits generated by solidarity dynamics in the productivity of the organizations.

Keywords: solidarity economy; Colombia; Boyacá; Latin America.

RESUMEN

La economía solidaria en Colombia aún sigue siendo un concepto emergente en los estudios sociales, existen oportunidades de estudio frente a las relaciones económicas y sociales de las organizaciones que funcionan bajo esta lógica; por esto, se planteó un proyecto de investigación que permitirá abordar esos aspectos. En este documento, se presentan los resultados del primer objetivo de investigación de dicho proyecto, se espera lograr contextualizar el concepto de economía solidaria, así como los avances en su institucionalización en América Latina, Colombia y su desarrollo en el departamento de Boyacá. Esto, a través de una metodología cualitativa, basada en el método de análisis documental, con una técnica sistemática. Entre los principales resultados se encuentra que esta corriente estudiada ha tenido un desarrollo en la región y en Colombia principalmente desde el sector agrícola, con características de cooperación y raíces sociales predominantes en campesinos y grupos indígenas, organizados colectivamente en áreas rurales. En Boyacá se han adelantado estudios en aspectos administrativos de las organizaciones, el impacto socioeconómico que generan, y determinación de sectores económicos más representativos, al igual de los beneficios que generan las dinámicas solidarias en la productividad de las organizaciones.

Palabras clave: economía solidaria; Colombia; Boyacá; América Latina.

RESUMO

A economia solidária na Colômbia ainda é um conceito emergente nos estudos sociais, há oportunidades para estudar as relações econômicas e sociais das organizações que operam sob essa lógica; por essa razão, foi proposto um projeto de pesquisa para abordar esses aspectos. Este documento apresenta os resultados do primeiro objetivo de pesquisa do projeto, que visa contextualizar o conceito de economia solidária, bem como os avanços em sua institucionalização na

América Latina, na Colômbia e seu desenvolvimento no departamento de Boyacá. Isso, por meio de uma metodologia qualitativa, baseada no método de análise documental, com uma técnica sistemática. Entre os principais resultados está o fato de que essa corrente se desenvolveu na região e na Colômbia principalmente a partir do setor agrícola, com características cooperativas e raízes sociais predominantemente em camponeses e grupos indígenas, organizados coletivamente em áreas rurais. Em Boyacá, foram realizados estudos sobre os aspectos administrativos das organizações, o impacto socioeconômico que geram e a determinação dos setores econômicos mais representativos, bem como os benefícios que a dinâmica solidária gera na produtividade das organizações.

Palavras-chave: economia solidária; Colômbia; Boyacá; América Latina.

INTRODUCTION

The solidarity economy is a concept that belongs to the field of organizational studies. Only at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, several hemispheres of the world have begun to deepen the importance of solidarity economy in the face of challenges such as poverty, unemployment and the distribution of wealth. In Latin America, solidarity has been linked from indigenous and peasant practices with the exchange and production relations that are part of any economic system. In the case of Colombia, the solidarity economy has begun to be involved as a strategy of attention from the government to business organizations that respond to concepts such as collaboration, cooperation, joint work, self-management, among others. In the department of Boyacá, the opportunity is wide because in the literature review there is a vast scenario to be discovered and that has not been documented, the findings found describe the advances that have been made to understand the solidarity economy from the daily practices carried out by farmers and workers of any economic sector and that are framed in solidarity. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the relationship between the solidarity economy and its institutionalization in Latin America, Colombia and underdevelopment in the department of Boyacá, leading to the following question that guides this document: what is the context of the institutionalization of the solidarity economy in Latin America, Colombia and what evidence exists of its development in the department of Boyacá?

In several theoretical postulates, the concept of solidarity economy is mentioned, together with that of social economy. These respond to a change of ideas and paradigms coming from the predominant world economic system (capitalist), in which notions such as free market, competition, supply, demand and consumption, among others, are mentioned. Thus, the social and solidarity economy is considered as a response to inequality, framed on several fronts, but mainly in one of the channels of social integration "work" (Coraggio, 2020)

Focusing on the term solidarity economy, Tapia Toral and Alvarado Espinoza (2019, citing Arcos et al. (2011), mention that this brings together associative entrepreneurial initiatives of production, transformation, marketing and services of groups of people who have come together in order to improve their quality of life and that of the surrounding community, which allows creating territorial development and improvement of community work. On the other hand, the solidarity economy is established as a non-profit entity, with an institutional structure, of private character and with voluntary participation, thus introducing higher levels of solidarity through organizations and institutions, in order to search for and obtain a social or cultural benefit. For this reason, the incursion of new cooperation increases these national indicators, resulting in greater development at three levels: economic, sustainable and human (Mirabal González, 2019).

For Ferrarini et al. (2018), solidarity economy practices come from the 1980s and then proliferate in the 1990s. This is reflected in the emergence and genesis of various associations linked to family farming and community projects, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and others on popular education projects. At the same time, in the development of this type of exchange relationship, it is possible to identify forms of community organization from urban peripheries, with special emphasis on the promotion of projects for access to credit, or income generation through the implementation of productive activities and the provision of services. Therefore, the general objective guiding this work is to describe the context of the institutionalization of the solidarity economy in Latin America, with emphasis on the context of Colombia and the department of Boyacá. In order to achieve this objective, three specific objectives are proposed:

1. Describe the context of the solidarity economy as it moves towards institutionalization in Latin America
2. Describe the applicability of the solidarity economy in Colombia
3. Describe the development of the solidarity economy in the department of Boyacá

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The structure to develop this research article is based on the literature review methodology proposed by Kitchenham, who specifies that the systematic review is a way of evaluating and interpreting what is written, available on a subject, thus identifying relevant elements on the topic of study, seeking to provide answers to a particular research question. According to Kitchenham (2004), the methodology consists of three stages: initially, there is the planning of the review, in which the search equations are selected, setting out the objective of the research and the delimitation of the sources of information; then, the second stage of development of the review consists of the analysis of the selected articles, which must integrate inclusion and exclusion criteria; in this stage, in-depth reading is fundamental; finally, stage three structures the results obtained from the information derived from the previous stages (Figure 1).

Thus, the *Web of Science* database was used, with the following search equations: Solidarity economy, Social and solidarity economy, Solidarity economy in Latin America, Solidarity economy in Colombia and Solidarity economy in Boyacá; the exclusion criteria were based on the fact that the search equations would be reflected in the title of the articles and the temporal segmentation was from 2018 to 2024.

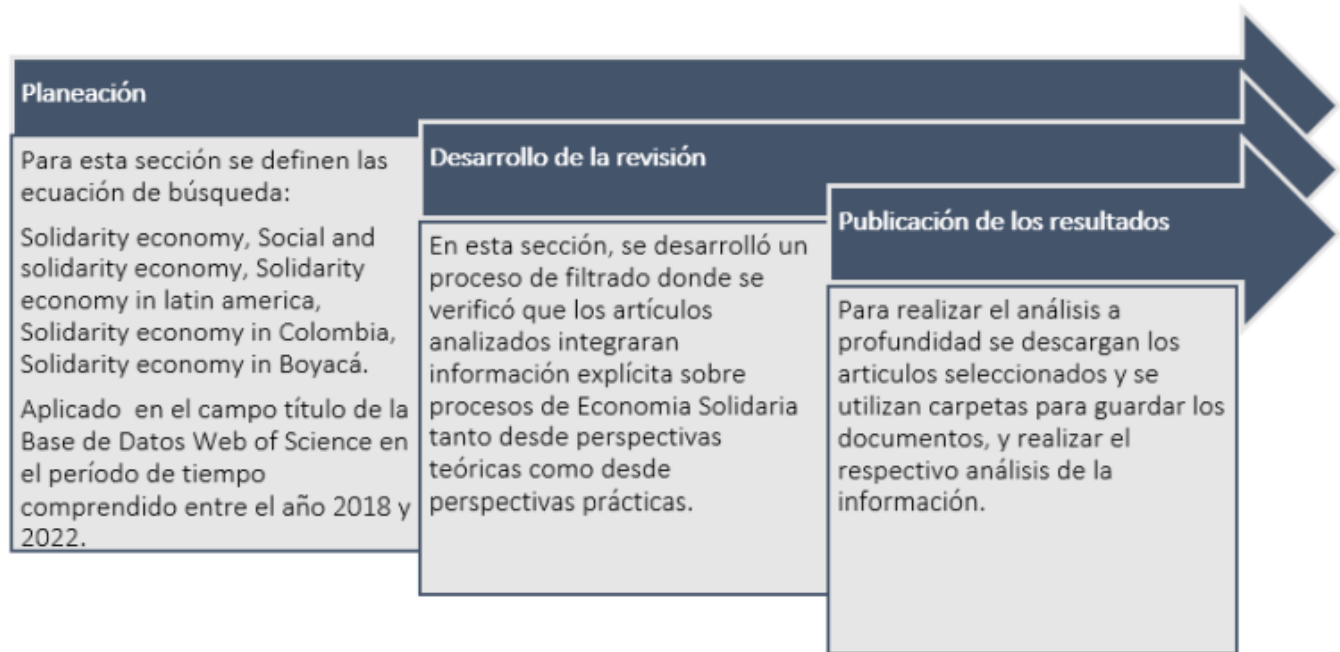


Figure 1. Methodological structure of the literature review based on Kitchenham's proposal
Source: Own elaboration

The sequential literature review process allowed a search and organization of the information consulted for its writing, based on theoretical contributions, case studies, as well as current regulations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In a globalized and constantly changing world, where capitalist and neoliberal ideas predominate, it has been found that a variety of sectors of the economy have been left behind, unable to compete fairly with large companies, since they do not advance at the accelerated pace of the global economy, therefore various expressions of the Latin American solidarity economy emerge as emerging alternatives and non-traditional organization. Around the world and in many Latin American countries, there is the modality of alternative forms of economic organization, in order to improve the development of their communities, the solidarity economy is a phenomenon with social roots. Thus Veltmeyer (2018) exposes that much of Latin America uses this type of strategies predominantly in peasants and indigenous groups, organized collectively in rural areas and forging social economies that reflect a commitment to a variety of models.

In Latin America, due to the characteristics of the region and the latent needs of the various countries, it is imperative to create alternative proposals for the economic strengthening of the region; these may be of the type, solidarity economy projects, but it should be noted that there are various types of solidarity economy, with different manifestations of their practices. Thus, comparing various practices achieved, it is possible to highlight their main coincidences and differences from the various spheres and dimensions (Ferrarini et al., 2018).

The beginnings of the solidarity economy in Latin America originate in the first half of the 19th century in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela, where a new business model arises in which the generation of wealth is sought for all those involved in the activity, that is, equity emphasizing the common welfare. Thus, in other countries this model is being developed through cooperative enterprises (Cartagena de Leiva, 2020, citing ILO, 2012).

Therefore, legislative frameworks of reference have been presented in certain countries with significant experience on the subject, allowing them to make use of a legal instrument for the operation and institutionalization, support and investment in the social and solidarity economy

system (SSE), which encourages greater development and growth of the economic sector. Thus, the regulations in the following countries can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Regulatory frameworks of the SSE model in Latin America

Country	Legislation	Target
Honduras	Law on the Social Sector of the Economy (1985)	It defines the social economy as a set of enterprises and workers, who opt for social ownership of production and establish an economic utility, solely for the purpose of improving the lives of the members.
Colombia	Solidarity Economy Law No. 454 (1998)	The principles and characteristics of the social and solidarity economy are established, as well as the types of legal entities that can be classified for this type of model.
Mexico	General Law of Cooperative Societies (1994)	To regulate the incorporation and operation of cooperatives in the country.
	General Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (2007) (2011)	It is based on the rules of organization, promotion and strengthening, with the objective of contributing to social and economic development, where benefits are generated in aspects such as employment, democracy and equity in income distribution.
Ecuador	Law of the Popular and Solidarity Economy of Ecuador (2011)	It establishes a legal framework for cooperative members, associations and the community. It also strengthens the sector for an increase in employment and income based on the principles of the SSE system.
Venezuela	Law for the Promotion and Development of the Popular Economy Decree Number 6130 (2008)	Its objective is to strengthen, promote and protect social entities.
Bolivia	Constitution of the Republic Art. 311	It promotes the development of solidarity corporations, which are identified through solidarity principles, characteristics and practices. Likewise, it establishes an essential component for these entities, self-management.

Argentina	Social and Solidarity Economy Law Mendoza Providencia (2012)	It determines the entities that belong to the social and solidarity economy model, where it dictates the principles, which must be the basis of these associations: solidarity, cooperation, legitimate authority, appropriation, resource provision, etc.
	National Law 26.117 on the Promotion of Microcredit	Promote access to credit for vulnerable sectors and strengthen the social economy.
Brasil	Law 9.867/1999	Regulation of social cooperatives and their inclusion in the productive system.
Paraguay	Cooperative Law 438/94	To regulate the incorporation, operation and supervision of cooperatives.
Uruguay	Law 18.407 of 2008	Regulatory framework for the promotion and regulation of the social and cooperative economy.

Source: Cartagena de Leiva (2020, citing Garcia et al., (2020, pp. 19-20), Guerra (2012) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024)

Describing the different regulations applied by Latin American countries, it can be highlighted that the social and solidarity economy is based on a substantive economy in which there is a social construction based on industrialized procedures, with an ethical purpose, which offers conditions for human sustenance. From this concept, Casse (2020) in his analysis of the work "Beyond Survival" by Loritz and Muñoz (2019), establish the principles of SSE through the integration of indigenous and peasant communities where a struggle for production and reproduction conditions is presented, being a form of identity that is realized in a fair nature. In this way, experiences of countries are presented to carry out a better development of this new economy, as is the case of Bolivia, where through the Constitution of 2009, ethical, theoretical and political axes of the SSE are raised, thus promoting a transformation of the economic sense, since there is an evolution towards an organization related to the human aspect and nature; on the other hand, Argentina, offers a legal transformation in public policies, offering a development of the social and solidarity economy, such as: the National Law 26.117, for the Promotion of Microcredit for the Development of the Social Economy, and Provincial Law 499 of Associative Productive Markets of the Province of Río Negro. As a result, these cases generate experience in a continent for the promotion of a social and economic

axis, since there is evidence of practices that need to be identified and regulated in order to consolidate this type of economy.

Accordingly, the experience that has been generated in the SSE in Latin America has been consolidated as a reflexive type of articulation, in which the countries with more events and advances compile the information to be published. Thus, the education through these dissemination processes presents a highly relevant aspect of the social and solidarity economy for Latin America and the Caribbean in that sense, the SSE in turn implies a contribution seen as a pedagogical instrument as mentioned below: "The SSE, as an economic and management model, plays a key role in the counter-hegemonic production of meaning. The worldview of the cooperative movement constitutes a pedagogical instrument for participatory democracy" (Stein, 2020). Thus, universities present a margin in the search for institutionalization mechanisms for spaces with public policies, which is why these entities place greater emphasis on cooperativism and solidarity, oriented towards the creation of associative strategies for the development of enterprises. For this reason, according to Berlien Araos (2020), different university academics form groups around the work with SSE, in Latin America the following stand out: the Corporación Red Colombiana de Profesionales Investigadores e Instituciones en Economía Solidaria y Social (Corporación Red unicossol) and the Red Universitaria de Economía Social y Solidaria both in Chile and Argentina (ruess Chile and ruess Argentina, respectively).

Now, in this regional scenario, Colombia has been one of the pioneers in the institutionalization of the Solidarity Economy, since in 1986 the concept of Solidarity Economy was adopted with Decree 2536 of August 4, where it is recognized as a sector of great importance in the economic environment of the country, followed by Honduras, which approved, by Decree 193/1985, the Law of the Social Sector of the Economy, there the interest in promoting the social economic sector of the economy is manifested. After the year 2000 it is highlighted its emergence in countries such as Argentina, in Bolivia for the year 2007 the idea of plural economy is raised and for the year 2016 the creation of the National Undersecretary of Solidarity Economy. After this, countries such as Honduras, Mexico and Venezuela also opened governmental spaces to encourage this type of economy that is still in the strengthening and construction of this type of economies (Battisti Telles et al., 2020).

The solidarity economy in Colombia emerged in 1961 as a movement seeking to unify associative forms of production, distribution and consumption, with the objective of promoting employment, income and livelihoods of the population. In this way, an alternative method towards economic and

social development is generated. For this reason, a historical context has been established in the country through practices, customs and experiences, where cooperation and mutual aid behaviors are presented. This is how the need to protect this type of solidarity organizations is manifested, mainly according to Law 454 of 1998, which corresponds to socioeconomic, cultural and environmental systems with social function and characterized by non-profit entities. In this way, regulatory advances have been established promoting the proper functioning of the solidarity economy (Arcos Soto & Suárez Pineda, 2018).

With respect to the term solidarity economy in Colombia, there has been an advance in theoretical reflection from two influential currents: the Latin American and the social and solidarity economy. The first, guided by a definition under construction, indicates that it is based on the conformation of non-capitalist economic entities, in search of solving problems of everyday social life and, in turn, the appropriation of solidarity values, in which the value of human beings and nature prevails over capital. On the other hand, the current of European influence bases its development on the concept of social and solidarity economy, a term that has derived debates for its theoretical construction, the social approached from the institutions created in Europe to reflect different economic alternatives and solidarity, guided by reciprocity in its practices, characterized from America and still in consolidation (Dávila Ladrón de Guevara et al., 2018).

However, these currents influence the evidence presented in Colombia, since solidarity practices are initially recognized from different organizations, mostly motivated by minority social groups (in the case of indigenous groups in their practices such as minga, convite or mano prestada). Based on this, these practices have been determined mainly in one type of organization, the "cooperatives", with which programs have been developed to strengthen their practices and, likewise, efforts to regulate them.

It could be said that, from a pluralistic point of view, the definition of solidarity economy in Colombia could be a group of entities or organizations which practice solidarity and humanist ideals, complying with legal requirements, with a form of associative capital where its form of government and operationalization is self-managed, where the democratic participation of its members prevails, sharing, in turn, responsibilities, this in favor of an integral development process that benefits the State.

A case study presented within the Colombian territory is in the article by Moscarella Brito et al. (2018), in which the solidarity economy was analyzed in 90 cooperatives in the municipality of Maicao, La Guajira. The authors, through a SWOT analysis, evaluate the advantages, opportunities, disadvantages and threats, of this group of cooperatives, resulting in increased competitiveness, however, these companies present absence of *marketing* strategies. In addition, it is presented in the sector a type of inter-company cooperation modality, showing a growing environment and with a positive trend of 52%. Therefore, through these alliances, a greater versatility and flexibility in production processes is sought, thus generating more profits and satisfying the needs of demand.

On the other hand, Velasco Burgos et al. (2020), from their study conducted with 36 solidarity economy organizations in the municipality of Abrego, Norte de Santander, found that, as a result of the study of this type of organizations, two ways of practicing solidarity economy are evident: the first, understanding this economic space as one that allows social and human development and the second, more related to the practices of a company, a system in which practices, values, imaginaries and common objectives of the participants live.

Vargas Prieto and Castañeda Guzmán (2019) find that from a look at agricultural cooperatives, specifically those dedicated to coffee exports, cooperativism is this type of solidarity organization that has the greatest representation in the Colombian national territory, representing more than 60%, followed by employee funds with 20% and mutual associations with 3%. However, it is the financial sector cooperatives that are the most influential on agricultural cooperatives. They conclude that the interaction generated within the solidarity organizations allows the development of the C factor, which is one of the most important and differentiating aspects of the organizations under the classic neoliberal model.

The concept of innovation has also been studied from the perspective of innovation management processes, in such a way that, in the Colombian solidarity sector, organizations focus their investments in science, technology and innovation activities such as specialized training. The trigger to promote these changes are the stakeholders, the top management and the projection of goal fulfillment. As benefits, it is identified that it strengthens collaborative work, but there are more barriers to improve this management, because, despite the investments made, there is still no development of competencies in the personnel, which allows the formulation of innovation projects that should give greater relevance to the type of social innovation. As a strategy, the creation of

knowledge networks is proposed to address the limitations in terms of training for the effective management of innovation (Henao Gil et al., 2020).

As a result of the post-conflict scenario, Colombia has also studied the relevance of the solidarity economy to support income generation processes for the population returning to their places of origin and displaced by the armed conflict, child care, self-management of social cohesion, among others. Doria Orozco (2018) mentions that although local development pursues an improvement in the living conditions of the inhabitants of a place through economic restructuring, this is potentiated by the values promoted by solidarity, since this focuses not on the processes of creation of the necessary goods for a society, but on the construction of balanced social relations that allow leading to the production of such goods.

On the other hand, it is evident that, at present, the implementation of practices related to the solidarity economy has become an essential component of government policies, in which an approach is identified that not only seeks to boost economic activity, but also recognizes the fundamental role of the solidarity economy in the reconstruction of social ties in communities affected by armed conflicts. Thus, the political will behind these initiatives translates into significant support for the solidarity economy as an instrument for social cohesion. The capacity of this form of economy to restructure the social fabric, especially after periods of conflict, becomes a crucial factor for sustainable development and peace building. In addition, the importance of factor C, which represents the generation of new relationships based on mutual trust, is highlighted as an essential element for the success of these practices.

Now, for the case of the department of Boyacá there is a vast scenario to be discovered and that has not been documented on the study of the solidarity economy in the face of the social and economic realities that have been experienced in recent years; based on this, the following studies were found: in the article by Arcos Soto and Suárez Pineda (2018) an investigation was conducted on power relations in 184 solidarity organizations, highlighting the productive sectors in which their base is the solidarity economy (agro-industrial, mining, artisanal, services and agricultural and livestock). From the above, the linkage of power in administrative processes is evidenced, likewise Boyacá has mostly solidarity organizations represented in associations and cooperatives, mainly in the agro-industrial sector.

On the other hand, Limas Suárez and Higuera Sandoval (2012) analyzed the socioeconomic impact of the solidarity sector in the period 2000-2009, identifying three aspects: firstly, macroeconomic variables where a contribution of 1464 jobs is evidenced and generating income equal to 2.6% of the national gross domestic product, likewise a growth as a source of employment generation by cooperatives in the department is presented as a result; secondly, at the microeconomic level, there are business initiatives in the sectors of transportation, wholesale and retail trade and financial intermediation, highlighting the development of these activities in the cities of Tunja, Sogamoso and Duitama, however, the main activities that represent greater cooperativity are agriculture, livestock, hunting, forestry, financial intermediation, wholesale and retail trade and mining exploration. Finally, in the social aspect, there is a growth trend in the number of associates of these solidarity organizations in which the needs of the community in general are satisfied, demonstrating the use of the business model of solidarity economy.

In conclusion, the solidarity economy is immersed in the economic practices of Latin American countries, it is a current under construction and an economic model different from the predominant one, which already lays its first foundations in the laws and decrees generated in Latin American countries, however, there are still opportunities in the incorporation of diversity of solidarity practices in these normative advances, where the academy, through its research efforts could contribute to the recognition of solidarity realities in the region (Andrade Restrepo, 2021).

In Colombia, on the other hand, progress has been made with the creation of Decrees and Laws in order to determine a conceptual framework, following the regional dynamics, it has been identified that cooperatives are the type of organization with more presence in the solidarity scenario of the country. Similarly, the definition of solidarity economy in Colombia does not differ from the concepts created in other countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia, since the basis of these is the existence of entities or organizations which practice solidarity and humanist ideals, with the presence of self-management and democratic participation. Evidence was found of studies that describe the opportunities for improvement for organizations that identify themselves as solidary, because despite the fact that they produce a good, the *marketing* strategies used are scarce. Another study showed the importance of the collective conscience of the collaborators of a solidarity-based company, since working under this idea highlights and contributes to collective imaginaries, objectives and values. Under this same idea, the application of factor C, characteristic of solidarity organizations in Latin America, was verified in coffee cooperatives. It is identified, in turn, that the management of

innovation in these organizations is influenced, to a great extent, by their relationship with their stakeholders.

The solidarity economy in Colombia has also had a link in recent years with social reality and the construction of new scenarios of inclusion. It can be concluded that solidarity ideas are an effective strategy that allows rebuilding social fabrics that strengthen values that, together with economic development, enhance the quality of life of the inhabitants. It is, then, a useful tool in the processes of social cohesion produced by the post-conflict phenomenon.

In the case of Boyacá, the advances have been important since they have identified power relations within the organizations, leaving opportunities to continue advancing in this aspect. Similarly, by studying the socioeconomic impact, characterizing some organizations of the solidarity sector, with an important presence of associations and cooperatives, opportunities are evident in the study of social relations within these organizations, especially in the communication practices among workers and the dissemination of ideas, as well as in the field of study of the economic relations between organizations and their stakeholders.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

David Steven Agudelo Gutiérrez and Nancy Lorena López Monroy designed the study, analyzed the data and prepared the draft.

Diana Katherine Parrado Hernández was involved in the elaboration of the study methodology and data collection.

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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