



## THEORY OF WELL LIVING AND SOLIDARY ECONOMY: A Possible Approach

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### SUMMARY

This article, entitled "THEORY OF WELL LIVING AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: A Possible Approach", aims to propose a reflection on well living and its approach to Solidarity Economy and how both seek to promote local development. The solidarity economy emerges in a historical context as a counterpoint to the massive economy known as capitalism, and the good life emerges as an opportunity to build another society based on the coexistence of human beings in diversity and harmony with nature, based on the recognition of the different cultural values that exist.

**KEYWORDS:** Solidarity Economy; Good Living; Local Development.

### ABSTRACT

This article entitled "THEORY OF GOOD LIVING AND SOLIDARY ECONOMY: A Possible Approach", aims to propose a reflection on good living and its approach to the Solidarity Economy and, as both, seek to promote local development. The solidarity economy arises in a historical context as a counterpoint to the massive economy called capitalism, and good living emerges as an opportunity to build another society based on the coexistence of human beings in diversity and harmony with nature, based on the recognition of different cultural and values existing.

**KEY WORDS:** Solidarity Economy; Good Living; Local Development

### 1. Introduction

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Since the dawn of mankind, people have always needed to organize so that together they can guarantee their survival and improvement. The practice of cooperation is something that is already ingrained in the individual. They discovered that through reciprocity they could achieve many things.

In view of the various ways in which work has developed today, which can be considered first, second or third sector jobs, the solidarity economy has emerged as a way of characterizing jobs considered informal in formal jobs.

Developed in the gaps left by the capitalist doctrine, the solidarity economy behaves in an economic scenario as an alternative for dealing with economic crises, unemployment, job insecurity and income concentration. With the increase in social exclusion due to the regulatory mechanisms of the economy and the bankruptcy of the state, the Solidarity Economy presents itself as a strategy for new ways of regulating society (FRANÇA FILHO; 2004).

Thus, the solidarity economy is a readjustment of existing economic models, taking this conception of socialism and capitalism, with the aim of achieving a balance between economic development and the social function that the economy needs to develop.

Throughout the ages, the concept of development has always been linked to improving people's well-being and quality of life. So, in practice, we seek to satisfy our needs - and this has become something sought by everyone, in practically every part of the globe, according to a European/capitalist model of society.

The promotion of the Solidarity Economy based on good living allows for the full implementation of citizen participation, social control by public management, with a view to strengthening civil society and empowering groups that have previously been disadvantaged.

marginalized, based not only on the economic premise, but also on other criteria (social, environmental and economic) that are essential for improving people's quality of life and preserving the environment, which are key aspects of local development.

## **2. The Theory of Good Living: Understanding the concept**

The limits of development, as it is seen today, have been conditioned by the stage of technology, the organization of society, intervention in the environment and the capacity of the biosphere to absorb the impacts of human activities (ALCANTARA: SAMPAIO, 2017). In this sense, the distribution and classification of the population into ranks, places and social roles results from the configuration of capitalism, culture and the production of knowledge under Western hegemony, characterized as Eurocentrism (WALSH; 2005).

For Quijano (2000, p. 549-550), this process is the result of "[...] a rationality or perspective of knowledge that has become globally hegemonic, colonializing and dominating other conceptual formations and their respective concrete knowledges".

In this sense, it is necessary to decolonialize, using a strategy that goes beyond a transformation that implies ceasing to be colonialized, but that points to a transformation, construction or creation and that seeks a transition, overcoming and emancipation through alternatives (WALSH; 2005).

For Sen (2000), social well-being and human development can only be achieved if people have the capacity to articulate and build their life projects. The human development approach has progressively incorporated sociocultural dimensions into its analysis, highlighting the importance of multicultural policies that make it possible to maintain and strengthen the identity of people and human groups, correcting historically rooted and socially entrenched injustices (UNDP, 2004).

It is in this context that the debate on the crisis of a systemic and civilizing nature suggests a reflection on the meaning of Good Living, as an alternative development proposal, when thinking about the relationship between society and nature. Good Living relates to improving people's quality of life (food, clothing and housing, for example), which is achieved through education, family relationships, work, habits and the environment (ALCÂNTARA; SAMPAIO, 2017).

The concept emerged recently and has been referred to, among other names, as: philosophy of life (Acosta, 2010), cosmology (Walsh, 2010), life attitude (Cortez, 2011), ontology (Thomson, 2011), development model (Radcliffe, 2012) and alternative to development (Gudynas, 2011), among others. According to Senplades (2009), the concept of Good Living is

[...] a commitment to change that allows the application of a new economic paradigm, whose end is not focused on the material, mechanistic and endless accumulation of goods, but instead promotes an inclusive, sustainable and democratic economic strategy. In addition, Good Living is also based on demands for equality and social justice, and on the recognition, evaluation and dialogue of peoples and their cultures, ways of knowing and ways of life (SENPLADES, 2009, p. 10).

For Gudynas (2011), this is a concept under construction and, due to its relativistic nature, it is necessary to adapt its application to each cultural and environmental context. In this sense, the Good Life can be understood as a paradigm that encompasses a common space-time, in which different ontologies can coexist, in the construction of an interculturality that points to alternatives to development.

Bem Viver gives "[...] explicit emphasis to the local-regional scale, considering it to be the most appropriate, both to express resistance against development-globalization and to concretize alternatives" (Garcia, 2012, p. 210).

In line with Garcia's idea, for Acosta (2016, p. 46), the discourse on development has consolidated a dichotomous domination of "development-underdevelopment, poor-rich, advanced-backward, civilized-wild, centre-periphery". In this way, according to the author, countries considered underdeveloped have agreed to apply policies, instruments and indicators in order to break out of the stereotype of backwardness and achieve the desired development. Often denying their historical and cultural roots in order to get out of this characterization.

In this sense, for Acosta (2016), Good Living, with its proposal of harmony with nature, reciprocity, relationality, complementarity and solidarity between individuals and communities, opens the door to formulating alternative visions of life (p. 33).

Thus, the Good Life is a proposal and an opportunity to think about another reality in which human beings form part of a whole that is more harmonious with nature and with other human beings, with alterity (De La Cuadra, 2015). At the same time, it is a paradigm to guide the policies and actions of national states, which must regulate social relations in order to reduce inequalities in society and improve the living conditions of the economically vulnerable (ALCANTARA; SAMPAIO, 2017).

In this sense, the discussion around the Good Life points to the unfeasibility of continuing to revere the current mode of production and consumption, conceived as a legitimate growth device based on the accumulation of material goods (ALCANTARA; SAMPAIO, 2017). For the Good Life, on the other hand, wealth does not consist of having and accumulating as many goods as possible, but in achieving a balance between humanity's fundamental needs and the resources available to satisfy them (ACOSTA, 2016).

### **3. Another Economy Is Happening**

Today, the solidarity economy is seen as a political agenda that uses new economic and social ideologies as an approach to generating employment and jobs.

income, according to some actors, is developing from the perspective of government action and not just civil society. "[...] an environment permeated by unemployment, precariousness, exclusion, inequality, disregard for the social struggle and neoliberal politics makes up the context of the expansion of the solidarity economy [...]" (SCHIOCHET, 2009 p. 55). (SCHIOCHET, 2009 p. 55). However, the solidarity economy is much more than a way of filling the unemployment gap. It is a way of life, an alternative to the mode of production, a popular sector alternative and a new perspective on the economic approach.

Thus, the Solidarity Economy is a socializing and democratic proposal by social movements to deal with the "social question", based on the intensification of the conflict and contradictions between the democratic achievements (constitutional universality of rights in 1988) and the growing unemployment and social exclusion resulting from the neoliberal option to overcome the crisis of capitalist accumulation (SCHIOCHET, 2009 p. 55).

Looking at the solidarity economy from a political perspective, many of the actions developed by the government from the perspective of the solidarity economy have a welfare nature, in other words, they are just government policies, a bias that is detached from its initial conception: the ideology of a new conception of life and not the ideology of a welfare nature. However, it was as a result of growing unemployment that the solidarity economy was consolidated as a specific policy, integrating an agenda present in government plans and programs, a bias that is falling apart with the current political situation.

Through a historical account, the solidarity economy can be described fundamentally from two perspectives: practices with associated economic activities and the managerial stimulus of self-management. The guiding principle of the solidarity economy is the collective management of the means of production, democratic management by the members, and collective responsibility for the organization's losses and surpluses (SCHIOCHET, 2009).

França Filho and Laville (2004) point to four basic characteristics for the Solidarity Economy: plurality of principles, institutional autonomy, democratization of decision-making processes, community-public sociability and multidimensional purpose, which point to the specificities of the management of democratic decision-making processes, mixed financing and objectives beyond the economic. Moura et al. (2004), on the other hand, draw up a model for analyzing the management of solidarity enterprises based on four dimensions: social, economic, public and technical-productive.

Another latent characteristic of the solidarity economy is that it is based on human social capital and not actually on monetary profit. According to Gaiger (2009, p. 82), "the efficiency of the solidarity economy develops through the devices of equity and self-management, taking the paths of solidarity as a constitutive element of the economy and collective life over the last two centuries".

The solidarity economy emerged in the context of the Industrial Revolution as a response to the demands of the labor reform and the social crisis it brought about. It began to flourish in Brazil in the mid-1980s and gained momentum in the following decade as a potential transformative struggle for the working class.

The emergence of this theme in Brazil is contextualized in the last decade of the 80s and 90s, based on the deepening of unemployment, with evidence to respond to the disorder generated by neoliberal practices (KRAYCHETE, 2000; CORAGGIO, 2000; GAIGER, 2000; SINGER, 2002).

According to França Filho and Laville (2004, p.15), the solidarity economy is defined as:

another economy that is emerging in different parts of the world from initiatives, mainly of a cooperative and associative nature, originating in civil society and popular circles. These initiatives take on different configurations, from those that create their own production and consumption circuit, feeding autonomous socio-productive chains and, in some cases, strongly based on non-monetized relationships, to

others that have more permanent relationships with the market and develop different types of partnerships with public authorities. The forms taken by this economy also vary according to the different regions and countries: from production and service cooperatives, through community banks, exchange clubs and service associations in Latin American countries, to social cooperatives, public interest cooperative societies, social enterprises or local exchange systems, among others, in European countries.

The Solidarity Economy differs from the capitalist economy through its basic principles: democracy, autonomy, fraternity, equality and solidarity, where the maintenance, preservation and way in which work is carried out is more important than profit. Cooperation becomes a key element in meeting the needs established by the workers themselves, which makes the Solidarity Economy a driving force behind a new way of seeing the world and social, political and economic development.

The origin of the solidarity economy in Brazil is linked to the intense struggles of organized workers against the exploitation of labour and the capitalist model of organizing individuals' social relations. In this case, people were subjected to the most inhumane forms of work, since the quest to increase capital drastically affected the structure of salaried employment.

The consequences concern, first and foremost, a weakening of the social bonds represented by the rights and identities forged through wage-earning conditions. Unemployment and underemployment, by taking on a functional aspect to the current pattern of growth, translate into a myriad of precarious and vulnerable forms of work or even survival. In this environment, insecurity and a lack of horizons mark individual behavior, while socially there is a loss of social cohesion (PINTO, 2004, p. 8).

Valadares (2005) states that religious manifestations, the act of fishing, hunting and building dwellings are indications of the cooperative movement in the struggle for survival, reported here as traces of the solidarity economy movement.



The Ecumenical Fraternity Campaign (2010) emphasizes that:

The Solidarity Economy is a social movement that fights for a change in society, for a different form of development, one that is not based on large companies or latifundia with their owners and shareholders, but rather a development for the people and built by the population based on the values of solidarity, democracy, cooperation, environmental preservation and human rights.

According to the Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy, in the early days of capitalism, wage labor took people to such a degree of exploitation that they had to join together in unions or cooperative movements that resulted in a form of defense and appropriation of wage labor rights and an alternative to achieving self-management.

Thus, the Solidarity Economy has emerged as a new alternative for income generation, inclusion and social empowerment, as an important response not only from workers but also from poor communities in relation to the transformations that have taken place in the world of work. This new production practice "favors collective work, self-management, social justice, care for the environment and responsibility for future generations" (CHAVES; PINTO, 2007, p. 61).

#### **4. Living Well Theory and ECOSOL: A possible approach**

The 'Good Life' is not restricted to this or that original people, nor is it limited to a certain period of time or space. As a concept, it is under permanent construction and seeks something beyond the traditional developmentalist concept: "an opportunity to build another society based on the coexistence of human beings in diversity and harmony with nature, based on the recognition of the different cultural values that exist in each country and in the world" (GUDYNAS and ACOSTA, 2011, p. 103).

With these arguments, Gudynas (2011, p. 18) urges us to understand the 'Good Life' as a basis for communicating different 'Good Lives', adopting different models and considering different social and environmental circumstances. This basis

It will be based on an interculturality that looks to the future to reveal alternatives to development. This basis is articulated with items that represent the 'Good Life', such as ethics, a vocation for dialog and interaction between different types of knowledge, conceptions of the multiple nature, among others.

The Solidarity Economy has been reinventing itself, other understandings have been created, other sources of inspiration motivate solidarity practices. This source of inspiration almost always comes from the desire to change and transform reality. The solidarity economy is currently "an important production space for poor communities" (BERTUCCI, 2003, PAG. 05).

When Bertucci (2003) refers to the solidarity economy as a "production space for poor communities", we understand the term "production" to go beyond commercial activities capable of generating income. We understand the term "production" as the production of another way of thinking, of positioning oneself, the construction of another subject who sees and places themselves in the world in a different way, in other words, the production of citizenship and human emancipation in these community spaces, the production of counter-hegemonic spaces of resistance.

In this way, we can see that solidarity economy practices are relevant tools for forming the critical consciousness of individuals, and become capable of developing processes that help to develop emancipation and, at the same time, help to build citizenship processes. In this way, the meaning of the solidarity economy for us goes much further than a set of tools, strategies and methodologies for overcoming the crisis generated by the capitalist production system, but involves thinking about a fairer world project, and constitutes a way of life:

The vision of the solidarity economy that we are working on here insists on the idea of the economy as a means to serve other ends: social, political, cultural, environmental, etc., and not as an end in itself. [...] It is, of course, about promoting a politics of everyday life in neighborhoods and communities, which encourages citizens to act (FRANÇA FILHO, 2007, p. 162).

Along the same lines, we understand the solidarity economy not only from an economic point of view, but also from a political and ideological point of view. It is a new concept for changing society, as stated above (SINGER, 2012).

One of the challenges of the solidarity economy, in this sense, is to promote a structural change in society in order to combat the clientelism, compensatory and welfare policies that are already somewhat entrenched, especially in rural communities. One of the ways to break down social problems is for people to become aware of them and build citizenship processes:

[...] citizenship is the human competence to become a subject, to make one's own collectively organized history. For the process of forming this competence, certain components are crucial, such as education, political organization, cultural identity, information and communication, with the emancipatory process standing out above all. This is based, from the outset, on critical capacity in order to intervene in reality in an alternative way" (DEMO, 1995, p. 01).

Thus, in the words of the aforementioned author, thinking about the meaning of citizenship means thinking about how each individual positions themselves and places themselves in relation to the social issues that arise in their daily lives. From the moment the subject leaves his or her passive condition and begins to assume the condition of an active subject, the protagonist of his or her own history, this subject becomes free from ties and oppression, becoming the author and co-author of social transformation. Of course, the construction of critical consciousness doesn't happen instantly.

In this context, citizenship is also linked to freedom and political participation, and this is possible when people are aware of their rights, understand social structures and start to question them. It is through understanding and experiencing citizenship that it becomes possible to recreate a sense of collectivity and collective processes, which is one of the guiding elements of solidarity economy practices (DALLARI, 1998).

In this sense, one of the principles that underpins the Solidarity Economy is the principle of solidarity. The meaning of the principle of solidarity presupposes a harmonious experience between individuals, which is essential for any model of solidarity economy to move forward. Solidarity is therefore:

[...] It is the idea of mutual help, of joining forces, that permeates all cooperative relationships [...] solidarity implies the possibility of perceiving the other, in the ethical sense of being responsible for them, and thus overcoming the individualistic view of being. Cooperativism can only develop positively based on the value of solidarity. [...] cooperative practice helps to train the individual in democratic living, and it would not be incorrect to say that cooperative living also stimulates the development of a sense of solidarity among cooperative members. The basic idea of cooperation is to act together, to cooperate. (ROSSI, 2011, p. 141)

The author uses the example of cooperative practice to understand solidarity, mutual, equal and fair aid. Solidarity, in the context of the solidarity economy, cannot be confused with pity, alms or charity. Solidarity in this dimension goes much further. Solidarity needs to be emancipatory. "To emancipate", etymologically, means "to take one's hands off". It is not enough to 'suffer with', you have to 'be with', to share" (GADOTTI, 2009, p. 47).

Solidarity, in this sense, is the bond that unites the different subjects in order to build new ways of overcoming the social, economic and cultural problems of the territory in which they live and relate. It is also expressed in the relationships established with the environment, expressing a commitment to a healthy environment and local sustainability; in the relationships established with the local community; in active participation in sustainable development processes on a territorial, regional and national basis; in relationships with other social and popular movements of an emancipatory nature; in concern for the welfare of workers and consumers and respect for the rights of workers (CARTILHA DE FUNDOS ROTATIVOS SOLIDÁRIOS; 2012).

From this perspective, we can say that the solidarity economy comes close to this epistemological current of the good life by seeking to construct a

model of economic, social and sustainable development, the solidarity economy has always sought to organize itself, produce goods and services in a self-managed way. In addition to seeking democratic and popular management, equitable distribution of collectively produced wealth, sustainable local development with a view to global development, valuing the human person, decent work and income generation, culture, and establishing equal relations between unequal people.

## **5. Initial considerations**

As previously stated, the Solidarity Economy is based on rearranging the current economy to help promote local development through cooperation and the circulation of the local economy. By promoting the local economy, the aim is to strengthen the community involved in the development process, as local enterprises are strengthened.

Local development can be characterized as an endogenous process caused by small units in territories and human groups that are capable of articulating economic, social and environmental dynamism and well-being, promoting an improvement in the quality of life.

Thus, one of the challenges facing the solidarity economy in terms of local development is to engage in a change in society's structural posture, in order to combat the practices of welfare and clientelism. Such practices create barriers to the emancipatory process and do not encourage community growth, but rather cause great subordination and control of the community by the state and private companies, a factor that hinders true local development.

From this perspective, in order to really promote local development, the community itself must adopt practices of self-management, solidarity and otherness, which will enable their emancipation, autonomy and the reinsertion of these groups that have been marginalized by society.

In this context, the values proposed by the solidarity economy movement are aligned with the proposal for sustainable local development, because through these practices there is a proposal to generate income for productive collectives that reflect on a change in ethics, thinking, improving the environment through the good use of natural resources, but which also achieve high productivity while preserving environmental and social values that reflect on the economic, social and agro-ecological sustainability of the communities involved in this cause (SOUZA; BORBA; MENEZES, 2021).

In seeking to bring together the good life and the solidarity economy, it was possible to identify that the challenges are still diverse, and that we must be concerned with the integration of traditional peoples and their ancestral knowledge and practices, raising awareness among future generations of the need to keep these local values strong, as well as developing them with a view to a promising and healthy future for the continuity of culture and locality, among other knowledge and the empowerment of belonging to spaces such as these territories.

Good Living, like the solidarity economy, goes much further than generating work and income and sustainable local development in its three main pillars. Both are a proposal to change habits, to build a new morality that opposes the morals and ethics linked to current powers and political parties, and represent the construction of a rich and sustainable place to live better.

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