

Social solidarity economy in a decolonial sense? Approaches from the Brazilian case

Sibelle Cornélio Diniz · Bruno Siqueira Fernandes · Roberto Luís de Melo Monte-Mór

Received: 1 September 2020 / Accepted: 9 September 2020 / Published online: 2 December 2020
© Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, ein Teil von Springer Nature 2020

Abstract The many-sided contemporary crisis—political, ecological, industrial, neoliberal—has been reviving debates on other ways of conceiving the economy and human organization, questioning the supposed homogeneity of the capitalist mode of production. In the capitalist periphery of the Global South, the current debate has its cultural and political–ideological roots in the modernity–coloniality binomial, as well as in the recognition of the persistence and strengthening of “other economies” based on different modes of economic integration. In this article, we argue that the capitalist and colonial relations established in the Global South impose specific characteristics for the other economies in their peripheral spaces, in particular for social and solidarity economy practices. Thus, we propose a view of the Global South that recognizes its economic systems as marked by economic differences and also constituted by antagonisms and disputes.

Keywords Capitalism · Coloniality · Other economies · Social and solidarity economy · Brazil

S. C. Diniz (✉) · R. L. de Melo Monte-Mór
Cedeplar – Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil
E-Mail: sibelled@cedeplar.ufmg.br

B. S. Fernandes
Instituto de Geociências, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil

Soziale solidarische Ökonomie in dekolonialer Hinsicht? Annäherung über den Fall Brasiliens

Zusammenfassung Die gegenwärtige, vielfältige Krise (politisch, ökologisch, industriell, neoliberal) belebt Debatten darüber, wie Wirtschaft und menschliches Zusammenleben anders gedacht werden können – und stellt somit die vermeintliche Homogenität der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise infrage. In der kapitalistischen Peripherie des Globalen Südens hat diese aktuelle Debatte ihre kulturellen und politisch-ideologischen Wurzeln sowohl in der Dualität *Moderne – Kolonialismus* als auch in der Anerkennung, dem Fortbestehen und der Stärkung alternativer Ökonomien, welche auf unterschiedlichen Formen des wirtschaftlichen Zusammenschlusses und der Verflechtung basieren. In diesem Artikel wird argumentiert, dass die kapitalistischen und kolonialen Beziehungen im Globalen Süden dortigen peripheren Räumen spezifische Bedingungen für alternative Ökonomien auferlegen – insbesondere für soziale und solidarische ökonomische Praktiken. Daher schlagen wir eine Sicht des Globalen Südens vor, die anerkennt, dass dessen Wirtschaftssysteme durch extreme Ungleichheiten gekennzeichnet und wesentlich durch Antagonismen und Konflikte konstituiert sind.

Schlüsselwörter Kapitalismus · Kolonialismus · Alternative Ökonomie · Soziale und solidarische Ökonomie · Brasilien

1 Introduction

Capitalism has been the hegemonic mode of production in the Western world for at least 300 years. From its nascent mercantile form to its industrial form, capitalist hegemony expanded rapidly and strongly throughout the world (Braudel 1982, 1985). In European peripheries and, particularly, in the southern hemisphere, through colonialism and imperialism, capitalism imposed itself over other local modes of production to exploit human labor and natural resources, subordinating populations and territories to its peculiar relations of production.

The countless crises of capitalism have implied transformations in its functioning and in the articulations between markets and other modes of economic integration, without, however, affecting its hegemonic control over the peripheral populations and territories. Despite this, these other modes of social and economic organization persisted, creating resilience and real alternatives, especially for vulnerable and poor workers.

In this sense, other economies, from peasant and indigenous to less traditional forms of market and exchange, continued to organize peripheral systems, either more or less invisible or more or less integrated into the capital's command centers. Unlike the hegemonic narrative, these economic and social practices, widely recurrent in the territories of the Global South, present heterogeneity as a social fact of the periphery. In moments of economic crisis, they appear with greater force, expressing their internal logic and allowing large sectors of the population to survive in a weaker articulation with capitalist logic. The so-called informal economies have always

been present in an expressive way in the peripheries of capitalism, having gained importance since the crisis of industrial capitalism in the second half of the last century.

The many-sided contemporary crisis—political, ecological, industrial, neoliberal—has been reviving debates that originated in several past crisis moments. Debates on other ways of conceiving the economy and human organization, questioning the supposed homogeneity of the capitalist mode of production, resurged. In the capitalist periphery of the Global South, where this mode of production was implanted in more degrading and exploitative ways, the debate takes on specific shapes, leading to the search for its cultural and political-ideological roots in the binomial modernity–coloniality, as well as in the recognition of these other economies, now called alternatives, that persisted and eventually strengthened in the face of the current societal (economic–ecological) crisis.

In this article, we argue that the capitalist and colonial relations established in the Global South impose specific characteristics for the other economies in their peripheral spaces, in particular for their social and solidarity economy practices. Thus, we propose a view of the Global South that recognizes its economic systems as plural, marked by economic and social difference, but also constituted by antagonisms and disputes.

The article is organized into three sections, in addition to this introduction and conclusions. In the second section, we present coloniality as a structuring part of the capitalist economic formation in the Global South, both by the imposition of exploratory economic relations and by the legitimation of certain forms of hierarchy and domination (knowledge, body, labor, etc.). In the third section, we discuss how contemporary urbanization processes, or extensive urbanization, in the capitalist periphery are accompanied by the permanence of some modes of social and economic integration centered on the principles of reciprocity and domesticity, making room for the strengthening of urban utopias and alternative economies in the capitalist periphery. The last section emphasizes the social and solidarity economy in Latin America and Brazil, highlighting its roots in the popular economy and its articulation around the two conceptions of plural economy and economic difference.

2 Coloniality, capitalism, and difference

2.1 Coloniality and the colonial matrix of power

According to Aníbal Quijano (2005), coloniality is a systemic element of domination of the North over the Global South that exceeds the temporal definition of colonialization and that defines a new pattern of power and domination. Under this form of territorial organization, the idea of race is constituted as the main instrument of domination that allowed the establishment of a hierarchy and naturalized the supposed “differences between conquerors and conquered,” using biological pseudoarguments to defend the superiority of Europeans over other “races” found in conquest expeditions (Quijano 2005, p. 117). In addition to this racial categorization, conquerors also imputed new forms of social hierarchy in order to exercise their power over

these territories, including the ideas of gender, sexual orientation, class, and Judeo-Christian normativity, among many others.

The notion of coloniality allows a broader interpretation of the colonization process, in addition to the recognition of military and economic domination, as part of a movement that aims to comprehend and transform the colonized subjectivity. Coloniality is directed toward the colonized bodies with “the objective of radically modifying their traditional ways of knowing the world and themselves and, thus, leading the colonized to adopt the colonizer’s own cognitive universe” (Castro-Gómez 2005; quoted in Cruz 2017, p. 02).

All the organizational elements of this relationship between metropolis and colony are articulated in what A. Quijano (2007) called the Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP). This matrix refers to the emergence of a structure of administration, domination, and control in the colonies, and also to its permanence as an organizer of the subjectivity of individuals in the Global South today. The Colonial Matrix of Power dominates and subordinates the bodies of Latin American subjects around the (re)production of a pattern of power oriented to extract resources from the south to the north. In short, it means that to the capital–labor domination relationship are added other relations of domination that intensify the degree of exploitation and subordination of peripheral individuals in the created hierarchy—that is, the superposition of explorations, such as the racial, gender, and heteronormative relations that are added to class relations.

The link between coloniality and modernity, therefore, is built on the understanding that European modernity (with the Enlightenment, scientific advances, the Industrial Revolution, etc.) was possible only after the introduction of a continuous exploitation system that classifies individuals in the Global South in a hierarchy of power. The authors of decolonial studies understand that the beginning of the “capitalist/patriarchal/Christian/modern/colonial European” world system is located exactly in the year 1492, with the “discovery” of the American continent (Wallerstein 1992). This means that colonization (and coloniality) was not just a contribution that made Europe “modern,” but a fundamental and necessary condition for it—“there is no modernity without coloniality” (Mignolo 2017, p. 2).

2.2 The colonial dimension of the capitalist paradigm

The capitalist paradigm inaugurates a new episteme and a new language to deal with the great diversity of economic practices in the Global South. Santos (2002, p. 246) names indolent reason the way in which capitalist discourse actively produces the nonexistent and qualifies it as “a non-credible alternative to what exists.” This allows us to think that the invisibility of a series of economic relations, oriented beyond accumulation, comes exactly from this fabricated invisibility—“what does not exist is actually actively produced as such, that is, as a non-credible alternative to what exists” (Santos 2002, p. 246).

This process fits within the notion of coloniality insofar as it is that which guides and produces the hegemonic discourse of capitalism in the Global North. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) invites us to ask, “[W]hat is there in the South that escapes the North/South dichotomy?” (Santos 2002, p. 246)—or what precisely escapes

dichotomous forms of hierarchization? Thinking of the multiple economic experiences of the Global South, we could ask to what extent a dichotomy that favors a formal, market-oriented and scale-oriented, hegemonic economy, among others typifications, produces the invisibility and subordination of a myriad of peripheral social experiences.

B. Santos (2002) points out five ways/logics of production of this nonexistence. The first logic, the monoculture and rigor of knowledge, is associated with the appropriation of the criteria of modern science to define the general criteria of truth and aesthetic quality. The second logic, the monoculture of linear time, concerns the way in which Western culture has dealt with the question of the direction and meaning of history. The Eurocentric perspective of reason, marked by the ideas of “progress, revolution, modernization, development, growth, globalization,” promotes a distortion and a “temporal relocation of all these differences, so that everything that is not European is perceived as past” (Quijano 2005; quoted in Cruz 2017, p. 4).

The third logic, related to social classification, concerns precisely the dichotomous forms of social classification by coloniality (race/color, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.) that try to naturalize these dichotomies, masking the real attempt of establishing a hierarchy behind these classifications. The fourth logic is that of invisibility through the dominant scale. The idea of a “global level” as a reference scale not only informs certain forms of classification/domination by orthodox thought—that is, the inability of local experiences to take on global/universal proportions and compose alternative forms of production—but also informs a large part of heterodox/emancipatory thought by pointing out the impossibility of these experiences becoming total alternatives to capitalism.

Last, the fifth logic concerns the monoculture of capitalist productivity. This logic makes economic growth appear as “an unquestionable rational objective and, as such, the productivity criterion that best serves this objective is unquestionable” (Santos 2002, p. 248). All experiences come to be understood in a productive–unproductive dichotomy, with this “productivity” understood in terms of accumulation and profit. Those experiences, which are based on other forms of economic calculus, are made invisible under the denomination of low productivity or unproductivity (Santos 2002).

2.3 Capitalism, language, and economic difference

Similar to the type of hierarchy made by modernity–coloniality and its CMP, capitalism invents a binary system of classification of economic practices in capitalist or noncapitalist, which is responsible for reducing the multiplicity, plurality, and difference of these practices. This binarism informs a series of discursive qualifications that give modern capitalism an unquestionable hegemony in the face of noncapitalist experiences; these characteristics appear in a multitude of narratives about the system: “organicist social conceptions, heroic historical narratives, evolutionary scenarios of social development, and essentialist, phallogocentric and binarian ways of thinking” (Gibson-Graham 2019b, p. 33).

In this sense, capitalism is usually represented as a unified body or system (Gibson-Graham 2019b) that is ever expanding, always in progress, and directed toward

global extension and total hegemony. So, any noncapitalist idea or experience, in a capitalist cognitive and epistemic paradigm, appears fundamentally impossible. J. K. Gibson-Graham (2019a) call this process capitalocentrism: These activities are always forced to represent themselves in terms of their relationship with capitalism—in opposition, in addition, subsumed, partially subsumed, functional to the system, among others.

For the authors, it is necessary to question this paradigm, showing that the form of “representation of the economy as essentially capitalist depends on the exclusion or suppression of various types of economic activity” (Gibson-Graham 2019a, p. 3). Thus, the economic difference—that is, this set of activities, ways of doing, existing, relating, and reproducing material life—can be properly represented only through a language capable of questioning the dominance of capitalism, and here we could also add a decolonial language.

The first step is to conceptualize and characterize this radical diversity of activities and economic relations based on the coexistence of the following:

- Different types of transactions with their different commensurability calculations
- Different ways of performing and paying for labor
- Different forms of economic organization or of undertaking, with its multiple forms of production, appropriation, and distribution of profit (Gibson-Graham 2019a, p. 3)

From there, we would be able to dismantle the supposed identity of economic activities with capitalism in favor of the construction of a noncapitalist identity. J. K. Gibson-Graham (2019a) also argue that this opening to new economic identities would make it possible to see the economy no longer as a representation or materialization of capitalist sociability but as a diverse economy. In other words, the discourse and language of the hegemonic capitalist paradigm covers only economic experiences based on traditional market and wage forms. A series of other forms of organization can be unveiled using a language of economic diversity: local exchange systems, social currencies, informal markets, cooperation exchanges (alternative markets); cooperative work, self-employment, payment in kind (alternative payments); indigenous exchanges, donation, the commons (nonmarket transactions); and many others (Gibson-Graham 2019a).

To these two authors of the feminist political economy, a theory based on places and bodies would allow us to understand how the transformation of the totality is potentially ubiquitous when we expand the ontological substrate of economic activities and the different relationships that these engender. If women are everywhere, then there will always be a potential for change from them somewhere—likewise, if there are alternative economic experiences everywhere that go far beyond their relationship with capitalism, there will always be the possibility of overcoming this relationship. This conception of a feminist spatiality “embraces not only a politics of omnipresence (its global manifestation), but a politics of place” (Gibson-Graham 2019b, p. 38).

This also allows the detachment of epistemic places and the enunciation of hegemonic and Eurocentric capitalism in favor of the Global South. In opposition to the construction of a neutral and universal, total and hegemonic knowledge is the “con-

struction of other epistemologies that are linked to the groups' experiences, pains and sufferings" (Cruz 2017, p. 13). By moving away from a supposed static ontology of identities and moving toward the dynamic representation of the economy, based on essentially mobile identities and practices, we could "discover or create a world of economic difference" (Gibson-Graham 2019b, p. 35).

Thus, it is necessary to invest in the creation of a different language, a different and alternative economy, which broadens the economic discourse and deconstructs the assumptions imposed by coloniality and indolent reason. This proposal questions capitalist hegemony, Eurocentrism, and coloniality, rehabilitating the emancipatory political potential of different economic practices:

[This] practice of seeing and speaking differently encourages us to make visible the hidden and alternative economic activities that abound everywhere and to connect them through a language of economic difference. If we can begin to see non-capitalist activities as prevalent and viable, we can be encouraged here and now to actively build them to transform our local economies. (Gibson-Graham 2019b, p. 38)

3 Urbanization and alternative economies

3.1 Transformations in contemporary urbanization

Capitalism took on a definitive commercial form from that of the cities, and at the end of the nineteenth century, it became hegemonic when the industry imposed itself as a dominant productive activity. Since then, the city–industry binomial has ruled the world. The growing concentration of wealth and the control of nature and labor by capital, as well as space–time around the world, points to a deepening of societal crises, even though capitalism is constantly recreating itself. With Henri Lefebvre (1978), we learn how capitalism survives by reproducing the social relations of production and occupying and producing space (regardless of the price, the author emphasizes).

Contemporary financialized capitalism, combined with "flexible production" and the ability to generate large technological surpluses, multiplied by rapid circulation, penetrates, in its neoliberal phase, into the most diverse spheres of daily life. It no longer carries the "inclusive" proposal that characterized the industrial/Fordist phase; on the contrary, it is now exclusive, generating structural unemployment and reducing opportunities for incorporation—if not for consumption—of increasingly larger portions of the population.

The production of urbanized space thus becomes selective and "strategic," in addition to being more exclusive and subordinated to the logic of financialization, encompassing sectors and various aspects of social life and having its privileged locus in large cities. However, it is not only in cities that this production of urban space occurs, but, on the contrary, urban–industrial forms and processes extend throughout the social toward the appropriation of nature and the generation of general

conditions necessary for the production and reproduction of various capitals, in addition to the conditions of collective reproduction.¹

On the other hand, contemporary capitalism no longer seems to be interested in broadly reproducing its social relations of production, as experienced in the Fordist phase, thus opening space for other modes of economic integration² with which it articulates and recreates processes of domination. In this way, it encourages the rescue of complementary but controllable modes of integration, given the differences in income and wealth that occur at the center of capitalist accumulation, in view of its multiple and diverse peripheries. Thus, the space, time, and societal conditions for the emergence and/or strengthening of other modes of social and economic integration seem to be provided by the very needs of new hegemonic capitals, with help and approval from the state. These modes of social and economic organization, centered on domestic and community relations of reciprocity, in addition to multiple forms of redistribution and exchanges in noncapitalist markets, proliferate in places previously unthinkable in the center of the capitalist world and resurface strongly in the peripheries incompletely organized by capital.

Following H. Lefebvre (1999), today we would be watching the end of the industrial era and the beginning of the urban era, when urbanization becomes virtually planetary, placing limits and redefining the industrial, “whose meaning is no longer sufficient, even if it remains necessary” (Lefebvre 1999). The transition between the two eras occurs through the illumination of the “blind field,” when the “industrial focus” loses part of its blinding luminosity and allows us to observe other forms that grow under its area of hegemonic influence. The transition from the industrial to the urban era also means a shift from the focus of production toward collective reproduction, from accumulation to the expanded reproduction of collective life (Coraggio 1994). In the scope of the industrial era and in the interior of the blind field, the urban is reduced to the industrial, and daily life is submitted to the demands of production, companies, and capital. What would make it possible to overcome the blind field and the (former) vision of a new era?

It is about an urban praxis, this novelty from the end of the twentieth century that has been taking over the world; not just cities, but the whole social space. It is about the politicization of (life) space around the collective conditions of reproduction. With the advent of urbanization, intensified in large metropolitan regions and extended beyond cities to gain all the social space, politics (and citizenship) also extend, virtually leading to an expansion of urban praxis in every corner of the appropriate space, increasingly subjected to collective reproduction, and thus the center of these urban utopias.³

¹ A classic study by Manuel Castells (1983) defines the role of the urban in the capitalist economic system: a privileged locus of the collective means of consumption necessary for the reproduction of the labor force.

² For the concept of modes of economic integration, see Karl Polanyi (2011), and for this discussion in the context of urbanism, see David Harvey (1975).

³ See, in this regard, Henri Lefebvre (1999) and, for the Brazilian case, Monte-Mór (2006, 2015), among several others.

3.2 Urban utopias

Already recognized in the world context, contemporary processes of urbanization extend beyond the cities. This is the so-called extensive urbanization (Monte-Mór 2006) currently being investigated in various parts of the world.⁴ This concept, inspired by H. Lefebvre (1999), explains the extension of cities on their surroundings, the “urban tissue” that takes the general conditions of production (urban-industrial) throughout the territory, from the “explosion” of the industrial city. The urban tissue, or just the “urban,” is the sociospatial form/process resulting from the encounter of industry with the city. Industry subordinates the city to productive logic, destroying it as a collective work and also transforming it into a product. Exchange value imposes itself on use value, commercializing the soil and the livelihoods themselves. The city, now industrial, implodes upon itself, recreating the citadel as centrality, where collective wealth, power, and party are concentrated, while exploding on its edges and surroundings, extending in the form of urban tissue. Thus arises the “urban,” according to H. Lefebvre, which should be understood here as a third term in the dialectic (triadic) field-city (Monte-Mór 2007)—a third term that encompasses the other two, without canceling them even if it contains them.

This new reality, the urban⁵ (industrial), which extends itself throughout the territory, driven by the “abstract space” produced by industrial capitalism, gains planetary dimensions and tends to subordinate the whole social space to its logic. However, this urban that extends with the urban-industrial fabric also carries within itself the power of the polis and politics, and with it the sense of citizenship, the result of an integral inheritance or of the contagion of the city over its complementary, immediate, or distant territory.⁶

In Brazil, the general conditions of urban-industrial production extended (virtually) throughout the country from the 1970s, when international Fordism gained the capitalist periphery, supported by the state and the national capital. Military governments created institutional and economic conditions to attract foreign industrial capital, while the compulsory (and encouraged) formation of domestic savings financed national capital investments in the production of an urban-industrial space necessary for the consumption of Fordist goods, thus disseminating the general conditions of production and collective reproduction and generating extensive urbanization.

In the 1980s, “urban social movements” lost their adjective, since indigenous groups, landless workers, and “seringueiros,” among several other “rural” groups, were already politically organized on a regional and national scale. Since then, they have been called “social movements,” dispersed and integrated throughout the

⁴ See, for example, the collection organized by Neil Brenner (2017).

⁵ The emphasis on the urban as a noun refers to this new reality and not to the adjective of city (Monte-Mór 2007). The emphasis on the urban as a noun refers to this new reality, and not to the adjective of city (Monte-Mór 2007). For a discussion of the emergence of the urban in Brazil, see Monte-Mór (2006).

⁶ See Leonardo Avritzer (2008).

⁷ This set of movements includes the first initiatives of the Brazilian solidarity economy, linked to some Catholic institutions, union movements, and the movement of landless workers—“Movimento dos Sem Terra—MST” (see Singer 2002).

country.⁷ The countryside and the city have increasingly interpenetrated, making distinct categorizations difficult, while the urban has extended and requalified the social space.

The social, cultural, and political synergies that developed in the cities, in the countryside, and in the urban point to new forms of articulation and to the strengthening of new (and old, sometimes) forms of social organization, which we refer to, with K. Polanyi, as modes of economic integration. It is in the midst of these rescues and inventions that we can speak again of urban utopias. It is exactly during periods of crisis and profound transformations that utopian thought is imposed, either as an antidote or as an inspiration for new experiments. Therefore, it is about concrete utopias (Bloch 2006; Münster 1993), the construction of which, today, appears impossible but which is already virtually announced as possible. It is about utopia as experimentation (Lefebvre 1976), and its privileged space is the urban as a whole, since it is there that new forms of struggle for emancipation are built. These urban utopias, however, are inspired by the peasant utopias, today redefined by the urban-industrial and the urban-natural, toward the urban-utopia (Monte-Mór 2015). Why? Because now the space of life and everyday life dictate the meaning of the future.

3.3 Alternative economies

In this context, the economy could not fail to undergo profound changes. In the last decades, we have seen the strengthening of other economies, complementary or in dispute with the capitalist economy: Ecological economy, social economy, popular economy, and solidarity economy, among many others, have gained visibility around the world, from the Global South, where they have always been endemic, to the Global North, where they are re-invented.

Diverse and with different objectives, these “other economies” have some points in common. A central point is the emphasis on the collective reproduction of life, from the local to the planetary scale, with a focus on environmental issues, but also on social and cultural diversity. In addition to the current planetary environmental threat, the crisis of the capitalist industrial economy, in its phase of globalized financialization, aggravates its processes of disembedding the concrete reality and exacerbating the abstract space as a dominant mode of social and economic articulation, apart from and while penetrating the core of everyday life.⁸ On the contrary, these “other economies” are directly linked to the territory and the reproduction of collective life.

An additional point is the centrality of the “work fund” (Coraggio 1994); that is, they are economies centered on the work capacity of the participants, organized in different ways that can vary from extensive and community family units to associations, cooperatives, and others. In all cases, they aim at an “expanded reproduction of life” as opposed to capitalism’s own accumulation of wealth. In most cases, they imply the “disalienation” of everyday life and living space.⁹

⁸ The main references, which will not be discussed here, are K. Polanyi (2011, 2012) on the “disembodiedness” of the market economy, and Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2010) on neoliberalism.

⁹ Bertell Ollman (1977) has a wide discussion of the implications of alienation in contemporary life.

An additional point highlights the collective and collaborative sense, in opposition to the individualistic competition typical of capitalism and bourgeois culture. Radical community experiences, from Narodniks to traditional peoples, have been eagerly studied and recovered, pointing to other possible ways of living. In this diversified context, “new”/old relationships with nature are taken as central issues to be (re)explored and redefined in the search for alternative economies, or even alternatives to the economy.

In this sense, the economy seems to be returning to its roots, to the *oikonomia*, to the *nomos* of the *oikós*, to the management of the house, of the living space, moving away from pure *chrematistics* (formation of prices in the market) to inhabit everyday life. The living space, or the territory, takes on new meanings, organizing societies, strengthening identities, and guaranteeing subsistence. Thus, labor also takes on another meaning, seeking disalienation, the construction of collectivities within the diversity of modes of articulation, standing at the heart of the sociospatial organizations themselves.

4 The social and solidarity economy in Latin America: the Brazilian case

4.1 The popular economy as the basis for the social and solidarity economy

The notion of the popular economy was proposed by Latin American theorists in the second half of the twentieth century to describe a heterogeneous set of economic forms in these societies, marked by rationalities and practices different from those of the capitalist company (Razeto et al. 1983; Coraggio 1994, 2000). In this way, the popular economy appears as the set of economic activities and social practices developed by the members of the working classes, which use their own workforce and their own resources to realize their economic activities. Their productive units are oriented to work in order to reproduce themselves and their households and communities (Kraychete 2006).

Labor is the main productive factor of these units, whose internal organization involves associated production (cooperatives, associations, purchasing groups, local exchange systems), small family businesses, and individuals (self-employed, autonomous workers) in relation, or not, to the market. Its dynamics combine domestic production with market relations in a diffuse connection between use values and exchange values that do not lead to the disappearance of, or disconnection with, market relations.

For Jose-Luis Coraggio (2000), the cells of the popular economy are the domestic units that depend mainly on the exercise of their work to reproduce themselves biologically and culturally. The domestic unit, founded on kinship, affinity, ethnic relations, etc., organizes the resources and capacities of its members (their “work fund”) to manage the satisfaction of their needs, with the ultimate objective of reproducing life in the best possible conditions (extended reproduction). There, economic rationality is subordinated to the reproduction needs of domestic units,

which implies, for example, the difficulty of replacing workers and the great weight given to the labor factor in relation to capital.

As a theoretical field and a set of practices, both the popular economy and the solidarity economy deny the use of labor as a commodity or a mere factor of production. In this sense, they differ from the informal economy, which is associated, by such currents, with the exploitation of the labor force of those who do not have the means of production. But the solidarity economy is understood in Brazil in a specific way, based on collective production units—cooperatives, associations, and informal groups—that are oriented to cooperation, the common use of the means of production and self-management (Singer 2002; Gaiger 2009).¹⁰

In the 2000s, the discussion around the popular and solidarity economy in Latin America approaches the international debate on “social economy” or the “social and solidarity economy” (Coraggio 2013). While the discussion of the popular economy originates from the urban theories and from the relations between space formation and informal economies in Latin America, the debates on the social economy were originally based on the economic realities of central countries, focusing on economic activities developed outside conventional companies, in associations, cooperatives, mutual organizations, foundations, and social enterprises.

In Europe, the older, more highly institutionalized large social economy organizations are generally opposed to the emerging “new social economy” or “solidarity economy,” the latter being largely responsible for social innovations and democratic effervescence. This new “generation of the social economy” addresses issues of growing relevance, such as proximity services, the rehabilitation of poor neighborhoods, assistance to the elderly, fair trade, ethical and solidarity finances, sustainable agriculture, recycling, and professional insertion of less skilled workers (Defourny 2009). Jean-Luis Laville (2012) calls this new set of activities the “social and solidarity economy”.¹¹

While in Europe these forms were strongly driven by the cooperative and labor movement in the early nineteenth century, in Latin America the solidarity economy has its origins in different sectors of society, integrating the poorest workers and those excluded from formal labor markets, with the support of some religious institutions, workers unions associated with left-wing parties, and social movements such as the Movimento dos Sem Terra—MST (“Landless Movement”) (Singer 2002). Also different from the case in Europe, these initiatives were not strengthened by the weakening of the welfare state after the 1970s. In Brazil, the welfare state has never been fully established. On the contrary, in this country, forms of solidarity and

¹⁰ In the 2000s, the solidarity economy gained space and visibility in Brazil, with the creation, in 2003, of the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy during President Lula’s first term. For an overview of the Secretariat’s actions and their repercussions on solidarity economy initiatives in the country, see França Filho (2012), Gaiger (2012), SENAES (2012), and Singer (2012).

¹¹ Gaiger (2009) sees the recent adoption of the use of the term “social and solidarity economy” as a compromise between the old promoters of the social economy and the more recent ones, which would allow encompassing both the institutionalized and assistance-oriented social economy and citizen mobilization around a broader front of struggles. For Lisboa (2004), the recent approximation of the social economy to the solidarity economy recovers and makes explicit its political dimension as an alternative for the organization of work and society.

reciprocity have always played an important role in the reproduction of the poorest families, including meeting of the essential demands for food, housing, care, and credit.

In this sense, as França Filho (2001) points out, the Brazilian singularity of the solidarity economy resides in the strong legacy of a popular economy, that is, a set of economic practices conducted by the popular classes in which economic activities and social relations are not disconnected. This set of activities permeates the state and the market circuits in a process that reflects the incompleteness of our modernity. The networks of solidarity that exist in people's daily lives are an important substrate for broader processes linked to the social and solidarity economy.

So, a growing interest in forms of economic solidarity (both old and new) unites the peripheral and central countries today, emphasizing the importance of understanding and supporting diverse initiatives. However, the social and solidarity economy in Latin America, and of course in Brazil, cannot be expected to limit itself to occupying niches not reached by the market or by the state, or to be conducted by a group of individuals with high "social capital" who are capable of organizing proximity service schemes or autonomous and self-managing communities (Coraggio 2012). The massive lack of basic needs, the degree of unequal access to technical and scientific training, and the stigmatization of the poor by the middle and upper classes make it difficult to develop symmetrical solidarity relationships that span the entire social spectrum. Despite the progress in the institutionalization of these forms, in recent years the popular and solidarity economy in Brazil has still been characterized, in most cases, by situations of low income, low coverage of social security, and various difficulties associated with the internal management of production units.

In this sense, there is an urgent need to rethink political action around the social and solidarity economy, recognizing its bases in popular economy and coloniality and, at the same time, considering its diversity and potential in the face of current demands for the integration of workers and provision of services.

4.2 Reconnecting production and reproduction: modes of integration and solidarity rationality

Regarding the social and solidarity economy, J.-L. Laville (2009a) also speaks of a plural economy, an analytical perspective that is strongly anchored in K. Polanyi's critique of the fundamentals of the modern economy, such as the identification between economy and market, the autonomy conferred on the economic sphere in relation to the other spheres of life, the identification of the market to a self-regulated instance, and the identification of any economic association with the capitalist company. The plural economy, in contrast to the modern economy, will highlight the presence of other principles of economic behavior in societies in addition to the market, notably, redistribution, reciprocity, and domesticity (Polanyi 2011, 2012).

The understanding of the economic system as plural (Laville 2009b) and instituted (Polanyi 2012) seems to be a key conception to the proposal of regulatory mechanisms closer to the current and desired daily life. In this sense, it is necessary to have a better understanding not only of the internal mechanisms of the popular and solidarity economy but, above all, of its relations, complementarities, and subor-

dinations to the economy of the public sector and to the capitalist business economy in its regional nuances.

In this sense, J.-L. Coraggio (2012) proposes a current reading of K. Polanyi (2011, 2012) that guides the construction of a political project in the direction of an economy with a market distinct from a market economy. In this sense, markets would play a complementary role in an economic system, linked to the other principles of economic behavior, which would have their role strengthened. This reading is close to that put forth by J. K. Gibson-Graham (2019a, 2019b), since it emphasizes the need to understand the economy from the economic difference, but goes further by proposing “another economy”—a system that would combine five principles of social integration:

- a) Autarchy of the domestic unit, which produces, individually or collectively, for its own consumption or use
- b) Intracommunity and intercommunity reciprocity, based on mutual aid
- c) Progressive redistribution, with a focus on both individuals and communities
- d) Exchange (trade) in regulated markets, avoiding monopolies and labor exploitation
- e) Participatory planning, based on recognition of the organizations and networks of the social and solidarity economy and on coordination of the economic actions of the multiple agents (Coraggio 2007)

As discussed in the previous sections, the processes of extensive urbanization and the multifaceted crisis that affects us open up space for purposeful criticism and for the reshaping of our economies in the direction of collective urban life, in its emancipatory sense. The sense of a plural economy, marked by the hybridization of resources and economic principles, as well as the idea of economic difference, can provide the basis for this reconstruction. Attention to the experience and daily life of popular and solidarity practices, and to their links with the business economy and the public sector economy, is a starting point for understanding the hybridization of economic principles existing in the Brazilian economy and development possibilities revealed by such a configuration.

However, in observing these connections, one should not lose sight of the possibility of a precarious insertion of workers from the popular economy and the social and solidarity economy in the global order. As Verónica Gago (2017) demonstrates, popular economic networks in South America represent complex organizational strategies, often characterized by ambiguity, since they are marked simultaneously by solidarity and competition, by authenticity and by copy, by articulation with the local and the global, and by political articulation and subordination.

In fact, the flexibilization of labor markets, and the decentralization of production feeds a diversity of subordinate relationships, ranging from direct subcontracting to apparently autonomous activities, but which contribute to reducing labor and material costs. This set of activities, often informal and precarious, would have a role in reducing costs and weakening the union basis, assuming a universal character, since it exists both at the center and on the capitalist periphery, playing a fundamental role in the penetration of markets. The costs of precarious insertion almost always

fall on historically excluded groups, such as the inhabitants of urban peripheries, women, and Black people.

Although participation in a popular economic organization is, in most cases, the only alternative in the short term to facing the immediate need for survival, it is common for its participants to progressively identify with this solution, even starting to prefer it to others that are economically more profitable, since they learn to value self-employment, without a boss, in an environment of greater trust and solidarity, and also due to the possibilities for cultural development, training, and living with other people that are offered by these organizations (Razeto et al. 1983).

Favreau (2004) points out that the units of the popular economy (self-employed workers, small family businesses), as they develop, can become private sector companies in a traditional sense or social economy organizations. The latter option often means participation in a collective organization strategy for cooperation and the construction of local exchange systems. In this case, the relationship with social movements and support and promotion entities, such as NGOs, is of great importance. L. Tiriba (2005), in turn, emphasizes the importance of educational processes that lead to the exercise of self-management in a “pedagogy of associated production.”

5 Conclusions

Economic and social relations based on the modernity–coloniality binomial establish specific ways of seeing and classifying economic activities, which implies processes of invisibility and underestimation of “other economies.” In this sense, the decolonial framework implies unveiling the multiplicity of economic forms established in peripheral contexts and explaining their heterogeneity and power, without denying their often precarious and functional character to the capitalist mode of production.

The social and solidarity economy, in the Brazilian context, is a set of practices deeply marked by the characteristics of the popular economy and its roots in the domestic, peasant, indigenous, “quilombola” economy, among others. The popular economy, in turn, reinvents and transforms itself in times of extensive urbanization, reconnecting its practices at different scales and reshaping popular subjectivities (Gago 2017). These processes open space for purposeful criticism and for the reshaping of our economies in the direction of collective urban life, in its emancipatory sense.

The understanding of the contemporary capitalist system and its (re)configurations in the peripheries involves the construction of a decolonial view and a decolonial language, which, in turn, demands the overcoming of totalizing readings and binarisms and a deepening of the concept and the sense of economic difference. Such redirection implies a profound review of the ways of producing academic knowledge, in terms of its conceptual and methodological references.

In other words, the reading of the Brazilian economic system from the perspective of a plural and diverse economy needs to incorporate the relations of coloniality expressed in its society. In this country, coloniality is expressed daily in the practices of racial and gender discrimination, which are revealed in an economic system

marked by segregation in different spheres and scales. Recognizing the centrality of this issue, however, this article focuses its efforts in defense of the deconstruction of the coloniality of knowledge. In this sense, we propose a view of the Global South that recognizes its economic systems as marked by economic difference.

Finally, understanding the social and solidarity economy and the other economies in a decolonial sense implies considering their complexity. In actual fact, these practices are marked by antagonisms and disputes, inserted into both the struggles for political emancipation and in global economic processes marked by precariousness and subordination.

References

- Avritzer, L. (2008). Terra e cidadania no Brasil. In H. Starling, H. Rodrigues & M. Telles (Eds.), *Utopias agrárias* (pp. 150–163). Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG.
- Bloch, E. (2006). *O princípio esperança*. Rio de Janeiro: EdUERJ, Contraponto.
- Braudel, F. (1982). *The wheels of commerce, civilization and capitalism, 15th–18th century*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Braudel, F. (1985). *La dinámica del capitalismo*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Brenner, N. (Ed.). (2017). *Implosions/explosions: towards a study of planetary urbanization*. Berlin: Jovis.
- Castells, M. (1983). *A questão urbana*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Castro-Gómez, S. (2005). Ciências sociais, violência epistêmica e o problema da “invenção do outro”. In E. Lander (Ed.), *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais latino-americanas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Coraggio, J.L. (1994). *Economía urbana: la perspectiva popular*. Quito: Instituto Fronesis.
- Coraggio, J.L. (2000). Da economia dos setores populares à economia do trabalho. In G. Kraychete, et al. (Ed.), *Economia dos setores populares: entre a realidade e a utopia* (pp. 91–133). Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Coraggio, J.L. (2007). El papel de la economía social y solidaria en la estrategia de inclusión social. https://www.coraggioeconomia.org/jlc/archivos%20para%20descargar/ponencia_coraggio_diciembre_2007_rev.doc. Accessed 6 Nov 2019.
- Coraggio, J.L. (2012). La economía social y solidaria (ESS) en América Latina. In A. Guillén & M. Phélan (Eds.), *Construyendo el Buen Vivir* (pp. 236–255). Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca, PYDLOS.
- Coraggio, J.L. (2013). Las tres corrientes de pensamiento y acción dentro del campo de la economía social y solidaria. *Revista Brasileira De Estudos Urbanos E Regionais*, 15(2), 11–24.
- Cruz, V.C. (2017). Geografía e pensamento descolonial: notas sobre un diálogo necessário para a renovação do pensamento crítico. In V.C. Cruz & D.A. Oliveira (Eds.), *Geografia e giro descolonial: experiências, ideias e horizontes de renovação do pensamento crítico* (pp. 15–36). Rio de Janeiro: Letra Capital.
- Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2010). *La nouvelle raison du monde. Essai sur la société néolibérale*. Paris: Éditions La Découverte, Poche.
- Defourny, J. (2009). Economía social. In A.D. Cattani, et al. (Ed.), *Dicionário internacional da outra economia*. Coimbra: Almedina, CES.
- Favreau, L. (2004). Qu'est-ce que l'économie informelle, l'économie populaire, et l'économie sociale et solidaire? In A.S. Fall, L. Favreau & G. Larose (Eds.), *Le Sud et le Nord dans la mondialisation: quelles alternatives? Le renouvellement des modèles de développement au Nord et au Sud*. Québec: Publication Université du Québec.
- França Filho, G.C. (2001). A problemática da economia solidária: uma perspectiva internacional. *Sociedade E Estado*, 16(1–2), 245–275. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69922001000100011>.
- França Filho, G.C. (2012). A política pública da economia solidária no Brasil. In S. Lianza & F.C. Henriques (Eds.), *A economia solidária na América Latina: realidades nacionais e políticas públicas*. Rio de Janeiro: Pró Reitoria de Extensão UFRJ.
- Gago, V. (2017). *Neoliberalism from below: popular pragmatics and baroque economies*. Durham: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822372738>.
- Gaiger, L.I.G. (2009). Antecedentes e expressões atuais da economia solidária. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 84, 81–99. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.401>.

- Gaiger, L. I. G. (2012). Avances y límites en la producción de conocimientos sobre la economía solidaria en Brasil. In J. L. Coraggio (Ed.), *Conocimiento y políticas públicas de economía social y solidaria: problemas y propuestas*. Quito: Editorial IAEN.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2019a). A diverse economy: rethinking economy and economic representation. <http://avery.wellesley.edu/Economics/jmatthaei/transformationcentral/solidarity/solidaritydocuments/diverseeconomies.pdf>. Accessed 6 Nov 2019.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2019b). Economic imaginaries. http://www.communityeconomies.org/sites/default/files/paper_attachment/Venice-gibson-graham.pdf. Accessed 6 Nov 2019.
- Harvey, D. (1975). *Social justice and the city*. London: Edward Arnold. <https://doi.org/10.2307/213551>.
- Kraychete, G. (2006). Economia popular solidária: paisagens e miragens. *Serviço Social em Revista*, 9(1), 1–15.
- Laville, J. L. (2009a). A economia solidária: um movimento internacional. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 84, 7–47. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.381>.
- Laville, J. L. (2009b). Economia plural. In A. D. Cattani, et al. (Ed.), *Dicionário internacional da outra economia*. Coimbra: Almedina, CES.
- Laville, J. L. (2012). La economía social y solidaria en Europa y en Francia. In J. L. Coraggio (Ed.), *Conocimiento y políticas públicas de economía social y solidaria: problemas y propuestas*. Quito: Editorial IAEN.
- Lefebvre, H. (1976). *De lo rural a lo urbano*. Buenos Aires: Lotus Mare.
- Lefebvre, H. (1978). *The survival of capitalism: reproduction of the relations of production*. London: Allison & Busby.
- Lefebvre, H. (1999). *A revolução urbana*. Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG.
- Lisboa, A. M. (2004). *Socioeconomia solidaria: marco conceitual latinoamericano. Textos para discussão UFSC CNM*
- Mignolo, W. D. (2017). Colonialidade: o lado mais escuro da modernidade. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 32(94), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.17666/329402/2017>.
- Monte-Mór, R. L. (2006). *O que é o urbano no mundo contemporâneo*. Belo Horizonte: Cedeplar.
- Monte-Mór, R. L. (2007). Cidade e campo, urbano e rural: o substantivo e o adjetivo. In S. Feldman & A. Fernandes (Eds.), *O urbano e o regional no Brasil contemporâneo: mutações, tensões, desafios* (pp. 93–114). Salvador: EDUFBA.
- Monte-Mór, R. L. (2015). Urbanização, sustentabilidade, desenvolvimento: complexidades e diversidades contemporâneas na produção do espaço urbano. In H. Costa, G. Costa & R. Monte-Mór (Eds.), *Teorias e Práticas Urbanas: condições para a sociedade urbana* (pp. 55–69). Belo Horizonte: C/Arte.
- Münster, A. (1993). *Ernst Bloch. Filosofia da práxis e utopia concreta*. São Paulo: Unesp.
- Ollman, B. (1977). *Alienation: Marx's conception of man in a capitalist society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611902>.
- Polanyi, K. (2011). *A grande transformação: as origens da nossa época* (2nd edn.). Rio de Janeiro: Elsevier.
- Polanyi, K. (2012). *A subsistência do homem e ensaios correlatos*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto.
- Quijano, A. (2005). A colonialidade de poder, eurocentrismo e América Latina. In E. Lander (Ed.), *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais latino-americanas*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 168–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353>.
- Razeto, L., Klenner, A., Ramirez, A., & Urmeneta, R. (1983). *Las organizaciones económicas populares*. Santiago: Ediciones PET.
- Santos, B. S. (2002). Para uma sociologia das ausências e uma sociologia das emergências. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 63, 237–280. <https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.1285>.
- Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária (Senaes) (2012). *Avanços e desafios para as políticas públicas de economia solidária no governo federal 2003/2010*. Brasília: Ministério do Trabalho e do Emprego.
- Singer, P. I. (2002). *Introdução à economia solidária*. São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo.
- Singer, P. I. (2012). Os oito primeiros anos da Secretaria Nacional de Economia Solidária. In S. Lianza & F. C. Henriques (Eds.), *A economia solidária na América Latina: realidades nacionais e políticas públicas*. Rio de Janeiro: Pró Reitoria de Extensão UFRJ.
- Tiriba, L. (2005). Trabalho, educação e autogestão: desafios frente à crise do emprego. *Trabalho Necessário*, 3(3), 45–75. <https://doi.org/10.22409/tn.3i3.p4575>.
- Wallerstein, I. (1992). Creación del sistema mundial moderno. In I. Wallerstein (Ed.), *En un mundo jamás imaginado*. Bogotá: Editorial Norma.