

Solidarity economies

In the last three decades in Latin America and the Caribbean, a very diverse set of new economic organizations has emerged from urban, rural and indigenous spaces - which we could call popular economy or solidarity economy. Starting from initiatives of the inhabitants of the city and the countryside of the region, they are efforts to obtain the necessary dignified means of life for the people, their families and communities in their territories and concrete environments.

Over the time, these experiences have faced acute difficulties and new opportunities, until they manage to break through and, thus, have a presence in the public arena. The achievement of their own space in the economies and societies of the region has enabled them to interact with the former, configuring processes with the potential to move from "less human conditions to more human conditions" of life¹.

In this issue of *Cultura Económica*, through the contributions of the authors, we present an update of the information and reflection on these experiences, their meaning, perspective and prospective. From the analysis and reflection on the processes that are generated in the scope of the recognition of these practices, it is possible to understand their concrete development in the economic and social scenarios, and in national, sectoral and / or local policies related to their promotion.

You will find in this issue, specific references to some of these practices, which after a period of "struggle to stay afloat", achieve important levels of sustainability. Each one with its own imprint, they are contributing to a reconfiguration of the economies and societies of the countries, as new practices to take into account. We could say that these are authentic alternatives, in the sense, of new paths to travel.

Firstly, the article by Father Jorge Arturo Chaves OP, in co-authorship with researchers from the Dominican Research Center of Costa Rica (CEDI), María Leonela Artavia-Jiménez, Jonathan Cordero-Bonilla and Marcelo Valverde, enable us to acquire an analysis of the context of the Latin America and the Caribbean Region (LAC), with updated information. After making some references to main indicators of the economic and social situation, and the predominant conception in the interpretation of it, the authors make a criticism of the "model" in force in most countries of the region. They finally present a reflection on other

theoretical approaches of recent years, which seek to explain the "rationality" of these practices and the contributions of them to the renewal of economic thought.

In their reflection, they highlight that the current "model" or "style" of development does not evidence a sufficient systemic approach, nor does it incorporate the care of nature. On the contrary, the latter places almost exclusively the search for maximum economic benefit and tends to consider economic processes almost as "impersonal" forces.

Alternatively, for the renewal of economic thought, they pose keys such as incorporating the ethical, responding to the human condition conceived integrally and articulating the theoretical analysis with praxis. Likewise, they encourage dialogue between researchers and activists, considering the perspective of the Common Good and its civilizatory implications. For the rest, they seek to achieve a new "synthesis" from a transdisciplinary perspective, including a "fraternal sympathy" and spiritual renewal.

Next, we present the contribution of Professor Raúl González from Chile who, as an academic, has a long history in the reflection on popular economy and solidarity economy both in the region and globally. This author presents a reflection on the "rationality" that sustains the reason for being of these experiences of solidarity, and then criticizes the limits of understanding solidarity processes from the popular, but also beyond the popular, only from the point of view of economic rationality.

Professor González questions that the rationalities of practices in the economy are only explained by the *homo economicus* approach. It makes it clear that, in order to understand these and other similar new practices in the region, it is necessary to have a more holistic vision and free oneself from a solely economic vision. It invites us to overcome the narrow focus of the paradigm of the "self-regulated market society" and opens the analysis to economic forms of economic and social cooperation, where the social clearly impregnates the economic and, therefore, rethinks human relationships beyond the purely market logic.

Finally, incorporating the practices of indigenous peoples, he proposes to analyze the multiplicity of current self-management, cooperative and solidarity practices that are multiplying in the region, as

contributions to the reconfiguration of the main relationships in society and their implications for democratization.

In the third place, we present the article by Professor Luiz Inácio Gaiger, which deals with a very current issue: that of public policies and their relationship with the solidarity economy and social movements from the Brazilian experience. Starting from the analysis of the situation, in the recent period of Brazilian history, in which there was a boost to the solidarity economy with relevant actions at the time, - such as the realization of a "mapping" of the Brazilian solidarity economy and the creation of the Secretary of State for Solidarity Economy - SENAES-, Professor Gaiger illustrates how different resistances to these advances arise.

The path taken by Professor Gaiger, also allows to see the vulnerabilities of the achievements of the solidarity economy in the legal field and, at the same time, its potentialities.

It presents the tensions and contradictions at all levels, including the ones in the sector of cooperatives itself. The author emphasizes how in the political field, the new expressions of solidarity economy require recognition by the regulatory framework of the country, so that this is reflected in public policy, particularly in the budget. But the institutions necessary for a true economic democratization, besides the legal, would require the consolidation of values in solidarity economy all along society.

In that sense, according to Professor Gaiger the "movimientalismo" of Brazilian civil society can contribute that these achievements of the solidarity economy, still weak mainly in public policy, do not disappear as a public presence.

We present, in the fourth place, the article by Professor Miguel Arturo Fajardo, addressing a key issue such as solidarity education from the Colombian experience. The author shows a complete educational experience in cooperativism at the local level with the inspiration of the University of San Gil in Colombia, south of Santander, under the impulse of the Church. The latter has played a key role in the emergence and development of cooperativism and solidarity economy, throughout the region, in which this Colombian experience is particularly emblematic. The experience gathers the contribution of the native population, which has been one of the factors that has been building the identity. From the

social pastoral, unions, youth organizations and others are promoted. The author points out that the main strategies that are put in place are those of working from socio-ecological units, education for leadership and the creation of cooperatives. The methodology combines communication, mobilization, creation of strategic alliances and cooperation. The pedagogical proposal incorporates the aspects of integral formation of the person, community organization, "dialogue of knowledge" (incorporating local knowledge), solidarity action and communication.

In the section *Essays* we present the paper by Professor Nedda Angulo, that deals practically with the same theme but from the perspective of the Peruvian experience, with a rigorous reference to the components of the Peruvian legal framework. The author reveals the vagaries of public policy regarding the promotion or not of self-managed, cooperative or solidary economy forms in Peru. It is relevant the retrospective that he carries out of the 70s and the role played by the populist military government of the time with the creation of agricultural cooperatives, and social property companies, a legal form unique in its kind, in the legislation of the region regarding the recognition of self-managed models. Professor Angulo analyzes the marked setbacks according to the political orientations of the successive governmental efforts. Then, she describes the fall of the military government, with the neoliberal policies of the late 80s and 90s. Finally, she presents the limited attempt of the 2011-2015 administration ("Nationalist Party"), in favor of the recognition of self-managed organizations, among them cooperatives and solidarity economies.

In the *Documents* section, we present the contribution of Professor Jorge Krekeler who, from Bolivia, shows a set of solidarity economy experiences oriented to the common good.

The author goes through four Latin American experiences: a spinning mill in Colombia, a vermiculture in Peru, an intercultural living experience in Ecuador and a savings and credit cooperative in Colombia. They are experiences of several years that have passed into a phase of sustainability.

According to the author these experiences, although small, may constitute a "critical mass" that can lead to a change in the realities in perspective of more human and solidary coexistence processes.

We could say that the "thread" or, rather, "the threads" of the analyses, reflections and stories that we present in this issue, show, as Pope Francis would say in *Laudato Si'*, that it is possible to "change course". In this perspective and prospective, the experiences of social and solidarity economy, from the people of the rural, indigenous and urban communities, point us to paths that can inspire a renewed and integral vision of the human person, his mission in this world, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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¹ Pope Paul VI. *Encyclical Populorum Progressio* No. 20, City of The Vatican, 1967.