



SOLIDARITY ECONOMY ENTERPRISES, SOCIAL TECHNOLOGIES, AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

EMPREENDIMENTOS ECONÔMICOS SOLIDÁRIOS, TECNOLOGIAS SOCIAIS E AMBIENTE INSTITUCIONAL

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Abstract

The present study aimed at analyzing the positioning, contribution, or limitation of the formal Brazilian institutional environment regarding the creation, promotion and implementation of Solidary Economic Enterprises and Social Technologies. The path used to carry out this research was the triangulation among documentary research, literature review and former empirical research results. We found that the formal Brazilian institutional environment has not provided the necessary elements for the strengthening of Solidary Economic Enterprises and Social Technologies. It, therefore, constitutes a space that is not very developed in the face of the existence of such organizations.

Keywords: Institutional Environment; Sociological New Institutionalism; Institutions; Solidarity Economy Enterprises; Social Technology.

Resumo

O objetivo do presente estudo foi analisar o posicionamento, a contribuição ou a limitação do ambiente institucional formal brasileiro para a criação, o fomento e a implementação dos Empreendimentos Econômicos Solidários e das Tecnologias Sociais. O caminho utilizado para a realização desta pesquisa foi o da triangulação entre pesquisa documental, revisão da literatura e resultados de pesquisas empíricas encontrados em momentos anteriores. Constatou-se, que o ambiente institucional formal brasileiro não tem fornecido os elementos necessários para o fortalecimento dos Empreendimentos Econômicos Solidários e das Tecnologias Sociais, constituindo-se, portanto, em um espaço pouco desenvolvido diante da existência de tais organizações.

Palavras-chave: Ambiente Institucional; Neoinstitucionalismo Sociológico; Instituições; Empreendimentos Econômicos Solidários; Tecnologia Social.

Introduction

Within the Social Science field, the definition of Institutionalism is not completely clear, in a way in which it is not possible to establish it as a school of thought *per se*, as Keynesianism or Marxism, for instance. This field does not present itself to Social Sciences as a unified block, as it contains several currents of thought which are often antagonistic regarding a theme; hence, they do not form a theoretical body of convergent knowledge (SILVA, 2010; MELGES; FIGUEIREDO NETO; BENINI, 2019). This statement is corroborated by Dimaggio & Powell (1991), who claim there is difficulty in classifying the different approaches of Institutionalism. From this perspective, Williamson (2000) observes that the pluralism of this body of knowledge must be accepted while there is not a unified institutionalist theory.

As stated by Lopes (2013) and Melges, Figueiredo Neto and Benini (2019), Institutionalism became a school of thought in the beginning of the 20th century; its precursors were Thorstein Veblen, John R. Commons and Wesley C. Mitchell¹. The first was its pioneer and theoretical leader, still having great expression and influence on contemporary authors. In the mid-1930, however, the school of thought went into decline – after the death of its leader and for several other reasons (HODGSON, 2003). It was only after the 1970s that institutionalism gained momentum again, and, renewed and transformed, it reappeared as an influential theoretical field in the social sciences (DIMAGGIO; POWELL, 2001; CARVALHO; VIEIRA; GOULART, 2005).

According to Hall & Taylor (1996), new institutionalism has three distinct currents: historical, rational calculation and sociological – the latter being the object of this research. For Carvalho, Vieira and Goulart (2005), sociological institutionalism brings the relationship between the environment and organizations to the core of the analysis. Thus, the compliance requirements and institutionally legitimated standards become the object of reflections which emphasize processes of homogeneity in the groups of organizations.

Sociological new institutionalism first appears with the work of Meyer and Rowan, who sought to contest the separation between the spheres of the world of organizations and culture, recovering the importance of symbols and myths in the performance of organizations. Thus, the authors understood that the institutional rules work as myths that are incorporated by organizations – hence they acquire legitimacy, stability and resources, increasing their degree of coordination planning and gaining trust from those involved in the process, with institutionalization as “the process by which social processes, obligations or circumstances assume the status of norm of thought and action (MEYER; ROWAN, 1977, P. 341).

For the authors of sociological new institutionalism, organizations must emphasize, in addition to their material resources, their symbolic resources, those that become cultural practices within organizations, as such tradition helps to build formal structures that promote the stability and legitimacy of the organizational environment. Institutions are seen as the product of social needs and pressures, and are structural complexes that aim at the balance of the environment and relationships (MEYER; ROWAN, 1977; HALL; TAYLOR, 1996; CARVALHO; VIEIRA; GOULART, 2005).

Therefore, institutions have developed as a way to structure human interactions, which can be either formal or informal, serving as a legitimizing thread for social relations and exchanges. Whenever there are failures or omissions from institutions – rules, laws, constitutions, contracts, negotiation agreements – certain groups and segments cannot reach their objectives (NORTH, 1991; DIMAGGIO; POWELL, 1991; ZENGER; LAZZARINI; POPPO, 2002).

Solidarity Economy Enterprises (SEEs) – production groups, worker cooperatives, companies or associations that are committed to the community and value the community and self-management

– they are production and commercialization initiatives organized in a collective and associated way, having as main objectives work and income generation. (GAIGER, 2003). Social Technologies (STs) are those that seek to bring practical and cost-effective solutions, valuing the actors' knowledge and experiences, seeking to ease the aggravation of workers precariousness, inequalities and exclusions (DAGNINO; BRANDÃO; NOVAES, 2004; NASCIMENTO ET AL., 2019). Therefore, both configurations are commonly accepted alternatives to unemployment and work precariousness (LIMA; DAGNINO, 2013).

However, despite the efforts of Brazilian public authorities to construct public policies or formal mechanisms, there is not sufficient legal framework to affirm that there is an institutional environment which is favorable to the creation and promotion of SEEs and STs across the country.

Considering the principles of SEEs – emancipatory character; cooperation and solidarity; social valorization of self-managed human work; satisfaction of the needs of all people as an axis of technological creativity and economic activity; economic development with people as its core (BENINI ET AL, 2009) – it is believed that they cannot be sustained considering that enterprises are under Law 5,764 / 1971, which defines the National Policy of Cooperativism and institutes the (unique) legal regime of cooperative societies (BRASIL, 1971).

This law deals with all forms of work cooperatives, including small and large enterprises/cooperatives. However, the law includes especially “traditional” cooperatives, those regarded as business cooperatives, in which there is no effective participation of the members in the productive and organizational processes. Thus, there is the intention to either Accept or Reject **Proposition 01 – The Brazilian institutional environment does not provide sufficient subsidies for the creation, promotion and strengthening of Solidary Economic Enterprises.**

A similar situation occurs with STs – which have social transformation, participatory development, contextualization, simplicity, cost-effectiveness, re-application and making popular enterprises viable as principles (NASCIMENTO; BINOTTO; BENINI, 2019). It is believed that this configuration is not sufficiently promoted by specific laws, only discreetly encouraged (NASCIMENTO ET AL. 2019), through Law 13.243 / 2016, that provided incentives for scientific development, research, scientific and technological training (BRASIL, 2016). Therefore, there is the intention to either Accept or Reject **Proposition 02 – The Brazilian Institutional Environment does not provide sufficient subsidies for the creation, promotion and implementation of social technologies.**

Hodgson (2006) points out that strong institutions and clear rules help the community to understand and share the rules established actively, not only acting as restrictions, but also as elements of permission and training of the agents involved. The set of known formal and informal rules is called the institutional environment (NORTH, 1991; WILLIAMSON, 1991).

From these considerations, it is important to highlight the relevance of analyzing how formal institutions influence the development of new organizational configurations. On that basis, the objective of this study was to analyze the positioning, the contribution or the limitation of the Brazilian institutional environment for the creation, promotion and implementation of Solidarity Economy Enterprises and Social Technologies.

Regarding the path taken to carry out this research, although the text may be understood as a theoretical essay, we started from the triangulation (TRIVIÑOS, 1987) among documentary research, literature review and empirical research results formerly performed by the authors (BENINI, 2008; NASCIMENTO, 2018). Based on consultation of the Brazilian legislation, a discussion was carried out – at the theoretical level – crossing and interrelating the themes object

of the research. In the first stage, a brief contextualization of the institutions was carried out, followed by a presentation of Sociological Neoinstitutionalism. In the second stage, the implications of the *modus operandi* of the institutional environment were related to Solidarity Economic Enterprises and Social Technology, especially addressing the most urgent challenges. In the last section, the conclusions to this research are presented.

Institutions

According to Melges, Figueiredo Neto and Benini (2019), institutions are the main unit of social analysis in the institutional field. Hodgson (2006) highlights that the use of the term dates back to 1725, by Giambattista Vico, in his study *Scienza Nuova* and there is no unanimity towards the concept of institutions.

Although Veblen (1987) conceptualized institutions in a rather vague way in his most famous book, - as mental models shared by a given community – the American author asserted, throughout his work, that they should be understood as a consequence and reinforcement of routine processes of thoughts that give cohesion to the set of social relations (VEBLEN, 1904, 1919, 1987). Hodgson (2006, p. 2), following the Veblenian line, understood that institutions are the type of structure that matters most in the context of social relations, and conceptualizes them as “systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions”.

For North (1991), an institutionalist linked to the New Institutional Economics (NIE), institutions are restrictions designed by society that regulate political, economic and social interactions. These restrictions can be informal, such as sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, codes of conduct; or formal, such as constitutions, laws, contracts, etc. For the author, the role of institutions is to create order and reduce the uncertainty of economic relations.

North's (1991) understanding of institutions is premised on the calculating individual of neoclassical economics – although with the difference of assuming that rationality is not complete, but rather limited – thus, the perspective in which his concept is inserted is the calculator, in which the role of institutions is to offer certainty regarding the commitment of the actors, within Nash's idea of game balance (HALL; TAYLOR, 1996).

However, for Hodgson (2006), the concept professed by North neglects the aspects of permission and empowerment in institutions, emphasizing only restrictions. Institutions are not just the rules of the game, forming the system of social rules incorporated by society (HODGSON, 2006). In the same perception, Powell (2001) understands that institutions are not only restrictive – they are also structures that sanction or provide means for action. Therefore, institutions present an intrinsic duality ‘restriction-freedom’, establishing identities and line of activities for these identities, that is, they provide, in the author's words, a ‘contagion of legitimacy’.

For Polanyi (2012), economic institutions, such as the creation and maintenance of property rights, can only exist if supported by other institutions, such as the State or other institutions antagonistic to the pure market. In the same vein, Hodgson (2006) argues that every institution is dependent on others, except the language that is the base institution of society. In this sense, institutions have a heavy sociological burden and, for these authors, the study of economic relations cannot be carried out disregarding social relations.

According to Gonzalo (2007), the intertwining and interdependence of institutions are premises for the focus of sociological institutionalism. Besides, institutions, in this approach, can be considered external representations of an internal set of beliefs of a society for relations in a given environment (LOPES, 2013), involving agents and organizations, mental models, forms of

learning, in addition to environment and the choices of individuals in a relationship in which they feedback. Therefore, sociological institutionalism understands institutions as social constructions, that is, the product of visible hands, understanding that in the market creation and exchange relations there is no invisible hand, but an intense conflict of interests (SWEDBERG; GRANOVETTER, 1992; POLANYI, 2012).

Sociological new institutionalism

As reported by Peres (2008), new institutionalism originates from the resumption of institutions as a central object of investigation, opposing the proposals and premises of behaviorists, arguing that institutions, in some way, shape or condition behaviors of individuals. Easton (1969), DiMaggio and Powel (1991) and Immergut (2006) support this point of view.

New Institutionalism is not a monolithic block with unified theoretical development lines. Its studies contemplate a wide range of interests through a multidisciplinary approach that investigates the exercise of collective actions and the criticism of the organization and performance of the economy. It also investigates forms of social control. Besides, the research field includes studies on norms, laws, customs, micro and macroeconomic analysis, market formation, institutional arrangements and environments, governance mechanisms, among other topics (MELGES; FIGUEIREDO NETO; BENINI, 2019).

For Hall and Taylor (1996), there are three different analytical approaches connected to new institutionalism: the historical one; the rational choice; and the sociological or organizational. Although the authors identify three different currents of thought, they assert that it is possible to simplify and divide the analytical perspectives in two, namely: the cultural perspective and the calculating perspective. Each of the different perspectives focuses its analysis on institutions and how they affect the behavior of individuals, with the central premise that institutions matter.

The institutionalist field, regardless of the perspective, is concerned with answering three fundamental questions: (i) what the institutions do; (ii) what are its maintenance mechanisms, and; (iii) how the actors work. Moreover, both the calculating and the cultural aspects question how institutions in society operate; yet, they provide different answers. According to the calculating perspective, the role of institutions is to offer stability to the system, that is, to provide certainty regarding the present and future behavior of the actors. From this perspective, institutions persist because they are embedded in the order of a Nash equilibrium. From a cultural perspective, they provide moral and cognitive models to individuals shaping their behaviors and attitudes. The individual is, therefore, conceived as an entity deeply involved in a world of institutions composed of symbols, scenarios and protocols that provide filters of interpretation applicable to the situation from which the actor defines a line of action. Not only do institutions grant useful information from a strategic point of view, but they also affect the identity, the image of themselves and the preferences that guide the agent (HALL; TAYLOR, 1996). According to Theret (2003), sociological new institutionalism uses the cultural approach, based on the interpretation of action based on the subject's cognitive dimension.

Within public policies, the aspects that make up the cultural perspective favor explanatory factors in this context, such as the previous historical trajectory, organizational practices and norms, ideologies and explanatory paradigms with an impact on the way of thinking about public action, incentives derived from the legal framework institutional, among others. At the same time, they agree to emphasize that the institutional and historical framework determines which actors (government agencies and bodies, parties, interest groups, communities, national and international

organizations and others) managed to influence the decision-making process, through which resources, procedures and means (formal and informal) and in which forums or instances of mediation and conflicts (VARELA; ROCO, 2013).

According to Scott (1995) and Carvalho, Vieira and Goulart (2005), sociological institutionalism is based upon the sociological tradition of Weber and Durkheim, somehow differing from Veblen, whose studies did not give much emphasis to organizations and focused more on macrostructures such as language, legal system and political systems. Thus, for Carvalho, Vieira and Goulart (2005) the core of analysis in the new sociological institutionalism are the organizations, leaving power issues in the background and highlighting compliance requirements or institutionally legitimate standards, thus approaching an analysis standard which is closer to the liberal tradition. However, it is necessary to recognize that the relationship with the old Veblenian institutionalism (and also with that of Polanyi), is not fully broken, especially concerning the emphasis given to the diachronic and particularistic aspects in their methods (DIMAGGIO; POWELL, 2001; VIEIRA; MISOCZKY, 2003; CARVALHO; VIEIRA; GOULART, 2005).

The pioneer in the institutional approach with an emphasis on organizations was Selznick (DIMAGGIO; POWEL, 2001) who saw the institution as “a natural product of pressures and social needs – an adaptable and receptive organism” (SELZNICK, 1972, p. 5). Thus, according to Carvalho, Vieira and Goulart (2005), for Selznick, institutionalization reflects historical peculiarities, a process that occurs in organizations diachronically, built by subjects and interest groups that relate to the environment. However, with the work of Meyer and Rowan (1977), this understanding of institutionalization is altered, thus emerging the new sociological institutionalism.

Still in the field of organizations, the authors understand that institutionalization is “the process by which social processes, obligations or circumstances assume the status of norm of thought and action” (MEYER, ROWAN, 1977, p. 341). In consequence, the movement made by sociological new institutionalism arises from contesting the distinction between the sphere of the social world (of instrumental, bureaucratic rationality) and the cultural sphere. Accordingly, the new sociological institutionalism recovers the importance of symbols and culture in the performance of organizations (HALL; TAYLOR, 1996). Furthermore, the causality of institutional processes was neglected by scholars of bureaucratic processes. For example, the process in which technology becomes institutionalized, growing a binding myth. Thus, procedures such as accounting, production, data processing or personnel selection acquire guaranteed and stable means to achieve organizational ends (MEYER, ROWAN, 1977).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) understand that organizations whose structures become isomorphic through the myths of the institutional environment, in contrast to the focus that organizations are made only of instrumental rationality – whose focus is the structure of demand and technical production and control and coordination mechanisms – have more legitimacy and stability. Thus, for the authors, institutional rules (mystified) play a fundamental role in organizational structures, creating relational networks and reflecting the general understanding of social reality.

Therefore, sociological new institutionalism dives into the elements of structural-functionalism to recognize and emphasize that besides the material resources of the organization, symbolic resources must be taken into account. In other words, to consider that procedures are cultural practices – compared to ceremonies or myths – serving as a source of recognition and building formal structures that seek to promote legitimacy and stability in the environment in which they operate (HALL; TAYLOR, 1996; CARVALHO; VIEIRA; GOULART, 2005).

According to Hall and Taylor (1996), for sociological new institutionalism, institutions provide cognitive and moral standards that allow interpretation and action, providing useful information and affecting identity, as they conceive the individual as a being deeply involved in a world of

institutions that are full of symbols. Thus, in a normative conception of institutional impact, institutions lead the individual to internalize specific roles in their socialization process, not only specifying what to do, but also what they can want. Consequently, institutions not only influence strategic calculations, but also define their most fundamental preferences.

Hence, for Tolber and Zucker (1996), the analysis offered by Meyer and Rowan was a radical starting point that provided new ways of thinking about the formal structure and the nature of organizational decision-making through which the structure was produced. The authors emphasize the knowledge that organizations have symbolic features is not new – it has already been approached by other functionalist authors. However, the novelty lies in the systematic development of the implications of the use of formal structure for symbolic purposes, particularly in terms of highlighting the limitations of more rationalist explanations of the structure.

In general, the sociological aspect emphasizes the structural dimensions that show the conjuncture behavior of the authors. In particular, it addresses the process of forming preferences: it does not take them as given or does it assume that they are rational in terms of maximizing utility, but culturally and contextually defined. Thus, even though the Government is a vertical organization, with some centrality, and with a positive prescriptive right in the bureaucratic hierarchies, in each decision or policy analyzed, a particular configuration of actors with defined preferences is established, according to the organization that each one represents and with a limited number of available alternatives (VARELA; ROCCO, 2013). In sociological (organizational) new institutionalism directed towards public action, institutions synthesize repeated social behaviors, which become legitimate and are supported by normative systems and cognitive interpretations that give meaning to social exchange by reproducing the social order.

It is worth noting that Carvalho, Vieira and Goulart (2005), when comparing new and old sociological institutionalism, admits that the new one has a more conservative character and criticizes it, advocating that new institutionalism defends organizational subordination with the repeated use of expressions such as “standards” and “suitability”, among others. The authors also emphasize that individuals within organizations are not just passive agents – they are inserted in these institutional contexts and interpret and mediate these elements, consistent with the inner logic of each one of them. In addition to the previous criticism, it is possible to affirm that sociological new institutionalism acts to domesticate the myth, that is, to avoid the conflicting character of social structures.

Solidarity economy enterprises

Considering the inability of the current development models to overcome the evident and latent economic, environmental and social issues, despite their contribution in different segments, there is the need to rethink the current form of development, production and consumption, to explore new configurations in work organization processes. These new inclusive configurations must take into account the variety of actors involved in its formatting and implementation. It ought to aim at developing organizational forms that effectively contribute to the construction of a more egalitarian society, capable of meeting the real human and social needs.

In this intention to redirect the development models – also due to the deepening of the crisis of capitalism – arose, more visibly in the last decades, cooperation and solidarity movements with socio-productive purposes, which have been conceived as Solidarity Economy Enterprises.

According to Singer (2002a), solidarity-based economic ventures emerged in the early days of industrial capitalism, in the early 19th century, conceived by workers as a response to poverty and

unemployment and as a way of maintaining some autonomy with the means of production. The first initiatives of organizing these workers took place from the creation of cooperatives aiming to recover the work and the management autonomy of their enterprises, thus disconnecting themselves from the pure logic of capitalism.

Nowadays, SEEs can be presented as production groups, associations, cooperatives and self-management companies that value the sense of community and the commitment to the community. Such ventures express a multiplicity of forms of alternative economy, marking opposition to the capitalist mercantile logic, and regarded as a form of empowerment and motivation to entrepreneurship (GAIGER, 2003).

After analyzing literature on the solidarity economy, it can be seen and implemented through different perspectives. Wirth, Fraga and Novaes (2011), for example, classified the various authors on the solidarity economy into four groups:

- a) those who perceive the possibility of overcoming capitalism in the solidarity economy – its principal theorist is Singer (2002a, 2002b) who focuses his analysis, at first, on the productive units that have characteristics that deny the capitalist mode of production, defending the collective ownership of the means of production, the principle of “one partner, one vote” and self-management. In a second step, these same principles are interpreted by the author as founding a new project of society. This process would take place gradually, as the number of production units increased and the number of units strengthened.
- b) those who defend a complementarity between the solidarity economy and capitalism – having as leading exponents of this perspective the authors Leville and França-Filho (2004), who interpret the solidarity economy as members of the plural economy, as they understand that despite capitalism being the predominant “model”, with it there have always been other forms of economics². These authors regard the solidarity economy as a complementary and viable way, mainly in the context of a work crisis.
- c) those who expand their analysis beyond the solidarity economy, focusing on the popular economy – this approach is by Coraggio (2007) and Kraychette (2007), who seek to understand the solidarity economy through the popular sectors made up of workers who have the work as the most important means for reproducing their lives. They argue that the re-articulation of this popular economy must be a political priority that must be assumed by the State. Still, they recognize that the economy of the popular sectors is dependent on the capitalist system and that it does not have the conditions to reverse this situation.
- d) those who perceive the solidarity economy as a space for the practice of self-management in the current historical moment, but defend its generalization in society, with “self-government by producers freely associated” as a direction – For the leading theorists of this perspective (SARDÁ DE FARIA, 2010; DAL RI and VIEITEZ, 2008; TIRIBA, 2008; NASCIMENTO, 2005; NOVAES, 2007) the emphasis of studies on associated work is in self-management as a means and an end to worker struggles.

Institutional environment of solidarity enterprises in Brazil

Considering that the proposed objective of the present work is to analyze whether the Brazilian institutional environment helps to create or foster SEEs in Brazil, the following proposition is put: *Proposition 01 – The Brazilian institutional environment does not provide sufficient subsidies for the creation, promotion and strengthening of Solidarity Economy Enterprises.*

The SEEs do not have a legislation in Brazil, having Law 5,764/71 and its subsequent amendments as guidance, where applicable. It defined the National Cooperative Policy and instituted the legal regime for cooperative societies. Chart 1 shows the legislation related to the theme.

Chart 1: Federal Legislation on Solidarity Economy Enterprises

Legislation	Description	Status (22/09/2020)
Law 5.764/71	Institutes the National Cooperative Policy	Ruling
Law 12.690/2012	Rules on the organization and functioning of the Work Cooperatives	Ruling
Bill 4685/2012	Rules on National Policy for Solidarity Economy and Solidarity Economy Enterprises	Awaiting analysis by the Committee on Agriculture, Livestock, Supply and Rural Development (Congress)

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the government websites consulted.

Considering the current stage of SEEs in Brazil, it is clear that the fact that they do not have their state legislation, hinders their development, due to the dichotomy between the principles of solidarity economy and the generic legislation of cooperatives. It should be noted that there has been some progress³, such as that brought by Law 12,690 / 2012 – known as the New Labor Cooperative Law – which seeks to punish false cooperatives and reduce job insecurity, as previously suggested in Recommendation n 193/2002 of the International Labor Organization (ILO). However, it is understood that this legislation also did not meet or endorse all varieties of SEEs in Brazil (ILO, 2002; BRASIL, 2012).

Regardless of the ideological perspective adopted by the SEEs, it is noted that there is a need for interrelation with formal institutions at certain moments in their development. A classic example is access to public policies. For an Enterprise to be able to access government programs, such SEEs must necessarily be formalized as an association or cooperative, and registered with the Organization of Brazilian Cooperatives (OBC). According to Law 5,764/71, Article 107: “cooperatives are required, for their operation, to register with the Organization of Brazilian Cooperatives or with the state entity, if any, upon presentation of the bylaws and their amendments later”.

Although there are several formalized SEEs, legally constituted, there is still a significant percentage of informal groups that perform solidarity economic activities. According to the latest survey by the National Information System in Solidarity Economy (SSE), carried out by the Ministry of Labor (ML), through the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy (NSSE), completed in 2013, 50.4% act as informal groups in Brazil, not constituting themselves as associations or cooperatives – (SSE, 2013). Therefore, considering the current Brazilian legislation, more than half of the SEEs cannot access public policies. And why are those SEEs not formalized as cooperatives?

One of the difficulties is, for instance, to reach the minimum number of 20 members, as according to Article 6 of Law No. 5,764 / 71: “Cooperative societies are considered: I – singular, those constituted by the minimum number of 20 (twenty) individuals (...)”. On the other hand, federal legislation that treats the different forms of cooperatives generically, ends up also harming the “traditional” business cooperatives, those that focus on the market, efficiency and competitiveness, being an obstacle to make competitive advantages impossible. Moreover, Pereira and Silva (2012) show that the Brazilian legal framework is insufficient, even for cooperatives (cooperatives in general) as it is a heterogeneous field.

Therefore, the disconnection of the solidarity economy from traditional cooperatives to strengthen them. In this sense, Benini et al. (2009) argue that there is a specific legal framework for SEEs,

differentiating them from business cooperatives, as this allows public policies that are more focused and closer to the two segments of cooperatives.

The lack of a specific legal framework for this organizational configuration creates barriers to the production and commercialization of its products and services, in addition to hindering access to knowledge (training, technical assistance and technologies) and credit for investments and working capital, access to public policies (BENINI ET AL, 2009; SANTOS; OLIVEIRA; SANTOS, 2012; SILVA; SILVA, 2015; NASCIMENTO, 2015).

Efforts to establish their legislation are being made, but they have not produced concrete results. Since 2012, Bill no. 4685/2012 – which provides for the National Policy for Solidarity Economy and solidarity economic enterprises, creates the National System for Solidarity Economy and takes other measures – and on this date (09/22/2020), after several steps, the project is still in the Federal Senate under analysis by the Agriculture, Livestock, Supply and Rural Development Commission – ALSRDC – (CAMARA DOS DEPUTADOS, 2020a).

Thus, there is a lack of institutional instruments for Solidarity Economic Enterprises in the country. There is, therefore, on the part of the State, a failure to promote formal mechanisms that establish norms and adequate to this organizational configuration. Therefore, proposition 01 is accepted, thus evidencing that the Brazilian institutional environment is not conducive to the creation or promotion of SEEs, generating negative impacts on the development of these organizations.

Social technologies

Following the proposed objective of this paper, regarding Social Technologies, the following proposition is raised: *Proposition 02 – The Brazilian Institutional Environment does not provide sufficient subsidies for the creation, promotion and implementation of social technologies.*

The Social Technologies movement originated mainly from experiences in the development of technologies in India since 1920, in which they rehabilitated and developed traditional technologies practiced in their villages. Worldwide, it is noted that from the decade of the 1960s, the production of technologies called ‘appropriate’, ‘intermediate’ or ‘alternative’ began to proliferate, more recently known as ‘social innovations’ or ‘social technologies’. These technologies have aimed to respond to the problems of community development, service generation and techno-productive alternatives in socioeconomic scenarios characterized by situations of extreme poverty (in different underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and to a lesser extent Latin America (THOMAS; FREESOLI 2009).

According to Rodrigues and Barbieri (2008), during the late 20th century, many expressions were created to demonstrate the diversity in proposals and the relevance of the movement for that period. Terms such as environmentally sound, community, low-cost technology from the solar era, the third millennium, participatory, progressive and with a human face.

The Appropriate Technology movement, due mainly to the criticisms received due to its deterministic, romantic, utopian and anti-modern character, has lost strength internationally. However, from the 1980s and 1990s, it started to be considered as an effective alternative for solving social problems (SILVA, 2012).

Nationally, from 1993 onwards, Appropriate Technology became Social Technology, a consensus reached between public agencies and academic sectors after the conclusion of several research projects on the theme, with the support of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (NCSTD). The new denomination for Social Technology sought, in addition to marking opposition to conventional technologies, aligning theoretical concepts with public social

policies, which were very present in the 1990s. From this new denomination, Brazil was cleared from the international scene – there are not international publications under the nomenclature of Social Technology. Thus, the current concept of Social Technology is considered an evolution of studies registered in the 1970s that dealt with what was then called Appropriate Technology (DAGNINO, BRANDÃO AND NOVAES, 2004; DAGNINO and NOVAES, 2005; RODRIGUES and BARBIERI, 2008; NOVAES and DIAS, 2009; FONSECA, 2010).

From this disconnection, the concept of STs was reconstructed through the participation and discussion of various civil society organizations, government institutions, companies, universities and research institutes (RTS, 2005). In turn, Dagnino, Brandão and Novaes (2004) and Novaes and Dias (2009) contributed to the development of this concept by directing it to a socio-technical approach. This approach, influenced by the constructivist view of the sociology of science, has spread over the past two decades and has given rise to a new field of studies, called sociology of technology. According to this approach, the development of a technological asset can only be understood from the social and political context of the various groups involved and cannot be determined only by scientific and technical criteria (SILVA, 2012).

For the Bank of Brazil Foundation (BBF), Social Technology can be defined as follows: “It comprises replicable products, processes, techniques or methodologies developed in interaction with the community and that represent effective solutions for social transformation”. For the Social Technology Institute (STI) (2007, p. 29) Social Technology is the “set of techniques, transformative methodologies, developed and/or applied in the interaction with the population and appropriated by it, which represent solutions for social inclusion and improving living conditions”. Nascimento, Binotto and Benini (2019, p. 94), reviewing the evolution of the Social Technology movement, explain that it is a movement which guides the development of products, processes, techniques or methodologies. It was designed considering the needs of users, through the union of traditional knowledge of communities with technical, academic and scientific knowledge, having as main objective the social inclusion of certain groups not covered by Conventional Technology.

Based on the survey of scientific production on the subject of Social Technology, Silva (2012) consolidated the essential elements of Social Technology, according to the main authors of the area:

- a) **to which it refers:** products, instrument, techniques, technologies, methodologies, method, process, procedures;
- b) **necessary condition:** re-applicable, transforming, simple, cost-effective;
- c) **origin:** developed and/or applied in the interaction with the community/population that appropriates it; developed under the cooperation between scientific and popular knowledge; associated with forms of collective organization; defined according to the technology-society context and with the involvement of interested actors;
- d) **purpose:** effective solutions for social transformation; social problem; social inclusion; improving living conditions; economic-social and environmentally sustainable development (SILVA, 2012, p. 44, emphasis added).

On the other hand, the need for a cooperation network for the effectiveness of the STs is highlighted. According to STI (2011), many actors can contribute through knowledge and social solutions, including a) public authorities b) civil associations; c) traditional populations and/or local communities (indigenous, *quilombolas*⁴, riverside population, *caíçaras*⁵, extraction workers, fishermen, family farmers and waste pickers); d) settled and resettled (Agrarian Reform Programs); e) higher education and technological institutions, mainly university extension; f) companies (through social responsibility); g) unions; h) cooperatives; and i) popular movements.

When researching federal laws on the topic of social technologies, it is ensured that this organizational methodology does not yet have its own specific rules issued by the State (as shown in Table 2), despite some specific government actions. It was observed that there were two articulations, to institutionalize the theme: Bill 3449/2008, which was prepared in partnership with the National Forum of Social Technology and Innovation, and which was not successful in processing in the Chamber of Deputies; and Bill 3329/15, of the Federal Senate that creates the National Social Technology Policy that is awaiting consideration by the Federal Senate, and the last procedure took place in 2017 (CAMARA DOS DEPUTADOS, 2020b).

Chart 2: Federal Legislation on Social Technology

Legislation	Description	Status (22/09/2020)
Bill 3449/2008	Institutes the National Social Technology Policy, creates PROTECSOL – Social Technology Program.	Shelved
Bill 3329/2015	Institutes the National Social Technology Policy.	Awaiting consideration by the Federal Senate
Law 13.243/2016	Provides for incentives to scientific development, research, scientific and technological training and innovation.	Ruling

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the government websites consulted.

Hence, it is observed that despite the STs included in the National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (2012-2015), no formal mechanisms for their promotion have been published to date. A discreet advance took place in 2016 with the enactment of Law 13,243/ 2016, which provided incentives for scientific development, research, scientific and technological training, in which it encourages the promotion and development and diffusion of social technologies (BRASIL, 2016).

According to Nascimento et al (2019) the treatment of STs concerning Conventional Technology was set out in Art. 5, in the initial text of the Law project, including the activities of STs in the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, establishing that ST activities should receive the same treatment as other activities developed in the science, technology and innovation sector. Nevertheless, the article was deleted, since the Constitution and Justice and Citizenship Commission considered that its content would interfere in the actions of the Executive Branch. Undoubtedly, the suppression of the article had a negative effect on STs, which therefore poses the risk of being regarded as a “second-class” technology, as a result of the lack of legitimacy on the part of the State.

On the other hand, among the non-governmental actions to promote the ST, the support of The Bank of Brazil Foundation (BBF) stands out, which has contributed significantly to the dissemination and reapplication of the TS. In fact, with this objective of reapplying TS, BBF created the Social Technologies Bank (STB) – a database which includes information on social technologies certified under the Banco do Brasil Foundation for Social Technology Award, considering that they have potential for reapplication (FBB, 2016).

Despite these governmental and non-governmental actions, the lack of formal mechanisms weaken the promotion of this social tool, causing: difficulty in accessing credits; risk-taking of innovation; partnership difficulties; distance between universities and TS movements; and low support from companies – as the legislation does not provide incentives for social responsibility (DAGNINO, 2005; NOVAES, 2010; LIMA; DAGNINO, 2013, FREITAS et al., 2013).

Therefore, it was found that – despite significant examples of the importance of ST – there are flaws in institutional mechanisms, clear rules and the governmental commitment to promoting Social Technologies. Consequently, Proposition 02 is accepted, thus evidencing that the *Brazilian institutional environment does not provide adequate subsidies for the creation and implementation of Social Technologies*.

Conclusion

Institutions are structures that shape, condition and release the actions and behaviors of individuals, in addition to reflecting the historical processes built by the subjects and groups of interest groups that interact with the environment. In the context of sociological new institutionalism, the fundamental question legitimates the acts performed by the actors. In this sense, an environment in which there is a high degree of institutionalization gains legitimacy, as its objectives and norms of conduct, mystified, are absorbed by the subjects' subjectivities.

Regarding the public sphere, institutions provide models and habits that facilitate social exchange by promoting legitimacy sustained by normative systems and cognitive interpretations. However, in the scope of public policies, more important than knowing that institutions matter, is to understand which ones matter and how they can provide means for the development of society. Thus, within sociological new institutionalism, it is privileged to understand the historical trajectory, social practices and norms, ideologies and models that impact the establishment of agendas and actions of public entities. In this sense, the institutional framework determines which actors – be they government agencies and bodies, parties, interest groups, national or international organizations, community, among others – manage to influence the decision-making process regarding the use of resources, in addition to which instances will be used to mediate conflicts.

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The general objective of this work was to analyze the contribution of the Brazilian institutional environment to the creation, promotion and implementation of Solidarity Economy Enterprises and Social Technologies.

It has been confirmed that SEEs need a constant governmental presence and several actors involved to develop organizational forms that contribute, in a significant way, to the transformation of society. There is evidence, however, that at present, SEEs do not have legislation that provides means of interrelation, assistance and exchange between the actors. The lack of a specific Legal Framework for this organizational configuration creates obstacles to the production and marketing of its products and services, in addition, hinders access to knowledge (training, technical assistance and technologies), credit for investments and working capital, in addition to access to other public policies. Therefore, we accepted Proposition 01: that the *Brazilian Institutional Environment does not provide sufficient subsidies for the creation, promotion and implementation of Solidary Economic Enterprises*.

Likewise, Social Technologies, whose objective is the generation of services and techno-productive alternatives aiming at social inclusion, need institutional support and cooperation networks to be effective. Nevertheless, it became evident that there are still no specific and formal norms in Brazil, making an institutionalization process impossible, considering that social processes, obligations or

circumstances assume the status of norms of thought and action (become incorporated by society). The lack of formal mechanisms weakens the promotion of this social tool, causing: difficulty in accessing credit; innovation risk-taking; partnership difficulties; distance between universities and ST movements; and low support from companies, because no legislation provides incentives for social responsibility actions. That can be seen and confirmed in the disclosure of proposition 02: that *the Brazilian Institutional Environment does not provide sufficient subsidies for the creation, promotion and implementation of social technologies*.

Consequently, the individuals who represent these organizational configurations must participate actively in the political agendas, because due to the limited alternatives to contemplate all the actors, the more organized movements are more likely to have their demands met and formalized. Thus, there is a limitation of this research regarding the fact that it did not collect information and testimonies directly from the managers of these alternative forms of organizations. Therefore, we suggest, as a research agenda, studies that use such methods. Additionally, studies that seek to verify the impacts of the fragile Brazilian institutional environment on the daily routines of SEE and ST movements could significantly contribute to these organizations that lack support, management and innovation mechanisms.

¹ Regarding the genesis of institutionalism, it is essential to note that functionalist sociology had already presented in its constitutive elements similar positions adopted by institutionalists. See, for example, Durkheim (1967) and the coercive character - as an external force and aggregating feature - of the social fact.

² This argument finds, in a way, echo with the institutionalist thinking of Hodgson (2008), when he argues that there are no “pure forms” of capitalism.

³ As an example of indirect progress, Decree No. 7,357 of 17 November 2010, which provides for the National Program for Popular Cooperative Incubators - PRONINC, can be cited; and Decree No. 7,358, of November 17, which instituted the National System of Fair and Solidary Trade - SCJS, creating its National Management Commission.

⁴ TN: A quilombola is an Afro-Brazilian resident of quilombo settlements first established by escaped slaves in Brazil.

⁵ TN: Caiçaras are the traditional inhabitants of the coastal regions of southeastern and southern Brazil. They form a distinct group of people, descended from indigenous people, Europeans and Africans. Their traditional way of life based on subsistence agriculture, hunting and fishing is threatened by real estate speculation, restrictive laws and declining fish stocks.

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