

BOOK REVIEW

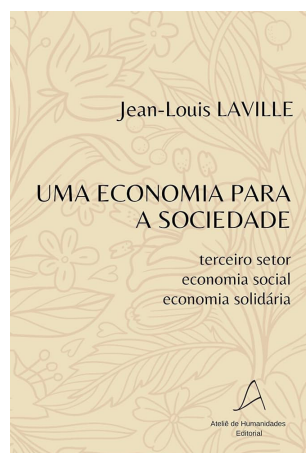
An economy for society: third sector, social economy and solidarity economy

Uma economia para a sociedade: terceiro setor, economia social e economia solidária

Una economía para la sociedad: tercer sector, economía social y economía solidaria

JOSÉ ROBERTO PEREIRA ¹

¹ UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE LAVRAS (UFLA) / FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS APLICADAS, DEPARTAMENTO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO PÚBLICA, LAVRAS – MG, BRAZIL



Laville, J.-L. (2023). *Uma economia para a sociedade: terceiro setor, economia social e economia solidária*. Ateliê de Humanidades Editorial. ISBN: 978-65-86972-18-4.

Keywords: Social economy. Solidarity economy. Associationism. Democracy. Politics.

Palavras-chave: Economia social. Economia solidária. Associacionismo. Democracia. Política.

Palabras clave: Economía social. Economía solidaria. Asociacionismo. Democracia. Política.

The launch of this book in Brazil in 2023 is an adaptation of *The social and solidarity economy: practices, theories, and debates*, a Portuguese edition published in 2018 by Almedina/CES. The purpose of this book is to analyze, through a broad historical contextualization, the democratic dynamics related to the social and solidarity economies and the third sector, from a critical point of view which reflects in theoretical and practical terms the associativism of Brazil, Latin American and Europe. Laville (2023) proposes resurrecting associationism based on its social practices, discarding various derogatory interpretations, through the problematization of the relations between democracy and the economy. The book is divided into three large sections in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. The first examines the history of associativism; the second its current nature; and the third offers an analysis which concentrates of the conceptions which turns a group of associative facts into an object of study, by seeking to delineate it.

To Laville (2023, p. 35) “[...] what attracts attention is the preoccupying fragility of democracy in the face of the unlimited nature of the economy” within the context of the first two decades of the 21st century. This leads him to reflect on the forms in which the phenomenon of associationism has taken under the designations of the “social economy” and the “solidarity economy”. The context of the great inequalities of the world, which has persisted for centuries, leads us to examine the place of the economy within society, consisting on one hand of the centralization of the market (liberalism and neoliberalism), and on the other, the centralization of the state (social democracy) with interventions in the market and society. To Laville (2023, p. 40), it is necessary to break away from this economic determinism of the state as well as the market against society, because “[...] a society which does not hold out the hope of individual and collective emancipation cannot sustain a minimum level of enthusiasm”. In this case, the author reappropriates the history of associations to explain current dynamics, as they have been proposed by Albert O. Hirschman, from the perspective of a political economy of society.

Book review submitted on December 22, 2023 and accepted for publication on January 08, 2024.

[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article’s translator

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120230241x>

Laville (2023) analyzes the political from the point of view of the writings of J. Habermas (2003a, 2003b, 2012) in terms of public spheres and democratic invention, using the exercise of citizen's rights, especially in relation to liberty and equality. He considers democracy to be the result of a search for balance between administrative and communicative power. Thus, Laville (2023, p. 46) believes that "[...] there exists the power to act collectively", even if the entire association is not structured by modern democratic principles.

To Laville (2023), the Social and Solidarity Economy should be explained based on a broad understanding of associationist phenomena as a "fact of society". The author recognizes the diversity of types of association, as well as the fact that not all of them are democratic. However, he notes that "[...] associations represent in their genesis a dimension of the public space derived from civil society and, at the same time, a mode of economic activity that is not submitted to the ownership of capital" (Laville, 2023, p. 53). From this perspective, he seeks to analyze the relations between associations and the democratic and solidarity project in the confluence of the right to collective expression of "self-governing associated citizens".

One of the initiatives of emancipation of associationism identified by Laville (2023) can be found in the popular economy, which is not interpreted based on the categories of the mercantile economy, but through their own logics, as the intellectuals of South America seek to do, such as J.-L. Coraggio for example. Meanwhile in North America, Laville (2023) identifies the popular economy as exercising citizen rights, as argued by Tocqueville, who considered the formation of associations necessary for the realization of egalitarian democracy.

After this report of various cases of emancipation movements among women and workers in the 19th and 20th centuries, Laville (2023, p. 95) recognizes that the formation of public spheres made the effective changes in these movements possible, and also believes it relevant to consider that "[...] the irreducible specificity of associationism consists of provoking an encounter with democracy".

Based on Latin American authors such as Mariátegui and Aníbal Quijano, Laville (2023) argues that alternative economies in this region have been invisible. Within this context, the author considers that the popular economy is synonymous with stagnation, situated in a traditional sector in opposition with the modern sector, focused on the accumulation of capital, which he describes as a "reserve army". This is why in his evaluation, the liberal opposition against self-governing associations seeks a "generalized democracy" for the poor, based on a discourse which invokes economic and political liberties so that "all" participate in the same democratic conquest.

From this perspective, Laville (2023, p. 143) argues that 20th century capitalism and more recently, a new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2009) have focused increasingly on individualism and "forgetting the common good". However, to him, anti-authoritarian and ecological movements put not only the redistribution of wealth on the agenda, but also political rights and participation in power. The feminist movement has added causes against hierarchies and the patriarchal system. These movements are characterized by political action and not as alternatives to power. The motivation is in the construction of a way of life which breaks with the "system". In this manner, Laville (2023, p. 173), on one hand, explores the visibility that economic solidarity has achieved in recent times, specifically in Brazil, with the creation of two support networks, Unitrabalho and the Technological Incubators of Popular Cooperatives (ITCPs). On one hand, Laville (2023, p. 180) identifies in Scandinavian countries new organizations and social movements known as "project promoters" which fulfill the role of the "co-construction of services". These organizations act in the form of associations and independent cooperatives of the state and the market, "[...] given that they both can provide resources in the fight for emancipation". Thus, Laville (2023, p. 315) delineates the solidarity economy as "[...] the desire to reaffirm democratic solidarity in the heart of the economy itself [...]", through services of proximity, fair commerce, solidarity finance, or social currency. Therefore, the solidarity economy brings public utility, collective interest, and the common good to the public debate. In reference to the latter, according to Laville (2023, p. 380), "it opens another heuristic path", which orients associationism for the common good, which is normally confused with mutual interest or general interest.

Laville (2023, p. 337) considers that "[...] what is determinant are the personal efforts made on social networks mobilized towards a common good". Despite considering relevant the typical forms of organization of the social economy, which guarantee equality among members, he concludes that they are insufficient for their democratic functioning. To him, we have to pay attention and use managerial means which stimulate self-reflection. From my understanding, these would be forms of social

management that we have addressed in our studies of Brazil¹, especially using the Habermasian approach, including participative methods of research² and planning. This is because, in Laville's evaluation (2023, p. 339) "[...] the weight of public authority and the predominance of the private company model have ended up suffocating them". The way out is considering that the force of associationism can influence public actions through public spheres, as the doctoral thesis of Machado demonstrates (2024), which deals with the effect of public spheres on the solidarity economy in Brazil. Laville (2023, p. 343) recognizes the need for this effort: "[...] it is essential to have the self-organization of civil society which is capable of representing the actors of the solidarity economy while at the same time drawing closer to other collective actions and social movements." Thus, he envisions the appearance of a public space policy which actually conforms to the deliberative policy proposed by Habermas (2003b). For this reason, his final evaluation is that the solidarity economy puts into practice the guidance according to which the plural economy and plural democracy mutually condition themselves.

Laville (2023) believes that participative democracy should articulate itself with instances of representative democracy, and in turn be strengthened by forms of direct democracy, through collective actions which seek to renew public debate and form global deliberative frameworks. In this context, it is possible to consider the existence of a plural democracy as well as a plural economy which complement each other. There is also plural management, which intermediates between the economy and democracy. Thus, we need to consider the contrasts between strategic management and social management³, whose paradigm is committed to social emancipation through deliberative democracy, as is the case of social management in Brazil oriented by the Habermasian approach.

The challenge of the Social and Solidarity Economy is also an epistemological challenge, to the extent that it demonstrates a self-sufficient cooperative rationality and a dialogue between researchers and social actors who are opposed to what Laville (2023, p. 376) calls "analyses which are held hostage to prejudice" and "reduced to an organizational or militant interpretation". In this manner, Laville (2023, p. 379) proposes that the social and solidarity economy should be approached from a perspective of social transformation and ecological transition.

Of great relevance to Brazilian readers due to the presented historical context and the critical analyses of the theoretical content which deals with the relationship between democracy and associativism, this work demonstrates the correlations between weaknesses and potential and indicates the need for management of the social and solidarity economy, and to my understanding social management is the most appropriate.

¹ See the publications of Cançado et al. (2015) and Campos and Pereira (2023).

² In relation to participative research, see Pereira (2017).

³ In relation to this see Pereira et al. (2023).

REFERENCES

- Boltanski, L., & Chiapello, É. (2009). *O novo espírito do capitalismo*. Editora WMF Martins Fontes.
- Campos, M. de S., & Pereira, J. R. (2023). Gestão social sob o crivo da linguagem do direito na mediação entre mundo-da-vida e sistema. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 21(4), e2022-0143. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120220143>
- Cançado, A. C., Pereira, J. R., & Tenório, G. (2015). *Gestão social: epistemologia de um paradigma*. Editora CRV.
- Habermas, J. (2003a). *Mudança estrutural da esfera pública: investigações quanto a uma categoria da sociedade burguesa*. Tempo Brasileiro.
- Habermas, J. (2003b). *Direito e democracia: entre facticidade e validade* (Vol. 2). Tempo Brasileiro.
- Habermas, J. (2012). *Teoria do agir comunicativo* (Vol. 2). Editora WMF Martins Fontes.
- Laville, J.-L. (2023). *Uma economia para a sociedade: terceiro setor, economia social e economia solidária*. Ateliê de Humanidades.
- Machado, J. de C. (2024). *Esferas públicas sobre economia solidária no Brasil* (Tese de doutorado). Universidade Federal de Lavras, Lavras, MG, Brasil. <http://repositorio.ufla.br/jspui/handle/1/58834>
- Pereira, J. R. (2017). *Diagnóstico participativo: o método DRPE*. Editora Perito.
- Pereira, J. R., Cançado, A. C., & Tenório, F. G. (2023). Gestão social como contraposição à gestão estratégica. *Desenvolvimento Em Questão*, 21(59), e13015. <https://doi.org/10.21527/2237-6453.2023.59.13015>

José Roberto Pereira

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1570-2016>

Full Professor of Public Administration and Social Management in the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences of the Department of Public Administration at the Federal University of Lavras (UFLA); CNPq productivity grant. Email: jrobertopereira2013@gmail.com

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

José Roberto Pereira: Conceptualization (Lead); Validation (Lead); Visualization (Lead); Writing- original draft (Lead); Writing- review & editing (Lead).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request to the corresponding author.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hélio Arthur Reis Irigaray (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9580-7859>

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Fabrizio Stocker (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro / RJ – Brazil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6340-9127>