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SOLIDARITY ECONOMY PUBLIC POLICIES FOR WOMEN IN ABC

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Abstract: This study carried out an analysis of the Solidarity Economy, focusing on the participation of women in public policies in some municipalities in the ABC region in order to understand the implementation of programs, projects and actions. The methodology used included a literature review on the subject, examining definitions, implementation in public policies and economic and social impacts for women. It was observed that the Solidarity Economy, albeit with reduced resources over the years, is present in municipal policies in order to promote inclusion, especially for groups marginalized from the formal labour market, such as women. This research highlights the importance of public policies in promoting the solidarity economy, particularly for women in situations of vulnerability and violence.

Keywords: Solidarity economy. Public policies. Women. Gender. ABC paulista.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the intersection between Solidarity Economy, gender issues and structural changes observed in economic models throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, focusing on public policies in the ABC region of São Paulo. The literature review reveals a plurality of views on the Solidarity Economy. Older authors have said that the Solidarity Economy emerges as a critical approach to the capitalist system. However, as will be pointed out below, the current economic system manages to absorb various social and economic demands, making the Solidarity Economy an axis of public policies and not a possibility of another economic system.

In this context, Solidarity Economy is still seen as a diversified movement that emphasizes solidarity, sustainability, equity, participatory democracy and pluralism. Although the approach apparently challenges the current economic model, due to its principles and practices, it is minimally present and contributing to tackling inequalities and exclusions in va-

rious spheres. With regard to the participation of women in the Solidarity Economy, authors have pointed out that they are a participatory and fundamental social group in this approach. However, other studies have pointed out that this participation is due more to the exclusion of these women from the formal labor market than to their desire to become entrepreneurs. In any case, research has shown that intense female participation in these spaces can promote gender equality and economic autonomy.

Studies and analyses have highlighted the vital importance of public policies for women and marginalized groups in Brazil. The need for an intersectional approach in the construction of public policies was noted, taking into account factors such as gender, race and class in order to understand and tackle the specific inequalities of these women, especially black women and those from more vulnerable socio-economic conditions. In addition, the studies presented also addressed the importance of the Solidarity Economy in this process as a strategy of resistance and a possibility of financial autonomy for these women.

In order to get a broader perspective on the issue, especially in the ABC region of São Paulo, information was researched on public centers that operate based on Solidarity Economy practices. The qualitative research focused on the municipalities of Mauá, São Bernardo do Campo, Diadema and Santo André, seeking to analyze information about solidarity economy practices and the participation of women in these spaces. This research approach allowed for a more in-depth understanding of local dynamics, policies to stimulate the Solidarity Economy and how gender issues are integrated into this context. It is important to note that the study for this article did not obtain sufficient information about the municipalities of São Caetano do Sul, Ribeirão Pires and Rio Grande da Serra, which poses the challenge of studying and understanding whether practices and policies exist in these places.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this research was based on a broad approach, comprising qualitative research to analyze the intersection between the solidarity economy, gender issues and structural changes in public policy. The qualitative approach adopted “means more than simply research that uses quantitative or numerical data” (Punch, 2021). This type of research allows for a broader understanding of social phenomena, in particular the situation of women in three municipalities in the ABC region in places that operate on the basis of Solidarity Economy practices.

Qualitative research in the social sciences focuses on the study of human behavior and social life in natural settings. Its richness and complexity mean that there are different ways of analyzing social life, and therefore multiple perspectives and practices in the analysis of qualitative data (. . .) (Punch, 2021, p.228)

The bibliographical research involved analyzing a variety of sources, such as books, recent academic articles, news, government websites and teaching materials related to the topic in question. This research aimed to gain an understanding of the subject by examining different theoretical and practical perspectives in the field of Solidarity Economy public policies for women in the ABC region.

Based on a systematic review of the themes of solidarity economy in Brazil, public policies on gender and solidarity economy, it was possible to draw up a national panorama in connection with the regional and municipal reality. This process allowed for a better understanding of the social, economic and gender dynamics on the regional Solidarity Economy agenda.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY APPROACH

The 20th century witnessed two important changes in global economic models. The first occurred after the Crisis of 1929, when Keynesianism emerged as a response to the Great Depression. In this model, economist John Maynard Keynes argued that the state should play an active role in the economy, intervening to stabilize the capitalist system in times of crisis. The second major change took place in the 1980s, marking the end of the Cold War and the transition from the Old World Order to the New World Order. In this context, neoliberalism gained strength, promoting deregulation of the economy, privatizations and the flexibilization of labour laws. However, in parallel with these changes, there was an increase in inequality from the 1980s-1990s, which was accompanied by an increase in global warming (Piketty, 2020b, p.573).

Piketty (2020a) takes a general historical approach to argue that inequality is ideological and political and that issues such as the market, competition, profit, wages, debt, among others, are social constructions that depend on the legal, fiscal, educational and political systems adopted by society. This is the ideology that maintains that the rich are rich because of their effort and merit, while the poor are poor because they are lazy and uncreative. In addition, the author points out that this ideological narrative justifies the domination of rich countries over poorer ones, based on the supposed superiority of their rules and institutions. He also points out that this inequality not only has economic and political impacts, but is also associated with culture and the environment. Thus, the current discussion focuses on the idea that capital, labor relations and the justification of inequality are largely shaped by ideologies that perpetuate and justify such social disparities.

The ideology of capitalism, capable of assimilating and integrating new ideas such as the solidarity economy, circular economy, collaborative economy and social innovation, among other proposals and practices, which were previously driven mainly by social and political movements, has weakened the effectiveness of public policies and the possibility of change in the economic system. Edwards (2020) warns of the need to rethink the conventional idea of economic growth, as it is jeopardizing global ecological stability. The author presents various economic approaches that reflect on this scenario. The theory of degrowth is one of them, which proposes a planned reduction in economic activity to tackle global environmental challenges. Based on this idea, Edwards (2020) opposes continuous growth and, like Piketty (2020a), highlights the social inequalities generated by market capitalism. It also highlights the need for a more inclusive approach that seeks solutions aligned with regenerative growth and the preservation of local socio-economic and ecological systems.

Based on this historical diagnosis, Kawano (2009) mentioned that in the face of an economic crisis, it is possible to see two broad options for society on an economic level: a return to a revised Keynesianism or the search for an economic system that prioritizes service to society over capitalism. The Solidarity Economy represents, in this sense, a movement that defends the latter option, emphasizing principles such as solidarity, sustainability, equity, participatory democracy and pluralism. Although it is a diverse and inclusive framework, the Solidarity Economy approach rejects the need for a rigid ideology and seeks to build organically on existing practices. The author highlights the importance of this movement in challenging the dominant neoliberal economic model, especially in the United States, where it has deep roots and needs a fundamental change in economic priorities.

Miller (2009) also criticized the current economic model, which prioritizes the profits of a few over the well-being of all, and highlighted the existence of various community and solidarity-based economic initiatives that seek alternatives to this social loss. These initiatives include workers' cooperatives, fair trade, intentional communities, alternative currencies, community social centers, credit unions for community development, community gardens, agricultural programs, etc. community-supported, community land funds and other possibilities. These enterprises share values such as cooperation, solidarity, shared responsibility and social justice, contrasting with the culture of competition in the prevailing economic model. Based on these examples, the author introduces the concept of solidarity economy and points out that it is a process of economic organization based on collective vision and action. This approach, which questions the conventional model - which shapes the common view of the economy - promotes a broader and more interconnected view of the economy, recognizing the diversity of possibilities in every sphere of economic life, from creation and production to consumption, transfer, governance and the allocation of surpluses.

Based on these notions, Coraggio (2011) outlined twenty-three guiding principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy, highlighting dignified and emancipatory work as essential for human development, promoting associative self-management. Solidarity cooperation is privileged over competition in social integration, while collective self-management proposes the shared administration of resources. Responsible production also includes environmental concerns and fair redistribution in order to economically integrate the most disadvantaged, respecting social rights and seeking equity in the distribution of surpluses.

One of the big names who defended these policies was Singer (2002) who “in 2003, took over the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy - SENAES in the Ministry of Labor and Employment, a position he held until 2016” (Who. . . ,). He defined the Solidarity Economy as an alternative system to capitalism, adopted by those marginalized or excluded from the labour market, but characterized by collective ownership and use of the means of production and distribution. For him, some examples that use this economic approach are: production cooperatives, enterprises with collective ownership, democratic management and division of profits between members. As the author points out,

The reinvention of the solidarity economy is so recent that it is risky to project its accelerated growth trend into the future. To a large extent, solidarity enterprises are the direct result of the bankruptcy of capitalist firms, the underutilization of land by latifundia (which, in Brazil, makes it possible to demand its expropriation for land reform purposes) and mass unemployment (Singer, 2002, p.113).

When comparing the Solidarity Economy in Europe and Latin America, França Filho Laville and (2004) highlight the differences in context, history and experience of some countries in these regions. They point out that in Brazil, the solidarity economy has had a strong influence from a “tradition of popular economy in the lives of large sections of the population”.

(. . .) This is where one of the greatest vocations of an economic project lies.

The popular and solidarity-based economy is currently taking shape through a number of new initiatives. Acting in the field of environmental education, as in the case of waste recycling associations or cooperatives, or in the field of more general education, as in the case of pre-university courses for underprivileged students, or even in the artistic field and

other lesser-known areas, these initiatives start from the need to tackle public problems. In this way, they tend to have a double dimension: that of acting in the public space, on the one hand, which is articulated, on the other, with the development of economic activities, which allows for the generation of decent income for those who are directly or indirectly involved in the initiative. In these practices, which are still the minority of cases, there is a double inscription related to two traditions of social struggle: that of a social movement acting to win rights, on the one hand, and that a movement fighting for income, closer to the cooperative and trade union traditions. (França Filho; Laville, 2004, p.180-181)

Cáritas Brasileira is an organization that, since its creation, has supported cooperative and associative actions by community groups. At the end of the 1990s, Cáritas Brasileira began a process of reorienting the Alternative Community Projects (PACs) to strengthen their role in supporting sustainable development initiatives. In this discussion, it was realized that the CAPs were part of a larger movement engaged in building economic alternatives based on solidarity. Based on this debate, Cáritas began to incorporate the Popular Solidarity Economy (EPS) as one of its Lines of Action for the period from 2000 to 2003, with the aim of promoting reflection on EPS from the perspective of Local and Sustainable Human Development, based on the experiences of the PACs and the partnerships aimed at developing a national movement, as well as encouraging the creation of integrated programs to support solidarity production chains (BRASILEIRA, 2003).

Gadotti (2009) linked the Solidarity Economy to sustainable development based on the search for good living, maintaining a dynamic balance with others and with nature. Based on this notion, the author emphasized that sustainability involves respect for life, opposing political domination, economic exploitation, injustice or selfishness. The author also points out that

The solidarity economy, as a cooperative and non-competitive way of producing and reproducing our existence, has an extraordinary educational component. Education for cooperation and self-management is necessary to train the people involved in solidarity enterprises to understand their company and manage it properly (Gadotti, 2009, p.33).

At the height of this discussion, Rocha Filho and Cunha (2009) addressed the important role of Solidarity Economy practices in promoting resistance strategies against economic and social exclusion, contributing to a critical and committed analysis of the establishment of successful solidarity enterprises that have improved people's quality of life. In addition, they point out that Solidarity Economy is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but can be implemented through various strategies, such as job sharing and the valorization of various forms of work. Furthermore, the authors recognized the importance of incorporating social identities, history and culture into Solidarity Economy practices.

From another perspective, Santos, Gonçalves and Sequeira (2021) addressed challenges and advances in the policy of promoting the Solidarity Economy in Brazil. An interesting point beyond the challenges of institutional management of this policy is the difference in government incentives and resources between the North and Northeast compared to the South and Southeast. By 2006, the Solidarity Economy policy had advanced in the institutionalization of social participation and established a more formal relationship with civil society. There were also advances in training, with social and professional qualifications, the holding of the first National Solidarity Economy Fair and the launch of the Solidarity Economy Atlas, which symbolically increased the visibility of the sector. In addition, the policy has made progress in the debate on territoriality, aligning itself with local development and the Solidarity Economy.

In any case, in the Brazilian context, the success of Solidarity Economy initiatives has depended, based on these authors, on internal and external structuring, public support, the development of a legal framework and institutionalization. Pita (2020) analyzed the construction of a legal framework for the Solidarity Economy in Brazil, focusing on its incorporation into federal public policies between 2003 and 2016. The author examined the legislative advances, their limitations and the prospects based on Bill No. 6.606/2019 (formerly Bill No. 4.685/2012). However, in 2023, due to the dismantling of these policies over the years, this process is stalled in a vote in the Constitution and Justice and Citizenship Committee.

As mentioned by Chiariello (2020), the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy (SENAES), which emerged in 2003, was a milestone that formalized a set of demands accumulated by various urban and rural social movements, aimed at public policies that would promote employment and income through solidarity economic enterprises. It facilitated the implementation and growth of these initiatives, allowing them to operate in a self-managed manner. Between 2012 and 2013, SENAES (the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economy) under the Ministry of Labor and Employment grew in importance, followed by a sharp drop in 2016-2017. The loss of *status* and transition to a sub-secretariat marked its decline, culminating in its extinction in 2019, transferring its functions to the Ministry of Citizenship, representing the end of a Solidarity Economy initiative as a decentralized and interdisciplinary public policy. This dismantling denoted the historical loss of the inclusion of the Solidarity Economy as an economic and social alternative.

Authors at the beginning of the 21st century have dedicated themselves to establishing the Solidarity Economy as an alternative to the prevailing economic system. However, as previously pointed out, due to capitalism's capacity for adaptation and high absorption,

this approach has been absorbed and integrated into market dynamics, which has created challenges in maintaining its original proposal in the face of conventional economic structures. Based on this notion, subsequent authors who have addressed this issue have distanced themselves from this original proposal and associate the Solidarity Economy with society and the economic environment other ways.

In 2023, there is a significant resumption of policies aimed at the Solidarity Economy. The National Secretariat for Popular and Solidarity Economy (Senaes) of the Ministry of Labor and Employment began setting up the Interministerial Committee in June, while the Finance and Taxation Committee of the Chamber of Deputies approved the creation of the National Solidarity Economy Policy (PNES) and the National Solidarity Economy System (Sinaes), including the regulation of enterprises in this segment (Ministry of Labor and Employment, 23/06/2023). This approval also implies the creation of the National Register of Solidarity Economic Enterprises, facilitating access to public policies (Machado, 14/08/2023). In addition, in October, the federal government reinstated the National Solidarity Economy Council, resuming activities after five years of paralysis (Verdélío, 18/10/2023).

SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND WOMEN

Within this legal and regional context of the Solidarity Economy, we can see the significant leadership of the women's and feminist movements. This approach not only promotes women's active participation in solidarity enterprises, but also strengthens their autonomy, expanding their economic and political influence. In addition, this perspective offers opportunities for building rights, educational growth and broadening gender awareness (Moraes *et al.*, 2021).

Integrated public policies coordinate efforts between multiple sectors and government agencies, aiming to solve complex social problems in a holistic way, such as domestic and family violence against women, with collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations and communities to provide comprehensive approaches (Bourlegat; Silva; Borges, 2020). In this direction, Farah (2004) contextualizes Brazil from the 1970s and 1980s, marked by changes in relations between the state and society. During this period, there was a rise in the gender agenda as part of the search for democratization and rights. The focus on public policies, especially income generation for women, aimed to combat poverty and promote female autonomy, in line with the struggles of feminist movements and seeking a more inclusive outlook, reflecting the opportunities for more egalitarian policies and the influence of international feminism. This approach represented a significant step forward in the quest for gender equality and social and economic inclusion.

Santos and Nascimento (2020) express the importance of an approach in public policies, especially in the context of the pandemic, in order to understand and combat the various forms of oppression faced by women, i.e. one that considers factors such as gender, race, class and other markers of difference. As the authors point out, intersectionality is essential to recognize the specific inequalities that black and working class women face, resulting from a history of racial and gender oppression. Finally, they point out the absence of an intersectional approach in public policies, highlighting how this can result in exclusion and limited access to services and rights for these women. This gap also has significant impacts on efforts to combat domestic violence and promote gender equality.

Schwenck (2019) discusses the dynamics of solidarity between women in the São Paulo Metropolitan Region, based on the experience of the Association of Women in Solidarity Economy of the State of São Paulo (AMESOL), highlighting the experiences of migrants from the North and Northeast in search of better opportunities. It discusses the socio-economic challenges faced by women in Brazil, such as job insecurity, restricted access to social security and the persistence conservative attitudes that maintain gender inequality. It points to the solidarity economy as a strategy of resistance, emphasizing the need to broaden conceptions of solidarity and public policies to meet women's demands.

In the same vein, Hillenkamp (2019) points out that

AMESOL is a meeting place for women who, for the most part, have a previous history of political involvement, whether in the solidarity economy, the feminist movement or other spaces of participation. Forged by specific causes and contexts, these trajectories complement and reinforce each other in some cases and come into tension in others, thus defining the contours of solidarity economy and feminist. (Hillenkamp politics, 2019, p.269)

In addition, the author addresses an issue that will be discussed in the following sections of the article: the inclusion of women in the solidarity economy and the consideration of gender relations beyond their significant presence in this scenario. Based on this notion, the author suggests that the exclusively female spaces of the feminist movement, which discuss gender inequalities based on women's invisible work, should find complex alliances with mixed movements, such as the solidarity economy. Finally, she emphasizes the need to build new shared visions, a long and challenging process that requires expanding struggles, overcoming differences and threatening established achievements and positions (Hillenkamp, 2019).

Coutor and Rubim (2021) analyze the Muheres Mil program in Bahia between 2011 and 2014, highlighting its effectiveness and limitations, in which they emphasize the program's purpose of raising women's self-esteem and social visibility by providing specific courses for those in vulnerable situations. Despite not showing any improvement

The article sought to explore the importance of feminist policies and the solidarity economy in empowering women and rescuing their cultural identity. As in other research, it emphasized the relevance of this approach to meeting the needs of women in vulnerable conditions, enabling them to develop skills and generate income.

Hernandorena (2020) is a Spanish writer who elaborates on the relationship between the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and the Feminist Economy (FE), highlighting that both share a critique of the conventional economy, seek a fairer economy, recognize the equal dignity of all people, seek to overcome discrimination, value work that promotes human development, defend sustainability and prioritize cooperation over competition. In addition to the work presented by the authors, she points to the need for a deeper convergence between these approaches, especially in the sphere of reproduction and the transformation of social relations. In this way, it is mentioned that feminist authors involved in SSE (Social and Solidarity Economy) are committed to uniting these two approaches in search of a fairer and more egalitarian economy.

This literature review has shown the uniqueness of the Solidarity Economy's approach to the gender issue, in which there is massive participation by women, often due to their exclusion from the informal labor market. In this direction, in 2023, research by Claudia Goldin, Nobel laureate in Economics, revealed an unexpected pattern in the participation of women in the labor market over time.

This unexpected pattern in the curve of female participation in the labor market was explained by Goldin as the result of structural changes and changes in social norms related to women's responsibilities at home and in caring for the family and children. This more historical study also helps us to understand the differences that exist today between countries with regard to the gender pay gap. Countries have different stages of institutional and technological development and social norms, would have an effect on the greater participation and appreciation of women in the labor market. The researcher has a wealth of academic articles published in the most respected international journals in the field of economics. Her publications are continuous, with important results for understanding the labor market today and even for the context of the labor market during and after the pandemic. (Gonçalves, 2023)

Goldin's study not only sheds light on the current gender pay gap at different stages of institutional and social development, but also contributes to understanding the participation and valorization of women in the economy. As highlighted earlier, Solidarity Economy not only promotes women's economic autonomy, but also plays an essential role in the valorization and inclusion of socially and economically vulnerable groups, demonstrating itself as a platform for equity and social empowerment.

SOLIDARITY ECONOMY EXPERIENCES IN THE ABC REGION OF SÃO PAULO

So far, this article has presented a bibliographical review of the history of the Solidarity Economy, focusing on both its progress and its challenges over the decades. It has highlighted the evolution of this approach, transforming it into a public policy within the current economic system. It also emphasized the analysis of the Solidarity Economy from a gender perspective and the growing incorporation of the Feminist Economy perspective. Based on this theoretical framework, the

following study will discuss the experience of contact and research carried out in the Public Centers of Mauá, São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema, which use solidarity economy practices in municipal public policies. It is worth noting that these were the most accessible cities for obtaining research information during the period established for the analysis.

Santo André Public Solidarity Economy Center

When looking for information about the Public Solidarity Economy Center in Santo André, it turned out that the place mentioned on the *internet* was not active. However, other initiatives were identified in the city, such as the Creative Economy Fair (when). It was also possible to identify the Grande ABC Intermunicipal Consortium, which held a Training Workshop for the Solidarity Economy Strengthening Project in March 2023 (Consórcio..., 2023).

At the last Municipal Culture Conference held in the city in October 2023, the Creative Economy axis was presented, highlighting the participation of civil society representatives, including women, artists from various segments and other groups. This axis highlighted the importance of culture for socio-economic development, seeking policies that strengthen production chains, boost artistic and cultural expressions, and enhance the generation of work, employment, income, and the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the country's GDP, with future Solidarity Economy initiatives in cities such as Mauá, São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema (Municipality of Santo André, 2023).

Mauá Public Solidarity Economy Center

The Public Center for Solidarity Economy in Mauá is an institution that seeks to foster, guide, qualify and inform public policy related to the solidarity economy in the municipality of Mauá. This policy is part of the broader social and economic development strategies under the responsibility of the municipality's Department of Labor and Income, as established in 2011 (Zerner, 2015).

In 2014, the Public Solidarity Economy Center was established, but faced a period of inactivity due to changes in management. However, in mid-2021, despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, the center was revitalized. One of the first actions after its reopening was the launch of the "Itinerant Fair" in June 2021, which had 9 exhibitors in the first edition and grew to 43 registered entrepreneurs in the last edition. In , the traditional "Mauá Craft Fair", which has been for more than two decades, was revived. The solidarity cafeteria at the Municipal Palace was also reactivated in the same year, demonstrating a revival of activities. The center later developed other initiatives to support the solidarity economy in the region.

After exchanging information with the management of the Public Center, it was possible to get a more detailed and closer understanding of the implementation of the Solidarity Economy there. The center stands out for offering a variety of training courses, covering areas such as dressmaking, cooking and even an electrician's course. Although the latter is not directly associated with the solidarity economy initiative, it is notable that it has the support of the Public Center, which provides the space for the course. The presence of the electrician's course, linked to the municipality's Department of Work and Income, illustrates an intersection of audiences and activities, highlighting the breadth of initiatives within this space.

In addition to training courses, the center plays an active role in organizing and participating in fairs. A notable example is the Agro-ecological and Handicraft Fair, where some of the chocolate sellers have acquired qualifications through a course offered by the center, which originated from the production of Easter eggs. The people involved sustainable handicrafts who take part in this fair demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by using recyclable materials in their creations.

In addition, the Centre also coordinates and participates in an itinerant fair, where each entrepreneur can take part individually, but there is an emphasis on organizing in groups. Another notable action is the partnership with the private sector, which results in the organization of fairs held in factories, promoting the solidarity economy and strengthening interaction with the community.

Braskem launched the "Creative Sewing" project in partnership with Senai and the City Hall, in which the company trained 36 students, reusing discontinued employee uniforms to create items such as bags and cases. This project aimed not only to promote local skills and generate income for families, but also to contribute to the circular economy, avoiding the waste of materials and uniting social and environmental actions for the benefit of the community. The classes took place at the Mauá Solidarity Economy Center, and the items produced were marketed and distributed in the region (Fidelis, 2023).

The Department of Work and Income, through the Solidarity Economy Division, leads the project of two solidarity snack bars, which involves local entrepreneurs. This initiative not only provides a source of income for the vendors, but also makes quality products available at affordable prices for those who visit a municipal park. According to the management of the public center, it is essential to promote solidarity entrepreneurial awareness, highligh-

ting the importance of cooperation and a focus on the collective for the success of the Solidarity Economy. Although there are no catalogued figures for the center, the perception is that the initiatives have a positive impact, improving the conditions of the people involved. As such, the solidarity economy is seen as a complementary income option, since most people are still looking for formal jobs.

In the context of the analysis between the formulation of national policies and their implementation in the municipalities, we can see a complex dynamic in which certain aspects are similar while others differ. In the scenario of great economic vulnerability and de-industrialization in the ABC region of São Paulo, the Solidarity Economy plays a key role, acting as a fundamental complement to income generation. Although national policies may establish general guidelines, the operationalization of these policies in the municipalities reveals significant differences, with nuances that reflect local realities. In this sense, Solidarity Economy is emerging as a support and livelihood strategy for communities impacted by the economic crisis and the transformation of the industrial profile of the ABC region. Its practices are visible in Mauá, where a support network is offered to families in a challenging context, providing complementary income support and seeking to fill gaps left by broader policies.

At the Public Solidarity Economy Center in Mauá, it is clear that women play a vital role in solidarity economic activities. , compared to men, women face greater inequalities, since formal employment seems to be less available to them. For many women, the Solidarity Economy represents a source of supplementary income due to the absence of public policies and substantial legal recognition in this field. Women's participation in this area is often driven by economic needs, although some also embrace the principles related to Solidarity Economy.

For Schneider (2010), the Solidarity Economy is emerging as an alternative to address inequalities, especially among the poorest women. There are two main aspects to this scenario. Firstly, the solidarity economy challenges the conventional divisions between the private, the domestic and the public, between the monetary and the non-monetary, creating intermediary spaces that stimulate discussion and the search for changes in women's daily lives and working environments. Secondly, women have progressively found a voice to present their ideas, combat gender and ethnic prejudices and claim their rights, not only in the solidarity economy, but also in feminism, the women's movement and other spaces. The solidarity economy is stands out as one of those environments conducive to this transformation.

In Mauá's Public Solidarity Economy Center, there is a notable disconnect between the ideas presented by Schneider and the reality faced by women. This is because although women's participation is highlighted due to the lack of opportunities in the formal market, there is a gap between the potential described by the author and the real limitations faced by these women. The pressing question is: how can this theoretical potential be transformed into practice, enabling them to be leaders in an environment where the options are restricted? There is a need to develop concrete and accessible strategies to empower and strengthen these women, enabling them to achieve leadership roles within the Solidarity Economy. This requires a closer look to identify and overcome the practical barriers that prevent the proposed ideas from being realized, making them applicable and effective within this specific context.

Work and Art Center in São Bernardo do Campo

The Work and Art Center, known as Nutrarte, has played a key role in promoting the solidarity economy and social inclusion in São Bernardo do Campo. After a visit and conversation with Nutrarte's board of directors, it was possible to obtain some information about the place, such as the activities carried out, the effects of the services offered on the community, among others. The center has been operating for over a decade, offering therapeutic and income-generating workshops within the Psychosocial Care Centers (CAPS). Its main objective is to support users in their search for social inclusion work, in line with the principles of the solidarity economy.

The Center serves users referred by Mental Health Services and Basic Health Units. It offers a variety of workshops, including cooking, sewing, carpentry, visual arts, jewelry, IT, thrifting and printing. Participants not only have access to these therapeutic activities, but they also begin to sell the products they create, taking some of the profits home with them, while others are used to replenish materials and resources. Users are guided through the Singular Therapeutic Project (PTS), in which they follow suggestions from the health unit about what can be worked on with them.

Similarly to Nutrarte, Mazaroa, Matsukuraa and Lussia (2020) argue that the solidarity economy and mental health join forces to support the psychosocial and economic rehabilitation of people affected by mental disorders and substance use. Together, they seek to promote social inclusion and the effective participation of mental health service users in the world of work. This partnership has developed through collective and participatory management initiatives, resulting in public policies that support this integration.

In this sense, the aim of the nucleus to make all the members of the income generation group self-sufficient, with part of their earnings reinvested in resources and materials. Although the municipality provides support with a technical team, physical space and maintenance, the organization of the group is their responsibility. The products marketed through internal and external partnerships, including fairs, collaborations with private companies, a presence on social networks and visitors to the center.

With regard to women, it was mentioned that there is a greater female presence on some fronts, such as sewing, jewelry making, printing and cooking, while other areas, such as carpentry, can be more male-dominated. This difference may be related personal preferences, but also to the characteristics of the disorders that users suffer from. In other words, there is a greater tendency for women to suffer from mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, while men are generally associated with drug and alcohol problems. Based on this notion, welcome and emotional support seem to be key factors that keep women at Nutrarte longer, even when they are ready to move on, i.e. when they can be discharged.

A study by Alves *et al.* (2020) showed that handicraft groups played an important role in improving the self-esteem, empowerment and capacity-building of women attending health facilities. As well as reducing anxiety and depression, they provided social support and boosted self-esteem recovery in health facilities. These groups have also generated income through external activities, contributing to the economic well-being of the participants.

Overall, Nutrarte has a significant impact on the lives of its participants, promoting the solidarity economy and providing practical skills that were neglected at one point in their lives. They not only acquire technical skills, but also develop values of sustainability, so-

lidarity and autonomy. These solidarity economy practices have a direct impact on these people's lives, from organizing simple everyday tasks to promoting more supportive and sustainable relationships. In addition, the influence and importance of the nucleus in the lives of vulnerable women is evident, because as mentioned in other studies and in the experience of Nutrarte, they acquire greater confidence and autonomy, as well as a significant improvement in their mental disorder.

The Solidarity Economy practices present in Nutrarte, like those in other municipalities, do not compete with the prevailing economic system. Instead, they aim to complement income and offer support to more marginalized social groups. In any case, the space offers autonomy, a better life and other possibilities for users, demonstrating an alternative and solidary path the more traditional economic structures.

House of Solidarity Economy in Diadema

The "Diadema + Cooperativa e Solidária" or "Coopera Diadema" program coordinates and strengthens the solidarity economy in the municipality, integrating municipal public policies and is linked to the Secretariat for Economic Development and Labor (SEDET).

It is also the program's responsibility to organize the sector through the creation of rules and legal frameworks, developed on the basis of Municipal Solidarity Economy Plan, the existing specific economy laws and Mayor Filippi Jr's 2021-2024 government program, always acting in conjunction with other areas of the municipal government and with partner and collaborating institutions. (Instituto Centro de Memória Atualidades and IPEPS (Incubadora Pública de Empreendimentos Populares e Solidários de Diadema), 2023, p.22-23)

The Public Incubator for Popular and Solidarity Enterprises, created by Municipal Law No. 301, provides support to groups and enterprises with a focus on collective work sharing and socio-cultural and environmental results. The Public Center for Solidarity Economy acts as a multifunctional space to promote integration between various enterprises, both governmental and non-governmental, with a view to developing and disseminating the Solidarity Economy. The Solidarity Economy House, located in the former residence of Diadema's first mayor, houses the Solidarity Economy Public Center and the Public Enterprise Incubator, offering resources for the productive development of the incubated enterprises (Coopera. . . .).

After a visit to the Casa de Economia Solidária in Diadema, it was possible to obtain bibliographic material that gave an overview of the organization and activities carried out there. According to the information, the House offers a variety of training and assistance, such as solidarity economy practices, business management, *marketing*, a course on economic viability and another on e-commerce, the latter of which is currently under development. These courses are promoted in collaboration with civil society and the town hall, and cover topics such as hygiene and food handling.

In addition, the main objective of the space is to promote the development of solidarity-based ventures, offering support and structure to individual and collective entrepreneurs, such as cooperatives and associations. It currently has 712 entrepreneurs, 12 of whom have already been incubated and 3 of whom are in the pre-incubation process. These entrepreneurs seek to create businesses that follow the principles of the solidarity economy, aiming for self-management, income generation and the economic and social strengthening of the local community. The incubation of these entrepreneurs lasts a period of 4 years, and at the end of the program they are expected to be self-sufficient.

According to a document prepared with the collaboration of the IMA (Instituto Centro de Memória & Atualidades) and IPEPS (Incubadora Pública de Empreendimentos Populares e Solidários de Diadema), Solidarity Economy Enterprises (EES) are divided into nine networks: cooperatives of waste pickers and recyclable materials; women's groups; solidarity food groups; digital and technology platform ventures; sewing ventures; art ventures; handicrafts and the creative economy; socially vulnerable solidarity groups; janitorial ventures and trade and service ventures.

After participating and getting involved in the solidarity economy course run by the House of Solidarity Economy, it was observed that the entrepreneurs' main objective was to obtain permission to take part in events held in the city. This provisional permit is possible after completing this training course and also the hygiene and food handling training course, if the enterprise is in the food sector. The content of the course covers the fundamental principles of the solidarity economy, its contextualization at municipal level, the contributions it makes to society and the local economy, as well as the legislation governing this issue. Other relevant issues related to the solidarity economy and its impact on the municipality are also explored.

As highlighted in the booklet of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil - CONIC and the Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy - FBES (2010), the solidarity economy plays a fundamental educational role when it promotes cooperation and self-management as necessary pillars in the training of people involved in solidarity enterprises. This can be seen in Diadema, for example.

The entrepreneurs assisted by the Solidarity Economy House face difficulties in the conventional labor market, especially due to their age, which averages 48 years. This difficulty is a reality faced by many, leading them

to seek alternatives for their subsistence and economic development, finding in the solidarity economy an opportunity to actively participate in the market, even after encountering barriers in the conventional labor market due to their age.

In addition to the age issue, another point highlighted during the visit was the participation of women in the program. Around 61% of the entrepreneurs assisted by the Casa are women, totaling 357, while 39% are male. This predominance of women is partly due to the greater difficulty face in finding employment in the formal market, often aggravated by maternity and the limited supply of work.

As pointed out by Almeida, Oliveira and Hoepner (2019),

this insertion into informal spaces promotes the process of resistance to the capitalist system, which presents itself in such a way as to accentuate inequalities. If access to formal work is difficult for society as a whole, it is even more so for women. They are one of the marginalized segments of society who suffer from the impact of contemporary transformations, i.e. they have historically always lagged behind men and even though they occupy the same positions in the world of work, the (Almeida; Oliveira; Hoepner, 2019, p.174)

In addition to the gender issue, Casa also supports and encourages an inclusive approach by prioritizing criteria such as female, racial and LGBTQIAPN+ representation when registering individual and collective entrepreneurs. Considering the information gathered in the four municipalities, Diadema stands out not only because of the support and encouragement of the municipal administrations, but also because of the engagement of civil society, which has historically led significant social struggles. This historical involvement was fundamental to the widespread achievement of public policies, especially with regard to the Solidarity Economy.

CONCLUSION

In the current scenario, marked by challenges such as economic and gender inequalities, limited access to essential services, as well as environmental and social concerns, public policies in Solidarity Economy have emerged as a set of fundamental collective concepts and practices to address and confront these problems that impact society on multiple levels. They still act, as noted, as effective means to mitigate some economic disparities, to promote social and economic inclusion, and to provide opportunities for marginalized groups such as women.

Despite the drastic reduction in resources allocated to these policies at national level, the results of this research reveal that in some municipalities, Solidarity Economy practices are operating and enabling significant transformations in the lives of participants. These programs, based on the principles of solidarity, cooperation, self-management and sustainability, act as essential tools for dealing with contemporary challenges. Even in the face of financial limitations, the local implementation of these policies demonstrates their effectiveness in promoting economic, social and cultural opportunities, providing support to marginalized communities and generating measurable positive impacts.

On the other hand, it is necessary to take stock of these policies. While there have been many achievements in recent decades, the setbacks faced cannot be ignored. Even in the face of progress, Solidarity Economy policies have come up against challenges and obstacles, such as a lack of ongoing resources, limited recognition and insufficient support to broaden their impact. This is evident in the obstacle of the legal framework, currently in the process of being paralyzed by the Brazilian Congress, as well as in the reduction of programs and projects, as observed in the case of Santo André.

A major innovation in the Solidarity Economy, as observed in research intersecting with the Feminist Economy, is the growing prominence of women, with a recognition of the role of women in this sector's ventures. In addition, there is the emergence of other social groups, such as the black community, the LGBTQIAP+ community and artists in general who are involved in approaches that have now been reframed, such as the creative economy and the collaborative economy. These rising movements are shaping a new face of the Solidarity Economy, emphasizing a more diverse and inclusive approach.

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