

# **“Social and Solidary Economy, Land Development and New Paradigms of Production and Consumption: is another development model possible?”<sup>1</sup>**

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## ABSTRACT

In the current scenario, thinking about and discussing the possibility of a new development model is an opportune and pertinent task, but it is also daring and full of obstacles, which range from the theory-concept sphere, to the practical and ideological ones. As can be noticed, throughout the evolution of the capitalist production system, concurrently with the material, production and technological advances conceived, the generation of a mass of excluded and impoverished individuals and of a production and consumption pattern that neglected environmental preservation and corrupted the idea of “good living” was observed. Faced with this scenario, it is believed that there is space to promote social and solidary economy (SSE) practices and sustainability. This theme has been recently raised and it contributes greatly when constructing a sustainable development model. However, related studies are still very scarce, especially given the difficulty of measuring the sector (Tremblay 2009). Among the main attributes of the SSE, incorporating the question of sustainability as an inherent part of its proposals and of its development model is possible. With cooperation, self-management and solidarity based on mutual interests, common goals and efforts, together with a broad participation, it is possible to promote self-sustainable practices, capable of carrying out the production of goods and services with social and environmental responsibility (Morais, 2010). This study aims at fostering this discussion, in addition to analyzing some innovative land development experiments in Brazil, that fit the “new production and consumption paradigms” (Morais & Borges, 2009).

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## **1. Introduction**

The phenomenon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial and Technological Revolution, which happened in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was conceived from the technical and productive advances of countries such as the USA, Germany, Japan and France, in the context of the loss of English hegemony, marked a new era of capitalist development in the world, giving rise to the cycle of the combustion engine. A new production and consumption pattern was constituted from the productive and technological point of view, based on modern production and commercialization systems, where the symbolic element of this irreversible transformation was the automotive vehicle, as well as the use of a series of products prompted by electricity and by the advances in the durable goods industry, with high production and consumption levels.

In Brazil, this production and consumption pattern was permanently constituted, in the second half of the 1950s, through the “heavy” industrialization process, in the JK government (the Goals Plan), that boasted the slogan “50 years in 5”. During this period, Brazil incorporated a productive and technological apparatus that can be compared with the most advanced ones in existence in the capitalist world. As a matter of fact, during a relatively short period of fifty years (1930-1980), being more accelerated between 1950-1979, we were capable of building a modern economy, incorporating the production and consumption patterns of developed countries.

During this period, the accelerated industrialization followed by fast urbanization multiplied the investment and the generation of employment and income opportunities. However, concurrent with the significant material progress, the increase of inequality and revenue concentration was seen, as well as the increase in “urban” poverty and misery, exported from the open country to the cities, where many came searching for new opportunities and, now, live with a consumption pattern that requires a higher income level, typical of developed countries. In other words, weighing the fast economic growth, the rapid social mobility and the restricted generalization of the modern consumption patterns, it can be observed that such production and consumption patterns showed themselves to be eminently centralizing and not inclusive, not to mention that it completely neglected the environmental issue. This fact becomes even more worrying after the 1980s, that inaugurated a period of decrease in economic activity (economic crisis) with high inflation rates, in a scenario that became known,

from the economic point of view, as the “lost decade”, although from the social point of view, the re-democratization meant an important and necessary advance in the redemption of the social debt in our country.

Later on, the 1990s began with a radical change in the international financial scene and with the implementation of a “new development policy”, based on the policies advocated by the Washington Consensus, fundamentally characterized by: liberation of foreign commerce and of the entry and exit of capital flow, privatization of state companies, reduction in size of the State apparatus and the concession of public utility services to private initiatives. In other words, we embraced neo-liberalism and the practices conceived one decade before with Reagan in the USA and Thatcher in England. Its effects were remarkable and, especially with regard to inflation control, the changes introduced in the Brazilian economy (liberalization, deregulation, privatization, etc.) a new scene of intensification of marked economic and social inequalities emerged, this time increased by the significant and terrifying increase in unemployment and informal market, followed by the national work market becoming more precarious and less structured.

In Brazil and in the world, the increase in unemployment, for those who experienced it, was followed by a series of measures to handle it and by the need to survive, giving rise to alternative practices, in what we know as social or solidary economy, and also to the spread of experiments in local development. These proposals, which have been implemented over the last ten years, bring important elements to the formulation of a new, broader approach, with a structuring character, that emphasizes on new production and consumption modes.

In a context where great international capital imposes itself as a driving force for the economy and creates a social order guided by market logic, in which the effects such as a growth in inequality, poverty, exclusion and environmental devastation are visible, many of the experiments performed by civic awareness organizations and networks aspire for autonomy and recognition of new political agents. They understand development in its full sense, as overcoming social, and environmental deficits and fostering productive inclusion.

In the current scenario, marked by the economic and financial crisis – and why not by the paradigm crisis also -, the goal of guaranteeing a dignified life for everyone, with emphasis on the social and productive inclusion, gains a special meaning and established itself as an “anti-cyclic” initiative, that asserts itself through the defense of

rights. This way, it is believed that the economic, social and environmental crisis that we are experiencing makes room for building something new, including, with the necessary and important participation of the entire society, transforming the lower social layers into political subjects of their territory, the latter understood not only from the perspective of space, but as a locus of production and reproduction of life, in its material, social, economic and cultural fields.

We start from the premise that the continuity of this current model of economic organization will lead to a higher concentration of revenue and wealth, will not fulfill the social inclusion role, and such a model also neglected, neglects and will continue neglecting issues of environmental sustainability and preservation of natural resources. Going even further, surpassing such a production and consumption pattern means overcoming a centralizing and excluding socioeconomic structure based on local oligarchies. Moreover, this is the moment to perform a critical review of the development/underdevelopment concept, seeking to comprehend the Brazilian economic peculiarity besides the characteristics of “underdevelopment”. The current development theory separates those who “made it” and tell the rest what goal they have to achieve. A new paradigm assumes another development reference that certainly is not the American standard of living, since it is already clear that it cannot be universalized.

This idea comes from the verification of some attributes produced by capitalism, such as, for example, the generation of income and power inequality; competitive relations demanded by the capitalist market and the generation of impoverished sociability forms (personal gain over solidarity); growing exploitation of natural resources at a global level and the catastrophic consequences *vis-à-vis* life conditions on Earth. In other words, the hegemonic development model used currently has shown itself unable to join the general well being, rights respect and environmental sustainability issues to economic growth.

It is worth noting that this is not a criticism leveled at the capitalist system, nor at the technological advances and production and consumption modernization processes, but in the sense that we need to rethink specific issues which are crucial to the socioeconomic and environmental development in this new century. This isn't about choosing capitalism or socialism either; reform or revolution, but to verify the need of reformulating the life model and the sociability spheres, making space for new ideas and actions that are more inclusive and that are not harmful to the environment.

We are therefore experiencing a (re)readings, (re)visions, (re)analysis, (re)examinations context, searching for new ways of thinking the way of life, in a society that has suffered the effects and consequences (exclusion, inequality, poverty, etc.) of the standards imposed and acquired by the neoliberal model in effect since the 1990s.

As for the development discussion, the current tendency in thinking, planning and endowing it with a more humane and sustainable character is certainly not an easy task. However, it is relevant and pertinent, especially nowadays, marked by the consequences of the recent world crisis, despite from a financial point of view, data and some analysis pointing to it being surmounted, we understand that crucial issues concerning social inclusion and environmental sustainability aspects, were not discussed and faced. By discussing new development paradigms, there is the mandatory need to discuss production and consumption patterns that, in turn, incorporate themselves into the public debate and to the process of formulation and implementation of public policies.

As was already mentioned before, it seems to us that the development proposals carried to term up until now are experiments that generate: a higher concentration of wealth, an increase social inequality and poverty, reinforce the discrimination of women and unprivileged groups, pollute and degrade the environment, in addition to allowing the increase of the “competitiveness” element as being of extreme importance to the different areas’ development strategies. It is necessary to move from the “competition” paradigm to the “collaboration” one, at least for survival reasons.

This way, this text has as its main goals, promoting this discussions, as well as presenting some experiments that are being performed in Brazil, that help us in understanding the main elements that could point to new production and consumption paradigms, such as, for example: a) increase in the use of local labor, including less qualified youngsters and adults; b) “shortening” the business circuits (production, commercialization and services); c) more accessibility to credit; d) promoting local circulation of the wealth produced in the area; e) guaranteeing a clean energy matrix and lower energy consumption and f) guaranteeing better life conditions for everyone. For this purpose, the article is structured in the following manner: in the initial part the idea of paradigms is discussed, so as to later discuss the problem of the elements and criteria for the selection of the experiments. Afterwards, the experiments selected to be analyzed throughout the research are presented.

## **2. Paradigms and changes in paradigms**

As can be noticed, “paradigm” is a word that has been used frequently, having also been wrongly used some times, to justify the mechanism’s imperfections and a possible change in the society through a new way and/or new insights in the way of comprehending the world. Therefore the word means a “model” or a set of basic and dominant “rules” in the way of understanding the world and a society’s, or even of a civilization’s way of thinking, believing, evaluating, commenting and acting in accordance to a certain view of the world. In this perspective, currently we live in an era where the capitalist system established some ideas, seen as “natural”, such as competitiveness, technological efficiency, immediate profit. In this context the individualistic, mercantilist and utilitarian values are exacerbated to the detriment of social, collective and collaborative values.

However, the word paradigm seems to have been spread and made popular by the physicist Thomas Kuhn, in his book “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions”, published in 1962. In other words, this book brought to the forefront, between the years 1960/80, the use of the paradigm concept applied to the history of scientific knowledge. This author used the paradigm concept to formulate his theses about the non-linear and continuous evolution of science, stating that it is not about a process of accumulation of knowledge, but about the revolutionary character of the historical scientific process, showing that the scientific process happens because of leaps and breaks and, therefore, of changes of paradigms. In his vision, scientific practice assumes a pre-comprehension of the real that will determine the object, the method and the type of investigation and the truth of each theory would only work inside each paradigm. In this sense, scientists advance inside the problems that the chosen paradigm allows to them to detect. And, by paradigm he understands a series of suppositions, methods and typical problems that will determine, to a scientific community, which are the important questions and what is the best way to answer them. The paradigm change brings not only a change in methods and concepts; a different paradigm will consider different types of questions as priorities and legitimate ones.

From the “scientific” point of view, it is understood that, currently, there is room to think of the possibility of the emergence of new ideas and practices. Our challenge

will be to cross over from the scientific orbit to the practical one, with the purpose of finding elements and, later on, experiments, that can pose as references for the debate about new production and consumption paradigms.

Such idea is echoed, for example, in Capra (2006). According to him, today we live in a globally interlinked world, in which biological, psychological, social and environmental phenomena are all interdependent and, to describe this world, we need a “new paradigm”, which expresses itself from a new view of reality. In “*The Turning Point*”, the author aims at providing a structure of concepts that is coherent and capable of mobilizing a powerful force for social change, advocating the need for paradigm changes. According to the author, the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century recorded a deep world crisis; both complex crisis and multidimensional, “*whose facets affect every aspect in our life – health and way of life, environmental quality and social, economic, technological and political relations*”. Also according to Capra, “*it is a crisis of intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions; a crisis of unprecedented urgency and proportions in the entire history of humanity*”. In addition to the “*social pathologies*” such as depression, violence, mental illnesses, “*economic anomalies*” are also witnessed, such as massive unemployment and a “grossly” unequal revenue and wealth distribution; problems that seem to confuse our main economists and politicians.

Equally confusing and contradictory is the use of technology nowadays, where the unimaginable “hi-tech” advances live side by side with unsolved structural problems, such as hunger, unemployment, ecological disasters, among other ailments. This way, technology evolves extremely quickly, virtually delivering the necessary keys for the solution of its material problems to mankind, while leaving it powerless *vis-à-vis* the challenges it faces.

With regard to the environmental issue, which is currently highly debated, it can be seen that the economic theory does not contemplate the planet’s decapitalization, thus leading to the absence of a systemic and long term view. Such findings are based on a problem of moral and values which demands a deep transformation of the production and consumption paradigms. This discussion is related to the theme that many call “sustainability”. However, what does this term mean? Is it connected to qualitative or quantitative factors? The expression sustainability, understood as goals to reduce material and energy consumption, demands a concept of sustainability expressed in quantity and, this view, although pertinent, seems superficial and insufficient to

understand the qualitative dimension and the one linked to the notion of a new development model.

More recently, the debate on sustainability has put into action different reflection axes, pointing to multiple paths to elaborate collective changes, when some reference values, such as efficiency, equity and self-sufficiency, are analyzed. From the point of view of new production and consumption paradigms, it is believed that the levels of continuous economic growth focused on the satisfaction of the demand for non-essential consumption goods is not compatible with an ecologically benign development process, which entails the need for cultural changes, with a view to auto-limitation of the consumption of material goods.

In general terms, it is urgent to pay attention to the fact that sustainability, in our view, contains different aspects that are interrelated, that is, it refers to the ecological dimension (storage and use of natural resources used in production and consumption); environmental dimension (Nature's capacity to absorb and recover from the aggressions); demographic dimension (in light of the two previous dimensions, analyzing the impact of the demographic dynamics); cultural dimension (preservation of values and practices based on national, regional and local integration); social dimension (improvement in the quality of life and distribution fairness); political dimension (possibility of participative construction of citizenship and of a new development project) and institutional dimension (how all of these aspects reflect on our social, political and economic institutions)<sup>4</sup>. In other words, when dealing with the question of sustainability, we are discussing issues that go beyond saving natural resources and questioning the development model and its relations, as well as the social processes that underlie the appropriation of the material base by societies. This way, according to Acsehrad (1999:28): *“sustainability has the tendency of being understood as a process by which societies deal with the material conditions of their reproduction, redefining the ethical and sociopolitical principles that rule the distribution of the environmental resources”*.

In this perspective, another theme deserves to be taken up again and added to the set of issues discussed above: the information and communication technology (ICT) and its impact, especially in the current context, where we hear more frequently that we are in the “post-modern” era of the “information society”, and of the “knowledge”, or even

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<sup>4</sup> Based on: “Brasil Século XXI: os caminhos da sustentabilidade cinco anos depois da Rio-92”, FASE (1997).



of the “Post-Fordist” or “post-industrial” society. According to Daniel Bell, an influential American sociologist from Harvard, in *“The Coming of Post-Industrial Society”*, from 1977, the post-industrial society refers to a new phase of the evolution that industrial societies would be entering, based on a closer relation between science and technology, in a services society, especially of knowledge and information. Within this transformation, a new age and a new development phase were conceived, where information and knowledge were becoming the *“strategic resources”* and the *“transforming agents”* of the post-industrial society, *“in the same way as combining energy, resources and mechanical technology were the tools for the industrial society”* (Bell, 1977:531). Furthermore, the information society starts a new production and consumption pattern, also changing its very source of wealth creation, as well as the determining factors for production and life style. In Bell’s and his followers’ conception, work and capital, basic variables of the industrial society, are replaced by information and knowledge. However, it is understood that the information society did not evolve in a neutral manner, exempt of value judgments and it is observed that ICT, as all technology, advanced in conformity with certain and specific social and political interests, in a context ruled by the power of money.

It is important to emphasize that, in this perspective, a structure of concepts, theories and practices capable of adjusting the formulation of new paradigms has yet to be built. However, an analysis of some real experiments already shows us that part of this structure is being formulated by individuals, communities and some organizations that are acting according to new ways of thinking and new principles. It is now necessary to advance in the attempt to list some elements, as well as define the criteria to select the experiments / experiences, with a view to understanding them, making them systematic and spreading them as new and possible heralds of production and consumption paradigms.

### **3. Elements that Point to New Production and Consumption Paradigms**

Based on what was exposed previously, at this point we intend to reflect on which element will characterize these new production and consumption paradigms, even though these elements are isolated, not completely articulated and cannot specifically offer a “world view” or a “theory about things”. These elements were found

through the bibliographic review and various readings, from conversations with people who are a reference in the area, from the observation of news reports, as well as debates and academic discussions, public opinion and in the public policies field.

In this perspective, the experiments that will be selected and analyzed must contain elements and criteria that place them not only as economic production and consumption alternatives, but also as having an emancipating potential, where its possibilities of success will depend greatly on the integration they achieve, taking into account the economic, cultural, social and political transformations. In other words, it is understood that the success of these experiments' will depend in their insertion in collaboration and solidarity support networks, as well as governmental participation, since they are mainly executed by less favored sectors of society, as well as by initiatives that are initially fragile and precarious. These experiments must also propose alternatives capable of functioning on different scales, from local to global, going through regional and national orbits. It is important to also pay attention to the radicalization of participative democracy and economic democracy, understood as two sides of the same coin.

The elements are now presented, in a random manner, without priority or any kind of grading. Our goal is for these elements to point to clues about what we are thinking when we talk of “new production and consumption paradigms”, because these elements will lead us towards the selection criteria and which experiments will be selected.

## **Environmental Agenda**

The magnitude of the phenomena of climate change and environmental disasters puts the debate on alternatives and the urgency of transforming the production and consumption patterns squarely on the world's agenda. The change in the energy matrix, the agro-ecological practices in the countryside, the patterns of urban mobility and the rational use of water are some of the themes that are being broadly discussed in this field and that will become even more present in the near future.

## **Living Well**

Well being and happiness have been subordinated to the goals of economic growth and to the permanent search for the accumulation of capital. The GDP has revealed itself to be an insufficient method of measuring a population's life quality. That is, if the main goal of development starts being the improvement of a population's life quality, any economic growth that does not reduce poverty and promotes social inclusion does not make any sense. The redefinition of happiness and well being as the main goal of society is a change of paradigm that also demands a critical review of concepts such as development / underdevelopment.

## **Collaboration**

Acting in collaboration networks has presented itself as a solution for many small enterprises. Collaboration is a tendency to be considered when discussing new production and consumption paradigms and must be understood in an encompassing vision and focused on participative governance, in order to strengthen the centrality of acting with civic awareness and its collective representations, as well as the potentiality of the land.

## **Co-responsibility**

In the ambit of production and consumption, an as yet timorous change in the role and behavior of the agents can be seen. The emergence of terms such as responsible, ethical and conscious consumption as well as social investment and corporative civic awareness, indicate the construction of a new way of acting in the economy. But co-responsibility goes beyond the production and consumption sphere, being a phenomenon that is creating new social agents and movements and that can be illustrated by the concept of *human responsibility*. Co-responsibility is bringing changes connected to making the individuals responsible for our world's problems and challenges , but more than that, it is a way of thinking that asserts the individuals' and citizens' capacity to build the existing reality.

## **Democratic Governance**

This is an absolutely central element, since we live in scenario in which the solution for the current deadlocks depends on acknowledging the existence of new social and political agents, socializing power, decentralizing management structures, and the radicalization of democracy. Rethinking the decision making structures and the population's participation in favor of a new civilization paradigm is currently relevant and pertinent. In this direction, the territory needs to be understood as the set of social relations that constitute the local production and consumption manners, the *locus* to think and act, in order to establish and built new paths from the strengthening of democratization.

## **The Disintermediation Processes**

Intermediation has become the activity that seizes most revenue in the economy, not because it adds value, but simply because it controls the path between those interested in offering and obtaining something. Intermediations must exist when really necessary. Creating alternative intermediation channels leads to fairer conditions in various sectors. The direct commercialization from the producer to the consumer and community banks are examples of how disintermediation can create more just conditions for both producers and consumers.

It is a question of creating short production and consumption circuits, or shortening the circuits, organized territorially based on the areas' potential and with the purpose of creating more favorable systemic conditions for producers, consumers and for the territory.

## **The Area's Valorization**

The territory has a tendency to get stronger as a space where life, culture, politics and also economic relations are built. It is necessary to think about a change in the development culture, in which a community is no longer seen as a passive agent,

that waits patiently, but rather as one responsible for the construction of its own history and transformations.

By transferring the development initiatives to a territorial level, there is an improvement in the participation and decision-making that are carried out by the citizens, who start operating with practices and solutions based on specific demands and the area's problems.

### **Socio-labor insertion and the generation of “green” jobs**

The question of productive insertion, of facing unemployment and the lack of employment for large contingents of people, especially young people, needs to be calculated in a coherent manner with the need to build new production and consumption paradigms, especially in view of environmental degradation challenges. It is no longer a question of increasing automobile production and, therefore, jobs in the production chains that constitute the sector.

The “green jobs” present themselves as key propellers towards economic and social development, which is also environmentally sustainable. These jobs can be created in every sector, in urban areas and rural zones, ranging from manual to highly qualified labor.

Given the unemployment created by the crisis, some countries have adopted a series of economic incentive measures with investments in “green” sectors, such as eolian, solar, thermal, biomass, hydroelectric, geothermal energy. These measures, in addition to contributing to the transformation of the current energy matrix, generate work positions, include less favored individuals and improve the energy efficiency in buildings, public transportation, electrical equipment and automobiles, and also increase the diversification of clean and renewable energy.

A new activities front also opens, dissociated from the concept of productivity growth in the production chains, which are the social work positions, those focused, for example, on taking care of vulnerable groups of the territory's population, in taking care of entertainment and cultural activities, among others.

#### 4. Selection Criteria for the Experiments

Selecting experiments for analysis is never a simple task, in addition to which, our goal is not to study only the experiments, but use them to identify and analyze the new production and consumption paradigms, with the final goal of developing a set of public policies to underpin and stimulate the appearance of new experiments in these segments.

For this purpose, a table with five comprehensive criteria that will guide us in the selection process is presented below. They are:

<i>Answer to the elements</i>	The experiments must in some way incorporate the identified elements. Some of them may symbolize a specific criterion. Other experiments may be examples of the incorporations of many elements.
<i>Point to scale-increasing strategies</i>	The selected experiments cannot be specific to the local conditions, and must point towards the limits and potentials of this scale-increasing strategy. It will also be interesting to analyze the scale-increasing strategies' limitations and potentials.
<i>Point to public policies</i>	The selected experiments must establish a dialog with the possibilities, needs and opportunities of public policies. It will be important to analyze the experiments' direct and/or indirect relationships with governmental participation and its municipal, state and federal instances. An analysis of this relationship's positive and negative points will be relevant in making intervention mechanisms clear.
<i>Make a systemic analysis of its results possible</i>	The experiments must feed an analysis not only in the economic and production and consumption field, but also in its political, cultural and social connotations, as well as an interdisciplinary analysis. In other words, they must be experiments that are controlled by a transforming ideology <i>vis-à-vis</i> the production and consumption paradigms.

<p><i>Force the ruling paradigm</i></p>	<p>The selected cases must, by incorporating the elements decided on, be in conflict with the hegemonic systems that constitute the ruling paradigm in its area. That is, they must be experiments that weaken the hegemonic paradigm. Therefore, they cannot be very limited or new experiments, which are still in an initial structuring phase. On the other hand, it cannot be a very successful experiment, since this will not be in conflict with the ruling paradigm anymore. In other words, they must be experiments that that have reached a degree of maturity and that will not grow anymore nor have more success because they are in conflict with the paradigm and the hegemonic structure.</p>
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In addition to these criteria, there is also a thematic cut that is needed for the selection of the experiments. Up to this moment, the following themes have attracted our attention:

- Urban agriculture, producers selling directly to the consumer and other ways to shorten the circuit;
- Waste Management with the inclusion of the garbage collectors;
- Digital culture, free knowledge, virtual collaboration processes;
- Solidary Economy and fair trade;
- Permaculture and agro-ecology;
- Integration of policies in the area and ways to act through a network;
- micro-credit, micro-finances and consent with solidary systems;
- Social technology;
- Eco-villages;
- Responsible, activist ethical consumption

From the elements and criteria, based on a list of around 50 suggested experiments, twelve experiments, to be presented next, were chosen. It is worth mentioning that, at this moment, twelve researchers are in the field visiting them, with the aim of developing a report based on a script developed by the Pólis Institute which

was guided by the coordinators of this research. In this study, the experiments will be displayed, with their main attributes, in order to later discuss the material collected from the visits and proposals that will be developed for the set of public policies.

## **5. Selected Experiments**

In this chapter, the selected experiments that are also being investigated by the research are as follows:

### **1. Pacto Novo Cariri [*New Cariri Pact*]**

Refers to an integrated and sustainable regional development program of the State of Paraíba, in the Northeast of the country, an area that is very poor, subject to drought and without many economic alternatives. Currently, the area, which contains 31 towns in the State of Paraíba, was revived through its own potentials that were previously under-evaluated. The program has 7 social inclusion Projects, based on handicrafts, agriculture diversification, rural tourism, production of goats milk and its derivatives, and production of social technology for the area's activities.

It is an experiment that appeared informally, from “bottom to top” and that, with the establishment of networks, including the SEBRAE, the municipal governments, in addition to social agents involved, allowed advances in its execution and development. The program also advocates trade and commercialization practices with solidarity, in addition to techniques that contribute and spread environmental preservation and the recovery of local culture. In other words, it allows the production of goods and services (and, therefore of work and revenue), with social inclusion and environmental preservation.

The analysis of this experiment will allow the understanding of some elements which the Research considers as responsible for representing the New Production and Consumption Paradigms - NPCP (environmental agenda, establishment of networks, generation of work and revenue, cooperation, well being, etc), allowing us, from the point of view of a meso and macro analysis, to think about the possibilities of sustainable development, in the current context that we are living, which will be important in the detection of elements for the development of public policies.



## **2. Ecovida Network**

A network of family farmers, technicians and consumers united in associations, cooperatives and informal groups, which encompasses the three Southern States and affects 170 towns. Currently, the Network is made up of around 200 farmer groups, 20 NGOs and 10 consumer cooperatives and more than 100 free ecological fairs and other manners of commercialization are organized in all its operational area. The network stands out because of its far-reaching influence, its political action and because it was a pioneer in Brazil in creating a system of participative certification.

The main aspects that justify its selection are: its mode of acting in collaboration networks, organized in consumer cooperatives and that promote responsible consumption, in addition to having created the first system of participative certification in Brazil.

The analysis of this experiment will bring information related to the 5 points identified above. The first is about the reality and the challenges for the development of collaboration networks, especially in the food production area. Here, this case should interact with the analysis of *Justa Trama [Fair Web]* and the *Pacto Novo Cariri [New Cariri Pact]*, which are also collaboration networks. In addition to this, this analysis should also understand how collective commercialization strategies are being made viable, such as fairs, which are being pointed out as the current social economy's biggest challenge. A third point of analysis must be focused on this Network's consumers, that is, analyze the consumer cooperatives and the actions of responsible consumption that are being practiced inside the Network. A fourth important point is agroecology and permaculture which are practiced in the whole network and that have been strongly spread. Lastly, the participative certification model is extremely rich and innovative and this experiment has the most advanced and least studied experience of this nature.

## **3. Cocais Bank**

This experiment will portray a community bank that supplies micro-credit in social currency, located in São João do Arraial, in the State of Piauí. The communities' banks, the social currencies and the micro-credit operations point to an important innovation in the financial/monetary field.

The selection of this experiment over others is due to the diagnosis that this community bank presents an innovation in relation to the Palmas Bank model, which

was diffused and applied in Brazil. The Cocais Bank has strong support from the municipal public power and this has been shown to be extremely effective. The experiment is 2 years old and its social currency is already accepted in more than 90% of the town's commercial establishments.

With the analysis of this experiment we intend to understand the innovations that are happening in the field of micro-finances in Brazil, incorporating the community bank, social currency and micro-credit. The fundamental analysis on the effect of this experiment on the local/territoriality economy is based on the following questions : Was it possible to reduce the monetary drain? Generate market for local initiatives? Increase access to credit?, among other directly or indirectly related questions. In this experiment's analysis the "state of the art" of solidary finances in Brazil will be presented, in the context of the recently created Communities Banks Networks and the current interest of the Central Bank in creating a regulatory framework for the sector, among other issues that involve this field.

#### **4. Palmas Bank**

The Palmas Bank is considered to the most famous and successful community bank in Brazil, which created a much reapplied model in the country: to give an idea, there are around 48 similar experiments today. It is a local development program that involves micro-credit, social currency, the creation of enterprises with solidarity, training professionals and consumer education. This experiment appeared and developed from society, without much support from the public power. Today the Palmas Bank also has strong political participation in the micro-finance field, seeking its recognition and the creation of legal frameworks.

Although this experiment has already been studied a lot, it is understood that its analysis will allow the understanding of the current challenges connected to community banks, as well as the existence of elements for the dissemination of territorial public policies that point to an access to credit system that is more including and different from the traditional one.

#### **5. Rede Justa Trama [*Fair Web Network*]**

It is a Solidary Economic Enterprises Network (EES) that embraced the so called solidary cotton ecological chain. There are around 700 men and women, agriculturists, spinners, weavers, seed processors and collectors and seamstresses. The

association and the cooperatives cover all of the cotton chain links, from the planting to the production of clothes.

This experiment has some of the elements that characterize the NPCP, such as the disintermediation, collaboration and environmental concern, in addition to generating work and revenue; important attributes that signal the NPCP.

First, this study must involve the thematic of solidary economy in Brazil, showing its current context and correlating with the reality that exists in this experiment. The fact that Justa Trama [*Fair Web*] involves a complete chain, from production to sales, will make this case interesting for the discussion of production and consumption chains. In addition to this, the disintermediation is another aspect that will allow us to become familiar with the cotton chain's production and consumption dynamic and to explore, as a transversal theme, the question of gender.

## **6. Sustainable Integrated Agroecological Production - PAIS**

The Sustainable Integrated Agroecological Production (PAIS) is a social technology that brings together simple agricultural techniques capable of generating social effects and positive environments. It is a bird, vegetables, and fruits integrated production system, with cyclic utilization. To begin the enterprise, the families receive a "Pais Kit", technical consulting and monitoring for two years for the execution of all of the stages, from choosing and preparing the land to selling their produced goods.

The PAIS already has units in 40 towns of 14 Brazilian States (ES, BA, GO, MG, PB, PI, RN, SE, AL, CE, MS, PE, RO and RJ), with more than R\$ 12 million invested.

It is worth mentioning that this experiment works with two very interesting concepts at its core, both innovative and recent: social technology and agroecological production.

We believe that by studying and visiting this experiment, it will be possible to analyze in some way the effect of this social technology on the area and on the well being of the benefited families. In addition to this, the analysis of this experiment should contextualize social technologies and agroecological production in Brazil.

## **7. Organization in the Semi-arid area of Brazil - ASA**

ASA is an organization forum of civil society, which has been fighting for the social, economical, political and cultural development of the semi-arid area of Brazil since 1999. The experiment includes more than 700 entities in 10 Brazilian States (AL, BA, CE, MA, MG, PB, PI, PE, RN, SE) and has the aim of building public policies for getting by in the Brazilian semi-arid region, from the perspective of rethinking land democratization and the agrarian reform for the semi-arid region.

ASA acts in national policies, especially through the CONSEA – Nation Council of Food Safety, also participating in other instances and Councils, such as the Sustainable Rural Development, which acts strongly in the towns where they can be found.

Generally speaking, ASA has the purpose of building an alternative model to capitalist agriculture- to agribusiness, monoculture, large irrigated plantations. They also try to value the small markets over commercialization in large circuits. Another important point that the experiment will allow us to understand and analyze is the relation between the use of social technologies and the effects on the area, in the sense of generating employment, revenue, though with social justice and environmental concern.

## **8. Cardboard and Recyclable Material Collectors' Association – ASMARE**

ASMARE has been acting in the Belo Horizonte area, MG, for around 15 years. From the socioeconomic point of view, in addition to the revenue they make every month, its workers, previously considered outcasts, nowadays have a job that has been slowly structuring itself and gaining social “value.” They are also fundamentally important for the environmental issue, since each kilogram of material that the collectors take off the streets reduces the amount of waste, which reduces the risk of floods and water pollution.

Another interesting aspect, with regards to this experiment, is the fact that, in addition to the collection work performed by the collectors, it develops a partnership and an environmental awareness with business companies, schools, public organizations, among others, on the importance of collecting recyclable material and the socio-environmental effect it has. Internally, the Association develops a series of Workshops that deal with subjects connected to recycling, but also economic, social, political and cultural subjects. And, these Workshops have made individuals, who previously had no future, qualified to work in joinery, stationary, sewing, and in cultural activities.

This experiment is anchored in partnerships with Universities, Commercial Associations, Catholic Church's Pastoral Care and, above all, with public authorities, with significant importance given to the City Hall. From the point of view of the regulatory framework for the sector, studying this experiment will allow for the discussion of the advances and limitations of the National Policy for Solid Waste, which has already been discussed in Congress since September 2009. The strengthening of the participative construction of more consistent and transparent public policies is expected with the due inclusion of the collectors.

### **9. Digital Piraí**

The Digital Piraí is a project for digital culture dissemination in the town of Piraí (RJ), which involves digital inclusion, educating in new media and computerizing management actions. The technological base of the project is a public wireless internet infra-structure that covers the whole town, inaugurated on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2004.

The selection of this experiment is due to the socialization of digital culture and to the use of technology, with an aim to educational, work and civil awareness, which becomes even richer due to the fact that it is promoted by a municipal government.

With the analysis of the Digital Piraí, we intend to understand the effects of promoting digital culture in the area and its consequences. In addition to this, this experiment will allow the discussion of the use of technology in promoting free communication, digital democracy and access to information.

### **10. The COOPER ECOSOL Case– Production and Consumption Cooperative**

Cooper Ecosol is a consumer cooperative, formalized in 2005, although its original group has been carrying out activities since 2000. It is located in Passo Fundo (RS). The purpose of this cooperative is to strengthen the economy for the people and the productive activities related to solidary economy through judicious, collective, solidary and ecological consumption, contributing to restructuring the production chain and the promotion of a chain of solidarity and cooperation, aimed at the well being of its associates, the community and the preservation of the environment; all important elements described in the NPCP.

This group was constituted thanks to the backing of the Center for Popular Solidary Economy - CAEPS, who are the main partner of Cooper Ecosol.

There are other experiments that support the consumption experiment of Cooper Ecosol, such as CRESOL – Passo Fundo’s Credit with Solidary Interaction Cooperative, CEAP – People’s Education and Aid Center, COOPVIDA, AGROLEITE, UNICAFES, the Economy with Solidarity Regional Forum and FETRAF – South – Family Agriculture Workers Federation.

The analysis of the experiment will allow the evaluation of family agriculture aspects (organization, structure and limits), within the discussion on shortening the production and consumption circuits, in addition to environmental aspects and the ones related to the networks, as well as everything involved with the subject of solidary economy.

## **11. Paradigms of Indigenous Production and Consumption: the Xavante People’s case**

Understanding what the indigenous population thinks about the act of producing and consuming may be an important advance for this Project’s goals, since, currently, there is a lot of talk about “living well”- also considered one of the transversal axes in the analysis of experiments.

The Xavante people currently live in the State of Mato Grosso in a savanna area, in approximately 180 villages, that contain up to 15,000 people. The purpose of analyzing this experiment is to assess the aspects in this location that are connected to the networks, taking into account the partnership that, through the projects in favor of sustainability and environmental protection, with the purpose of preserving food diet (such as the “Jaburu”), was established with EMBRAPA- the Brazilian Enterprise for Agriculture and Livestock Research, the National Environment Fund, as well as Universities such as ESALQq/USP, of Piracicaba and UNICAMP. The issue of rights and citizen representation may also be analyzed deeply, since the Xavante people were the first to create an Association capable of representing them within “white people’s” society, the result of a long rights’ awareness, civic awareness and educational/cultural training process.

Another interesting aspect, important to questions of local development and territorial identification, are the cultural projects and events performed by the Xavante community, that also contribute to increasing the understanding of cultural differences

and to promote mutual respect between white people and the indigenous population. As a consequence, there is the appearance of the pertinent idea of connecting traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge, to ensure the quality of life, incorporating modernization while maintaining millenarian knowledge.

The purpose of the analysis of this experiment is to find elements for discussing the elements that characterize the NPCP (environmental agenda, networks, collaboration, democratic governance, etc.), in addition to deepening the discussion on the subject of “living well”.

## **12. Agro-forestry Systems Network (SAFs) and the generation of green jobs**

The SAFs represent a change of paradigm for agro-industrial production with monoculture and exhaustion of resources for the diversification of the production connected to the maintenance of environmental services, resources generation and social benefits. Some of the positive effects related to such changes may be described as: generation of green jobs through recovering the production capacity and reducing the agriculturist’s dependence in external input and agrochemicals; diversification of the production connected to environmental and social benefits, in addition to decreasing the agriculturist’s vulnerability and promoting food safety; promoting production systems that fulfill similar functions to the environmental services performed by forest areas (climate regulation, water and soil conservation, biodiversity maintenance), essential help for the climate changes challenge.

This experiment’s mentor is Ernst Gotsch, an agriculturist and researcher and a SAFs pioneer who started experimental areas on his farm, in the cocoa bean areas of Bahia, over 25 years ago, in a land that was considered completely unproductive and he transformed that area into one of the most productive areas in the whole Atlantic Forest, he was able to reforest over 300 hectares of a degraded area in highly productive forests. This project has been spreading in the Bahia area through the diversification of the production system and acknowledgement of the agricultural efficiency “Green Gold Bahia Project,” in addition to the search and development of economic growth, scientific research, social development and environmental protection.

From the social point of view, the Project will address the analysis of the Family Agriculture programs, a Training School, the development of houses in Nova Igrapiúna (“green” constructions) and the creation of green jobs thanks to the diversification of agricultural activities and professional training. From the environmental point of view,

the experiment will address the creation of an ecological reservation with 3 thousand hectares and a Biodiversity Studies Center and, with regards economy and land, it will address a diversification of cultures program (rubber tree, cocoa and banana).

## **6. Final Considerations: for directing purposes**

As we have attempted to show, in the current scenario, marked by the economic and financial crisis – and why not, also, by the paradigm crisis -, the intention of ensuring a dignified life for everyone, with an emphasis on social and productive inclusion, gains a special meaning and registers itself as an “anti-cyclic” initiative, which is asserted by the defense of rights.

In this perspective, we believe that the economic, social and environmental crisis that we are experiencing makes room for building something new, and also with the much-needed and important participation of the entire society, transforming the lower social layers into political subjects from their area, the latter understood as not only through the perspective of space, but as a locus of production and reproduction, in its material, social, economic and cultural fields.

These experiments and their elements must be understood not only as alternatives for economic production and consumption, but as showing an emancipating potential. They must propose alternatives capable of acting in different proportions, from local to global.

The successful development of practices that cater to these elements depends greatly on the integration of agents in the area, which can act in collaboration and as mutual support networks, as well as building new relationships with the governmental apparatus.

With this article, we aim to open a discussion and channel for debate given the context in which we are inserted, with the aim of thinking about the development and dissemination of new production and consumption paradigms, that is, a new development model, more inclusive and socially and environmentally sustainable. a later stage, we will present the main advances, from the detailed analysis of the twelve experiments portrayed in this study and that are being analyzed at the moment.



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