

The reconciliation between economic and social in the notion of a social enterprise: limits and possibilities in Brazil

Genauto Carvalho de França Filho¹, Ariádne Scalfoni Rigo², Washington José de Souza³

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Introduction

The notion of a social enterprise brings together a wide range of socio-economic practices (Laville and Nyssens, 2001). Arising from the concern to understand the limits of purely economic initiatives and their capacity to respond to social demands, this notion tries to indicate the resurgence of experiences that mobilize varied objectives between economic and social logics. However, diffusion of the notion of social enterprises around the world has provided different and even conflicting interpretations, including Anglo-Saxon, classic European, Latin American and new European versions (Laville, Young and Eynaud, 2014). This is how the term may appear, depending on the varying contexts; sometimes as social businesses and, at times, as the third sector, social or solidarity economy. Thus, how does one understand the variety of meanings that are attributed to these practices, according to these four different meanings of the term "social enterprise"?

The key to interpretation that we have adopted here, in order to understand this variety of meanings, comprises approaching their aim for a reconciliation between economic and social. In other words, the fact of these organizational practices becoming effective or not, and their capacity to exhaustively articulate and interact with the economic and social objectives in their dynamics of action. Therefore, we start off with the following question: to what extent are the different meanings attributed to the term enough to unveil this reconciliation? With the aim of answering this question, we will take the Brazilian context as a reference, in order to examine how each of the four above-mentioned notions are expressed and have been used, particularly with regards to this reconciliation. We set off from the assumption according to which a reconciliation between economic and social implies a redefinition of economic. Therefore, an analysis of the four terms should take into consideration both what the practices indicate, in terms of a social enterprise model, and what the conceptual debate suggests.

Our aim of contributing towards understanding the distinct attributes of the concept of a

¹ Professor at School of Administration in Federal University of Bahia, Brazil

² Professor at the School of Administration of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA)

³ Professor of the Department of Public Administration and Social Management (DAPGS) of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte

social enterprise, should promote a greater understanding in this debate. Based on this goal, the text was divided into four parts. Initially, the conceptual bases on which we are questioning the relation between economic and social are clarified, from a Polanyian interpretation of this problem. Then we will begin with an update of this Polanyian interpretation to propose a specific reading of this question of reconciliation. In the third part, we will examine each of the four notions (social businesses, the third sector, social economy and solidarity economy), applied to the Brazilian context, in order to reflect on them in the light of this questioning, in terms of reconciliation. Lastly, in the final considerations, we will highlight the specifics of each notion and its capacity, or otherwise, to reconcile economic and social, and suggest general conclusions about conditions for this reconciliation, according to different contexts.

1. The reconciliation of economic with social: a Polanyian interpretation

The most recent tradition in the field of economic sociology has sought to highlight the difficulty in separating social aspects in an analysis of economic matters. Among these, the Granovetterian argument has gained prominence, according to which the behavior of economic agents and, therefore, its rationality, cannot be fully understood, independent of an analysis of the social structure involving these actors (Granovetter, 2007). The author unveils a new way of looking at market dynamics in this way (Granovetter, 2000), opening up a wide spectrum of research on the topic of networks in a sociological analysis of market organizations.

Important progress has been made in this economic sociology of markets, particularly as an alternative to the approaches of rational choice. However, this approach gives particular emphasis to the way that social aspects influence the economic conduct and behavior of market agents, therefore failing to analyze the articulation of economic and social purposes in organizational dynamics beyond market agents. The analytical endeavor that we are requesting here needs to go beyond an economic sociology of markets, in line with economic sociology studies (Swedberg, 2009; Lévesque, 2009).

The studies that have made the most progress towards understanding the problem of the relation between economic and social in the dynamics of varied forms of organizations have been those that question the associative fact. Among these studies, we can highlight Laville and Sainsaulieu's (1997) seminal text, proposing a sociology of association, followed by other relevant work, such as the treatment of association governance (Eynaud, 2015) or association policies (Laville 2010 and Laville 2017). These studies make a relevant contribution to the challenges involved in managing forms of organization that permanently seek a reconciliation between economic and social, according to the centrality of different logics inherent to the nature of their operation.

Therefore, in an attempt to clarify a more specific understanding of the relation between economic and social, which also represents a problem which preceded the one mentioned above (on which these authors are supported), we will adopt a Polanyian perspective of analysis here for one main reason: apart from market sociology, and in coextensivity with the sociology of associative fact, a Polanyian analysis proposes an anthropology of economic fact of life in society (Polanyi, 2000 Polanyi, 2011). In doing this, in Polanyi, first and foremost, economic analysis is an analysis of how it is instituted or institutionalizes in the organization of society itself. Therefore, it is an analysis of economic interaction, understood in its substantive meaning (broader and includes market relations), with the different dimensions that organize life in society, or with which we could essentially designate non-economic – an expression of social in

a broad sense.

Economic anthropology and the Polanyian perspective in particular, offers us a variety of forms of historically understood economic institution: the market, passing through redistribution to reciprocity, including a specific form in the latter, which is the principle of householding (Hillemkamp, 2013). In an attempt to update this way of thinking, the Polanyian grid contributes with three analytical perspectives: a) the first is recognizing the variety of rationalities of economic behavior and understanding the specifics; b) the second is understanding how these different rationalities can articulate and interact in different forms of organizations or institutional systems; and c) the third is about how each one of these specific rationalities can be redefined from the relation they establish between them.

From a Polanyian analysis of institutional forms of economic (Polanyi, 2000), we may conclude that the indissociability between economic and social constitutes the standard of organizing life in society throughout history for the simple fact of not knowing of any economic system that was independent or not submitted to the elementary rules of social life (Polanyi, 2011). It is the phenomenon of rooting economic in social. In this respect, what we could designate as a social determination of economic has prevailed. In other words, when economic activities do not make sense in themselves but only as a means to achieve other purposes. It is precisely this reversal, in the form of an economic determination of social, which will only be discovered with the advent not of the market principle in itself but the principle of the self-regulating market, in a form better known today as market economy (Polanyi, 2000). It is a movement attempting to expel social from within the economic, which corresponds to transforming social into a category of organizing society, increasingly submitted to the rules and rationality of the self-regulating market. From a condition of dissolving economic in social, with the advent of modernity, Polanyi informs us that it is a movement towards separation or autonomizing the economic sphere of the market in relation to the set of spheres that organize social life and this movement is indispensably tensioned between rooting and uprooting, characterizing its own dialectics of modernity.

It is precisely this perspective which today leads us towards trying to understand not the problem of juxtaposition between economic and social but, instead, the question of reconciliation conceived as a dynamic interaction between economic and social. If, in the first case, of juxtaposition, the economic and social aspects do not communicate with each other, generally with social being submitted to economic rationality, understood in its market sense, in the second case, in which there is a reconciliation, the economic purposes are submitted to the social ones, whether due to the democratic political processes of deliberation, or subordination of the economic goal.

2. Proposal of an analytical grid

From the above analysis, the fundamental problem that besets the formulation of the analytical grid, could be defined from the following question: At the level of organizational dynamics, under which conditions are a dynamic interaction between economic and social observed? In other words, to what extent are practices designated as social enterprises capable of producing this dynamic interaction, this reconciliation or dissolution of economic in social? The problem of reconciliation posed in these terms indicates a reflection, in terms of the rationality of organizational practice. Thus, we suggest a dual perspective: the organizational

purpose on the one hand and its form of management on the other.

With this proposal of a dual perspective, the focus goes beyond understanding the relation between economic and social logics only from the point of view of its alleged relation of parity or overdetermination of one over the other. Once more, it is not to try and recognize its juxtaposition but to seek to evaluate its dynamic interaction. Two, practically inseparable criteria, are then mobilized here for an analysis of this interaction, as a condition to evaluate the reconciliation between economic and social: a) the purpose of the initiative defining the management goal on the one hand, and b) the form of undertaking management on the other.

The form of undertaking management criterion defines the process of organization, decision-making and management, according to principles, guidelines and standards used in the organizational dynamics under analysis. In this criterion, we consider two other subcriteria, which are democratic governance on the one hand and technocratic governance on the other. Management practices are understood as democratic governance, guided by collective dynamics, founded on the principles of cooperation and democratic mechanisms of conduction. Democratic governance suggests a balance in the relation between economy and democracy, pointing in the direction of an inseparable relation between the standard and technical procedure of management on the one hand and its political deliberation, backed by a collective sphere of decision-making, on the other. Technocratic governance is defined as management practices whose process of organization, decision-making and management are fundamentally guided by technical-financial guidelines. If the democratic governance subcriterion indicates a greater weight for the social dimension in the management process, given its nature of social appropriation, the technocratic governance criterion indicates the opposite, for the simple denial of social appropriation of the management process. In this case, the technocratic governance subcriterion indicates a greater weight on the economic dimension, understood according to the parameters of market rationality, since the governance criterion arises from this rationality standard.

Management purpose criterion is defined according to the principles, guidelines and standards that orientate the conduct or behavior of the enterprise or initiative under analysis. Two other subcriteria are considered in this criterion, which are social utility on the one hand and financial viability on the other. Social utility is considered here as conduct or behavior of a venture guided, above all, by the non-economic purposes of its activity, whether of a social, cultural or even environmental and/or political nature. According to this subcriterion, the means of viability, in terms of resources for these objectives are not merely self-financing under market conditions. Financial viability defines the conduct or behavior of a venture fundamentally guided by its capacity for self-financing under market conditions. If the prevalence of the social utility subcriterion indicates a greater weight on the social dimension, in terms of its aim or organizational purpose, the prevalence of the financial viability subcriterion reconfirms greater weight on the economic dimension, according to market rationality parameters.

In the analytical grid proposed in Figure 1 below, we have the criterion of the management objective on the X-axis (horizontal) and, on the Y-axis (vertical), the criterion related to the way of undertaking management. The aim of this grid is to try to understand the conditions according to which the capacity to produce reconciliation between economic and social are indicated in the dynamics of the practice under analysis. In quadrant A, the

organizations have a democratic form of undertaking management and their actions have the aim of social utility. In quadrant B, despite the aim of social utility, these practices are managed technocratically. In quadrant C, they have the aim of financial viability and are managed technocratically. In quadrant D, the organizations focus on financial viability, although seeking democratic decision-making mechanisms.

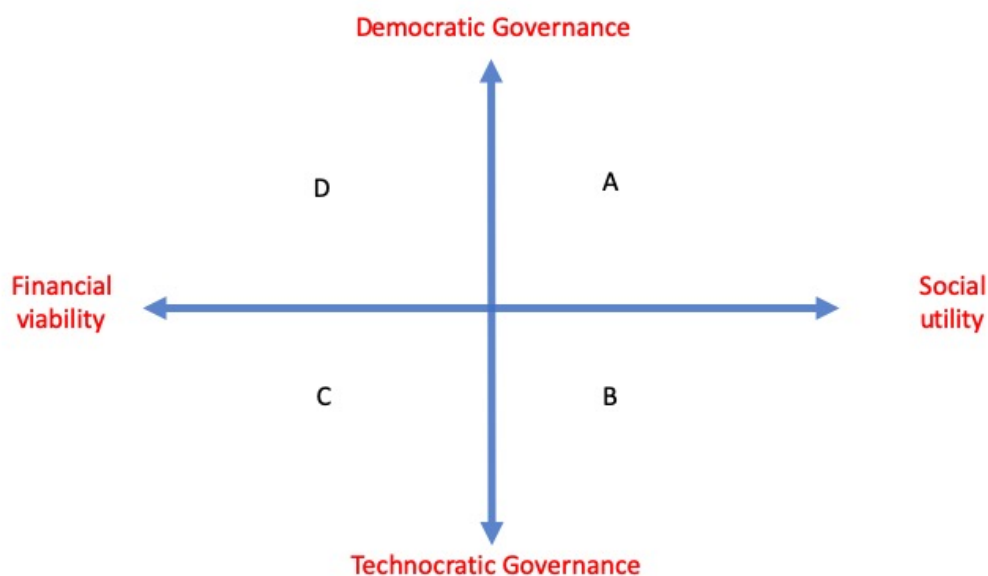


Figure 1: Analytical grid of reconciliation

In the light of what we have addressed above, the question that starts to concern us at this point is knowing about how different grouped socio-economic practices in each of the four concepts (social businesses, the third sector, social economy and solidarity economy) design or outline the relation between economic and social. It is the extent to which each of the four notions indicate, or otherwise, the possibility of reconciliation and which outlines or characteristics define it.

We should clarify that the first two notions (social businesses and the third sector) take part in a context of a common reality, influencing other contexts and indicate a meaning of the idea of social enterprises, as highlighted in the introduction of this book. Our analytical separation of the two terms, which we will address below, continues to reconfirm this specific meaning of the notion of social enterprise. However, it highlights an important nuance of this universe, of the reality of social enterprises among what has more recently been called social businesses and the previous forms of non-profit organizations whose term the third sector sought to embrace historically.

3. Examining the notion of a social enterprise as a social business

The concept of social business has seen an increasing level of circulation in Brazil, since the mid-2000s, which is the result both of some well-known international influences, as is the case of Yunus' work, and production by national authors. The Brazilian discussion is closely related to the idea of social business, with the notion of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise (Tiscoski, Rosolen and Comini, 2013; Fischer and Comini, 2012; Oliveira and Vasconcelos,

2011). In addition, it is often also confused with the notions of social responsibility, including businesses and, more recently, social impact businesses (Limeira, 2015).

At the source of the notion of social business, in Yunus (2008 and 2010), the concept is related to the following characteristics: a) it has the mission of meeting the demands of low income and more vulnerable population segments; b) it develops and sells products and services adjusted to these social demands; c) it generates enough income to cover its own expenses; d) it reinvests a part of the economic surplus in expanding the business, while the other part is kept as a reserve to cover unexpected expenses; e) it has investors who do not receive profits in the form of dividends, but they may receive their investment back, after a specific period (Limeira, 2015, p. 3). To summarize, for Yunus (2010), a social business should have a mission to solve a social problem. According to this, the business may produce a surplus but it should be reinvested into it, and not be appropriated by someone or a group.

In this sense, the notion of social business in Yunus differs subtly from the Anglo-Saxon and more contemporary tradition that emphasizes meeting a niche or market demand “from the pyramid base.” As Defourny and Campos (2005) and Rosenberg (2011) demonstrate in this concept, the market defines what has been characterized as social business. Gattes & Kiviat (2008) highlight that social businesses should bring people who are far from the capitalist system to within it. In contrast, in a European concept, a social enterprise basically pursues social objectives and its surplus is completely reinvested into the business. This is because, in this perspective, a social enterprise is not guided by the logic of maximizing profits (Defourny and Campos, 2005, p. 280).

Indeed, returning to the Brazilian debate on this notion, the most well-known definitions appear to reflect a tendency to understand the topic as it is disseminated in the Anglo-Saxon matrix, considered a social business. A brief investigation of Brazilian literature, undertaken by Limeira (2015), clearly indicates the main way of understanding the term. In Comini (2011, apud Limeira 2015), for example, “social enterprise, inclusive business and social business” are some of the terms used to identify the organizations that “aim to solve social problems with efficiency and financial sustainability, through market mechanisms.” In Naigeborim (2011, apud Limeira 2015), market mechanisms are also highlighted: “these businesses should operate under the same commercial rules as any other business, i.e. operating under the law of market supply and demand.” According to the author, these ventures are planned, in order to generate enough resources to cover all their operations and also contribute towards their growth. However, in these businesses “profit is not an objective in itself but a means to develop solutions that help to reduce poverty, social inequalities and environmental degradation.”

Along the same argumentative line, Oliveira and Vasconcellos (2011, p.7) consider that social and inclusive businesses are models of entrepreneurship that generate social impacts, which should be economically profitable. For the authors, it is necessary to choose to be profitable and cause a social transformation, as both are possible concomitantly. Self-sufficiency and profitability are also fundamental aspects for the Brazilian institutional concept of social business. The *Negócios Sociais* (social business) site, for example, considers that social businesses should not require “free” sources of capital. “A social business should serve the pyramid base or other groups which are deprived of social inclusion, through its products/services, or include them in its value chain, by distributing the profit generated by the business (*Negócios Sociais* site, 2013).

From the above definitions, social businesses indicate the enterprises' capacity to, above all, produce economic-financial self-sufficiency under market conditions and to also meet alleged social demands. Thus, social businesses are defined as economically viable enterprises. Residing precisely in this viability is its capacity to meet social demands. However, literature reveals a lack of case studies that empirically demonstrate how social businesses reconcile economic viability with achieving a social purpose. There is a lack of accounts and financial statements. In any event, some indications about the cases that would support the formulated concept remain. A brief evaluation of the vast majority of Brazilian cases cited as examples of social businesses (Negócios Sociais site, 2003), leads us to put forward three conclusions:

a) The experience of a type of private entrepreneurship that taps into an audience made up of population segments considered to have a low income is understood as a social business. Thus, qualification as social is defined by its business niche and, in this sense, seems to invent a new marketing category: social as a new market niche. In one of the most well-known examples, called *Moradigna*, the business provides a repair service to houses in favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro, at a cost considered lower than the market average. The question of how low-income is defined and to what extent it is a paid activity also remains open in this case. An example of social business in Brazil is an initiative by the economics student, Gustavo Fuga. In 2011, he created a company called 4You2 that offers English language course at prices accessible to the low-income population in vulnerable communities. The instructors are foreigners who are fluent in English (but not in Portuguese). At the start, the instructors were volunteers interested in living in Brazil as an exchange, particularly students, and they stayed in family houses in the community where they worked, paying a low rent. The classes took place at the head offices of civil society organizations in these communities (NGOs and associations) that supported the initiative. Therefore, the initiative connected foreign exchange students with people interested in learning English in these communities at a very reduced price, providing a service for the so-called pyramid base. The organization was then able to expand with its own capital, starting to award an allowance to the voluntary instructors, as well as rent for the use of partner organization' head offices, where they held the courses. In 2015, the initiative became well-known, winning the Social Entrepreneur Award and, in 2017, had 200 exchange students from 50 different countries. This is a private enterprise, which taps into a low-income audience as its market niche. Despite having a social impact, in this case the business appears to "pay for itself", in such a way that the organization was able to reinvest and expand.

b) The fact that its agents were set up as private companies (as in the previous case], but without exploiting a specific market niche, is also understood as social business. The new feature in this case lies in the fact that the initiative acknowledges a degree of resource transfer (voluntarily decided by the company), obtained or generated from an audience considered "social". In a relatively well-known example, a clothing company, called Osaria, whose brand focuses on a high-income audience, donates a specific equivalent percentage of items of clothing to the needy (through agreements signed with charitable institutions), which occurs depending on the value of their sales. Thus, the company links a social action with a client purchase, which means confirming that the performance of a social business depends and takes place with a percentage of money from that – and not from allocating the company's net profit and assets. In other words, charity is used as an instrument to obtain a higher income and, therefore, ultimately the company negotiates a social appeal, in order to increase its profitability.

c) A third group of cases put forward in literature is quite surprising, distinguishing the nature of moralizing capitalism or philanthropizing the business present in the first two types: it is a select group of civil society organizations undertaking innovative practices. Here, the discourse of social business borrows known examples from civil society organizations that claim to be taking part in other agendas, in terms of social movements, as is the case of the Banco Palmas (Palmas Bank), which defines itself as a solidarity economy practice. Therefore, if civil society organizations are recognized as non-profit making and do not meet the fundamental criterion of financial viability, why are they being classified as such (as social businesses)? According to our hypothesis, the answer to this intriguing question is found in that the concept of social business does not incorporate (as it extrapolates the paradigm of financial viability), but sees as important, sustainability as distinct from certain civil society organization practices. They are also able to generate their own resources, although in a proportion which is not sufficient to obtain financial viability. It is as if the concept of social business made a concession to certain innovative cases that demonstrate (in practice) the capacity of being sustainable, although they are not financially viable. If this conceptual concession is hidden, as it is at odds with its very nature (exhibiting a contradiction or conceptual insufficiency), on the other hand, it seems to intend to foster a redirection of the agendas of non-profit organizations. In other words, the concept of social business tries to fit into a new trend in the context of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Brazil, whose most striking characteristic is the metamorphosis they are currently undergoing (many of these are quite old within social work). Faced with a shortage of funding, they tend to strive for financial sustainability by generating their own resources; therefore, they adopt the legal status of a company and a business management model.

Thus, in the Brazilian case, the fact of a notion of social business to interpret, in its own way, the traditions of organizational practices in the so-called social or socio-economic area, much before the advent of this notion, is observed. For example, the numerous cases of civil society organizations, cooperatives, grassroots and solidarity economy. In any case, the fact that these organizations should operate as private companies remains the central, defining element of this idea. This is how the notion highlights the search for financial viability as the primary purpose of management on the one hand, and the exercise of technocratic governance as a way of undertaking management on the other. Under these conditions, the notion and practice of social business does not even accept the possibility of reconciliation between economic and social or its juxtaposition. The so-called social result is understood as a consequence of an eminently economic action, according to the parameters of market rationality.

4. Examining the notion of a social enterprise in the light of the concept of the third sector

The term “third sector” originates from the North American reality, particularly impregnated by the idea of philanthropy, in a context in which the tradition of social is historically non-existent. The term basically identifies the universe of the so-called voluntary or non-profit sector. Although the third sector does not claim the notion of a social enterprise, the occurrence of the fact of organizations in the segment are equipped with clearly set objectives on the one hand, and undertake fundraising activities in order to meet the same objectives (as an action strategy) on the other, can be deducted.

As Salomon and Anheier (1992) consider, within this field (the non-profit sector) organizations present five essential characteristics: they are formal, private, independent, should not distribute profit and should include a certain level of voluntary participation. We may add two others to these five traits – organizations should not be political (in the strict sense of the term, i.e., political parties are excluded) or religious (in other words, any type of religious organization is excluded) – the common nomenclature for classifying the third sector, is known as the International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations (ICNPO). This nomenclature served as a base for international research on the third sector directed by the John Hopkins Foundation in the early 1990s, which involved 13 countries, including Brazil. Work by Fernandes (1994) forms the Brazilian part of this research. This author reveals the limits of this definition to consider the reality of a Latin American third sector, which appears to have an extremely heterogeneous configuration. His criticism specifically resides in the disregard of the criterion of informality (that is the non-institutionalization of initiatives). With this notion of the third sector, a wide field of initiatives that play a fundamental role for significant sections of the population of Latin American countries, such as Brazil, is lost from sight. If, on the one hand, there was a certain care in applying the term to the Brazilian reality, the fact is adjustments were produced in the sense of a generalized use of the term that began to identify with the universe of social organizations in general: from the domain of organized civil society to the so-called grassroots form. Resistance continues from civil society organizations engaged in social movement traditions until today.

In contextual terms, this generalization of the use of the term “third sector” corresponds to a movement known to export ideas and concepts from countries in the north towards those in the south, thereby setting a political agenda for social organization activities. This movement is supported by specific forms of justification. In the predominant interpretation of the third sector in Anglo-Saxon literature, its existence is mainly explained “by market failures to reduce information asymmetries, and also the collapse of the state and its capacity to meet minority demands” (Laville, 2000).

From the point of view of organizational practice, the idea of the third sector implicitly carries an emphasis on achieving social purposes, like a type of search to satisfy a purpose of social utility, without inquiring into the means of implementation, from the point of view of management rationality. Third sector organizations (civil society organizations) in Brazil were accustomed to conventional management procedures, according to known techno-bureaucratic standards of formal management procedures. On the other hand, with the generalized use of the term, concern with achieving a non-economic purpose is reiterated, but this time emphasizing the importance of adopting even stricter rules and management rationality, according to the rigorous precepts of technocratic governance. This was particularly visible in the demands imposed by financing institutions on funded organizations. Thus, we see a movement towards merging the third sector with social businesses.

To summarize, the notion of social enterprises embedded into the third sector format seeks a specific equation between achieving the purpose of social utility on the one hand but with a strong assertion of the value of technocratic governance. Therefore, what example can we give on this? The Obras Sociais Irmã Dulce (Sister Dulce Social Work – OSID) is a Bahian entity that represents traditional third sector organizations. A philanthropic and non-profit organization, it was founded in 1959 by the nun, Sister Dulce (Maria Rita de Sousa Brito Lopes

Pontes), born in Salvador in 1914. Known as the "the good angel of Bahia", Sister Dulce achieved notoriety for the numerous actions of charity and assistance to the poor. OSID currently provides free health, welfare and educational services distributed throughout 21 centers in the city of Salvador in Bahia. The institution's sustainability is guaranteed by public resources (notably from the Brazilian Unified Health System - SUS) and resources from agreements and partnerships with state institutions, as well as private donations and the sale of products. In this case, as an organizational practice, OSID resembles a state institution, respecting technocracy and management standards imposed by the organizations with which it has agreements and collaborates. In OSID's case, SUS standards are strictly met, both with regards to service criteria, and the use of managing available resources, but without losing sight of its strictly social purpose.

To conclude, for the vast majority of so-called social organizations, operating within the domain of the third sector, it is noted that if the prevalence of the logic of technocratic governance prevents a reconciliation between economic and social, on the other hand, its concern with social utility, as the primary purpose of organizational practice, indicates a situation of juxtaposition between the two dimensions.

5. Examining the notion of a social enterprise in the light of the concept of social economy

In contrast, in relation to the notion of the third sector (typically North American), the notion of social economy refers to the reality of the European context. Here, Laville (2000) reminds us that the relation with the social state is formed of associativist experiences. The author considers that this is the reason, according to which thinking the idea of a third sector in Europe implies surpassing understanding as a "supplementary economic behavior," to seeing it as "an element that is in a constant historic interaction with the public powers."

In fact, in contrast with the notion of the third sector, notions of social and solidarity economy are heirs of a fundamental, common historic tradition. This is related to the associativist workers' movement in the first half of the 19th century in Europe, which was converted into a dynamic of popular resistance, resulting in the emergence of a large number of solidarity experiences, widely influenced by the ideology of mutual aid (mutualism), cooperation and association. This, was due to the fact that the claim of the utopia of a self-regulating market at this historic moment, generated a political debate about the economy or conditions for economic activity. The debate was encouraged specifically by these associativist initiatives that, by refusing autonomy of the economic aspect in their practices, in view of the others – social, political and cultural, etc. – were more well-known under the social economy heading. Similarly, by symbolizing an ideal of social transformation in their practice, that did not mean taking political power via the state apparatus – but the possibility of multiplying experiences, placing the horizon of constructing a hegemony in the way the economy operated with this, i.e., in the way production conditions were reproduced – also becoming known under the expression "Utopian socialism." It should be noted that this expression became commonplace in Marxist discourse, in order to oppose another: scientific socialism. Both expressions reflect the two distinct forms of achieving a transformation of the capitalist system.

It should be pointed out that the political dimension originates from social economy experiences, with regards to the issue of the right to work. This is because the initiatives

generated in the midst of this emerging social economy emerge as alternatives to that proposal, in terms of organizing work, from the dominant form of salaried work, established by the economic principle that was becoming hegemonic, imposed by the emerging capitalist company. The conditions of impoverishment that marked the lives of significant segments of the population in Europe at this time were due to the over-exploitation of work, in the context of the birth of capitalism, and rampant unemployment. Understood, therefore, as initiatives originating from grassroots sectors, simultaneously combining a social and economic dimension in their organizational activity, against a backdrop of political struggle, these experiences gradually alter the content of their practice; in other words, changing their physiognomy throughout history. This is precisely due to a strong movement of specialization and management professionalization that is established on functional logics imposed by the public powers or lent to the commercial sphere. The actions undertaken in this associativist dynamic progressively gained recognition from the public powers, which resulted in preparing legal frameworks that both conferred legal existence on initiatives and contributed towards separating what the original associationist movement wanted to bring together (Laville, 2000). Statutes of cooperative, mutual and associative organization emerged in this dynamic. This fragmentation of social economy in specific legal statutes was gradually established during the second half of the 19th century, moving into the 20th century, reflecting the tendency for these organizations to isolate themselves in this movement, due to their respective legal statutes, and they simultaneously integrated into the dominant economic system. Thus, cooperatives were widely placed in the commercial economy, mainly occupying those “sectors of activity in which capitalist intensity remained weak” (Laville, 2000:532) and mutual organizations were almost entirely incorporated into the non-commercial economy practiced by the state. Therefore, these organizational dynamics reflect, from an internal point of view, the change in profile of the frameworks that formed it: militant politicians enthused by the ideas of a vigorous workers’ movement, are gradually replaced by professionals with a strong techno-bureaucratic nature, whose presence in these organizations becomes hegemonic. Therefore, the technical or functional dimension of the organization starts to take precedence over its political project.

Thus, the perspective of a solidarity economy disappears at the initial and protracted moment, witnessing, in its place, the development of a social economy that became highly institutionalized during the 20th century – its role is practically limited to a type of appendix to state apparatus. Today, social economy organizations in France, for example, with some large banks and hospitals identified as cooperatives or mutual organizations, represent major techno-bureaucratic structures that are hardly distinguishable from a private or public company with their working dynamics.

As an example, in this third slant, it is relevant to introduce the case of the Family Farmer and Artisanal Fishermen’s Solidarity Economy Cooperative in the Mato Grande Region (Cooafes/Rio Grande do Norte). Cooafes was founded in 2010 by a group of leaders from the family farming and artisanal fishing system in the Mato Grande Territory in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, with the aim of organizing production systems, and processing and selling family farming and artisanal fishing products. However, the conception and foundation was strongly demarcated by the presence of political territorial leaders, such as presidents of rural unions, agrarian reform settlement associations, fishing colonies and party political leaders. The president recently acknowledged that there were more political leaders without any agricultural

and livestock production than workers with regular farming activities as Cooafes members. Therefore, he commented that the cooperative's continuity was impossible without workers who were committed to generating an income and operational surpluses, with regular production and sales. There are costs to be borne by the cooperative as a legal entity and, therefore, retaining the objective of a political organization is relevant but the main focus has to be economic market operations, both to generate and improve the members' income and to pay operational and administrative costs. This is a case of an attempt to reconcile economic objectives, allied to components of socio-political interest, generating a juxtaposition of these dimensions.

This example merely illustrates the difficult task of reconciling economic and social in the organizational dynamics of many cooperatives, whose market pressures jeopardize the enterprise's purpose of social utility. In this type of situation, at least one juxtaposition between the enterprise's social and economic purposes is observed, safeguarded by the democratic governance present in organizational dynamics. In other, more serious, situations, even the principle of democratic governance is at risk, in addition to the primacy of financial viability over social utility, jeopardizing the initiative's distinct cooperative nature.

6. Examining the notion of a social enterprise through the concept of solidarity economy

The concept of solidarity economy is formulated from a number of specific origins and influences. The first influence is found in studies on the theme, undertaken by national authors, whose frame of reference is the work of Paul Singer starting in the late 1990s. The second influence is the work of Latin American authors on the topic of solidarity in the economy, such as the Chilean, Razeto, in the 1970s or the Argentinian, Coraggio, in the 1980s. The third influence is found in work by European scholars, with a special highlight on the contribution by Laville in France, since his seminal book in 1994. What these different influences have in common is a concern with reflecting on socio-economic organizational practices that are generated within societies, in a critical statement in relation to the foundations of a predominant capitalist rationality.

In addition, in Brazil, the concept of solidarity economy endeavors to incorporate a wide spectrum of self-organizing, socio-economic initiatives, starting off with civil society and grassroots forms. These initiatives have relatively diverse areas of activity, structural forms, legal nature and level of coverage of their practices, among other aspects. With the concept of solidarity economy as popular and solidarity economy, an institutional field undergoing a formation process can also be indicated (França Filho, 2006). Four main areas follow this: socio-economic initiatives or solidarity economy enterprises (SEE); support and promotion entities (SPEs) that are organizations to support the SEEs as solidarity economy incubators connected to universities or civil society organizations; forms of political self-organization, such as the various forums and solidarity economy networks at multiple levels and scales and government policy bodies, such as secretariats, agencies or departments present in different governments.

At the heart of this universe of experiences, the SEEs are defined from five fundamental characteristics, which we can be summarized from the principles of authentic cooperatives (available at: <https://www.ocb.org.br/o-que-e-cooperativismo>) and the nature of solidarity economy enterprises (available at: <https://cirandas.net/fbes/o-que-e-economia-solidaria>): a) they

are partnerships and not capital companies (as with private companies); b) originally, bringing people together takes on a social function, and, therefore, the commercial function is subordinate and dependent; c) they are associations of *equal people* and this requires egalitarian power relations, with horizontal decision-making processes discussed and established by consensus; d) ownership of the means of production and appropriation of the economic outcome is collective; e) the members' work is not salaried employment but results from the volume of transactions the member undertakes with the enterprise. In contrast, at solidarity economy enterprises, the worker is the owner, both of the means of production and the economic outcome of this labor.

In fact, one of the most prominent characteristics, both in the different definitions of a SEE, and in the discourse of those who work at these initiatives, is regarding the self-managed nature of these enterprises. Clearly, self-management is put into practice at SEEs, as a learning process of a political culture of democratic governance and, as such, presents some advances, according to the different cases reflected in the level of maturity of each experience. This aspect confers a particularly important political content on understanding the action and purpose of solidarity economy, redefining the way subjects envisage work in these initiatives. In fact, work in solidarity economy gains other meanings, besides economic production. It is as if economic activity were diluted into other meanings, or serves as a means for other objectives. For Max-Neef (2012) the economic dimension is a means, as the work (in solidarity economy) fills existential needs of having, being and doing that are not exclusively economic and monetary. Dilution of productive activity into other purposes can also be observed outside the organizational action in solidarity economy, when its practices are understood as new formats of public action in a given local, territorial context (França Filho, 2013 and 2017). This is when a SEE, through its socio-economic dynamics, is responding to demands of affirming identity, environmental preservation, giving value to social links or strengthening political struggles (for access to land, healthy, pesticide-free food, the right to housing, the city and female emancipation, etc.).

Thus, the field of SEEs encompasses a broad and diffuse inventory of experiences with their respective range of audiences. The people who take part in solidarity economy in Brazil are those with psycho-social disorders (undergoing health treatment at the Unified Health System Psycho-social Care Center – CAPS/Sus), inmates serving sentences at detention centers, homemakers (at mothers' clubs and community and residents' associations), family farming workers, agrarian reform settlers, quilombo residents, forest dwellers, fishermen, indigenous people, artists, recyclable material collectors, professionals, technicians and service sector specialists (such as technical assistance and rural extension associations – Ater), in addition to the segment of the population who are unemployed, including the homeless. University incubators, civil society organizations and, in some cases, public administrators, work alongside these segments.

Solidarity economy enterprises are distinct organizations, in terms of status, motivation for their establishment and capacities. They are formal and informal collectives, undergoing a formalization process or at the stage of altering their nature (for example, from association to cooperative). Among other spaces and reasons, they originate at mothers' clubs, community organizations, from the need for control, from workers, companies experiencing bankruptcy, the need to capitalize a productive activity, to strengthen processes, to purchase raw materials and

supplies or strengthen collective sales and promote social capital and the well-being of individuals and communities; the enterprises are organizations at various stages of maturity, in terms of self-management practices. In this aspect, the fact that among the solidarity economy enterprises are those with a defined and mature self-management process, with clear practices of negotiated decisions and transparency, and extensive participation by members in the decision-making process, favoring management turnover and collective leadership should be highlighted. At an intermediate stage, there are enterprises that cultivate member participation, exercise transparent decision-making and management processes but lack parity in the exercise of internal dialogue and leadership renewal. Not unusual, are enterprises with members at different stages of socio-political engagement in the community and commitment to social movements or with distinct educational levels. In this case, a certain centralization of authority and power in the leader is easily detected – who, at times, would like a transition to occur but the members insist on keeping them in this position, since they are a reference point.

Solidarity economy enterprises are organizations comprised of distinct publics, with various objectives and motives – of generating income, complementing the family income and, concomitantly, of social utility – which could be explained from the socio-demographic segment of workers. We defend that the objectives of generating or complementing income and, at the other end, social utility, have a direct relation with the profile of the public involved and meanings that the members award to the associated activity they undertake. This reading enables a path to explain the predominance of low financial-economic income enterprises. Along these lines, we highlight that Solidarity Economy Mapping (2013) identified various reasons for the establishment of the mapped economic enterprises, with a very low percentage of *salvaged companies* (3.1%) and, at the other end, high percentages for a *complementary source of income* (48.8%) and an *alternative to unemployment* (46.2%).

The mapping does not classify the population segments that seek to *complement their income* or are an *alternative to unemployment*, because the question on characterizing the reason for establishing the enterprise was multiple-choice. The explanation for the existence of economic enterprises with a low financial-economic performance, however, can be explained using another route. When we look at intermediary positions related to reasons for establishing enterprises, we identified substantial interest in an *activity in which everyone is an owner* (40.7%), *community development* (28.6%), *social, solidarity or religious motivation* (19.3%) and *strengthening an ethnic group* (9.7%). Thus, we note that there is no exclusivity or predominance of financial-economic interest but, instead, a search to *complement income* or an *alternative to unemployment*, allied with social and cultural objectives and a certain political position, through initiatives able to generate *higher gains in an associative enterprise* (43.1%).

With distinct reasons and a wide range of population segments, in terms of socio-demographic and socio-economic profiles, solidarity economy enterprises are, as indicated in the Solidarity Economy Mapping (2013), mostly formalized as an association (60% of the total). A further 30.5% are informal groups and only 8.8% are formalized as a cooperative organization. For this reason, Silva (2017, p. 21) claims:

This result demonstrates that enterprises have a considerable amount of institutional fragility. This is because although the associations constitute an intermediary alternative to formalization, given their legal simplicity, they are very limited organizational forms, in terms of commercial activity.

Therefore, what elements explain these percentages of informality and associations in the

mapping? Possibly the reason for their formation, if not in all the cases, but some of them. We may assume that enterprises created with a focus on community development (usually in the form of residents' associations, community organizations and mothers' clubs) or for social, solidarity and religious reasons, are not prioritizing sales or a more complex level of formalization (via cooperatives). In addition, variables, such as low educational levels, a higher age bracket, peripheral location and restricted number of members, may, on the one hand, express reduced capacities for investment, capitalization and production and, on the other, may explain the non-commercial reasons and high social utility objectives.

We assume it is unlikely that an enterprise located in a peripheral neighborhood of a large city, in the form of a community association, made up of homemakers with craft-making activities, for example, has the same socio-political-cultural sense and purpose as an enterprise in that location, which focuses on collecting and processing solid waste. We can assume here that the production of crafts by homemakers would be less market and sales orientated and more focused on the enterprise's social utility. On the contrary, a solid waste enterprise would be more focused on the volume of material collected and sold than a socio-political-cultural function within the community. Therefore, they are at distinct poles: an enterprise whose continuity over time could be explained by its social utility, without suppressing the commercial dimension and, the other, whose purpose is centered on a commercial relation, without suppressing its social utility. We can explain this distinction on account of the nature of the enterprise and the members' socio-demographic profile.

An interpretation may lead to understanding that the crafts enterprise, formed of homemakers, is not characterized as a solidarity economy, while the waste enterprise is. Therefore, the discussion begins to incorporate different interpretations of solidarity economy: in the first scenario, certain practices would be assistance work and, therefore, we need to separate solidarity economy organizations and enterprises. In this case, there is no reconciliation between the economic and social dimensions and they are only social. With the rejection of the previous scenario, therefore, we accept that distinct practices assign specific meanings to solidarity economy enterprises, redefining the notion of economic, as: a) it continues to be associated, collective and self-management work and b) it continues to be a work and production space.

We defend the second scenario, based on the argument that SEEs redefine the idea of economic, centered exclusively on monetary relations. Therefore, we need to interpret the wide and diverse group of SEEs, in the light of the motives and profiles of the workers involved in them. Thus, we have strong indications that homemakers, in enterprises based on crafts, elect the learning they continually share, valuing products of an artistic-cultural nature and the relevance of the work they undertake in domestic (re)structuring, the well-being established on them and intra-family relations as factors explaining the continuity of associations with restricted financial returns. We are faced with a typical case in which social utility overlaps the economic-monetary outcome, considering that the women's double working day leads them to divide their time between caring for the home and family and handicraft activities. The income here, when it comes, complements the family income.

At the other pole, it is unlikely that underestimating the economic-monetary component occurs in cases of solid waste processing enterprises. Here, we see that the monetary component takes priority, considering that the partners of this enterprise have the income

received from the sale of the production that they share collectively as an exclusive source – both in the work process and sharing the outcome. The greater or lesser predominance of one or another component (social or economic), in the reading we are undertaking here, only indicates the plurality of SEEs. Thus, we understand that, in any situation, they are guided by work relations and production in a given organizational environment (with a higher or lower level of economic and social interests), mediated by self-management principles. Consequently, since decision-making in any work and production system is handed over to the workers' collective and subject to democratic governance, we can call it a solidarity economy enterprise.

The case of the Social Cooperative of the Psychosocial Care Center (Coopcaps) serves to illustrate a typical case of organization with a priority focus on the principles of solidarity economy. For example, the objective of promoting social organization for production, taken less as a component to generate production, sales and income but, instead, much more as a base to promote re-socialization processes, occupational therapy and giving a new meaning to life. The case in question is not a welfare organization, usually centered on meeting the criteria and management principles of the Unified Social Assistance System (Suas). The social cooperative is a legal entity and, as such, needs to meet specific management criteria, subject to specific regulations – Law no 9.867 of November 10, 1999. With specific regulations, these organizations focus on people in a situation of vulnerability or at a social disadvantage, such as those leaving the prison system, people afflicted by serious illnesses and with psychosocial problems. Coopcaps includes its members through work, reducing discrimination and giving them new meaning to life, not through welfare principles but through work, shared organizational management (although with certain restrictions) and the production and division of any excess financial gain, through collective acts and cooperation. However, in this case, supremacy of the solidarity values of work and production, as a human action linked to pleasure and giving meaning to life, and self-management, and any advances in objectives of an economic nature is clear. It is possible that this phenomenon governs all social cooperatives, but in order to move forward with this understanding, studies should be undertaken with this organizational segment. This is a priority case of social utility, as the overriding purpose of management, together with the exercise of democratic governance, as the preferred means of undertaking management, which summarizes the conditions for reconciliation between economic and social in organizational dynamics.

Conclusion

In an attempt to apply our proposed analytical grid (see Figure 1) to the four cases analyzed in the previous item, Figure 2 is provided below. In this, we identify three different results, in response to the fundamental question about the extent to which practices designated as social enterprises are able to produce a reconciliation between economic and social. The three results interpreted below are: non-reconciliation, juxtaposition and reconciliation.

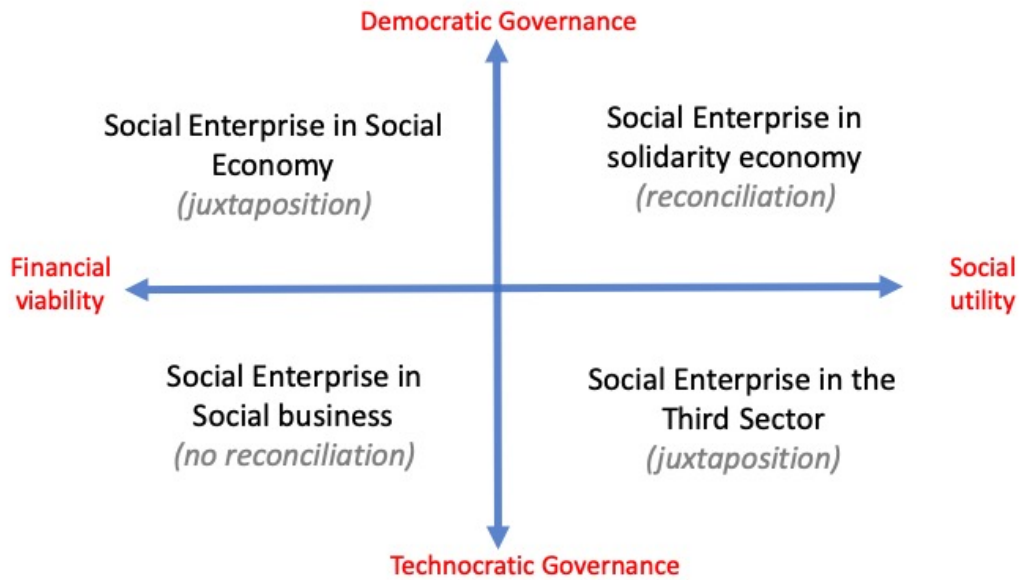


Figure 2 – Types of social enterprises and reconciliation

We observe non-reconciliation between economic and social in the case of social business type social enterprises, both because their purpose and form of management are established on the logic of separating economic in relation to social. It is the priority of the focus on financial viability as an organizational action's purpose. In this case, social aspects are understood as a type of consequence of economic gains. These would be able to indirectly promote achieving a purpose that seems to be very imprecisely defined: a service at an allegedly more accessible price for a population considered low income and donating the business' products to those in most need, according to the volume of sales, etc. Similarly, in relation to governance, the enterprise must conform to strict technocratic rationality standards, considered a condition for the efficiency of the organizational purpose. Reaffirming the understanding of economic according to the mechanisms, principles and values most characteristic of market rationality, social businesses meet all the requirements of the radical separation of economic with social.

Between non-reconciliation and reconciliation, we find two intermediary situations, which we will define here as a juxtaposition between economic and social. Co-existence of economic and social in the same organizational project is understood as juxtaposition. This co-existence does not allow for a merger (which would lead to a state of reconciliation), as economic and social, in this case, account for very opposite rationalities.

In the case of a social economy type social enterprise, particularly reflected in the reality of cooperative organizations, it acknowledges a focus on the economic result, through the search for the enterprise's financial viability, also seen as a business but simultaneously seeking to promote higher levels of management participation, by valuing democratic governance mechanisms. However, the different levels of intensity for each of the four subcriteria should be recognized. In some cooperatives, for example, lesser importance is given to the focus of financial viability, reaffirming the accountancy principle of surplus and a greater value of the historic principles of cooperatives that include the importance of community development. In this type of situation, the organizational purpose is close to the social utility quadrant. In contrast, other examples of cooperatives reveal a low intensity of democratic governance and greater proximity to the technocratic mechanisms of management, which are

usually accompanied by a more intense focus on financial viability and distance from social utility, as the enterprise's purpose. This frequently takes place in cases of cooperatives that assimilate their operations in the format of private companies, faced with the environmental pressures of their sector of activity, characteristic of institutional isomorphism processes.

In cases of third sector social enterprises, the state of juxtaposition that is observed is presented in the reverse sense of the previous case. Social is now represented by the social utility purpose, characteristic of non-profit organizations that are not found in the logic of generating their own resources, according to the mechanism of the financial considerations of commercialized products or services being the main principal of their fundraising. However, this does not necessarily lead to assimilating democratic governance processes. On the contrary, the vast majority of non-profit organizations adopt more conventional formats of technocratic management, having management model's characteristic of company administration as a benchmark. In addition, predominant literature on the third sector does not see a central or strategic element to meet their objectives in organizational democracy. And also, with the reconfiguration of the current financing scenario for civil society organizations, dependence on private funders rises and, similarly, the number of these organizations linked to the private sector increases (business foundations and corporate social responsibility, etc.), meaning that there is a greater tendency for proximity with social businesses for this type of social enterprise. Many non-profit organizations are now invited to develop their own portfolio of services to be commercialized. In resistance or a countermovement, we cannot fail to recognize cases of low intensity of technocratic governance at certain civil society organizations and although basing their management on strict rules, they accept a certain degree of democratization of decisions, heading towards more egalitarian systems.

Lastly, an effective tendency towards a reconciliation between economic and social can be observed in cases of solidarity economy. Unlike a coexistence or juxtaposition of the two dimensions, reconciliation is understood as an effective interaction, involvement and/or rooting of economic in social. The enterprise's economic nature becomes inseparable from its social, political, cultural or environmental practice. Two characteristics of the economic, dynamic focusing on organizational practice, usually indicate reconciliation: a) decentering the market mechanism in mobilizing resources, enabling the emergence of more collaborative management practices, with a greater appeal to the principles of economic solidarity, with redistribution and reciprocity; b) the redefinition of market practice in the enterprise's dynamics, when there is an introduction of mechanisms of cooperation and solidarity in the configuration of their market relations through pacts, agreements, arrangements and inter-actor networks of different types and forms, supported on values and principles, such as fair trade, solidarity finance, and ethical and conscious consumption, among others. Conditions for the effective exercise of reconciliation are also defined by the territorial context. Solidarity Economy Enterprises (SEEs) are not defined independent of the territory to which they belong. The meaning of the economic activity undertaken is not understood without a relation with the social conditions and life stories of the people that take part in it, and their relation of cultural identity with where it is located. SEEs are frequently defined as territorial development agents. The economic-material substratum of the activity undertaken by the enterprise is not perceived without motivation of another nature, which encourages and directs the organizational project. In addition, the search for the self-management of initiatives may be seen as a permanent effort to learn a democratic

governance process, construed as the primary management principle. Reflecting on the question of intensity, varied levels of democratic governance are observed among the SEEs, according to the initiatives' level of maturity, defined by their capacity to learn or, in other words, for cultural change.

The quadrants presented in Figure 2 only indicate a horizon of possibilities for each context and reality of the social enterprise, and its capacity to devise ways for a relation between economic and social. However, the intensity with which each of the four indicators related to the objective and way of undertaking management is presented (in each case) more clearly defines the enterprise's strategic position. This position or "place" of the enterprise helps us to better understand their challenges, whether from the point of view of the nature of the conflicts which characterize it or whether in terms of the strategic reach of their action for the transformation which is sought.

The type of analysis undertaken here invited us to reflect on the conditions required for an effective reconciliation between economic and social. We observed that this accomplishment assumes a historic reversal of the two terms, to consider a social determination of economic in practice. Thus, in fact, this situation is verifiable when economic becomes a means to achieve other objectives in the organizational dynamic, ceasing to be an end in itself. In order to subordinate economic in a dynamic of collective action, we see that two characteristics are fundamental. In other words, both the means of undertaking management and its purpose must be socially defined, according to the prevalence of the notions of democratic governance and social utility. From this point of view, two general conclusions are useful.

Firstly, it should be highlighted that in contexts of the economic determination of social, a reconciliation of economic and social becomes inconceivable. Thus, according to conventional market parameters and rationality, it is not possible to undertake this reconciliation, for the simple fact that this rationality implies social subordination.

Thus, it is possible for economic and social to co-exist in a relation of juxtaposition, in which the margin for social maneuver will always be quite limited, whether the product of the effect of market pressures on the objective of the initiative in question, or whether as the result of a loss of democratic mechanisms to conduct the initiative.

Lastly, reconciliation of economic and social seems possible to us when the way of establishing the economic is modified. In other words, reconciliation requires the activation of institutional devices and mechanisms, implying not only the combination of varied economic logics, such as the redefinition of market principles and practices. It is through experiences of social or democratic control of the economic that there is a glimpse of this reconciliation. Reconciliation indicates the path of institutionalizing other, more supportive, sustainable and common forms of economy.

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