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WORKING PAPER

Local Public Policy of Social and Solidarity Economy as a Strategy
for Generating Work, Income and Social Inclusion

Julia DA SILVA GUTIERREZ RUIZ, Victor Hugo MORAES DE CASTRO, José Carlos
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Local Public Policy of Social and Solidarity Economy as a Strategy for Generating Work, Income and Social Inclusion

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Introduction

Poverty in our society is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, including the lack of access to economic, social, and human rights. Therefore, to eradicate poverty, it is important to offer opportunities for growth and development, focused on the poorest and most vulnerable people (Engel, 2022). In general, the population groups in a situation of hardship are those with low levels of education and schooling, children, the elderly, black people, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, widows, single mothers, unemployed youth, the chronically ill, the disabled, etc. (Festa Jr., 2024; Narayan, 2000).

The municipality of Araraquara, in the interior of the State of São Paulo, is not immune to the effects of the national context. The city also faces the challenges of increasing poverty and unemployment, which plague Brazil as a whole, mainly affecting women. Considering the above, urgent measures need to be taken to combat these social ills. The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is presented as a sustainable local development strategy, which aims to develop the territory and strengthen the community (Paiva, Silva, 2020). The article aims to discuss the SSE as an instrument of public policy capable of fostering income generation and decent work for people in situations of social vulnerability, drawing a gender perspective, in the municipality of Araraquara-SP.

To this end, the study applies a qualitative methodology. As for technical procedures, the methods used in the research were the case study and the bibliographic research. The case study is an investigation that allows an in-depth analysis of “one or a few cases, in a way that allows for their broad and detailed knowledge; a task practically impossible through other designs already considered” (Gil, 2022, p. 35). This type of study uses various strategies, such as exploring real-life situations; describing the research scenario; formulating hypotheses or developing theories; and explaining social variables (Gil, 2022). The second method was based on a literature review including scientific articles, dissertations, and theses, as well as recent research that highlights data on the practice of SSE in Araraquara–SP, carried out by Castro (2024), Festa Jr. (2024), and Ruiz (2024); on direct observation by researchers of the activities developed in the municipality and in the daily praxis of the SSE; and on participant observation, based on the second author’s experience in an internship at IPECS, assisting associations and cooperatives.

This research is validated by the fact that Araraquara is among the pioneering cities in Brazil implementing this type of public policy as well as public investments to support and develop the SSE, with the purpose of reducing unemployment and poverty in the municipality. According to Paiva (2017), popular associations or cooperatives can be a means of providing work, income, housing conditions, food, and opportunities for those excluded from society.

That being said, the SSE can also be a fundamental instrument to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda (Chaves-Avila, Gallego-Bono, 2020; ILO, 2022; Morais, 2019). This UN 2030 Agenda is focused on a new model of social and economic development that addresses the main challenges of our world such as poverty, hunger, inequality, among others (Chaves-Avila, Gallego-Bono, 2020).

This article is composed of five sections. Following the introduction, the second section includes a brief discussion about public policies supporting SSE in Brazil, in an attempt to understand its relevance as a tool to combat poverty via the generation of work and income. The third section addresses the public policies of SSE that the municipality of Araraquara–SP has tried to put into practice. The fourth section provides an analysis and discussion of the results; while the fifth section covers some final considerations.

1. SSE Public Policy in Brazil

This section aims to briefly discuss public policies supporting SSE in Brazil. The definition of public policies is multifaceted, but they all converge around the need to resolve societal problems. Morais (2013) emphasizes that public policies can be understood as: (i) governmental research on social issues; (ii) governmental actions to achieve specific goals; (iii) governmental interventions in the lives of the population; (iv) governmental decisions on actions and omissions; and (v) governmental instruments to shape behaviors.

Teixeira (2002) presents arguments that coincide with those pointed out by Morais (2013), indicating that public policies define the course of government action, aiming to meet the

demands of society and promote collective well-being. Its objectives can range from guaranteeing fundamental rights to economic development. According to Chaves-Ávila and Gallego-Bonno (2020), the current generation of public policies for the Solidarity Economy (SE), referred to by the author as Transformative Policies for the Social and Solidarity Economy, is characterized by citizen participation, integration with other policies, the use of public contracts, specialized training, and the involvement of various stakeholders.

Unlike traditional policies that focus, for example, on tax incentives for companies or other purely economic aspects, SSE public policies seek to promote the generation of work and income through an alternative economic model, based on cooperation and solidarity, with a focus on the human being and the environment in which people are embedded, and with the capacity to address other social issues such as housing, culture, basic sanitation, and gender (Ruiz, Morais, 2023; Silva, Morais, Santos, 2020). This is because the SSE is able to address issues that transcend the economic field, demonstrating an interdisciplinary character that encompasses social, political, environmental, and cultural dimensions (Morais, 2013). It is precisely from this capacity that SSE public policies “draw inspiration”, so that they can be combined with other public policies and better address the needs of SSE and its organizations (França Filho, 2006). Due to this transversal character, the SSE and its public policies are often related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, since the SDGs encompass 17 different general themes that, when added together, encompass all areas of development and human life (ILO, 2022).

In general, SSE public policies have been applied as a tool for reducing social inequality, aligned with SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities), to encourage the consumption of food produced by family farming and make it more accessible, implementing sustainable agriculture policies and combating hunger (SDG 2: Zero Hunger), to promoting initiatives that generate work and income mainly for minority groups, such as women and poor people, dialoguing with SDGs 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). In addition, SSE policies take into account respect for local communities, territories, and the environment in the spaces where public policies occur and the organizations reside, connecting with SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water) and 15 (Life on Land) (ILO, 2022; Sousa, 2023; Mariosa, 2022; Morais, 2019; Ofreneo, 2019; Pitacas, 2019).

In Brazil, the composition of the National Council of Solidarity Economy, linked to the National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy (SENAES), is made up not only of groups and ministries directly linked to SSE, but also linked to city planning, agriculture, science and education, racial and gender equality, the environment and climate, among others, including the office of the Presidency of the republic. In 2017, an important milestone was achieved in the institutionalization of SSE, with the approval of the National System of Solidarity Economy (Morais, 2023). However, with the discontinuity of this federal agenda from 2018, the capacity of states and municipalities in the development of new practices has been weakened, mainly due to insufficient budgetary allocation. That said, experiences have emerged and have been consolidated at subnational levels, such as that of the municipality of Araraquara-SP (Paiva, Silva, 2020).

According to Morais (2023), the new federal government, which took office in 2023, has expressed interest in revitalizing and restructuring SENAES, in a more explicit and cross-cutting manner, responding to criticisms of the old practices of the Secretariat, which were analyzed by other authors as incapable of concluding the process of institutionalization of the SSE (Fonseca, Morais, Chiariello, 2021).

In August 2023, the Bill of the Parliamentary Front for the Popular and Solidarity Economy was launched, with the objectives of advancing the national legal framework, guaranteeing resources, stimulating state capacity, deepening the debate in the National Congress, and connecting the national agenda of SSE with international agendas.

In November 2024, the Chamber of Deputies approved the Bill that established the National Solidarity Economy Policy and the respective system for coordinating actions to promote social organizations to meet their goals. The National Solidarity Economy Policy has the following objectives: I) to strengthen and stimulate cooperativism and associativism; II) to contribute to income generation, the improvement of quality of life, and the promotion of social justice; III) to facilitate access for SSE activities to promotion tools, means of production, markets, knowledge, and social technologies necessary for their development; and IV) to support actions that bring consumers and producers closer together, fostering practices related to conscious consumption and fair and solidarity trade (Piovesan, Miranda, 2024).

Regarding subnational SSE policies in Brazil, it is known that, driven by the high unemployment rate of the 1990s, some municipalities adopted measures to encourage the emergence of workers' organizations, such as cooperatives and associations (Ruiz, Morais, 2023). And the SSE as a strategy to boost regional development and job creation gained increasing support, so much so that, by 2008, 14 states and more than 200 municipalities included SSE public policies in their government plans, each with its specific characteristics (Goulart, Marin, 2011).

The specificity of each subnational public administration significantly impacts budgetary issues, and each territory has a different way of implementing and designing strategies for the execution of public policies in collaboration with the community (França Filho, 2006; Goulart, Marin, 2011).

Nobre and Freitas (2012) complement this perspective by stating that the configuration of SSE public policies is influenced by local political arrangements, to the point that some city administrations link SSE policies to social assistance secretariats, while others integrate them into economic development secretariats, as is the case of the municipality of Araraquara.

It is important to emphasize that, in Brazil, the 1988 Federal Constitution granted municipalities administrative, legislative, and financial autonomy. Therefore, this places them on equal footing with the states and the union regarding the legitimate exercise of their own competencies, with the capacity for self-organization, self-administration, and self-governance (Correia, 2010). This explains the heterogeneity of local experiences and the diverse initiatives across the national territory.

1.1 Poverty and SSE public policies

Following the previous section on public policies of SSE in Brazil, this subsection intends to address some conceptual aspects regarding poverty. Sen (2000) discussed how the concept of poverty and all related discussions are centered on how the poorest live, given the economic, political, and social deprivations to which they are subjected.

According to the same author, poverty can be defined as a deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as a low level of income, although inadequate income is often the main cause of deprivations that we normally associate with poverty, such as hunger (Sen, 2010). This association of poverty and hunger is institutionalized in the UN SDGs, which has as its first objective to end poverty; and, secondly, to end hunger by 2030 (UN, 2024).

Complementary to the analysis, according to Banerjee and Duflo (2021, p. 35), “for many of us in the West, poverty is almost synonymous with hunger [...]. A poor person was essentially defined as someone without enough to eat”. In this case, the structure and improvement of public policies in the distribution of basic resources, especially food, is fundamental (Engel, 2022).

Poverty in our society is a complex phenomenon and can be broadly defined as a situation in which human needs are not satisfactorily met. It is necessary to clarify what these needs are and to define the adequate level of care for society. Everything depends mainly on the standard of living of the people and how these needs are specifically met in a given socioeconomic situation (Rocha, 2006).

In the words of Engel (2022, p. 236, our translation):

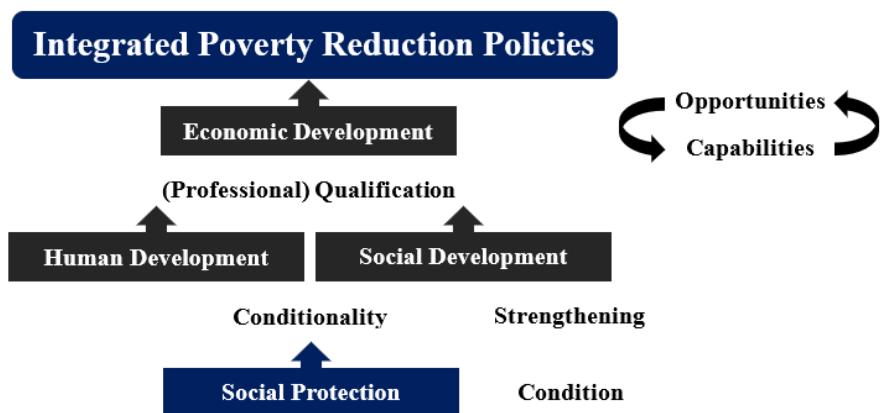
Poverty tends to reproduce intergenerationally, through factors that affect the possibilities of development of individuals in each of the stages of their life cycle. Therefore, it is necessary that poverty reduction strategies provide for social protection and development policies for each of the stages of the life cycle (ages 0 to 6, 7 to 14, 15 to 24, 25 to 60, over 60) capable of neutralizing such factors.

The starting point, essential but not sufficient, would be the existence of a social protection network with income transfers and a socio-educational program that guarantees the minimum conditions for survival as a beginning of a process of human, social and economic development, with a focus on people and families at risk, poverty and social vulnerability (Engel, 2022). In the author's view, the human development process should include enrollment in school, access to health, culture, sports, leisure, in addition to adequate housing conditions. In the social field, the emphasis would be on families, especially mothers, and support for local organizations, squares, playgrounds, youth centers, libraries and projection rooms. The economic field would also need to offer qualification and requalification to enter the productive world with courses and training for insertion in the labor market. In this sense, research done by Barros and Machado (2022, p.

12, our translation) shows that the “central pillar of a poverty reduction policy is the guarantee of the right to work, which, when exercised, leads to a successful process of productive inclusion, and then to an increase in the family’s purchasing power to overcome poverty”.

Eliminating poverty requires effective human, social and economic development protection policies that are organized, structured and focused on the poorest and most vulnerable. Such actions must be taken synergistically to have a significant impact on the transformation of the lives of these families (Engel, 2022). Figure 1 provides a visualization of the discussion.

Figure 1 — Social Protection Network.



Source: Adapted from Engel (2022).

It is worth noting that, “even the most well-intentioned and well-thought-out public policies may not have an impact if they are not implemented properly” (Banerjee, Duflo, 2021, p. 268, our translation). In the authors’ analysis, many policies fail to work in practice due to many government failures; thus, the poorest and most vulnerable are the first victims of poor governance (Duflo, 2022).

Poverty affects more women than men. (Bronzo, Silva, 2021). According to Pearce (1989), the “feminization of poverty” is mainly defined by the increase in the proportion of women and/or female-headed households in poverty or extreme poverty (Souza, 2020). A study conducted in 2021 indicates that approximately 63 % of people living in households headed by women without a spouse and with children under 14 years of age lived in poverty (IBGE, 2022).

In Table 1, it is possible to observe the evolution of the feminization of poverty in Brazil based on an index developed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), from its Gender Equality Observatory, which is used to compare the poverty situation of women aged 20 to 59 years compared to men of the same age. The index is calculated from the quotient between the proportion of poor women and men in a given country and multiplied

by 100. It uses the base value 100 for analysis, and if the values are lower than the base value, it means that poverty (or extreme poverty) affects men more than women; if the values are higher than the base value, it means that there are more women in a situation of economic vulnerability than men.

It can be stated that, as Pearce (1989) points out, the feminization of poverty has advanced over the years; in the Brazilian example, the feminization of poverty index jumps from 105.5 in 2002 to 120.1 in 2022, while extreme poverty followed an identical rhythm, jumping from 104.3 in 2002 to 119.5 two decades later (Table 1).

Table 1 — Feminization of poverty index from 2002 to 2022, by decade, in Brazil.

| Year | Poverty | Extreme Poverty |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|
| 2002 | 105.5 | 104.3 |
| 2012 | 115.9 | 116.7 |
| 2022 | 120.1 | 119.5 |

Source: Adapted from Monteiro Santos (2025, p. 24).

Beyond exhibiting a higher proportion in poverty, women also represent the group with greater volatility concerning unemployment and underemployment, as well as occupying more precarious jobs, due to constraints imposed on their mobility and available time, stemming from their historical obligation to family care, whether of children or elderly family members, thereby limiting women's choices regarding sectors and positions (Ruiz, Morais, 2024; Hirata, 2018; Oliveira, 2008). In the economy, women generally face gender-related challenges, as they are historically positioned as "second-class citizens" (the "non-man") within a patriarchal society, a regime of exploitation and/or domination of women by men, which controls the work women can or should perform, their sexuality, and their freedom; as described by Beauvoir (1980) and Saffiotti (2004). Among these gender issues, Ruiz (2024) highlights limited decision-making power, which represents the curtailment of female autonomy, in addition to "patrimonial violence", which is connected both to the curtailment of autonomy and to economic issues in general.

More comprehensively, female autonomy, as addressed by Costa (2000) and Schefler (2013), is intrinsically linked to the concept of empowerment, encompassing dimensions ranging from economic and bodily control to the freedom of sexual expression, the right to free movement, and protection against violations and abuses, and this autonomy transitions between individual and collective spheres. Regarding economic autonomy, Schefler (2013) emphasizes that women's control over resources can not only improve their living conditions but also empower them to make decisions about their use, potentially transforming traditional domination structures and even decreasing the incidence of violence in these contexts. For this to occur, it is

necessary for women to have the possibility of being integrated into the labor market in a way that allows them to achieve financial autonomy and to benefit from these gains (Ruiz, 2024).

Therefore, the entry of socially vulnerable individuals into the formal wage labor market, as is the case for women, represents a challenging form of productive inclusion, while the economic growth of a country alone is not sufficient for these individuals to fully access work that guarantees their dignity and that of their families (Campos , 2018). Silva (2011). State investment in traditional policies to incentivize the wage labor market is insufficient for women, individuals with low educational attainment (and limited skills or professional training), and individuals in extreme poverty to become productively active in the economy: only social development policies, which encompass various social aspects, can include and grant dignity to these individuals.

Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations and Enterprises (SSEOEs) are characterized as self-managed and democratic including their members in their decisions (including productive decisions or those related to their sector of operations, as is the case with women's enterprises that end up operating based on needs of women). They not only generate income but integrate sociocultural dimensions and the subjectivity of the individuals involved (Ruiz, 2024). However, for these SSEOEs to survive, precisely due to their social nature, they require external support and often resort to state aid (Santos , 2021). Social Incubators, as presented later in this work, are of utmost importance because they operate at the "front line" of the process, directly acting upon and monitoring the SSEOEs. Nevertheless, Silva (2011) presents other challenges of these policies, which remain present almost 15 years later:

To create a conducive institutional environment for the formalization of these enterprises into cooperatives; to establish adequate financing channels for their reality —for example, the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) in family farming—; to provide technical assistance that supports enterprises in the most diverse sectors and at various organizational stages; to have access to institutional markets, via public procurement, that can guarantee the initial viability and development of these enterprises; to generate openness for the participation of solidarity enterprises in large government investment projects, supplying the need for services and products demanded in the intervention locations; to have joint action between Senaes and agencies from other ministries in order to enhance the "political brand" of the solidarity economy internally within the federal government (Silva, 2011, p. 52, our translation).

Thus, as highlighted previously, public policies for SSE that are capable of promoting work and income based on cooperation and solidarity, with a focus on the human being and their surrounding environment, and with the capacity for integration with social aspects, such as the qualitative integration of women into the labor market, are relevant policies for broadly combating poverty and the feminization of poverty, even with their institutional challenges.

2. SSE Public Policy in Araraquara

The city of Araraquara resides in the inland of the state of São Paulo. According to IBGE data, the city has approximately 242,000 inhabitants (2022), with a GDP of R\$ 49,692.93 (US\$ 9,035.08¹), in 2021 (IBGE, 2025). The Municipal Human Development Index (IDHM) is 0.815, classified as the 14th largest in Brazil and considered high by the United Nations Development Programme (Paiva, Silva, 2020).

Data from May 2025 show that the municipality has 23,912 families registered in the “Cadastro Único para Programas Sociais” — a registry that allows better information on low-income families in Brazil. Of these, 9,269 (39 %) live in poverty, with a monthly income of up to R\$ 218.00 (US\$ 38.66) and 5,230 (22 %) in a low-income situation, with a monthly income of up to half the minimum wage, that is, R\$ 759 (US\$ 134.61) (CadÚnico, 2025). These figures reflect structural problems within the economic system out of which the SSE emerged in the municipality of Araraquara through the SE movement (which is more common in Latin America and is part of SSE) as a strategy for social organization and income generation since 2001. Under the administration of the Workers’ Party (PT) at the time, a project management department was created to generate jobs and income within the structure of the Municipal Secretariat of Economic Development (Paiva, Silva, 2020). Some SSEOE^s already existed and operated in a dispersed manner in the municipality, mainly informally.

At the beginning of 2005, in the second term of the PT (2005–2008), SE public policy was institutionalized under the mandate of the Executive Coordination of Social and Solidarity Economy (CESS) (Paiva, Silva, 2020). In 2008, representatives of public authorities, the university and SSEOE^s created the Municipal Forum of Solidarity Economy, a space where groups could exchange experiences and where the elaboration and approval of the Araraquara Solidarity Economy Charter of Principles took place. Soon after, in 2009, the Municipal Law of Solidarity Economy was approved, a milestone for supporting existing SSEOE^s and consolidating SE in the municipality (Fonseca , 2014).

The construction of a public policy beyond a government program allowed the SE to exist with some structure for the following eight years, after the change in government. The institutional structure was renamed the Social and Solidarity Economy Management, with the disappearance of the CESS. In 2017, against the dismantling of SE at the federal level, after the return of the PT government, the Executive Coordination of Work and Creative and Solidarity Economy (CETECS) was created, thus SE continued, after a hiatus, as a strategic agenda within economic and social development policy, combating hunger and enabling social and productive inclusion in Araraquara (Paiva, Silva, 2020).

In 2018, the Municipal Program “Territories in Network”, an intersectoral initiative with the objective of socially protecting and offering integrated services to meet the needs of individuals and families in priority territories, was launched. This program serves as a guide for the

¹ All Real to Dollar conversions will be based on an exchange rate of 5.50 USD/BRL. Chosen arbitrarily, based on present and historical values, in order to facilitate comparisons over time.

development of social policies in the municipality. In the areas of job creation and income generation, territorial actions were implemented, such as awareness workshops on SE in the Social Assistance Reference Centers (CRAS) and territorial fairs, which aimed to promote the development of local knowledge (Paiva, Silva, 2020).

Highlighting the partnership between the university and the city hall benefiting the solidarity economic ecosystem, the “Araraquara 2050” Program was launched in 2019, by Law, consolidating the partnership between the municipality and UNESP. This program, based on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, aims to promote a strategic short, medium and long-term macro development plan for the municipality, based on the economic, environmental and social potential of Araraquara, and has as one of its main axes SE public policies (Paiva, Silva, 2020).

Also in 2019, CETECS carried out the project “Cooperativism as a Gateway to the Future”, to promote the organization of people in situations of unemployment and high socioeconomic vulnerability and encouraged the formation of new cooperatives. In 2020, to assist the SSEOE, which were increasing in number, the IPECS was established, under the responsibility of CETECS (Castro, 2024).

In 2021, the project “Coopera Araraquara” was established to create and monitor cooperatives and associations in the municipality. This program collaborates with IPECS in supporting SSEOE with financing and resources (Castro, 2024). Also, the Municipal Council for Work and Creative and Solidarity Economy was established by law, with the purpose of establishing, monitoring and evaluating the program for decent jobs and income generation and for the promotion of the solidarity, popular and creative economy, as well as expanding the participation of organized civil society in the elaboration of the municipal SE policy planning and measures for the development and management of a public work, employment and income system (Araraquara, 2021).

It is worth noting that, during the Covid-19 pandemic, SE modernized itself through virtual or in-person meetings only with the leaders of groups, making it possible to formalize cooperatives that were in the process of formation and start a new trajectory of market insertion for the effective generation of income, as well as support existing groups (Paiva, Silva, 2020).

In October 2024, a group of cooperatives founded “Aracoop”: a Central cooperative (second degree cooperative) with the support of IPECS and the city hall. Aracoop aims to strengthen the activities of its member cooperatives and promote social and economic development with sustainability in the central region of the state, strengthening the solidarity economic ecosystem (ACH, 2024a).

Currently, following municipal election results, PT is no longer in government for the 2025–2028 term. In the previous hiatus, between 2009 and 2016, the SE had a limited presence in public policies, surviving only due to the approval of the Municipal Law of Solidarity Economy in 2009. It will be interesting to see how the SE in the city will fare in the future, with a better institutionalization and a stronger ecosystem, but with the risk of repeating the challenges of the past.

A change can already be seen in the relationship between public authorities and SSEs, with an ongoing discussion in the new municipal administration about not renewing public employment contracts with cooperatives in the city. Currently, one of the contracts with a cooperative has not been renewed, meaning less sustainability and greater difficulty in generating income for the organization (Chagas, 2025).

2.1 The Municipality Social Incubator as catalyst of SSE public policy in Araraquara

IPECS belongs to the CETECS' structure, which belongs to the Municipal Secretariat of Labor, Economic Development and Tourism of Araraquara. Since 2021, its activities have been mostly carried out at the “Espaço Kaparaó”, a public space founded in 2010 that serves as a municipal center for social and professional training, but it has decentralized spaces that can be leased to incubated SSEOEs (Castro, 2024).

According to Pacheco (2023), the IPECS team is composed of five members, in addition to having some interns, most of whom come from higher education courses at universities in Araraquara. Since its foundation, IPECS has been allowed to cooperate with universities, as well as with other governmental and non-governmental institutions, to guide, assist or coordinate the execution of incubation projects, allowing important partnerships with people experienced in the solidarity economy - for example, the execution of advisory contracts for better training of SSEOEs (Araraquara, 2020).

Through the Coopera Araraquara program, IPECS annually holds a selection process through a public call for registration and selection of SSEOEs in the modalities of “Solidarity Cooperatives”, “Solidarity Associations and Collectives”, and “Informal Groups”. This is the initial step in the IPECS incubation process, which registers and selects groups for incubation, formalizing informal groups and embracing already structured ones.

There were approximately 28 SSEOE in the ecosystem of Araraquara during the pandemic, with 23 active (Ruiz, Moraes, 2021). However, there is no recent mapping on the number of these groups to understand the whole ecosystem. Therefore, the IPECS incubation framework, with a list of 13 organizations, is the most up-to-date and reliable source of information on this data, also highlighting the importance of the institution for the ecosystem, bringing together different experiences. The SSEOE incubated have different levels of maturities and operate in the sectors of Food, Cleaning, Gardening, General Services, Deliveries, Transportation of People, among others.

Chart 1 — SSEOE incubated by IPECS.

| Form of Organization | Organization's Name (reduced) | Activities | Number of Workers |
|----------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| Associations | Associação Mão Que CriaM | Urban; Artisan craft and sewing | 14 members |
| | Associação de Mulheres Assentadas do Assentamento Monte Alegre VI (AMA) | Rural; Food (bakery) | 10 members |
| | Associação de Mulheres Campesinas em Ação do Assentamento Bela Vista (AMCA) | Rural; Family farming; baking | 14 members |
| Cooperatives | Cooperativa de Trabalho Acácia | Urban; Waste collection and sorting | 200 members |
| | Cooperativa de Trabalho Costura e Arte | Urban; Artisan craft and sewing | 7 members |
| | Cooperativa de Trabalho Morada Car | Urban; Ride-sharing app | 20 members |
| | Cooperativa de Trabalho Morada Express | Urban; Motorcycle couriers | 7 members |
| | Cooperativa de Trabalho Panelas Unidas | Urban; Food (popular restaurant) | 17 members |
| | Cooperativa de Trabalho Sol Nascente | Urban; Cleaning conservation areas | 40 members |
| | Cooperativa de Trabalho Vitória Multisserviços | Urban; Entry/exit control; janitor; cleaning | 115 members |
| Informal Collectives | Coletivo Dons Dorcas | Urban; Food | 27 members |
| | Coletivo S.E.I.V.A. | Urban; Artisan craft (soap making) | 11 members |
| | Coletivo Made in Matto | Urban; Artisan craft | 13 members |
| Total of Workers | | | 495 |

Source: Adapted from Festa Jr. (2024).

It is known that four work cooperatives provide services in the municipality of Araraquara through public contracts, by exemption from bidding. The “Acácia” Cooperative, has been carrying out selective collection of recyclable materials in the municipality since 2007, one of the first cases in Brazil (Paiva, Silva, 2020). “Panelas Unidas”, formed exclusively by women who are economically responsible for their families, has been managing and operating, since 2022, two popular restaurants existing in the municipality (ACH, 2022). “Sol Nascente”, formed exclusively by individuals with justice history, has been providing manual waste collection services in the margins of streams and permanent preservation areas belonging to the municipality since 2022 (ACH, 2022). Finally, “Vitória Multisserviços” has contracts with the city hall in dengue control actions and with the Autonomous Department of Water and Sewage, at the 12 Points of Delivery of Rubble and Bulky Items - PEVs” (ACH, 2024).

Two of the cooperatives are considered Platform Cooperatives²: Morada Car, passenger transport and Morada Express, deliveries. Both are awaiting the operationalization of their apps with the support of city hall through IPECS and Coopera Araraquara, with assistance in structure and access to financial incentives. Both were recently awarded a public call notice for funding innovation and social technology projects.

Other organizations, such as associations, are generating income by selling their products and services in the market. AMA has a space provided in the Monte Alegre VI Settlement where the workers run their bakery, and Mão que CriaM has a rented space in the center where they sell their handicrafts. Informal collectives have just entered the process and are still formalizing and consolidating, with not much data on their income generation (Castro, 2024).

² Defined as a business that primarily uses a website, mobile application, or protocol to sell goods (including data) or services, and that relies on democratic decision-making processes and the shared community ownership of the platform by workers and users (Scholz, 2017 Zanatta, 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

The research by Festa Jr. (2024) and Ruiz (2024) analyzed census data collected by IPECS on incubated SSEOE workers. This data is from 2023 and is a sample of the reality of workers in the sector in the city. The sample, with a total of 96 responses, included 37 cisgender men (39 %), 56 cisgender women (58 %), 2 transgender women (2 %), and 1 non-binary person (1 %). Using descriptive statistics, the analysis revealed that 64% of the participants receive above the Brazilian monthly minimum wage (In 2023, R\$ 1,320 [US\$ 240]), and their average monthly income is R\$ 1,550.18 (US\$ 281.85), as seen on Table 2.

Table 2 — SSEOE workers' monthly income.

| Gender | Men | Women | Transgender Women | Non-Binary Person | Total | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| No income | 4 | 1 | - | - | 5 | 5% |
| From R\$ 600 to R\$ 1,319 | 5 | 25 | - | - | 30 | 31% |
| From R\$ 1,320 to R\$ 1,639 | 3 | 17 | 1 | 1 | 22 | 23% |
| From R\$ 1,640 to R\$ 2,000 | 16 | 9 | 1 | - | 26 | 27% |
| More than R\$ 2,000 | 9 | 4 | - | - | 13 | 14% |
| Total | 37 | 56 | 2 | 1 | 96 | 100% |

Source: Adapted from Festa Jr. (2024).

Complementing these data from a gender and race perspective, Ruiz's (2024) research indicated that the average monthly income of women (cisgender and transgender) was approximately R\$ 1,447.00 (US\$ 263.09), while that of men was R\$ 1,762.00 (US\$ 320.36). Also, there is a difference in income between white and black women: while white women receive around R\$ 1,488.00 (US\$ 270.55), black women receive around R\$ 1,418.00 (US\$ 257.82).

Compared with data from the traditional Brazilian market, the SSEOE show a less unequal income distribution, highlighting the SSE as an effective arm of SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). In the SSE's organizations, women receive, on average, 82.13 % of men's remuneration, while in the traditional market, this proportion drops to 77.69 % and, among the women themselves, the ratio between the average remuneration of black women in relation to white women is 95.29 % in the SSEOE, against 58.29 % in the national scenario (Ruiz, 2024).

The reason for comparing the data with the minimum wage is because it is an index used by IPECS to measure income generation and decent work (Castro, 2024), since an SSE that cannot offer a minimum wage income level may be equated to an organization that offers precarious work. Another income indicator mentioned by IPECS is the salary floor of each sector, which is often above the minimum wage, but there is no record of the use of this index.

As previously stated, SSEOE have different income generation profiles. It is evident that the organizations that are consistently generating income do so by being able to provide services to the municipal government through public bidding contracts. As Castro (2024) found, the groups

that venture into sales of products and services in the private market, such as associations, still struggle to generate income, while other groups, which manage to provide services to the public sector, obtain a better return.

This may be evidence of a high degree of dependence of organizations on the public sector, which can become a fragility in the local SSE ecosystem. This is because, without the autonomy of the SSEOE s in income generation, a change of government that does not renew their contracts may mean a strong blow to their sustainability. However, there are no indicators in the literature that allow a structured analysis of the degree of dependence of the ecosystem on the public sector and what level would be worrying for its survival.

Table 3 shows that 53 % of workers had no income before working in the SSEOE s and 18 % depended exclusively on public aid to survive, highlighting the importance and impact of these organizations in income generation and the fight against poverty. Drawing a gender cut, 58.9 % of women had had no income and only 12.5 % of them worked before joining SSEOE s (whether formal or self-employed), which demonstrates how important these organizations are also for the generation of women's economic autonomy. These results corroborate the idea of the SSE as an SDG strategy in the territories, highlighting here SDGs 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Table 3 — Income before working on SSEOE s.

| Gender | Men | Women | Transgender Women | Non-Binary Person | Total | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| No | 17 | 33 | 1 | - | 51 | 53% |
| Yes (public assistance) | - | 16 | 1 | - | 17 | 18% |
| Yes (formal job) | 6 | 5 | - | - | 11 | 11% |
| Yes (self-employment) | 14 | 2 | - | 1 | 17 | 18% |
| Total | 37 | 56 | 2 | 1 | 96 | 100% |

Source: Adapted from Festa Jr. (2024).

In Table 4, it is observed that 84 % of the workers have their main income in the SSEOE s (Festa Jr., 2024). This corroborates the statement by Morais (2013, p. 246, our translation), which says: "for many individuals and families, the SE is the only source of survival to earn a living."

Table 4 — Main or supplementary income*.

| Gender | Men | Women | Transgender Women | Non-Binary Person | Total | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Main income | 31 | 46 | 2 | 1 | 80 | 84% |
| Supplemental income | 6 | 9 | - | - | 15 | 16% |
| Total | 37 | 55 | 2 | 1 | 95 | 100% |

Source: Adapted from Festa Jr. (2024).

Note: *A woman did not answer.

Table 5 shows that 76 % stated they have from 1 to 3 people who depend on this income (besides themselves). Furthermore, 18 % have more than 3 dependents, with a man who reported having 9 dependents and a woman who reported having 11 dependents standing out. It should also be noted that, proportionally, 8 % of men do not have any dependents, while among women the value drops to about 3.6 %. (Festa Jr., 2024; Ruiz, 2024).

Table 5 — Number of dependents on the workers' income.

| Gender | Men | Women | Transgender Women | Non-Binary Person | Total | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------|
| None | 3 | 2 | 1 | - | 6 | 6% |
| From 1 to 3 people | 24 | 48 | - | 1 | 73 | 76% |
| From 4 to 6 people | 9 | 5 | 1 | - | 15 | 16% |
| More than 6 People | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 2% |
| Total | 37 | 56 | 2 | 1 | 96 | 100% |

Source: Adapted from Festa Jr. (2024).

The data, therefore, highlights the profile of workers in SSEOE in the municipality of Araraquara, composed mainly of women who are economically responsible for their families, and who rely on SSEOE as their main source of income to support themselves and their dependents.

Beyond the economic aspects and labor market insertion, Ruiz's (2024) research dedicated efforts to understanding the role of SSEEs as a safer and more inclusive space for women, from the perspective of the women themselves. In this research, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with invited women who participate in SSEOE led by women. They were invited to discuss their perspectives on autonomy and gender issues in horizontal enterprises formed exclusively by women.

When questioned, they indicated their organizations as safe spaces for dialogue and that they feel welcomed by the other women in the cooperative/association. One of them stated that she feels "more empowered" and another reported that, when working with men, it is often necessary to assert oneself, but in a SSEOE composed only of women, dialogue is facilitated and consensus is reached more easily.

Therefore, as pointed out by Ruiz (2024), it is possible to note that SSEOE are environments that empower women, promoting financial autonomy and a sense of belonging and solidarity, in addition to proving to be an effective option for the full insertion of women in the labor market, as demonstrated by Campos (2018) to be a challenging task.

Thus, it is important to emphasize the role of public policies to support SSEOE and their instruments, such as IPECS, which act directly in the formation and longevity of these organizations, allowing the generation of income for the most economically marginalized community.

Final Considerations

As discussed, poverty is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon that limits access to economic, social, and human rights, affecting, above all, vulnerable groups (as women and black people) in various parts of the world and Araraquara is no exception. In this locality, SSE practices emerge as a strategy to combat poverty and hunger, generating income and dignified work, contributing to a more just and sustainable economy, in line with the UN's SDGs. Therefore, this research aimed to discuss SSE as a public policy instrument capable of fostering income and job generation for individuals in situations of social vulnerability, with the purpose of conducting a gender-specific analysis within the municipality of Araraquara, SP.

During the investigation, it was noted that, on average, SSE organizations in the city manage to provide an average income higher than the minimum wage, with 64 % of workers earning above this threshold. Furthermore, SSE in Araraquara presents a less unequal income distribution than the traditional national market, in terms of both gender and race. Women, on average, receive 82.13 % of men's remuneration (in contrast to 77.69 % in the traditional national market), and black women receive 95.29 % of white women's remuneration (in contrast to 58.29 %). However, it is important to emphasize that even in an economy that aims to combat inequality and exclusion, there are still considerable discrepancies between men and women.

The research also highlighted that 53 % of workers had no income before joining SSEOE, with only 11 % reporting prior formal employment. It was found that SSE is the main source of income for 84 % of workers, with 76 % of these workers supporting 1 to 3 people, and 18 % supporting more than 4 people.

Given the above, it is evident that SSEOE are environments of inclusion, especially for women who are heads of their households, because they find a more female-friendly and egalitarian environment concerning work and income when compared to the traditional market. Beyond inclusion for economically excluded groups from the labor market, examples include the Sol Nascente Cooperative, composed exclusively of formerly incarcerated individuals, or the Mões Que Criam Association, formed solely by women, who find opportunities for work and family sustenance.

It was observed that what is formed in the municipality is an SSE economic ecosystem that serves as a fundamental tool for local development, fostering new initiatives and supporting existing groups, particularly through institutions dedicated to this objective, such as IPECS, which provides access to structure, financial support, and technical advisory services. Notwithstanding, the key to the success of such an ecosystem lies in the integration between government, university, and community, through effective communication and well-structured public policies and, currently, there is tension regarding the continuity of SSE strategies with the change in municipal administration, highlighting the fragility of this ecosystem's sustainability, which needs to be overcome.

In conclusion, SSE is an important tool for local development and aligns with the United Nations SDGs, nevertheless, it is not an isolated solution, as other public policies are needed to create a functional support ecosystem that benefits the community in the fight against poverty and in gender-related issues.

Glossary

| | |
|--------|--|
| AMA | Association of Women Settlers from the Monte Alegre Settlement |
| CESS | Executive Coordination of Social and Solidarity Economy |
| CETECS | Executive Coordination of Work and Creative and Solidarity Economy |
| IPECS | Public Incubator of Creative and Solidarity Economy |
| PRONAF | National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture |
| PT | Brazilian Workers' Party |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SE | Solidarity Economy |
| SENAES | National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy |
| SSE | Social and Solidarity Economy |
| SSEOEs | Social and Solidarity Economy Organizations and Enterprises |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESP | São Paulo State University |

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ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Founded in 2013 in Seoul, the GSEF – Global Forum for Social and Solidarity Economy – is a global organization of local governments and civil society actors committed to promoting and developing the social and solidarity economy. Its 90 members, present in 35 countries, represent the diversity of SSE stakeholders: local governments, networks of actors, associations, cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, universities, etc. The GSEF supports the development of the SSE around the world by promoting dialogue between public authorities and SSE actors in order to jointly develop local public policies that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the emergence of ecosystems conducive to the SSE.

The GSEF thematic working groups (WGs) were voted on at the General Assembly on May 5, 2023. The WG on "The Impact of SSE Public Policies on the Achievement of the SDGs" brings together some fifteen researchers from all continents. It is led by Marguerite Mendell (Karl Polanyi Institute) and Timothée Duverger (Chair Terr'ESS, Sciences Po Bordeaux) and supported by the GSEF General Secretariat employee working on his CIFRE thesis.

Following on from research already conducted by the GSEF in partnership with UNRISD, which led to the production of guidelines for local SSE policies, in January 2024 the Research WG launched a call for contributions to gather proposals for working papers focusing on three recurring processes in public action: development, implementation, and evaluation. Through the analysis of these processes of SSE public policy development, the authors of the papers (both researchers and SSE actors) were asked to examine two fundamental dimensions: the contribution of these local policies to the achievement of sustainable development goals, and the paradoxes associated with the institutionalization of the SSE.

A reading committee composed of GT members evaluated more than forty proposals, including the seventeen working papers now published under the title *Local SSE Policies enabling the Socio-Ecological Transition*. Each paper is available on the GSEF website, free of charge, in its original language (English, French, or Spanish) and in English. This publication and the English translations were made possible thanks to financial support from Caisse des Dépôts.

The concrete examples provided by these working papers will feed into programs to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and support the development of public policies favorable to the SSE.



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