

## Principles and Practices of the Social and Solidarity Economy Toward Resilient and Inclusive Governance in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua

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**Abstract--** The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) emerges as a transformative alternative to traditional capitalism, prioritizing collective well-being, democratic governance, and sustainability over profit. Rooted in principles of solidarity, cooperation, and self-management, the SSE encompasses cooperatives, mutual aid societies, and community initiatives that balance economic, social, and environmental objectives. Drawing on authors such as Coraggio (2009, 2011, 2024), this study reviews the theoretical foundations of the SSE, emphasizing labor over capital and its practical applications in Latin America, including Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

In Mexico, the SSE gained constitutional recognition in 1983 and formal legislation in 2012, supported by the National Institute of the Social Economy (INAES). The sector includes more than 47,000 entities involving 7.8 million people, promoting labor inclusion and local development amid neoliberal crises. Case studies highlight the resilience of the SSE during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rosa and García, 2022) and its role in addressing poverty, inequality, and environmental challenges in regions such as Michoacán, Jalisco, and Tlaxcala.

Focusing on Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua—particularly in marginal desert areas of the southwest—the analysis examines legal, social, and urban challenges (e.g., irregular land use, water scarcity, insecurity) and opportunities for the SSE, such as binational forums, ITCJ programs, and cooperatives for housing and employment. Despite limitations in infrastructure and political support, the SSE promotes equitable growth.

**Keywords—** Neoliberal alternatives, Latin America, Ciudad Juárez, Cooperatives, sustainable development, Social and Solidarity Economy.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is an alternative paradigm to traditional capitalism that prioritizes the economic well-being of individuals and communities over private profit. It is based on fundamental principles such as solidarity, cooperation, democratic self-management, and a balance between economic, social, and environmental impacts. It includes entities such as cooperatives and mutual aid societies, which empower participants in decision-making and seek to transform socioeconomic structures toward more sustainable and just models.

Key authors such as José Luis Coraggio (2009, 2011, 2024) emphasize the primacy of labor over capital, positioning the SSE as a path toward an equitable economy centered on sustainable human development. Studies such as Coba-Molina and Díaz-Córdova (2018) highlight good governance in SSE enterprises to improve management, transparency, and performance. Susana Presta (2016) analyzes how it redefines governance through solidarity networks and collective collaboration. However, Luciano Martínez Valle (2009) urges a critical analysis of its limitations, especially in interactions with the market and the state, to maximize its transformative potential.

In scenarios of economic and social crisis, the SSE combats poverty and exclusion through self-management and solidarity. Examples include cooperativism in Michoacán, Mexico (Frías Figueroa, 2011), Venezuela (Pérez, 2017), and socio-ecological transformations (Alió and Azevedo, 2015; Giavedoni, 2015). Globally, it addresses inequalities in the North and South; during COVID-19 in Argentina, it strengthened networks (Rosa and García, 2022). In Mexico (Jalisco: Aguilar, 2024) and Cuba (Gómez Arencibia, 2023), it prioritizes well-being despite structural challenges. Regional analyses (Casaccia, 2015) and local policies in Argentina (Cuvertino and Cherner, 2015; Lozeco, 2015) highlight its role in social integration.

The SSE promotes solidarity-based entrepreneurship (Franco, 2023, Ecuador), creating jobs and strengthening the social fabric, and requires regulatory frameworks (Coraggio). Labrador-Alemán-Rivera (2017) view it as an antidote to neoliberalism. Studies address policies in Colombia and Mexico (Pérez Villa, 2022), solidarity-based education (Urdapilleta Carrasco, 2019), Time Banks (Rivera, 2020), and academia-state-NGO partnerships (Nolasco, 2022; Rojas Herrera, 2022). It contrasts with private accumulation by fostering trust and equity (Reyes, 2021), with an emphasis on labor emancipation, interculturality (Casillas, 2020), universities (Flore, 2023), and school cooperatives (Baños, 2022; Nolasco, 2023).

Neoliberalism generates global crises, promoting the SSE as a human-centered alternative to profit. Research in Tlaxcala, Mexico (Marín, 2023), INAES, NODESS (Reyes), economic circuits (Travieso, 2023), and talent management (Cortez and Pérez, 2024) demonstrate its viability for environmental and social equity.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) represents an economic paradigm that reverses capitalist logic, placing labor above capital and collective well-being above profit (Coraggio, 2009, 2011, 2024). This model is based on principles of solidarity, cooperation, democratic self-management

and a balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It includes cooperatives, mutual aid societies, and community initiatives that democratize decision-making and transform productive structures toward sustainability. As Coba-Molina and Díaz-Córdova (2018) point out, good governance in these entities improves transparency and performance, while Presta (2016) highlights solidarity networks for prioritizing collective well-being. Critically, Martínez Valle (2009) notes limitations in their interaction with markets and states, calling for analysis to enhance their transformative potential. In contexts of neoliberal crises such as pandemics or inequalities, the SSE emerges resilient. Rosa and García (2022) document its adaptation in Argentina during COVID-19, strengthening post-pandemic networks. In Mexico (Frías Figueroa, 2011, Michoacán; Aguilar, 2024, Jalisco) and other countries (Pérez, 2017, Venezuela; Gómez Arencibia, 2023, Cuba), it promotes social inclusion and socioecology (Alió and Azevedo, 2015; Giavedoni, 2015).

### Methodological Framework and Key Actors

The methodology of this study combines a systematic literature review, analysis of Latin American cases, and a qualitative approach in Ciudad Juárez. The SSE prioritizes collective ownership and collaborative work, optimizing production circuits, consumption, distribution, savings, and credit for community needs (Nolasco, 2022, 2023). Three actors drive its promotion:

- Public sector: Support for formal cooperatives.
- Universities and civil society: Informal practices.
- Successful experiences: Shared models.

Its philosophical roots date back to Ancient Greece, with key thinkers summarized in Table 1 (Nolasco, 2023).

**Table 1.** *Contributions of the Greeks to the social and solidarity economy.*

Thinker	Proposal
Democritus	Human society is the result of a historical process that led man from his primitive, nomadic life to civilization, thanks to mutual aid. The opposite of this is envy, the source of discord among humans. In the absence of mutual aid and in the presence of hatred among men, laws were established.
Socrates	Advocate of an austere and frugal life.

Diogenes	Living in accordance with nature, despising wealth and social conventions.
Plato	Communist content of the State, as well as equality between the sexes; furthermore, the absence of ownership of land and houses fosters a deep sense of solidarity and mutual aid among people. The State will be the owner of the land; citizens will not be able to sell, transfer, or mortgage the land distributed to them, and the State will intervene in the distribution of wealth. Citizens will retain ownership of property for personal use and will possess certain work tools.
Aristotle	He distinguishes between domestic economy (what is known as the solidarity economy, as it does not seek to increase wealth) and chrematistics (what is known as political economy). He emphasizes community participation, as it fosters happiness among individuals.
Epicurus	He is concerned with the happiness of the individual, which is achieved through friendship and the concept of pleasure. The latter is achieved through the cultivation of the spirit and the practice of virtues.

**Source:** Author's own work.

Guiding principles (Table 2, based on Coraggio, 2011; Marín and Herrera, 2023) include intergenerational sustainability and variable holistic approaches.

**Table 2.** Underlying principles in SSE experiences.

<b>Production-related</b>	<p>For all jobs.</p> <p>Workers' access to all forms of knowledge. Workers' access to means of production.</p> <p>Solidarity-based participation.</p> <p>Collective self-management of the general conditions of production and reproduction.</p> <p>Socially responsible production.</p>
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<b>Regarding distribution and redistribution</b>	Social justice, guaranteeing the reproduction and development of life for all. To each according to their need for work. No exploitation of others' labor.
<b>Regarding mobilization</b>	Self-sufficiency (autarky). Correspondence. Barter. Money does not create money.
<b>Principles regarding coordination</b>	Society. Regulated market. Planning.
<b>References to consumption</b>	Responsible consumption.
<b>Perpendicular</b>	Free enterprise and socially responsible innovation. Pluralism/Diversity. Non-discrimination against individuals or communities. Complexity/synergy. Territoriality.

**Source:** Prepared by the author.

### Legal Context and Scale in Mexico

In Mexico, the SSE has been constitutionally recognized since 1983 and under the General Law on Cooperative Societies since 2012, promoting care and sustainability through INAES (Muciño, 2018). The sector comprises

47,313 entities (13,316 enterprises with 3.05 million members; 4,371 solidarity societies with 143,187 members; total 7.88 million people), which are key to social and labor integration through democratic cooperation. Programs such as "Mexico City's Social Economy" provide resources to formalize cooperatives, increase productivity, and promote inclusive economies.

## Experiences in Latin America

The SSE addresses regional challenges through flagship projects:

- Brazil: Institutionalized solidarity movement via SIES, supporting entrepreneurship.
- Venezuela: Cooperatives for community inclusion.
- Paraguay: Mexico-Germany triangular project against poverty.
- Argentina: RILESS Network and local policies for a scientific foundation and integration.
- Uruguay: Policies on agroecology and associative production.

These cases illustrate the SSE as a tool for social justice and sustainable development (Casaccia, 2015; Cuvertino and Cherner, 2015).

In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua—a border region plagued by poverty and unemployment—the SSE faces challenges in the marginal desert southwest: irregular land use, water scarcity, insecurity, and a lack of services. Nevertheless, opportunities include:

- Cooperatives for housing and employment.
- ITCJ programs such as "Nodos Fuerzas Libres."
- Mexico-U.S. binational forums.

Despite infrastructure limitations, it promotes equitable growth, aligned with INAES and NODESS (Marín, 2023; Reyes).

This study integrates theory, methodology, and empirical evidence to validate the SSE as a viable alternative to neoliberalism.

## Discussion and Analysis of Results

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) positions itself as a resilient model in the face of neoliberal capitalism, demonstrating the capacity to generate labor inclusion and sustainable development in crisis contexts. In Mexico, its 47,313 entities involving 7.88 million people validate its significant scale, particularly through the INAES and the 2012 legislation, which formalizes cooperatives to optimize production circuits and combat inequalities. This structure contrasts with the traditional model by prioritizing labor over capital (Coraggio, 2009, 2011, 2024), aligning with Latin American experiences where the SSE strengthened networks during COVID-19 (Rosa and García, 2022) and promoted socioecology (Alió and Azevedo, 2015).

The results reveal that good governance in the SSE through participatory democracy and transparency (Coba-Molina and Díaz-Córdova, 2018; Presta, 2016) overcomes limitations identified by Martínez Valle (2009), such as tensions with markets and states. In Latin America, projects in Brazil (SIES), Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina (RILESS), and Uruguay confirm its transformative role, fostering social justice beyond extractive economies. However, structural challenges persist: in regions such as Michoacán (Frías Figueroa, 2011), Jalisco (Aguilar, 2024), and Tlaxcala (Marín, 2023), the SSE requires robust regulatory frameworks to scale its impact.

In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua—especially in marginal desert areas of the southwest—the findings highlight opportunities for the SSE despite urban challenges. Initiatives such as housing/employment cooperatives, ITCJ programs (“Nodos Fuerzas Libres”), and Mexico-U.S. binational forums promote inclusive self-management, addressing poverty, water scarcity, insecurity, and irregular land use. These empirical results validate the SSE as a catalyst for equitable growth, aligned with INAES and NODESS (Reyes), though limited by poor infrastructure and insufficient political support.

**Table 3.** Findings.

Challenges in Ciudad Juárez	SSE Opportunities	Expected Impact
Water and service shortages	Productive cooperatives	Environmental sustainability
Insecurity and inequality	ITCJ Programs	Labor inclusion
Irregular land use	Binational forums	Border development

**Source:** Prepared by the author.

**Table 4.** Regional Comparison.

Country/Region	ESS Strengths	Weaknesses	Evidence
Mexico (overall)	7.88 million people; 2012 Law	State agency	Muciño (2018)
Argentina	COVID-19 Resilience	Variable local policies	Rosa and García (2022)
Brazil	Institutional SIES	Informal scale	Casaccia (2015)

Country/Region	Strengths ESS	Weaknesses	Evidence
Ciudad Juárez	ITCJ Initiatives	Limited Infrastructure	Marín (2023)

**Source:** Author’s *own work*.

The data confirm that the social and solidarity economy (SSE) generates decent employment and fosters social cohesion (Franco, 2023; Labrador-Alemán-Rivera, 2017), overcoming neoliberal precariousness through solidarity-based education (Urdapilleta Carrasco, 2019) and multi-stakeholder partnerships (Nolasco, 2022). Its transformative potential lies in balancing equity and sustainability, although it requires comprehensive policies to overcome contextual barriers.

### Conclusion

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is establishing itself as a viable and transformative economic paradigm that reverses capitalist logic by prioritizing labor over capital, collective well-being, and sustainability (Coraggio, 2009, 2011, 2024). Its 47,313 entities in Mexico, involving 7.88 million people, demonstrate significant scale for labor inclusion and local development, backed by constitutional recognition (1983), legislation (2012), and the INAES.

In Latin America, the SSE demonstrates resilience in crises such as COVID-19 (Rosa and García, 2022) and addresses inequalities through cooperatives, solidarity networks, and flagship projects in Brazil (SIES), Argentina (RILESS), Venezuela, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Good governance (Coba-Molina and Díaz-Córdova, 2018; Presta, 2016) overcomes market-state limitations (Martínez Valle, 2009), fostering socio-ecological equity (Alió and Azevedo, 2015; Marín, 2023).

In Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua—a marginal desert area in the southwest—initiatives such as housing/employment cooperatives, ITCJ programs (“Nodos Fuerzas Libres”), and binational forums counteract poverty, insecurity, and water scarcity, promoting self-management despite infrastructure deficits. The SSE generates decent employment, social cohesion, and equitable growth (Franco, 2023; Nolasco, 2022), validating its role as an antidote to neoliberalism (Labrador-Alemán-Rivera, 2017).

Practical implications: Strengthen comprehensive policies, multi-stakeholder partnerships (academia-government-NGOs), and solidarity-based education to scale up impact. The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) not only mitigates crises but also catalyzes social justice and intergenerational sustainability.

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