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**EPISTEMOLOGIES OF THE SOUTH:
INTERFACES BETWEEN SELF-MANAGEMENT, TRANSCONSCIOUSNESS, AND
TRANSSUSTAINABILITY¹**

**EPISTEMOLOGIAS DO SUL:
INTERFACES ENTRE AUTOGESTÃO, *TRANSCONHECIMENTO* E *TRANSUSTENTABILIDADE***

**EPISTEMOLOGÍAS DEL SUR:
INTERFACES ENTRE AUTOGESTIÓN, *TRANSCONOCIMIENTO* Y *TRANSSOSTENIBILIDAD***

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Abstract:

Industrial society (modern rationality) – governed by hegemonic logic – has produced a risk society: a society of uncertainty and profound social ills, which, in the name of economic and scientific progress, has jeopardized life on Earth (modern rationality now faces exhaustion, disintegration, and disenchantment). Self-management is fostering a new epistemology – from the Global South – rooted in the complexity of interknowledge and transconsciousness (with its self-eco-organizing nature). This is a transdisciplinary knowledge that engages with

¹ This study aims to advance, revisit, and deepen reflections on the concept of transsustainability, based on: SGUAREZI, Sandro B. Epistemologies of the South: Interfaces between self-management, transconsciousness, and transsustainability. Presented at: (1) XXIX ALAS-CHILE Congress – Latin American Sociology Congress (Working Group #18), Santiago, Chile, September 29 – October 4, 2013; (2) XVI Brazilian Sociology Congress (Working Group #7: Social and Solidarity Economy), Brazilian Society of Sociology (SBS), Salvador-BA, UFBA Campus, September 10–13, 2013. Also published in: RODRIGUES, A. S. & FRANÇA, R. (Eds.). Epistemologies of the South: Studies in literature, languages, and education. Cáceres-MT: UNEMAT Editora, 2014. pp. 335–354.

the logics of ecosolidarity, theosolidarity, and anthroposolidarity. This triad of eco-theo-anthroposolidarities may revitalize the concept of development. Development anchored in sustainability cannot be reduced to market pragmatism—yet the market has appropriated the concept. Transsustainable development expresses the incompleteness of sustainability, as it enables not merely dialogue and interchange among economic, political, social and cultural spheres, but embraces the audacity of transcendence and transgression that carry hope and utopia. A hope that does not wait. A utopia that motivates action. It is a collective doing, unique to the subjects of the process who are protagonizing and living other ways of doing science while building another possible world. The Epistemologies of the South present infinite possibilities in this paradigmatic transition/emerging paradigm toward the viable-unprecedented.

Keywords: self-management, transsustainability, complexity.

Resumo:

A sociedade industrial (racionalidade moderna) - lógica hegemônica - produziram a sociedade de risco: Uma sociedade da incerteza e das grandes mazelas sociais que em nome do progresso econômico e científico colocaram em perigo a vida na terra (racionalidade moderna: sofrendo exaustão, desintegração e desencantamento). Autogestão está produzindo uma nova Epistemologia – do Sul – fundada na complexidade do interconhecimento e no *transconhecimento* (característica auto-eco-organizadora). Um conhecimento *transdisciplinar* que dialoga com a lógica da ecosolidariedade, da teosolidariedade e da antroposolidariedade. Essa tríade das eco-teo-anthroposolidariedades pode revigorar o conceito de desenvolvimento. Desenvolvimento ancorado na sustentabilidade não se reduz ao pragmatismo do mercado, porém o mercado se apropriou do conceito. Desenvolvimento *transsustentável* traduz a incompletude da sustentabilidade, pois permite não só o diálogo e o trânsito entre o econômico, o político, o social e o cultural, mas comporta a ousadia da *transcendência* e da *transgressão* que carregam a esperança e a utopia. Uma esperança que não espera. Uma utopia que motiva caminhar. É um fazer junto singular aos sujeitos do processo que estão protagonizando e vivendo outras formas de fazer ciência e construindo *outro mundo possível*. As Epistemologias do Sul apresentam infinitas possibilidades no processo de transição paradigmática/paradigma emergente rumo ao *inédito viável*.

Palavras-Chave: autogestão, *transsustentabilidade*, complexidade.

Resumen

La sociedad industrial (racionalidad moderna) —la lógica hegemónica— ha generado la sociedad del riesgo: una sociedad de incertidumbre y graves males sociales que, en nombre del progreso económico y científico, ha puesto en peligro la vida en la Tierra (racionalidad moderna: sufrimiento, desintegración y desencanto). La autogestión está generando una nueva epistemología —del Sur— fundamentada en la complejidad del interconocimiento y el transconocimiento (una característica autoecoorganizadora). Un conocimiento transdisciplinario que dialoga con la lógica de la ecosolidaridad, la teosolidaridad y la antroposolidaridad. Esta tríada de eco-teo-anthroposolidaridades puede revitalizar el concepto de desarrollo. El desarrollo anclado en la sostenibilidad no se reduce al pragmatismo del mercado, sino que este se ha apropiado del concepto. El desarrollo *transsostenible* refleja la incompletitud de la sostenibilidad, ya que permite no solo el diálogo y la interacción entre las esferas económica, política, social y cultural, sino también la audacia de la trascendencia y la transgresión que conllevan esperanza y utopía. Una esperanza que no espera. Una utopía que nos motiva a avanzar. Se trata de una acción colaborativa singular con los sujetos del proceso, quienes lideran y experimentan otras formas de hacer ciencia y construir otro mundo posible. Las epistemologías del Sur presentan infinitas posibilidades en el proceso de transición paradigmática/emergente paradigma hacia lo viable sin precedentes.

Palabras clave: Autogestión, Transsostenibilidad, Complejidad.

Introduction

Modernity has produced problems that its hegemonic logic cannot solve. Faced with this reality, it becomes urgent to conceive alternative, non-hegemonic approaches capable of addressing modernity's unresolved legacies. This is precisely where the Epistemologies of the South, solidarity

economics, and self-management become relevant. The Epistemologies of the South prove essential through their self-eco-organizing nature, their commitment to the complexity of interknowledge and *transconsciousness*. Through its transdisciplinary approach grounded in a worldview that engages with the logics of ecosolidarity, theosolidarity, and anthroposolidarity, it allows us to dare envision a *transsustainable* world – one that embraces the audacity of transcendence and *transgression*, which carry the hope and utopia of the *viable-unprecedented* and of *another possible world*. In this way, the Epistemologies of the South present themselves as infinite possibilities.

2. Epistemologies of the South: Complexity, Transdisciplinarity, and Transconsciousness

Industrial society and modernity (modern rationality) - this hegemonic logic - has produced the risk society². A society of radical uncertainty, unpredictability, and profound systemic crises that, in the name of increased production, economic progress and scientific advancement, has pushed Earth's life systems to the brink of collapse. For Martins (2023, p. 53)

The value of the relational is stimulated by the importance of criticizing the limits of instrumental and financial rationality in a historical context, in which the commodification of social life guided by accelerated technical innovation is threatening to render a significant part of humanity useless. Therefore, the critique needs to turn to a vertical understanding of the “nascent state”, that is, of the importance of social forms in gestation as theoretical, moral and aesthetic alternatives to revisit utopias and the assumptions of generous social solidarity.

This instrumental rationality produced the risk society. [...] the constellations of risk society emerge because the certainties of industrial society (the consensus around progress or the abstraction of ecological effects and risks) dominate the thinking and actions of individuals and institutions within industrial society [...] Risk society is not an option that can be chosen or rejected through political debate. It arises from the continuation of autonomous modernization processes that remain blind and deaf to their own effects and threats (Beck, 1997, as cited in Giddens et al., 1997, p. 16).

Most solutions implemented in modern society have proven unsustainable. Their false promises demand critical reflection about future directions. Thus, it becomes necessary to reconsider paradigms and seek alternatives that reinvent and reestablish conceptions of society, world, nature, and science. Faced with such complexity, we require new epistemologies to interpret the world.

In the introduction to their book *Epistemologies of the South*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses present the following epigraph: An epistemology of the South is grounded in three directives: learning that the South exists; learning how to go to the South; and learning

² The concept of risk society designates a stage of modernity in which the threats produced along the path of industrial society begin to materialize [...] The risk society concept triggers notable systemic transformations across three key areas: (1) industrial society's relationship with natural and cultural resources; (2) society's relationship with self-produced threats that exceed the foundations of social safety paradigms; (3) the exhaustion, disintegration, and disenchantment of collective meaning sources (e.g., class consciousness or belief in progress) within industrial society's culture (Giddens et al., 1997, pp. 17-18).

from and with the South. (Santos, 1995, as cited in Santos & Meneses, 2009, p. 9). This foundational statement originates from Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (1995) work *Toward a New Common Sense: Law, Science and Politics in the Paradigmatic Transition* (New York: Routledge), which initiated the first systematic reflections on this theme.

This work serves as the foundation for all subsequent references to the Epistemologies of the South, which emerge from the critique of scientific reductionism that constrains our freedom and capacity for scientific practice and reflection - a hallmark of the emerging paradigm. According to the author

Knowledge within the emerging paradigm thus tends to be non-dualistic — a knowledge grounded in overcoming the familiar and seemingly obvious distinctions that, until recently, were considered irreplaceable, such as nature/culture, natural/artificial, living/inanimate, mind/matter, observer/observed, subjective/objective, collective/individual, and animal/person (Santos, 1999, pp. 39-40).

Thus, the author emphasizes the importance of recognizing subject/subject relations and overcoming the fragmented positivist vision centered on vertical, authoritarian relationships. 'Learning that the South exists; learning how to go to the South; and learning from and with the South' constitutes a way of acknowledging other knowledge modalities - but it is more than that. Fundamentally, it represents an attitude of recognizing the Other, difference, and horizontal dialogue among diverse perspectives (Santos, 1999).

This paradigmatic shift is also articulated by Morin (2000, 2007). It demands overcoming this ecotechnocratic vision rooted in positivism and hyperspecialization - a challenge that intersects with the principles of complexity. As Morin (2000) asserts, it is imperative to "*reform thought to reform education and reform education to reform thought.*" To reform thought means to transcend the decontextualization characteristic of dominant abyssal thinking.

Dominant knowledge remains bound to abyssal thinking - the ideology and practice of coloniality and paternalism. Santos (2008) encapsulates this practice through his concept of the *sociology of absences*

The sociology of absences is intrinsically linked to five modes of producing non-existence: (1) the monoculture of knowledge and rigor; (2) the monoculture of linear time; (3) the logic of social classification; (4) the logic of the dominant scale; and (5) the productivist logic. This framework embodies both indolent reason and the hegemonic vision. (Santos, 2008, pp. 93-105)

And firmly rooted in the Epistemologies of the South's project to overcome hegemonic knowledge, the author proposes the complementary concept of the *sociology of emergences*

The sociology of emergences consists of replacing the empty future of linear time (a void that is simultaneously everything and nothing) with a future of plural and concrete possibilities - at

once utopian and realistic - that are actively constructed in the present through practices of care. This caring for the present carries within it the Not-Yet, that emancipatory consciousness [...] The sociology of emergences is sustained by: (1) the ecology of knowledges; (2) the ecology of temporalities; (3) the ecology of recognitions; (4) the trans-scale ecology; and (5) the ecology of productivities. (Santos, 2008, p. 117).

The emancipatory consciousness does not present itself as a historical subject, but rather serves to promote horizontal dialogue among the diverse forms of knowledge proposed by the sociology of emergences. As Santos and Meneses (2009, p. 90) articulate

The Epistemologies of the South [...] constitute a set of epistemological interventions that denounce this suppression, value the knowledges that successfully resisted, and investigate the conditions for horizontal dialogue between these knowledges.

This horizontal condition of dialogue among different knowledges leads to the utopia of interknowledge. In Santos' (2009, p. 47) formulation

The utopia of interknowledge is to learn other knowledges without forgetting one's own. This is the technology of prudence underlying the ecology of knowledges. It invites deeper reflection about the difference between science as monopolistic knowledge and science as part of an ecology of knowledges.

Therefore, I reaffirm the need for the unprecedented nature of transconsciousness. Transconsciousness not only apprehends other knowledges without forgetting one's own - it goes beyond, *reconnecting* one's knowledge with other knowledges, *transcending* them through connections that enable the construction of new knowledges. The prefix *trans-* signifies this capacity to move from the obvious to the audacity of the viable-unprecedented. Consequently, the Epistemologies of the South necessarily connect with transdisciplinarity. As articulated in the Charter of Transdisciplinarity (Article 3)

Transdisciplinarity is complementary to the disciplinary approach: it brings forth new data through the confrontation of disciplines that articulate them; it offers us a new vision of nature and reality. Transdisciplinarity does not seek dominion over other disciplines, but rather the opening of all disciplines to that which traverses and transcends them. (Freitas et al., 1994).

This complementarity indicates *reconnection* while simultaneously requiring the subversive ingenuity that traverses and surpasses disciplines. As Nicolescu (1999, p. 46) clarifies

Transdisciplinarity, as the prefix 'trans-' suggests, concerns that which is simultaneously between disciplines, across disciplines, and beyond any discipline. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, for which one imperative is the unity of knowledge.

The Epistemologies of the South embody both the unity of knowledge and the transgressive challenge proposed by transdisciplinarity. Transgression here means overcoming, opening possibilities,

and recognizing emergent knowledges while promoting horizontal dialogue among diverse knowledge systems - challenging the epistemic privilege of the Global North without aspiring to hegemony. As Santos (2009, p. 47) articulates

[...] the ecology of knowledges is fundamentally a counter-epistemology. The basic impulse behind its emergence stems from two factors. First, the political resurgence of peoples and worldviews from the other side of the line as partners in resistance to global capitalism - that is, counter-hegemonic globalization [...] Second, an unprecedented proliferation of alternatives that nevertheless cannot be subsumed under any singular alternative. The ecology of knowledges seeks to provide epistemological consistency to pluralist and propositional thinking.

The Epistemologies of the South are not merely spaces of recognition, but of antagonisms and complexity, of light and shadow that seek to understand contradictions and identify alternatives capable of promoting another kind of science; another form of development; and a distinct sustainability paradigm. This envisioned development and science would engage in dialogue while respecting human dignity and relationality, ultimately preserving diverse forms of life.

Given that the hegemonic scientific system operates through the paradigm of simple modernization³ — where traditional theoretical models remain limited and in crisis—understanding reflexive modernization⁴ requires embracing complexity. This necessitates *complex thinking*: thought that *relinks* the world of science with the humanities. Such a relationship must develop while honoring the principles of complexity theory⁵ [Cf. Edgar Morin, *Complex Thought*, 1990: “[...] the first is what he terms the dialogic principle, the second is the principle of organizational recursion, and the third is the holographic principle” (Ibid., pp. 106-108)] and other epistemologies, including the Epistemologies of the South. As Morin (1997, p. 11), a key architect of complexity theory, asserts

Complex thinking seeks to *relink* what disciplinary and compartmentalized thought has disjoined and fragmented. It reconnects not only separated domains of knowledge but also—dialogically—antagonistic concepts like order and disorder, certainty and uncertainty, logic and the transgression of logic.

The challenge of complexity lies in expanding, transcending, and questioning the evidence produced by homogenization, overcoming the inherent incomprehension of simplistic thinking through this reconnection of knowledges – the reconnection between science and art – while understanding that “[...] complexity emerges as difficulty, as uncertainty, and not as clarity or as an answer” (Morin, 1999, p. 177). To pursue science with consciousness, paving new paths that prioritize a critical, self-critical, and creative science by engaging with complexity, is the fundamental challenge

3 Cf. Maria Aparecida Ferreira de Aguiar, *Organizational psychology...*, 2000. “Simple modernization is a strategy that seeks solutions to new problems through old forms and techniques” (Ibid., p. 31).

4 Cf. Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, 1997. “Simple modernization (or orthodox) first entails disembedding and then reembedding traditional social forms into industrial social forms, whereas reflexive modernization first entails disembedding and then reembedding industrial social forms into another modernity” (Ibid., p. 12).

5 Cf. Edgar MORIN, *La Pensée complexe*, 1990: “[...] the first is the principle he calls dialogical, the second is that of organizational recursion, and the third is the holographic principle” (Ibid., pp. 106-108).

– especially since modern rationality neither answers questions nor provides solutions to the very problems it formulated. Facing these challenges, non-hegemonic alternatives emerge as competent frameworks for building sustainable and solidarity-based relationships that help confront this empty construct that is uncertainty. It is within this landscape that the proposal of the Epistemologies of the South takes root and flourishes.

3 Epistemologies of the South: Self-Management, Transconsciousness, and Transsustainability

The transformations in the world of work are driving significant societal changes. In response to the perpetual crisis of capital and the challenges posed by these shifts, social movements have identified solidarity economy and self-management as viable alternatives for generating work and income through localized, sustainability-focused approaches.

Dowbor (2020) contends that amid rampant environmental destruction, escalating inequality, and the concentration of income, wealth, and power (financial chaos) —exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic⁶—capitalism is mutating into new social architectures where corporate powers dictate the rules. Yet he views this as the inception of a deeper societal shift: the emergence of a knowledge society capable of not only grasping the full scope of these changes but also reclaiming ownership over both the means of production and knowledge itself.

In a perspective diametrically opposed to market economy principles emerges the proposal of self-management and solidarity economy, which faces the challenge of finding in the fissures produced by the capitalist system a form of counter-hegemonic resistance. How can cooperation from the perspective of self-managed solidarity contribute to building new labor and life relations in modern society?

If in solidarity economy relations are centered on valuing human beings rather than their fragmentation, how can we transform our way of life? If mass production is a recent human phenomenon, this means humanity lived most of its existence without it.

As Marx (1979, p. 46) explains

Production only appears as population grows. It itself presupposes relations between individuals. The form of these relations is in turn conditioned by production [...] which represents a specific mode of these individuals' activity, a particular way of manifesting their life, a determined mode of life [...] What individuals are coincides therefore with their mode of production. And what they are depends consequently on the material conditions of their production.

Given this, life or the mode of life is determined by relations of production. This explains why solidarity economy represents a form of production relations distinct from the capitalist system - a different way of manifesting life, because the material conditions of production in solidarity

⁶ Infectious disease caused by the Coronavirus, discovered in early 2020, which spread devastatingly worldwide, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives across the globe. It disrupted world structures economically and socially, while particularly stirring profound distress as it was then an incurable virus.

economic ventures modify the relationships between individuals. These relationships are not based on competitiveness and exclusion, but rather emerge from solidarity and free association, through self-management and self-eco-organization⁷.

The principles of solidarity economy are Cooperation, Self-management, Solidarity, and Economic Action (CASA, from its Portuguese acronym). These principles were endorsed by Arruda (2019) and Sguarezi et al. (2020) and are related to the principles of cooperativism. They inspire and shape the conduct, values, and production modes of Solidarity Economic Enterprises (SEE) that constitute the solidarity economy, enabling development aligned with sustainability, productive socioeconomic inclusion, and democratic and socially just practices (Leal & Rodrigues, 2018; Sguarezi et al., 2020).

Self-management constitutes the foundation of self-eco-organization as it emerges through grassroots, bottom-up construction — a popular movement that coalesces diversity and resistance allies. This “base” character inherently renders it both resistant and resistance-oriented: a dynamic, living movement yet anchored in foundational roots, deeply ramified and interwoven into a radical social fabric solidified through critical consciousness⁸ and organizational awareness⁹. These enable the dialectical praxis whereby struggle fosters transformative action, and action perpetuates struggle.

Foundational because it carries the potential to rebuild society and its values, and consequently its relationships. Deep, ramified, interwoven and interconnected because self-management, as both a principle of solidarity economy and a social movement, must develop the capacity to lead the self-eco-organization of another possible world paradigm. A self-eco-organizing process that overcomes the fragmentation of struggle and unites different social movements, respecting their differences while building common agendas that foster new labor relations and new social relations. A self-eco-organizing process that enables the construction of bridges and connections leading to transparency in relationships within and between different social movements - protagonist subjects of a social reality in progress. Subjects capable of constructing struggle through life’s trajectory, and making struggle into history itself, into the very awareness of self and struggle, because it is struggle that generates consciousness of subjection to the exclusionary and tyrannical reality imposed by capitalism in its refined version of neoliberalism or by equally authoritarian and perverse State socialism¹⁰.

To become protagonists of their own history, understanding the history of class struggle is fundamental. The experience of collective enterprise serves as a catalyst for self-managed organizations, which in turn require education for self-management. As Pistrak (2000, p. 32-33) states

7 Morin (2007, p. 33) argues that self-eco-organizing systems exhibit a fundamental duality: while asserting their autonomy by distinguishing themselves from the environment, they simultaneously deepen their dependence through complex exchanges. Unlike closed systems—which lack individuality and external interaction—these systems maintain rich, interdependent relationships with their surroundings. Their internal logic requires the incorporation of the external environment, rendering any claim to self-sufficiency or hermetic closure impossible.

8 Concept developed by Freire (1981, pp. 40-41) and expanded by Wanderley (2010, pp. 36-38).

9 Concept developed by Morais (2002, p. 21) based on Freire (1981).

10 Beyond the fallacies of hegemonic science, modernity has constructed two false promises. The first, a minimal state for society and maximal state for capital; the second, a maximal state for a minimal segment of society. Both are rooted in an elitist and bureaucratic vision that believes itself enlightened to direct society’s course, forgetting that the masses - the majority of society - consist of people, human beings who are thus bearers of intelligence and capable of active participation in production processes, economics, and politics (Sguarezi, 2011, p. 81; Sguarezi, 2020, p. 101).

The phase we are living through is one of struggle and construction - construction from below, from the bottom up, which will only be possible and beneficial on the condition that every member of society clearly understands what must be built and how it must be built. The solution to this problem requires the presence and development of the following qualities: (1) aptitude for collective work and for finding one's place in collective work; (2) aptitude to analyze each new problem as an organizer; (3) aptitude to create effective organizational forms.

The aptitude for collective work is only acquired through collective practice, through daily experience. This therefore constitutes a core challenge that self-managed schools must confront. Yet this collective aptitude equally implies knowing when to lead and when to follow in shared protagonism. Self-managed experimentation emerges through the dialogue between self-management of pedagogy and pedagogy of self-management (Nascimento, 2020) - a mutually reinforcing process.

It requires participation, and reflection about this participation. A participation that means taking part in action. To participate, in this sense, is to construct new public spaces and to resist exploitation through struggle, thereby creating awareness for self-organization through the practical making of a new society – a self-managed society. This requires utopia, in the Freirean perspective of the viable-unprecedented. As Freire (2001, p. 29) warns, we must “fight against certain postmodern [our emphasis] reactionary discourses [...] that decree the death of dreams and defend an opportunistic pragmatism that denies Utopia.” Thus, the construction of another possible world, or of a self-managed society, will only occur to the extent that social participation becomes effective in counter-hegemonic struggle – whether in overcoming State socialism or neoliberal capitalism. Therefore, the possibility of worker organization through solidarity economic enterprises necessarily involves understanding and practicing self-management. Addressing this issue seems crucial to comprehend that solidarity economy initiatives require reinterpreting various concepts, including that of sustainable local development, since the reality of solidarity economy is transdisciplinarily and inextricably linked to counter-hegemonic proposals.

Consequently, I argue that sustainability alone cannot exist, nor does the complex reality of the 21st century accommodate any hegemonic notion of knowledge. This leads us to boldly propose transsustainability grounded in transconsciousness.

The concept of sustainable development, as presented by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) in the final report of the Brundtland Commission (1987) titled *Our Common Future*, defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Lemos, 1996, p. 7). However, we must move beyond this ecotechnocratic vision rooted in positivism and hyperspecialization (Morin, 2000), advancing further toward transdisciplinarity between solidarity and sustainability within an ecodevelopment framework advocated as early as

1973 by Maurice Strong and Ignacy Sachs. Because beyond being solidarity-based and socially just, we need an economy that promotes a sustainable society—and as Buarque (1996, p. 22) asserts

A sustainable society is technically and economically viable, as opposed to one that attempts to solve its problems through constant growth. The transition to a sustainable society requires a careful balance between short- and long-term goals, emphasizing sufficiency, equity, and quality of life over quantity of production. Beyond technology and productivity, this transition will demand maturity, compassion, and wisdom. The greatest obstacles are psychological, social, and political.

This represents a paradigmatic challenge. In a context of unsustainability, global crisis, and the economic, social, ecological, and political inadequacies of capitalism, Brazil's hegemonic development model—grounded in neoliberal capitalist assumptions—underscores the need to envision alternatives for generating work, income, and sustainable local development. Achieving sustainable local development requires overcoming hegemonic logic. As Santos (2008, p. 104) clarifies

Within this logic, nonexistence is manufactured through the particular and the local. Entities and realities defined as particular or local become trapped within scales that render them incapable of being credible alternatives to what exists universally or globally.

This means the richness and diversity of the local elude both the comprehension of hegemonic science and the recognition of capital. Therefore, it is essential to shift from a sustainability paradigm to transsustainability, equally anchored in the challenge of transconsciousness.

While sustainable development plays a strategic role in discourses and projects, it is equally crucial to revitalize this concept—one that must not be relegated to the rhetoric of capital interests. One way to reinvigorate both the concept and its practice is to understand sustainability as a living movement. Another is to *learn how to learn through praxis* with the solidarity economy what sustainability truly means, and transform this understanding into concrete actions at scale through social technologies and public policies that emancipate social movements. This dialectical process should reflect the audacity needed to construct futurity within innovative yet inclusive horizons that align with practices challenging dominant development paradigms. As Amaro (2009, p. 108) clarifies

The concept of local development corresponds above all to a remarkable multiplicity of grassroots initiatives. Through these, local actors of diverse types and situations attempt to respond to crises—economic, technological, environmental, and political—that ended the so-called “golden age” of relatively stable economic growth during the 30 years following World War II.

This development concept dialogues with proposals from solidarity economies and self-management. While solidarity economy initiatives clearly help revitalize sustainable local development practices, the concept must be transdisciplinarily linked to that of *biocivilization* — “[...] centered on life and Earth as its core axes, a ‘third shore’ already under construction, as seen across World

Social Forum sessions” (Boff, 2010, p. 49). A cosmological, planetary civilization that transcends industrial society, information society, and knowledge society, leading us to an era of consciousness and wisdom¹¹.

1. A sustainable, responsible, and solidarity-based use of nature’s limited resources and services;
2. The use-value of goods must take priority over exchange-value;
3. Democratic control must be established over social relations, especially markets and speculative capital;
4. A global minimum ethos should emerge from multicultural exchange, emphasizing an ethics of care, compassion, cooperation, and universal responsibility;
5. Spirituality - as an expression of human uniqueness rather than religious monopoly - must be fostered as a benevolent aura accompanying human trajectory, for it anchors humanity and history in a dimension beyond space and time, giving meaning to our passage on this small planet. (Boff, 2010, pp. 50-51)

To revitalize sustainable local development practices, it is essential to reinterpret both its concept and what sustainability truly means. The concept of sustainability cannot advocate for maintaining the status quo of consumer society, nor can it be deliberately appropriated by capitalism - where the few rich remain rich and the many poor remain impoverished. In dialogue with Buarque (1996), we propose four objectives for sustainable development as outlined by Daly (1996, pp. 50, 224) as cited in Dowbor (2007, p. 71)

[It] must respect the scale that the planet can sustain long-term; this in turn implies respecting the principle of sufficiency, since we cannot indefinitely increase our consumption without destroying the basis of reproduction; we must ensure efficiency in resource use to minimize impact and reduce the staggering waste of our current economic organization; and we must ensure equitable distribution - something market mechanisms fail to guarantee.

These authors touch on key points for implementing a sustainable economy. Yet perhaps the most striking assertion is: market mechanisms fail to ensure equitable distribution not only of goods but also of opportunities. Sustainability, in its truest sense, must seek balance not in wealth accumulation but in life conditions, equality, and dignity - for both human and non-human life. The non-rich must have access to living conditions on equal footing with the rich. Therefore, the concept of sustainable development must be grounded in the logic of disorder, moving toward a new order envisioned by alternative thinkers. I would venture to say that to build another possible world, it must follow at least three logics: the logic of ecosolidarity, theosolidarity, and anthroposolidarity.

Ecosolidarity refers to a form of solidarity that respects nature. An ecosolidarity that recognizes Mother Earth as our common ground - the space of political, economic, religious, and cultural diversity.

Theosolidarity entails a solidarity capable of acknowledging that life’s force manifests not only in humans but in all life forms. A theosolidarity that reclaims the sacredness of life, fostering

11 On this matter, see: Guevara, A. J. de H., & Dib, V. C. (2007). *From the knowledge society to the consciousness society: Principles, practices and paradoxes*. Saraiva.

respect among religions, peace between humans and the divine, and harmony between humans and other life forms.

Anthroposolidarity must reinforce radical humanist principles in theory and practice. An anthroposolidarity that positions humans and humanity's happiness as ends in themselves - never as means or resources to exploit either people or nature. An anthroposolidarity that reconnects spirit to body and recognizes the essence of human nature.

This triad of eco-theo-anthroposolidarities can revitalize the concept of sustainable development when, as Morin, Almeida, and Carvalho (2002, p. 68) teach us, “[...] they connect and reconnect scientific culture to humanistic culture,” interweaving with one another to collectively weave a framework leading to true sustainability.

Therefore, it is imprudent to remain confined within sustainability; I believe it more pertinent and intelligible to embrace transsustainability—which necessarily involves opening epistemological dialogues through transconsciousness. We advocate for transsustainability precisely because it can transport us to another world, possessing the capacity to transgress both disorder and the prevailing order, pointing to alternatives that unite, weave, interlace, and craft networks, chains, and paths previously unimagined, as Figure 1 seeks to illustrate.

Figure 1. Transsustainability, development, and self-management
Source: Author's own elaboration, 2025.



Transsustainability provokes dialogue about alternative forms of development—the development of another economy, of another possible world manifested through the praxis of self-management. Solidarity economic enterprises intrinsically embody commitment to the local and to this transsustainability perspective. Typically, the proximity between individuals and their reciprocity serves as a determining factor for relationships and socialization.

Moreover, these alternatives articulate the political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions without any one prevailing over the others. This occurs not only internally but also transcends the physical boundaries of these organizations, fostering social transformation both within and beyond them through the practices of solidarity economic enterprises. Such transformation happens insofar as the subjects of this process maintain an ongoing reflection about their internal practices and their relationships with other subjects and the community. Internally, this reflection reinforces group identity and increasingly consolidates their collective organizational form. Although dependent on external relations, these internal relations ensure conditions for the group to protagonize its trajectory through its own choices, taking responsibility for shaping its destiny.

The diverse proposals and initiatives in the field of solidarity economy represent successful examples of overcoming neoliberal developmentalist rhetoric and fallacies. Most alternative proposals emerged from excluded communities. Yet these initiatives have proven sustainable, even as they operate paradigmatically opposed to capitalism. Hence the importance of considering the complex transdisciplinary dialogue between Epistemologies of the South, self-management, transsustainability, transconsciousness, and solidarity economy.

4- Final Considerations

In our view, these reflections do not constitute a conclusion, as they remain unfinished—a starting point, never an endpoint. It is more fitting to close this text with questions meant to provoke readers into debate: what are the interfaces between self-management, transconsciousness, and transsustainability? Do they engage with the Epistemologies of the South? Can self-management experiences truly be considered emancipatory?

This text is a provocation from those who carry a hope that does not wait—a call to dialogue about the utopia that motivates us to walk boldly toward collective action. It seeks to stimulate both the singular and the collective subjects of this process, who are already constructing alternative ways of doing science and building another possible world.

The Epistemologies of the South present infinite possibilities in this paradigmatic transition—or emerging paradigm—toward the viable-unprecedented, and self-management is one of them.

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