



The case of the Solidarity-Based Supply Chain Justa Trama



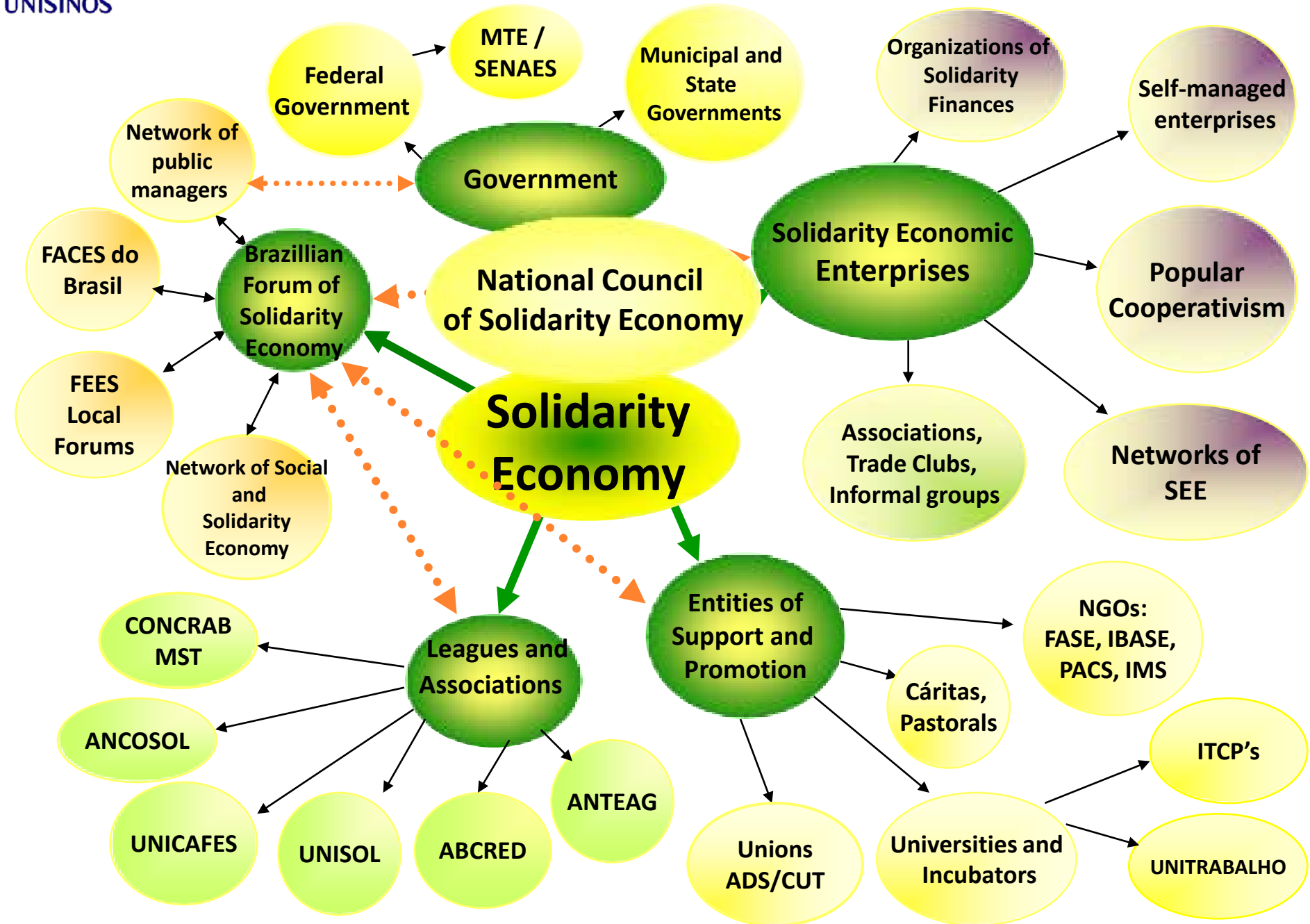
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Solidarity Economy in Brazil

- Various forms of economic organization: production and marketing cooperatives, recovered companies, networks and clubs of trading systems, fair trade, solidarity credit, informal community groups, supply chains...
- Its enterprises are originated by the free association of workers, in which cooperation is a mainstream of its efficiency and viability. They adopt collective arrangements in variable proportions in the possession of means of production, work process and management, minimizing the presence of hierarchic relationships (GAIGER, 2009, p. 181)
- Social and community embeddedness: lead to attend functions in the fields of health, education, environmental protection
- Commitment to sustainability
- Encompasses a multitude of social segments, agents and institutions
- **We call the experiences SEE (solidarity economic enterprises)**

The field of solidarity economy in Brazil





Justa Trama supply chain

Justa Trama, released publicly on October, 2005, in the community of Cantagalo in Rio de Janeiro, is characterized as one of the first **solidarity economy production chains**, organized on a national scale. It is a pioneering experience of local development and global connectedness through group work and income generation, besides its potential to integrate the rural and urban areas, uniting under a single brand farmers, weavers and seamstresses.

**justa
trama**
FIBRA ECOLÓGICA

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Cadeia produtiva do algodão agroecológico:
UMA TRAMA DE SOLIDARIEDADE!

Justa Trama

- Justa Trama produces clothing with organic cotton. Entire production chain is ecologically sustainable, from planting of cotton to the manufacturing of clothing.



The origin

- The articulation of the production chain begins in the Brazilian Solidarity Economy Forum (FBES), in which cooperatives **Univens**, **Textilcooper**, **Cones**, **Açaí** and NGOs **ESPLAR** built the idea of a production together. The major impetus for the start of production took place with the production of 60.000 bags of cotton required for organizing the **World Social Forum**, in 2005, in Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. (Metello, 2007)



- From this, the idea grew into practice. It is interesting to remember that the whole process was designed, at first, **by women** (seamstresses, planters and political activists).

The supply chains

- Specifically, the supply chain encompasses all the steps it takes to get a good or service from the supplier to the customer (Mance, 2002).
- As stated by Castro (2002), the concept of Supply Chain was introduced as a tool for systemic view. It assumes that the production of goods can be represented as a system, where different actors are interconnected by flows of materials, work, capital and information, in order to supply the final consumer market with products of this system. This form of productive organization has fundamental importance for the Supply Chain, and stimulates its formation over the development of **collaborative networks**, which are essential for the solidarity economy.



The supply chain

- Justa Trama has links in six states of Brazil: Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Ceará and Rondônia (RS, SC, PR, SP, CE, RO). It deals only with organic cotton, without the use of chemical pesticides, and is fully managed by workers of SEE.
- The possibility of planting without poison is one of the major gains that Justa Trama has offered to growers of cotton.
- For the consumers themselves, the principles of agro-ecology is a way to achieve quality in their lives as well.

The production involves six states in the country of Brazil and 444 people from different associations and cooperatives in the manufacturing of products sold at fair trade.

Rondônia: The 30 members of the **Acai Cooperative** in Porto Velho, collect seeds and coconut shells, in natura, to make buttons and props.

Ceará: 145 small farmers in **ADEC**, produce three tons of cotton. Receive R\$27 per arroba, while 13 are paid in the conventional market.

Minas Gerais: The 200 cooperative members of **Coopertextil** produce 20,000 meters of fabric to make the final product.

São Paulo: The 23 cooperative members of **Coopstylus** in Santo André, in São Paulo's ABC region, manufacture children's clothing and dolls.

Rio Grande do Sul: the 26 seamstresses **UNIVENS**, in Porto Alegre, manufacture clothes. Their pay is around 25% higher than the regular market pay.

Santa Catarina: The 20 cooperative members of **Fio Nobre** em Itajai produce cords, wires and loom bags. They are responsible for the design of products.





NORTH

NORTHEAST

MIDWEST

SOUTHEAST

SOUTH

Growers of organic cotton in Ceará



Leaders and workers of the base acting together



The cotton woven in Ceará becomes products in São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul







The militant and the base

The figure of **the militant or activist** worker plays a central role in the history of Justa Trama. Their role embraces the production, the internal links of the chain, its external representation and the exercise of instigating grassroots workers participation. We believe that they practice shared joint leadership, encouraging all members of cooperatives and associations to really participate in the process. It becomes clear in this statement:

“Think about my experience..., I was born here in these woods in the middle of nowhere [!] and one day, they put me on a plane and I got there in [*the city of*] Porto Alegre, to talk about our experience, in front of a lot of people... I had to overcome myself and my fears!”
(Associated small farmer).



Other gains

- If the financial return, for some, is not yet within expectations, the other gains are eminent and happen very quickly. We perceive this clearly in the speeches of the growers who do not need to plant with chemical pesticides, the joy of seamstresses from São Paulo about forming a group of friends that supports them, the joy of the planter from Paraná about being invited to travel and represent Justa Trama in other places, that she would never have known if she were not participating in the chain.
- **RECOGNITION**



What we found:

- The 18 semi-directive interviews were conducted by the researchers, who traveled to visit five of the six SEE to observe and have contact with members of the chain. We used a topic guide based on Bauer and Gaskell (2002), which listed the main points to be obtained.
- **Local Development and Benefits for local communities**
 - I- Environment, labor and education gains*
 - II-From local to Global: a change in scale of business and life*
- **Challenges for local development, yet to construct**
 - III- Involvement with the environment and “correct practices”*
 - IV-Accessibility and Awareness of the whole community*
- **Changes in workers subjectivity**



Some testimonials

- “What we're doing here is very new..., the other day a guy came here, from France, who came to see how ecological cotton was planted. When would we have imagined that there would be a guy from France? Paris? In the city of Moreira Sales, to meet us and learn from us? (*Laughing a lot*) Unbelievable!” (Planter from Moreira Sales - PR)
- "In addition to bringing health care to those who plant, some of the cities where the chain takes place, are being placed on the map! Tauá is now recognized as a place that has Economic Development. This is the biggest development that we could think of having“. (Technical of ADEC – Tauá - CE)
- “My wife did not want to sleep by my side, because of the smell of the poison. When I started to grow organically, even my marriage changed.” (planter from Tauá - CE)

Some testimonials

- “Here you work and know your value. I've done so much in my life..., one day someone asked me what I really liked to do, what I could do and not be tired, when it's time to go home, you do not want to leave the place you work. I thought ***I love fashion!*** And the person told me *then go do that, because while you do what you love it's not work, it's life.* And today I'm here, working on sewing and I'm no one's employee!” (Seamstress Cooperstylus - SP)
- “It is a job that gives you a lot of possibilities, it's more flexible, if you have a sick child you can leave earlier and the group supports you. The whole tract is different, more human and personalized, you can be a mother, woman, wife, housewife, worker, friend, all without so much difficulty.” (Seamstress Fio Nobre-SC).
- “In these ten years of cooperative, we eliminate illiteracy among the partners, everyone already knows how to read and write, we made an agreement with the local school. Almost all finish high school and some are doing technical studies, financed by the cooperative. ”(Cones-SP cooperative worker)



Some findings

- At the political level the community leadership, consolidation of local leaders and the aggregation of these new developments in the political struggles of ECOSOL as a social movement all become evident.
- The economic issue, despite Justa Trama not yet represent a solid pay for some workers, in some cases (such as planters of Tauá) this economic activity is indispensable for the survival of the families.
- Finally, the cultural dimension, although we still do not see many outside activities of solidarity enterprises with their communities, addressing issues besides work and income, some actions indirectly affect this dimension, such as the growing ecological reframing, gender issues and the recovering of a local identity.

Political participation



Participation of Justa Trama's workers in Thematic Social Forum, demanding social and environmental justice, and criticizing capitalism.



But there are still difficulties...

- Despite the good results in terms of recognition and learning, they have not yet fully consolidated a base that allows calling attention to the demands of the local / regional needs.
- Anyway, the aspects of local development are derived directly or indirectly from Justa Trama, by generating employment and income and increasing enrollment.



Some testimonials about it

- "No, we do not have this discussion here [*about consuming products and inputs from other SEE*], products for cleaning and nutrition, industrial products are used, conventional ones that is." (Secretary of CONES-SP).
- "We generally buy conventional products at the grocery store." (Dressmaker of Cooperstylus - SP).
- "Today we have difficulty in participating in community events. First of all, because of the amount of work. Then, due to political involvement in larger spheres, both national and international. But still, we always keep an eye on things here. At least we try to!" (Dressmaker from Univens).

We asked this question to workers during the interviews: *Why govern one's self through self-management?*

- *The life's stories of workers involved in Justa Trama teach us that they want to govern themselves to be autonomous and thus gain recognition; to be the main beneficiary of their own work; to free themselves from the bonds of dependency that infantilize workers; to be a committed worker who finds pleasure rather than burden in their work; to use the work as a tool for further achievements and not simply as a way to survive. Also to be able to choose the dream of trying to change the world, to choose to do what one likes, to be more human, more citizen. To give meaning to their lives... Ultimately, govern themselves to be happier.*



“We are weaving our achievements with the thread of our dreams.” (Nelsa Nespolo, leadership, seamstress and political activist. Solidarity Economy Secretary of the State of RGS.)

Thank you for your attention!



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