

Expanded abstract

Viability of circular economy in nonindustrialised countries and its adjustment to a proposal based on transformative economies: an approach to the latin-american scenario

In response to the evident unsustainability of linear economy a vast array of new concepts regarding the so-called alternative economies has emerged. Along the same line, this paper focuses on analyzing the definitions, applications, and debates over circular economy. The main question being to identify to which extend circular economy can be adapted and respond to the realities and needs of non-industrialized countries' societies in the global South, especially in Latin America. To do so, all main questions in which the so-called reformist and transformationist schools differ have been examined: full reduction of resources, conceptions of sustainability, and even the modification of the capitalist economic order (promoted by transformationists while unreservedly rejected by reformists).

This proposal points out the limits of circular economy regarding unemployment levels, planned obsolescence, or its contribution to dematerialization and decarbonization so as to constitute a viable model. Also, its implementation does not necessarily ensure energy reduction or optimization and material consumption, and it meets with corporate resistance given that its profitability is unclear. These debates show the diversity and ambivalence of approaches and practices regarding alternative economies. Societies such as those in Latin America should examine how these economies are shaped to provide a real alternative adapted to local needs.

Firstly, this article provides a state of the art through the review and contrast of multiple alternative approaches to the economy, coming from different parts of the globe with different politico-economic realities (care economy, ecological economy, economy of life, sustainability, sharing economy, degrowth, popular economy, the Common, etc.). Secondly, it aims to lay the foundations for a useful proposal tailored to countries and economies that are not rich nor industrialized but show high levels of inequality, social injustice, and serious external and internal threats regarding ecological sustainability.

The results reveal that in several territories in the South some rooted circular economy practices already exist (higher rates of re-utilization and repair as well as lower consumption, which equates to reduction). Urban recycling together with agriculture and livestock farming (especially with agroecology and permaculture initiatives) provide livelihood to many people through popular economy and, in some cases, through social economy. All the above is signif-

icantly connected to Latin American conceptions regarding development, such as *Buen Vivir*, which deviate from a rational, productivist logic and offer alternative approaches to social justice and to living in harmony with nature.

This proposal was outlined after an in-depth analysis of various results. One specific conclusion is that the concept of circularity is especially useful to lay down the guidelines of transformative economies for societies in the South as long as it is associated to a number of other premises.

All these guidelines can be summarized as follows: coverage of basic human needs; strong sustainability; relevant reduction of extractivisms, popular economy/social economy, socio-economic and ecological democracy; inclusive, predistributive and fair in nature; inspired by nature, ancestral communities and other productivities; strengthening of internal and local economy linked to higher scales of economy, and finally, useful, dignified, collaborative, universal employment.

From a substantial perspective that considers economy as being strictly linked to two larger systems (the society and the environment that contain it), this proposal offers a change in direction regarding the menace of unsustainability and social injustice imposed by the dominant economy (dissociated from the natural and social environment) and more patently visible in peripheral societies in the South rather than in core countries.

This theoretical proposition attempts to address an issue and its existing approaches although it draws on practices that we have not directly investigated. It is therefore inevitably generic in nature and for specific applications it should be adapted to concrete ecological, sociopolitical, and economic contexts of unindustrialized societies in the South. Likewise, it sets out guidelines on indicators for the identification of sustainability, circularity, coverage of needs and social justice, which should be operationalized according to these different contexts. Still, this proposal was conceived as the theoretical and conceptual framework of a current investigative process in Ecuador on specific areas such as electronic waste management, polymers reuse, or the role of recyclers; in that sense, its purely theoretical nature is left behind as it is a key part of a set of larger joint actions.

The originality of the present work relies on the manner that it connects all the concepts and debates over alternative economies –and their relation to the dominant economy– with the reality of unindustrialized countries of the global South. Importing these unadjusted models translates into unsuccessful efforts –often from public institutions– since they lack social, cultural, and economic contextualization, among others.

In this sense, this comprehensive and contextualized proposal sets up the necessary guidelines for transitioning from a dominant model to alternative forms of economy.

Keywords: Transformative economies, circular economy, circularity, strong sustainability, coverage of needs, *Buen Vivir*.