

# Expanded abstract

## The social capital of rural productive organizations of the social economy

### Objectives

In rural areas, the social economy represents an alternative way to promote convergent, fair and sustainable community development processes (Cheshire et al., 2015). Through the creation of common goods, various associative and cooperative experiences manage to satisfy needs, combat poverty, reduce levels of exclusion and maintain balanced relationships with natural environments (Uphoff & Wijayaratra, 2000).

The collective action of these groups, whose members join voluntarily, is based on principles of solidarity and participatory democracy, which directly depend on the quality of the social fabric that sustains them (Buciega, 2013). The strengths and weaknesses of the social environment of the group reflect the organization's ability to combine internal competencies with contextual conditions and external support. To this extent, relationships represent a real resource, an endowment of social capital essential to guarantee their existence (Kustepeli et al., 2023).

The objective of this research is to identify and assess the endowment of social capital of rural productive organizations of the social economy. It aspires, in this way, to contribute and strengthen the collective action and the capacity of social economic organizations to maintain common goods and facilitate the creation of community development interventions.

### Methodology

The research corresponds to a case study that is made up of 31 rural productive organizations in the province of Manabí in Ecuador, a country that recognizes in its Constitution the particularities of the social economy, under the name of popular and solidarity economy (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008)

The urgency of strengthening the organizational processes in Manabí, after the earthquake that occurred in 2016, makes clear the need to maintain social cohesion, reconstitute productive activity and channel national and international aid to improve the living conditions of the population. In this sense, the concept of social capital provides a useful theoretical framework to address the complexity of community productive organization processes and offers a practical tool to identify strengths and weaknesses of the social environment, such that it guides the formulation of practical intervention strategies. and promotion of community development (Saz-Gil et al., 2021).

The research applies the methodology for valuing the social capital of rural productive organizations of the social economy, proposed by Salinas & Sastre-Merino (2021). The authors

use an interdisciplinary, synergistic and multidimensional meso-level approach to identify the provision of social capital in its institutional, cognitive and structural dimension, expressed in the areas of territorial context of action, organizational profile and relationship between members. With these elements, analysis categories are built, whose variables and indicators are defined according to the specific situation of the case study.

The selection of variables and indicators responds to validity criteria provided by experts in the study area, researchers, field technicians, leaders and members of the organizations. The results of the assessment of social capital by area, dimension and component are subjected to reliability tests through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The applied research techniques use different instruments, sources of information and research tools. Field technicians, leaders and members of the organizations participate among the reporting actors.

In this way, the full spectrum of valuation is identified. That is, the positive value of social capital ( $n$ ) and its negative reciprocal ( $1-n$ ). To obtain the endowment of social capital ( $d$ ), the difference between the positive and negative value of the spectrum is calculated ( $d = n - (1-n)$ ). The integration of results is achieved through the application of a conditioned sequence of weightings, which begins with the assessment of the territorial area and concludes with the integration of the organization's profile areas and the relationship between members.

With the application of this methodology, it is conceivable to categorize organizations according to their provision of social capital, valued both in general terms and disaggregated by area, dimension and component of analysis. In this way, organizations with a positive endowment of social capital are identified, whose conditions allow them to promote proposals to strengthen collective action, distinguishing them from those with a negative endowment in which intervention would be useless.

## Results

The results show that, although each organization experiences particularities in social relations, the weakness of its connection with the territorial scope and the difficulties of the State in providing quality goods and services with cultural relevance are evident. The provision of social capital in the scope of the organization's profile indicates strengths in the construction of internal links compared to reduced levels of participation in networks and connection with external actors. In the area of relationships between members, the need to strengthen group identity and regulate the sanction of opportunistic behavior is observed.

In this way, the application to the case study demonstrates that valuing social capital allows us to clearly identify the relational conditions and political participation that public institutions establish in the context, in addition to recognizing some causes that explain the quality of the relationships. The typology of leadership and the possibility of making visible both the positive value of social capital and its undeclared negative reciprocal.

In summary, the results demonstrate that it is possible to value the social capital of rural productive organizations of the social economy, by addressing the complexity of their social environment as an ecosystemic, multidimensional and dynamic structure.

It is important to recognize that there are limitations and investigative risks that the methodology sought to mitigate, among them: the inter-subjectivity of human relationships, especially those that result from the position of the reporting and investigative actors, the relevance in the selection of the variables and indicators applied to assess the different components and dimensions of social capital in organizations and finally the difficulty in capturing the contemporaneity of events that result from historical constructions.

## Conclusions

The research shows that valuing the provision of social capital improves the understanding of the organizational processes of the social economy in the rural world and facilitates the design of community development policies. Furthermore, it incorporates, from the perspective of the actors, multidimensional elements and inter-subjective conditions, which explain the quality of relationships and the capacity for collective action.

The approach to experiences of the social economy through the concept of social capital opens multiple possibilities to achieve greater effectiveness of government and cooperation interventions, in their effort to promote inclusive, fair and sustainable community development processes.