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Potential exchanges to be established between the Social Economy context in  
Liverpool, United Kingdom, and the Solidarity Economy reality in Brazil: a view  
from Social Enterprises

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To all those dedicated to work and fight for social, economic and environmental  
improvements for all.

*"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."*

**Albert Einstein**

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## ABSTRACT

**SANTOS, C. V. Potential learnings and exchanges to be established between the British Social Economy and the Latin American Solidarity Economy realities.** 2014. Monografia (Trabalho de Graduação em Engenharia Ambiental) – Escola de Engenharia de São Carlos, Universidade de São Paulo, 2014.

Market economies can be great creators of wealth, but often it is distributed unequally, with social inequalities, wealth concentration and environmental impacts as consequences. Economic alternatives which exist in different territories aim to build up higher levels of social equality, justice and participation, while different geographical locations develop these alternatives differently. Therefore, the present work explored the Social Economy movement in the United Kingdom, and, more specifically, in Liverpool (which was possible through a living experience in Liverpool during one year), as well as the Solidarity Economy movement in Latin America, while focusing in Brazilian experiences. In Liverpool, Social Economy organizations have been visited (while focusing in social enterprises), and literature review on Social Economy and Solidarity Economy was performed. The obtained results indicate potential exchanges and learnings between those realities from the comprehension of similarities and differences between them.

Key words: Solidarity economy, social economy, exchanges.

## RESUMO

SANTOS, C. V. **Aprendizados e trocas potenciais entre o cenário Britânico de Economia Social e realidades Latino-Americanas de Economia Solidária.** 2014. Monografia (Trabalho de Graduação em Engenharia Ambiental) – Escola de Engenharia de São Carlos, Universidade de São Paulo, 2014.

A ideologia competitiva que sustenta o modelo capitalista de mercado gera, como consequência, cenários de desigualdades sociais, concentração de riqueza e renda e impactos ambientais. Alternativas econômicas existentes em diferentes territórios buscam uma sociedade mais igualitária, justa e participativa, de modo que diferentes regiões geográficas desenvolvem diferentemente tais alternativas. São, portanto, exploradas características dos movimentos de Economia Social e sua emergência no Reino Unido, e, mais especificamente, na região de Liverpool (o que foi possibilitado por uma vivência em Liverpool por um ano), assim como características do movimento de Economia Solidária existente na América Latina, com enfoque em seu desenvolvimento no Brasil. Foram visitadas, na região de Liverpool, organizações que funcionam de acordo com os princípios de Economia Social (com um enfoque em empresas sociais), além de revisão bibliográfica acerca das temáticas de Economia Social e Economia Solidária. Os resultados obtidos indicam potenciais trocas e aprendizados entre tais realidades a partir da compreensão de semelhanças e diferenças entre determinados aspectos característicos dos contextos analisados.

Palavras-chave: Economia Social, Economia Solidária, aprendizados.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current economic system is strongly related to the development of social inequalities around the world, which, according to Singer (2002a), is a consequence of the competitive capitalist market ideology. Different regions have different historical realities and, consequently, have developed different cultural values over time, so naturally the alternatives to social inequalities they have come up with are diverse. This way, exchanges between these experiences have the potential to open up new possibilities in order to strengthen the alternative economies movement worldwide.

Regarding that, Latin American experiences have brought up the Solidarity Economy movement, which has arisen in Brazil by the 80's and has become a complex approach related not only to economic activities, but also to the cultural and ideological shift needed if a more equitable society is possible. It is based on feelings of reciprocity and democracy, is organised through self-management, and arises mainly through cooperatives (Lemaître, 2012). Theoretically speaking, the solidarity economy understands social problems not individually, but as different consequences of the same capitalist exploitative economic system (which is why the movement carries a strong anti-capitalist feeling). This way, it differentiates itself from the market-based Social Economy in the United Kingdom, and exhibits a stronger sense of anti-capitalist radicalism.

Some may argue that the UK would benefit from a dose of radicalism, which, indeed, has already been a reality during the Industrial Revolution years, and would be related to awakening a process of empowering people and bringing them together in a fight for higher levels of social equality, while in a current context of economic crisis and austerity. In fact, even though these feelings came about Latin America as a consequence of the specific and highly-exploitative processes it has been through for the last 500 years, there is no doubt that some aspects of this sentiment could teach once again the UK a lot in an exchange between the two places.

On the other hand, the UK, which is considered to be the place of birth of the first cooperatives by the 19<sup>th</sup> century (while in a historical moment of Industrial Revolution), has built up the Social Economy movement over the years, which has established strong connections and networks between Social Economy organizations, as well as strong relations with a worldwide low-carbon environmental movement in a moment of peak oil and climate change (especially through



governance initiatives), which could also be positive for Latin America Solidarity Economy movement (among further aspects).

This paper aims to point out some of these potential exchanges, while considering geographical, cultural, historical, political and economic differences between these locations. It is more strongly focused in experiences from Brazil and Liverpool, and became possible from a living experience in Liverpool for one year.

The first part of the work focuses on the Social Economy concept and its emergence mainly through social enterprises, firstly in a more general way and furthermore with a stronger focus in the UK and Liverpool. The second part consists on Latin American experiences regarding alternative economies, the Solidarity Economy concept, its historical approach specifically in Brazil, and how it has been differently conceived in further Latin countries. The results show some collected data in Liverpool, from 9 visited Social Economy organisations, and indicates some similarities and differences noticed between both realities. Finally, a discussion is held in order to raise some potential exchanges, and how concrete they could actually become.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

This work aims to point out potential exchanges and learnings regarding alternative economies, between the Brazilian Solidarity Economy scenery and the British Social Economy context, while focusing in Liverpool. This process would be held while considering historical, cultural, political, economic and environmental differences between both realities.

### **2.1. Specific Objectives**

- i)** Understand both the British past and present realities, as well as the Latin American and the Brazilian, through literature review;
- ii)** Understand the historical development of alternative economies in both geographical locations, and raise similarities and differences on how this process has flourished in each reality;
- iii)** Raise potential exchanges between both realities, in order to associate higher efficiency in achieving a wider range of social outcomes and higher levels of social equality.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1. Social Economy

Firstly, Social Economy is contextualised and its emergence in the United Kingdom is studied, as a way to understand the current Social Enterprise movement, especially in Liverpool.

##### 3.1.1. Historical approach

The Social Economy concept is rooted on the oldest forms of human associations, but its concept was not put together before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was an intense historical moment for the outburst of more liberal thinking while in a context of Industrial Revolution and social oppressions. Organisations as food corporations in medieval Byzantium, post-medieval guilds in the Muslim countries, professional castes in India and confraternities of craftsmen in primitive Africa and in pre-Colombian America have historically existed to “protect” communities around medieval years, and were related to Social Economy principles in a way. The same way, Egyptian corporations, as well as Roman colleges of craftsmen, were also related to associative life (MOULAERT; AILENEI, 2005).

The term “Social Economy” was firstly used in 1830 by the French liberal economist Charles Dunoyer, when a social economy treaty for a moral approach towards economy was published by him (VÎRJAN, 2012). The French sociologist Frédéric Le Play has also contributed to this conceptualisation by founding the *Société Internationale des Etudes Pratiques d'Economie Sociale* and the *Revue d'Economie Sociale* in 1856. His definition to “Social Economy” was “the study of the situation of the working class and of its relations with other classes”. The concept was fully academically and institutionally recognized by 1912, when was finally defined by Charles Gide, French economist, as “the study of all efforts made to improve the condition of the people” (MOULAERT; AILENEI, 2005).

Historically speaking, it is understood that the Social Economy movement is directly related to the proposition of alternatives in moments of socioeconomic crisis, when both the public and private sector have faced difficulties in delivering adequately services for population. This way, the Industrial Revolution in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the post-1929 economic crisis, post-II World War and the 1973 oil crisis were moments when the Social Economy played an important role in delivering

services from the population to the population, through organisations as cooperatives, social enterprises and charities, especially due to loss of protection from the welfare system (MOULAERT; AILENEI, 2005). Moreover, Social Economy can be considered an alternative to a liberal system which conceived excessive freedom for economy under a competitive approach, while it is aimed higher levels of articulation between politics and society with economy (FRANÇA FILHO, 2002).

### **3.1.2. Social Economy in the United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom nowadays has high diversity of functioning social enterprises, cooperatives and charities playing an active role as the third sector. Historically speaking, the alternative economies movement is rooted in the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, while in the Industrial Revolution context of social chaos. By then, a cooperative was firstly set in 1844 by the Rochdale Pioneers, who collected £1 per member and, this way, set up a grocery shop. The membership has risen to about 600 members in 6 years, which inspired further workers to establish cooperatives according to the Rochdale model, which is considered the first successful cooperative (ANHEIER, 2009). It was a democratic, humanistic movement against the individualist and exploitative actions performed by industrial capitalism at that time (KEIL, 1982). Some may argue, though, that Rochdale consisted on a myth in some ways (for example, that it has not actually been the first successful cooperative), but is still considered a definitely important and memorable experience, that has inspired associative and cooperation experiences all over the world (FAIRBAIRN, 1994).

Nowadays, the third sector plays a role in pursuing social benefits, which could not be entirely accomplished through public interventions in private capitalist market (even considering that public policies of capital and land redistribution, as well as supporting small producers, have had concrete social outcomes) (BALAGUER, 2013). According to Moulaert and Ailenei (2005), the third sector could be defined as

(...) different from the traditional public ‘general interest serving’ and the private market sectors, that combines: formal and informal elements at the level of organisation (market, state, volunteering, self-help and the domestic economy), market and nonmarket-oriented production and valorisation of goods and services, monetary and non-monetary resources at the level of funding.

One of the main reasons for growing interest in the third sector is related to provision of public services. In Germany and the Netherlands, for example, the third sector has been fundamental in putting together post-war welfare state, while in the UK it became stronger around the 90's, in the context of outsourcing and the New Public Management, which supported market-oriented management of the public sector. It is also argued that the third sector has been losing some of its distinctiveness, which resulted in a process of weakening the boundaries between private, public and third sectors. Consequently, third sector organisations have been given characteristics from these further sectors, as formalization processes from the public sector, as well as the idea of maximising the income (but without maximising the profit) from private sector. This process has resulted in a general debate about whether these boundaries between sectors should be strengthened or not (PESTOFF; BRANDSEN, 2013). França Filho (2002) defends that the third sector should actually not be independent, and that it was beneficial for it to interact with both private and public sectors rather than simply playing the role of social adjustment.

Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) defend that Solidarity Economy was originated from Social Economy organisational structures, and it is the result of the re-emergence of social economy principles, but added from the importance of also strongly associating feelings of reciprocity, collectivity and cooperation in the context of building up alternative economies. The authors also argue that Anglo-Saxon literature has not dedicated enough attention to these processes, while they are, in fact, differently conceptualised from the Latin American approach of “solidarity” (Anglo-Saxon idea of “solidarity” is more strongly connected to the ‘philanthropy’ concept, and, this way, to a sector of non-profitable activities (FRANÇA FILHO, 2002)).

Concepts of “social economy”, “third sector” and “solidarity economy” under an Anglo-Saxon approach are better explained in Figure 1 below, according to Moulaert and Ailenei (2005).

Concepts and dimensions	Social economy		
	Social economy	Third sector	Solidarity economy
1. Institutional-political dimensions and historical perspectives	<i>19th century</i> : institutionalise better wages, better work conditions, consumer satisfaction <i>1930s</i> : housing and food cooperatives to avoid blunt poverty <i>1970s</i> : sustainable social entrepreneurship <i>post-1980s</i> : worker-oriented co-operatives, LETS	Immediate response to crisis of work and society in the 1980s	... reinforce institutional capital
2. Property and control relations	Regulatory role of state (social justice): not for profit? Members are shareholders	Non-profit? But in EU also co-operatives + mutual organisations	Civil society + public partnerships?
3. Type of 'core' agent	Firms with social objectives or socially inspired work organisations (co-operatives, <i>mutuelles</i> )	Defined at level of sectoral interaction (meso-economic) or associative agents	Bottom-up initiatives
4. Market orientation	Most core agents operate in the market but according to solidarity principles	Partly—quite eclectic definition (see Lévesque <i>et al.</i> , 1999)	Neither market nor state? Lipietz: synergies with market and state sector
5. Model of co-operation—social bond—organisational model	Solidarity practices of guilds, confraternities, co-operative, associative + mutual aid practice	Large component of voluntary work	Hybridisation of market, non-market and non-monetary
Contemporary definition	Historical—eclectically integrating, most dimensions of social economy in previous epochs: social objectives, reciprocity + solidarity, self-management, state-regulated	Social-economy initiatives by agents in civil society Associations	Stressing rediscovery of <i>lien social</i>
Related concepts	Non-lucrative sector	Not-for-profit, independent sector (UK) Non-profit (US)	Voluntary sector

Figure 1: Table of the dimensions of Social Economy concepts (MOULAERT; AILENEI, 2005)

### 3.1.3. Social and political context in Liverpool

Liverpool city is located in North-West England, in the Merseyside County (as shown in Figure 2, it is one of its 5 districts, together with Sefton, Knowsley, St. Helens and Wirral). Liverpool has a population of 445.000 inhabitants, while Merseyside has about 1.350.000 inhabitants (OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS, 2010).

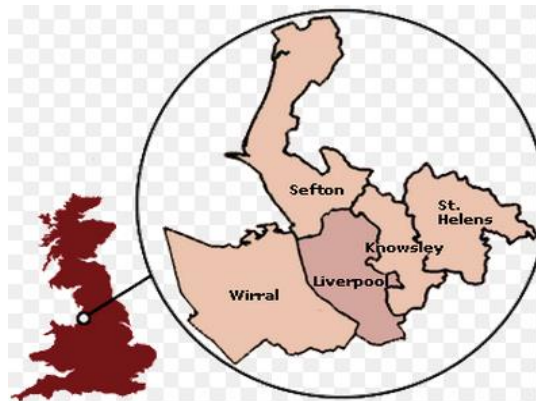


Figure 2: Map of the Merseyside County in the United Kingdom, and how it divides itself between Liverpool and further districts (Liverpool Crime Stop Guards, ?)

Even though nowadays some may argue that Liverpool does not have a politically active population, the city has actually had a strong militant past, especially during the end of the 70's and the 80's, while going through a strong economic crisis. The ascension of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher to power in 1979 meant hard times of public financial cuts for people, while she proclaimed that "there is no such thing as society". Even considering that Liverpool has had a prosperous past of global trade until the 70's (even though it has been through difficult periods as the 1930's depression and the post-World War II destructions), the city has been so hardly hit by the crisis that it lost almost 50% of its population, from 1951 to 2001. The high unemployment rates, the housing issues ever since the post-World War II period, and the incredible decrease in sea trade with Europe were some of the reasons for it to happen (FROST; NORTH, 2013).

The social work performed by the people at the time (as road restructuring, for example) showed that these measures were not enough to deal with such profound social deficiencies. After all, according to Frost and North (2013), "[people] do not often think about who provides [services] or how to pay for them, except when they fail to work well or are cut back or even withdrawn". Deep changes were needed, and this was the scenery in which the Labour Party, with the Militant group of Trotskyist tendencies, developed its ideas, got popular support, and took over Liverpool City Council in the General Election of 1983, after numerous years of militancy (even though these results were against the politically conservative trend in England).

Their management has been dedicated to confront Central Government for a fairer budget and less cuts for the city, so that the critical social situation through which Liverpool has been through could be reversed. Although they could not find support from the conservative Government, and did not last more than a few years in power, some defend that their confronting actions were responsible for bringing greater willingness to local authorities, central government, public, private and voluntary sectors in working together in collaboration (FROST; NORTH, 2013).

Nowadays, even though Liverpool has been through renewal processes and is nowadays a vibrant city (it has even been given the European Capital of Culture title, by the European Union), the city finds itself once again facing economic crisis, cuts, austerity and deprivation. According to the Atlas of Indices of Deprivation 2010 for England, Liverpool is had as one of the most deprived cities in the United Kingdom, with serious problems around income, employment, health and disability, education, services, crime and living environment, as shown in Figure 3. Although there

is still disagreement on the topic, some still defend that the Militant past of fighting the Government in times of difficulties could teach a lot to present Liverpool.

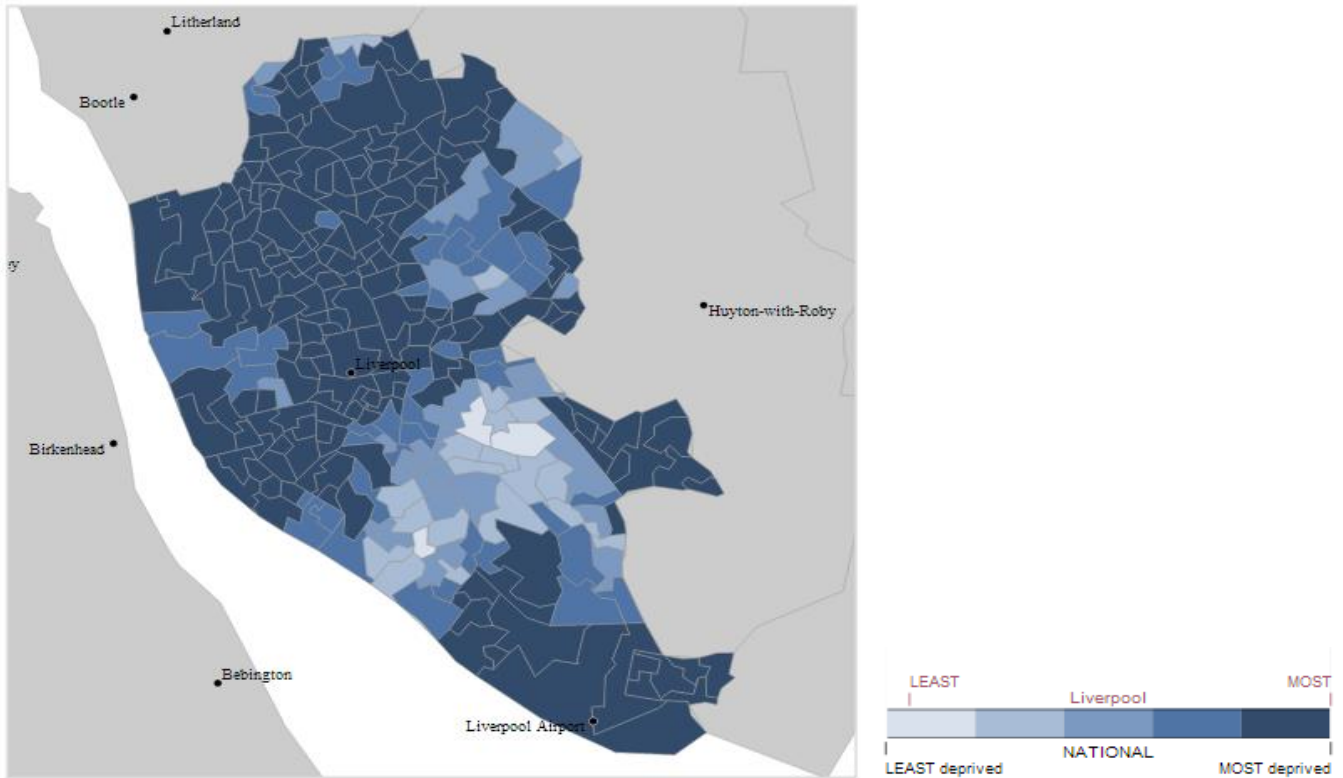


Figure 3: Indices of deprivation in Liverpool (Atlas of Indices of Deprivation 2010 for England)

### 3.1.4. Social Economy in Liverpool: an understanding through Social Enterprises

Having established strong roots in the United Kingdom, by the Industrial Revolution (as stated in Section 3.1.1. in this work), Social Economy has emerged through a wide range of different third sector organisations (as charities and cooperatives), including social enterprises, which are more closely explored in this work.

Social enterprises are organisations which exist wherever there is social dysfunction, and, this way, aim to tackle social issues as their primary objective. They do not have shareholders, and distinguish themselves from private businesses mainly from having their surpluses reinvested among workers and in local communities, rather than privatised. The same way, they are distinguished from further third sector organisations, as charities and voluntary organisations, from not holding dependence over grants or donations (SEN, 2013). Differently from non-profit



organizations as well, it is believed by social enterprises that “it is OK to be profitable”, since profit is recirculated rather than privatised (BLACK; NICHOLLS, 2004). The same authors defend that social enterprises are about social improvement and verification, added to competition and innovation, while the social entrepreneur, in this context, would be defined as the one who “assumes risks, supplies financial capital, innovates, makes decisions, coordinates resources and engages in arbitrage”.

There are diverse legal structures associated to social enterprises, as “community interest company”, “community benefit society” and “company limited by guarantee”, which would have a president or director. Cooperatives are also considered legal structures for social enterprises, which should have all its members as equal owners of the organisation.

The funding of these organizations becomes an important issue, since it cannot depend on grants and donations; furthermore, investments should expect not only financial but also social return, and should be applied for social change (DAVISON; HEAP, 2014).

Innovation is a required feature in the process of social enterprises development, which helps to explore different entrepreneurial solutions to social problems (DAVISON; HEAP, 2014). It also becomes a concept related to an ideological brake with mainstream principles, in the search for innovative alternatives.

Furthermore, social enterprises aim to focus on real consumer demands rather than creating demands for consumption, which is a strong capitalist market principle (SEDDON, 2014). The sector is also characterised by raising market-based alternatives for social problems, as well as establishing close relations with social discourse to private sector, as a way to attract private initiatives to the social cause (SEN, 2013).

Generally speaking, the sector aims to maximise the social value in every action, which is supported by the Public Services (Social Value) Act, from 2012. According to The Social Value Guide (SOCIAL ENTERPRISE UK, 2012), “Social Value” can be defined as “the additional benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”. The document also states that

(...) the Government has said it would like to see a much greater role for social enterprises and voluntary organisations in delivering public services, because it believes organisations rooted in the communities they’re working

with - and for - are often best placed to understand local needs, deliver personalised services and reach those most in need of support.

In order to achieve this, the social enterprise sector in Liverpool has already achieved and is still working for higher levels of cohesion through the establishment of networks, as Social Enterprise Network – SEN Together, Social Enterprises Northwest, and Social Enterprises UK, which play an important role in supporting social enterprises and promoting networking and further connections between them. They also have an educational potential of orienting the social entrepreneurial sector into the importance of having social value as an outcome of every planned action, as exemplified in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Rosie Jolly, CEO of SEN Together, defending the importance of Social Value in International Festival for Business, July/2014 (SEN Together Twitter, 2014)

Some may argue that, since there is still no exact definition for the “social enterprise” concept (HARDING, 2004), and, this way, no concrete legal details about the obtained social outcomes, some enterprises easily tend to be “less social” than others.

### 3.2. Latin America

Further, Latin America is also studied, as a way to contextualise the Solidarity Economy movement and, this way, compare to British experiences.

### 3.2.1. Contextualising Latin America

Although Latin America is positively known worldwide for its diverse nature and rich culture, it has historically been stained by international interventions which repressed former indigenous grassroots in the region. Ever since colonial times, exploitative relations have taken place over Latin context, since late Renaissance ideological principles have sustained processes of European expansion as well as appropriation and domination over further cultures, while it was justified as a process of illumination and purification from European way of thinking and living (GUARDIOLA-RIVERA, 2010). These interventionist oppressive relations have been explored not only in colonial times, but also until the present day, through a wide range of actions in the international relations context, in different historical periods as well, and sustained by different ideological arguments, all built up in order to benefit economic development of countries in the global North (former extraction of minerals as silver and gold, forced agricultural and industrial production, political interventions in supporting conservative dictatorships in the 60s, neo-liberal interventions in the 90s, among further interventionist actions).

According to Galeano (1980), some may argue that Latin America would be considered socially problematic due to its misery; however, this condition is clearly a social consequence from these imposed interventionist processes that have been responsible for colonising countries in the North to appropriate themselves of wealth found in Latin countries, which affects every aspect of these Southern societies until nowadays. Karl Marx argues in the *Capital* that gold and silver deposits originally found in Latin America have led to extermination of native populations by Europeans (not only in the Americas, but also in African countries and India); all this exploitation context has also enabled for the capitalist ideology to be put together some years after, from all the wealth concentration that was possible for countries in the North from colonial processes (MARX, 1983). Even after Latin colonies have become independent, they were still subjected to international interests, while most of them have also faced periods of bad administration in a geographical place that had been politically, economically, environmentally and culturally messed up by colonial exploitation. Economic dependence from core countries was still held in this context, while Latin Americans have never felt themselves without having been tied up. Furthermore, according to Coraggio (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012), destructive interventionist dictatorships were imposed by the 60's over democratic governments in Latin countries, while people were left with nothing but a feeling to fight these forces. These conditions were fundamental in order to strengthen

social movements and left wing parties by the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, which have played, since then, an important role in the fight for social equality in Latin America. More recently, globalisation processes have also played the role of justifying interventions in Southern countries and going over Latin grassroots in order to explore and establish commercial connections worldwide (FREIDMAN, 2005).

Considering it all, according to Guardiola-Rivera (2010), Latin American grassroots allowed for a resistance cultural process to take place in Latin countries, which represented unacceptance toward interventionist exploitative relations: “collective mobilisation, religious and indigenous traditions, and a long experience with struggles for liberalisation, tempered by a sense of tragedy and failure”, have allowed Latin Americans to resist the idea of inevitable progress imposed elsewhere. Under this process, it is argued by Latin Americans that globalisation can be achieved under their own terms and conditions, without being subjected to supposedly international unstoppable forces. It has been created a general feeling of disagreement, rather than acceptance towards what has been historically built in the South, while it is realised that submission to European and North American policies is not the only way (GUARDIOLA-RIVERA, 2010). Consequently, people (mostly lower and middle income, who are more strongly oppressed) have got together to hold a strong “no” and to build alternatives to the Nordic neoliberal system, as it is also considered that there is nowhere else in the world where people hold so strongly to the promise of democracy, and have such a strong belief in utopias as a possible future (differently from the English meaning of “utopia”, related to a more unattainable scenery (KANE, 2011)).

Even though Latin countries have historically been controlled by global forces, and it has been defended that this phenomenon has influenced the current situation of the continent (especially regarding the scenery of social inequalities), it is also important to consider that it has been more than a century that its countries are independent and, this way, have a certain autonomy to deal with their own internal issues. It is argued that the absence of civil society until the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a fundamental factor to assure social benefits for the richest, and, consequently, to contribute to intense social inequalities (CARDOSO; FALETTTO, 2004).

### 3.2.2. Solidarity Economy in Latin America

Considering Latin resistance created as a response to exploitative processes which were historically built from international interventions which reflected in social struggles, Solidarity Economy became one of the alternatives pursued by people tired of having no voice or no power over decisions, while in a society where democracy did not find itself concrete. It was also a response to unacceptable sceneries of deep social inequalities worldwide: by half 19<sup>th</sup> century, life quality levels in Northern countries were as far as about 50% better than in the South (GALEANO, 1980).

Authors as França Filho (2002) and Lechat (2002) defend that Solidarity Economy has the same roots as Social Economy; however, the Social Economy concept has existed ever since the XIX century, and the worldwide economic crisis in the 1970's has built up a new historic moment when Latin American people have adapted the Social Economy idea to their own reality (which happened by the 1980's in Brazil), which originated the Solidarity Economy principle as an economic alternative developed by workers as a response to the difficult moment they were going through.

According to that, this context of crisis allowed for the theoretical foundations of Solidarity Economy to be put together (the first literature on this conception is dated from the beginning of the 1980's (LECHAT, 2002)). According to Coraggio, economy cannot be solidary, because the market determines current economy, and competitive market could never be solidary (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012). This way, Solidarity Economy differentiates itself from neoliberal thinking, and, the same way as Social Economy, also aims more concrete interactions between economy, politics and society (FRANÇA FILHO, 2002). It becomes a part of the mixed economy concept, next to the private, public and popular sectors (while the popular economy would be defined as the emergence and expansion of small productive and commercial units among socially disadvantaged regions in major cities in Latin America (FRANÇA FILHO, 2002)). A scheme from José Luis Coraggio on how public, private, popular and solidarity economies interact is shown in Figure 5.

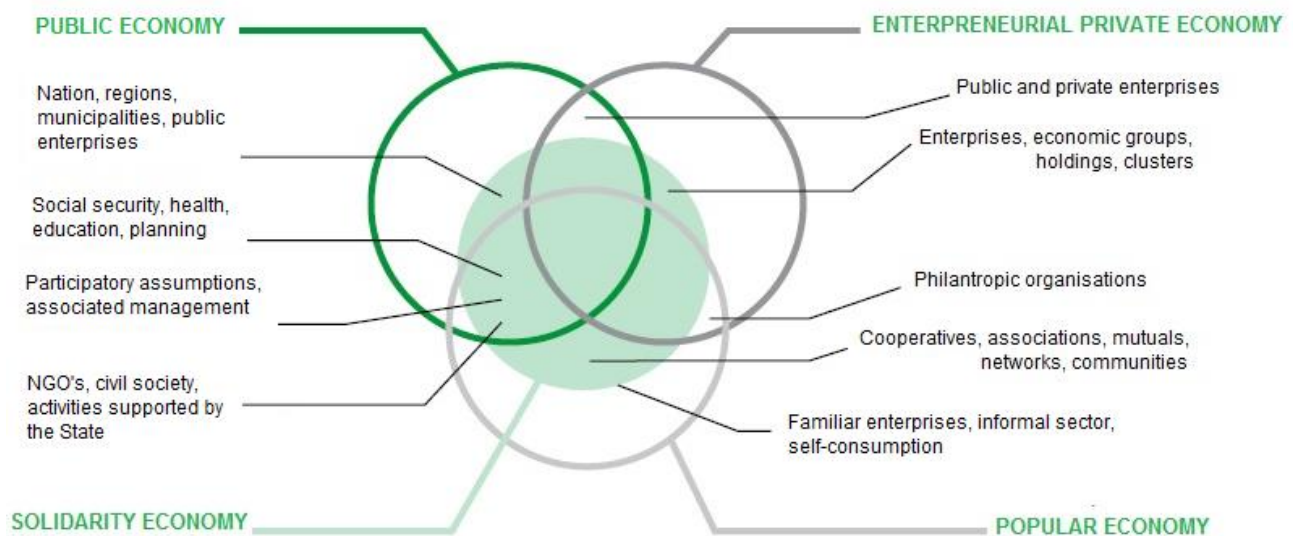


Figure 5: Solidarity Economy in Mixed Economy (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012)

Solidarity economy is consisted on an alternative to capitalist competitive ideology, and targets social inequalities. According to Singer (2002b), a feeling of competition has been naturalised not only among commercial relations, but in social relations as well, which consequently creates vertical relations of “winners” and “losers”, at the same time that being a “loser” means to be socially excluded in a way. It is also defended that hierarchical management structures are justified by this view of some workers being more capable than others, which, consequently, results in meritocratic ideologies that associates power to personal capacity in a working environment, which becomes the base for competitive feelings. This way, it would be one of the roots of social inequalities, which should be overcome if a more equal society is aimed, while cooperative relations should take over competitive ones. The author also argues how important it is for competition to be questioned rather than simply accepted, at the same time that people take conscience over the possible economic alternatives.

While in this scenery, self-management becomes a strong principle over which Solidarity Economy practices are built through cooperatives, since it empowers workers while in a more horizontal environment. Furthermore, exchanges are also valued among Solidarity Economy principles, as a way to concretise reciprocity feelings and avoid consumption. Some may argue that humans carry a natural tendency to establish exchanges, which has happened ever since Neolithic

revolution; it is also considered to be beneficial to collective development since it is associated to a tendency of better recognizing the value on each other's production (DURÁN, 2007).

Concretely speaking, solidarity organisations belong to their workers, and, differently from capitalist companies, where investors hold the power over decisions in the company, as well as also keep most of the profit to themselves, in solidarity enterprises the action of working is directly related to having power over the company, together with other workers, while in a self-managed horizontal internal structure of equal rights (SINGER, 2002a). Decisions are collectively taken in general assemblies, which are the maximum democratic spaces where every cooperative member has the right to vote and to speak up (HOLZMANN, 2000). Destination of the annual exceeding is collectively decided; usually a share of it is equally divided between workers, while surpluses is donated to further social projects or community organisations. Considering it all, every worker is equally responsible for what is produced and how the production process is managed, and, the bigger the cooperative is, and in case a higher number of workers get involved, less easy the management becomes, and, this way, division of tasks may become necessary through establishing specialized functions among workers. However, differently from privatized capitalist businesses, those who are gained specialised functions have the obligation to be committed to representing the collective interests of the cooperative, otherwise they will get replaced (SINGER, 2008).

As opposed to what Figure 1 states, Solidarity Economy under a Latin American approach, differently from an Anglo-Saxon one, is not only about voluntary activities, but about workers who have needs to keep their jobs in moments of crisis, and who have found a way to do it through more democratic and equal paths. Solidarity organisations, characterized by all these elements, work as cooperatives, which, according to the Federal Law 5.764 in Brazil (BRASIL, 1971), are defined by people who get together voluntarily, hold the power over collective decisions, are politically neutral, avoid every kind of prejudice (racial, social, religious), and do not aim profit.

Although these bureaucratic and legal structures are necessary so that cooperatives are conceived as solidarity organisations, these entities are ideologically sustained by a feeling of social change and the belief that subjection to exploitative work and living conditions is not actually necessary. However, according to Singer (2008), there are numerous organisations that legally exist as cooperatives, but concretely do not reproduce these ideological principles of equality and self-management. This fact is mainly related to the current legal condition of cooperative members, who, since considered independent workers, do not have working rights as vacations, guarantee

fund and 13<sup>th</sup> salary, which can be seen as an advantage by presidents or directors of companies legally registered as cooperatives.

As a result of the cooperatives movement worldwide, the International Cooperative Alliance was established in 1895, and was created in order to support and represent cooperatives internationally (ETGETON, 2005). According to it, there are 8 principles over which cooperatives are settled:

- i) The cooperative is democratically managed, and every member has the right to vote;
- ii) The cooperative is open to everyone interested in becoming a part of the organisation, since it is paid by those a minimum amount of money, which should be equal for everyone who aims to become a cooperative member;
- iii) If further money, beyond the minimum amount, is also paid by a member, it does not mean that he/she holds the right over a higher amount of decisions;
- iv) All the expenses (including interests) would be distributed between the associates, proportionately to how much they have spent in buying materials for the cooperative;
- v) Every payment for a sale would be made at the time of the purchase;
- vi) All the products to be sold by the cooperative would be pure and good quality;
- vii) The organisation should promote its members' educational process regarding cooperative principles;
- viii) The cooperative is politically and religiously neutral.

The main idea is for cooperativism to become an ideological movement not only for the ones who are from lower social layers, but for every one who aims to have conscience over their own real living needs, over true human feelings towards themselves and their communities. Even that there are legal structures and organisational processes to hold cooperatives together, only these structural characteristics are usually not enough to truly fulfil their function in the Solidarity Economy movement: a cooperative, for example, is about a complex empowering process which arises from deep personal involvement, in which workers recognise their equal power, go through a personal development process in order to publicly introduce and defend their ideas, as well as to debate over what is better for the collective unit, rather than simply being physically present in assemblies (HOLZMANN, 2000). This process is consisted in a non-elementary process of breaking with mainstream characteristics of discouragement towards individual public manifestation, and, this way, being individually exposed to collective critique.



These aspects summarise what solidarity economy is truly about: consisting on a way through which work does not become an alienating function of social obligation, but a fulfilling activity for individuals and for the collective working force. It is also the main idea of the oppressed individuals taking care of each other and establishing mutual solidarity relations, since the mainstream economic system does not take care of anyone (SINGER, 2002a). This solidarity feeling, historically speaking, can be traced back to Greek society, as well as to Christian values of universal brotherly love, and, later on, in the French Revolution, through the “*Fraternité*” (fraternity) principle, right next to “*Liberté*” (freedom) and “*Egalité*” (equality) (COOTE; ANGEL, 2014).

### **3.2.3. Solidarity Economy in Brazil**

The Solidarity Economy movement has naturally risen from the economic crisis in the beginning of the 80’s, when numerous companies found themselves bankrupt and workers struggled without living alternatives in order to sustain themselves and their families. This way, led by a natural feeling of need, a movement of taking over bankrupt companies and reorganising them as cooperatives was organised by those workers, and was successful in taking control over companies as the oven industry “Wallig” (Porto Alegre), the “Cooperminas” explorer of coal mines (Crisciúma), and the blanket factory “Teceragem Parahyba” (Recife and São José dos Campos), for example, which are still active nowadays. These companies were reorganised as cooperatives, which meant that all workers equally owned the company and had equal power to vote over decisions, through assemblies (SINGER, 2002a).

One of the main references of this management shift process was the shoe company “Makerly”, in Southeast Brazil, which was strongly hit by economic crisis in the beginning of the 90’s as a consequence of the process of opening the country to imports. Workers got support, put themselves through difficult negotiations for financial credit with “Banespa” (Bank of the São Paulo Estate), and, when victorious, they controlled the factory until 1995, when Federal government interventions suspended the credit. That experience supplied the methodology for workers to formally take over bankrupt companies and run them as cooperatives, which also influenced in the creation of “Anteag” (National Association of Workers of Self-Management

Companies and Stock Participation), in order to offer support for workers in managing the taken over companies (SINGER, 2002a).

The shift to the self-management process, ideologically different from former capitalist management, was something new that often did not gain enough trust from workers at first. Furthermore, it usually took a while until the company regained financial stability and attracted former and new clients, suppliers and credit. It also demanded that workers built together a general feeling of mutual trust, as well as the acceptance that it might take some time until the cooperatives became financially sustainable. This way, entities in support of workers (as Anteag itself) became something crucial for the cooperative movement to arise (SINGER, 2002a).

More recently, there was created a government structure to support Solidarity Economy through public policies: after results achieved in the I World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (2002), and after president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was elected and had Solidarity Economy inserted in the economic planning of his government, SENAES (National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy) was formally created in 2003, in the III Solidarity Economy Plenary, attached to the Ministry of Work and Employment, in order to support both nationally and locally Solidarity Economy initiatives. This process was fundamental in opening doors for Solidarity Economy projects to arise through supporting local forums (the Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy – FBES – is locally organised in numerous municipalities all around the country) and supplying local projects with public funding: so far, ever since its creation, SENAES has played an important role in supporting and funding 435 solidarity economy projects across the country (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012).

Another public policy released by Brazilian federal government since 2004, related to supporting Solidarity Economy through family agriculture (a considerable share of solidarity economy actions in Brazil is currently present in rural environments), is the Program for Acquisition of Food (PAA), which aims for the government to buy what is agriculturally produced by small producers through family agriculture and Solidarity Economy principles, and supply people who find themselves in food insecurity situations with those. Under these conditions, small producers find an incentive for them to get together and organise themselves in cooperatives to collectively sell what has been produced to the government, since it is not possible for this program to reach all of the thousands of small producers in the country (SINGER, 2008).

Even though a lot has been achieved so far, the structure for public policies in the Solidarity Economy field is still highly bureaucratic and corrupt, and there is still a huge field for education regarding Solidarity Economy, in order to involve people in popular actions and the entire Solidarity ideology and principles (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012). Furthermore, there are still contradictions related to provision of finances, since solidarity enterprises usually arise from socially disadvantaged ones, who are exactly the ones to whom credit from banks is less available (current financial system in the country has traditionally strong relations with favoured big clients as enterprises and government). The main solution to that scenery, according to Singer (2008), would be to support microcredit policies.

Singer also argues that participation of civil society is fundamental while a strong solidarity economy network is aimed across Brazil: the management of policies that should theoretically reach more than 200 million of Brazilians, by very few people in charge of that, becomes a challenge, which can be overcome with organised popular support (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012). Part of this connection that should exist between civil society and the government happens through the Solidarity Economy Forums, which happen locally in order to organise actions that find themselves in agreement of that ideology. These organisational instances are also fundamental in order to strengthen cooperation networks, not only locally but also nationally and even internationally, through International Cooperative Alliance. The establishment of these networks are given a lot of importance since cooperatives get stronger when acting together, especially considering that the capitalist system against which they were ideologically conceived is strong and has its organisations intensely connected to each other under a competitive market approach (SINGER, 2008).

Even though Solidarity Economy has been through moments of strengthening for the last decades, it is still a minority in the country, and still meets numerous challenges in its development and demands numerous actions which aim its expansion.

#### **3.2.4. Solidarity Economy in further Latin countries**

Even though this work considers Latin America as the geographical way through which solidarity economy has been concretised, it has not flourished the same way among different Latin American countries. Equator and Peru, for example, have solidarity economy much more strongly connected to indigenous spirituality, while it is based on the “sumac kawsay” or “buen vivir”

concept, meaning “intense living” (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012). It was brought up from indigenous language, and aims to rescue human connections with nature while living in society. According to Humberto Ortiz Roca, solidarity economy should be based over these concepts, as well as over fraternity, equality, harmony and sustainability (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012).

Equator has been through a process, in 2008, in order to change its constitution together with civil society and social sectors, which explored Social and Solidarity Economy policies, under the “sumac kawsay” concept. Patricio Ruiz (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012), argues that solidarity economy has existed in the country for a long time, however without formal recognition and support from the state and without public policies support as well. After the constitutional reform, the “Gobierno de la Revolución Ciudadana” (Government of Citizen’s Revolution), which has established public policies for popular and solidarity economies, has launched “Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir” (National Plan of Welfare) to promote, support and regulate these alternative and collective economies. Moreover, regarding public structures, there is also the Popular and Solidarity Economy Revolution Agenda (AREPS), which is ran by the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion (MIES), and support, among further actions, solidarity relations in the national economy context (as to financially support small producers).

In Peru, according to Humberto Ortiz Roca (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012), Solidarity Economy should be present in all sectors of economy, rather than becoming a sector itself. Furthermore, it is considered to be important to have local economy connected to regional, national and global economies, but without leaving aside local perspectives. Currently, it has become intensively present in the social sector, less present in the public sector, and hardly existent in the private sector (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012).

In Venezuela, the cooperative movement has arisen in the 60’s, having been initially supported by the Catholic Church. With Chávez administration, from 1999, cooperatives have exponentially grown in the country, mainly as a result of public policies (rather than spontaneous popular organisation), as the 2001 Law of Cooperative Associations. However, this sudden growth has intensely affected the effectiveness of organisations, which resulted in the transition, from 2008, to the Socialist Production Units (SPU’s) model, formed by state-owned, non-profitable organisations, democratically managed by their workers, local communities and the state. Ideologically speaking, the two most popular learning areas among those involved in SPU’s are

both the understanding towards the “needs” concept (not only individual, but also communal needs), as well as collective organization (LARRABURE; VIETA; SCHUGURENSKY, 2011).

Bolivian experiences regarding Solidarity Economy activities have begun around 1985, through actions promoted initially by rural trade unions and social organisations, and currently have Solidarity Economy management organised through four levels: departmental, municipal, regional and indigenous. The Bank of Productive Development has been created so that small and medium entrepreneurs would meet credit, and the National Plan for Social and Solidarity Strategy has also been put together in order to support these policies. Local councils are in charge of supporting Solidarity Economy projects locally; however, some localities still do not present effectiveness in those policies, which, according to Beatriz Delgado (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012), can be related to conservative political forces in some cities, as La Paz for example.

In Argentina, hyperinflation processes from the mid 90's, and especially the economic crisis from 2001, were fundamental in justifying popular pursuit for economic alternatives. By this time, the country has been through a process with similarities comparing to what Brazil went through by the 80's, characterized by bankrupt enterprises, hardly affected by economic crisis, being taken by workers willing to save their jobs, and collectively reorganised as cooperatives (LARRABURE; VIETA; SCHUGURENSKY, 2011). Social movements played an important role at the time, especially in spreading the methodology for collectively organising cooperatives and developing a self-managed structure among further workers, in different companies; this way, incentives to recovery did not come from individualist ideas, but from collective strengths and networks. At the time, about 200 enterprises were recovered, with about 10.000 workers involved (PIZZI; BRUNET, 2011), while Solidarity Economy exchange practices, as clubs for exchange (where people exchanged goods) were also developed (SINGER, 2008). This massive involvement in the movement, under these conditions, was not justified by workers willing to concretise a revolutionary political process, but simply by workers who were strongly hit by the financial need to have a job. Nowadays, it is argued that the main socio-economic problem in the country would be excessive wealth concentration, rather than poverty. There is a law to support microcredit, which created the National Commission for Microcredit, which manages the National Microcredit Program, responsible for destining 100 million pesos every year to small organisations. Moreover, in 2012, was held in the country the 1<sup>st</sup> Latin American Congress for Microcredit, with over 10.000 ambassadors of Solidarity Economy (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012).

The same way with Solidarity Economy in Brazil, it is still a minority and challenger movement in those further Latin countries as well. Considering all the presented features, some may argue that it should not be possible to truly achieve social emancipation in a Latin country, without having acted collectively as the Latin continent. One of the initiatives that have been concretised this union is the Bank of the South, developed by Venezuelan former president Hugo Chávez, which aims to fund social programs in Latin countries, also as a way of weakening the dependence on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (ECONOMIA SOLIDÁRIA, 2012).

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The epistemological study of both British and Brazilian realities studied in the present work, as it was put together in Section 3, was fundamental in order to understand some features of the present and past realities in these locations. This way, to indicate possible and reasonable exchanges between them becomes something further achievable.

The work was mainly performed in Liverpool, supported by Social Enterprise Network and University of Liverpool, and, besides the epistemological study, an empirical approach towards the Social Economy reality in Liverpool and Merseyside was also explored, through visiting social enterprises in Merseyside County, so that the contact with the alternative economies scenery could be strengthened and better comprehended while living there. This contact was possible through organised visits to 9 different organisations which aimed to attend Social Economy principles in the United Kingdom. These organisations were mainly suggested by Social Enterprise Network - SEN Together, based on having different legal structures, existing in different regions in Merseyside, and performing different activities from each other. The main information collected in these organisations was location, legal structure, main field of activity, people attended, and main activities developed.

Finally, all these theoretical material and the obtained results from visits to third sector organisations were put together, so that similarities and differences between them could be raised and analysed through a critical discussion.

## 5. RESULTS

After going through literature review, which was fundamental in order to grow a more profound understanding of both studied contexts, the results obtained from visits to social enterprises in Merseyside region is shown in this section.

### 5.1. Meeting Social Enterprises in Merseyside County

In order to better understand how is the work performed by social organisations in Merseyside region, as it was explained in the Methodology, 9 organisations were chosen to be visited, mainly suggested by Social Enterprise Network - SEN Together, and based on having different legal structures, existing in different regions in Merseyside, and performing different activities. The organisations are firstly described in a map of the region (shown in Figure 6), further their main activities are described, and, finally, a comparative chart was organised with some collected data (shown in Table 1).

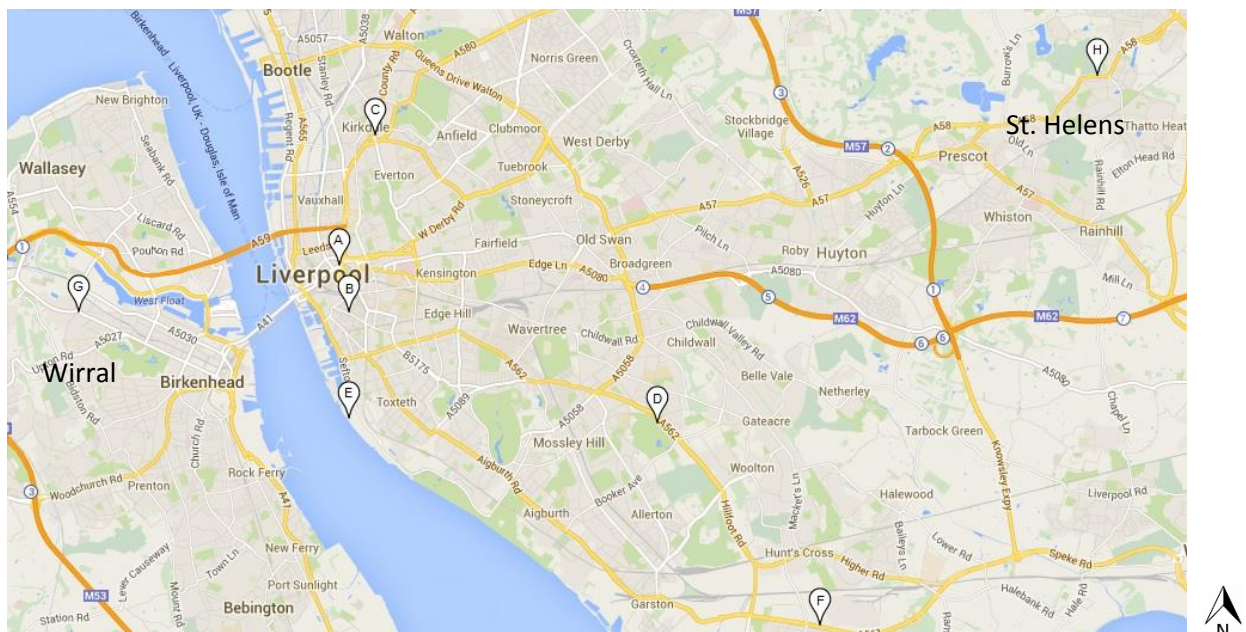


Figure 6: Location of visited organizations in Merseyside (some of these also exist in further locations, not only in further British cities but also internationally)

#### i) SEN Together

Social Enterprise Network, in Liverpool, supports social businesses in Merseyside, so that higher levels of social impact can be achieved by those. It also establishes connections and



encourages networking between social enterprises, and has also been working to spread the “buy social, buy local” idea, among the entrepreneurial sector and public in general. Annually, the enterprise also organises, since 2012, the “Powerful Together Awards”, which aims to congratulate and recognize social enterprises that have detached themselves in achieving higher levels of social value in their activities (Figure 7 portrays the 2014 latest edition of the Powerful Together Awards).



Figure 7: Powerful Together Awards, Liverpool Town Hall, Oct/2014  
(SEN Together Twitter)

## ii) **Life Story Network**

Has been created from initiatives of supporting individuals with dementia. The company uses life story work in order to make individuals connect more strongly with themselves and with their own stories and lives. More recently, the “Your Community Matters” project aims to strengthen community cohesion, especially around support for dementia, in order to have, this way, dementia friendly communities, especially in those most deprived areas in Liverpool.

## iii) **Ethecol**

Cooperative which sells chip-and-pin machines for commercial businesses, has existed for 4 years already, but only 1 year as a cooperative (has formerly been a social enterprise). Every financial transaction with credit cards in Ethecol terminals creates donations for third sector organisations, which involves no extra cost for the consumer.

#### iv) **Progressive Lifestyle Solutions**

Has existed since 2010, and was created from Paul Martin's initiative to apply his business skills to tackle a social issue: his social enterprise currently offers services in support of adult men who find themselves without a home or a job (as shown in Figure 8). It is based in Northern Liverpool, and, initially, had the capacity to attend 5 people, and about 48 nowadays.



Figure 8: Support to one of the Service Users with his job search

#### v) **The Reader Organisation**

It is a charitable social enterprise that makes use of the power of shared reading by promoting weekly groups to listen to stories read aloud by participants, across the UK and beyond. It aims individual well-being as well as a Reading Revolution. The reading methodologies in groups, as portrayed in Figure 9, are also related to individual and collective empowerment, as well as individual emancipation processes through reading.



Figure 9: One of the shared reading activities held by the organization

#### vi) **FRC Group**

Furniture Resource Centre was set as a charity in 1988, and nowadays works as a social enterprise, running businesses that aim people's well-being: Furniture Resource Centre itself (which sells items for homes), Bulky Bob's (waste management business, which collects, reuses and recycles bulky household waste, mostly furniture and appliances, as shown in Figure 10), and Bulky Bob's Furniture World (public shop selling low-cost used furniture which they have previously collected in homes that have requested for their collection services).



Figure 10: Bulky Bob's truck, which collects pre-used furniture and delivers it at Bulky Bob's Furniture World to be sold low-cost

#### vii) **Rotters Community Composting**

Local charity which provides organic waste services for businesses and schools, and has its piles of organic waste portrayed in Figure 11. It is currently settled in Southern Liverpool, and was originated from meetings of a local group which discussed the environment. Nowadays, the volunteers also promote educational activities in schools nearby.



Figure 11: Composting piles of organic waste where Rotters Community Composting is currently settled

### viii) Women's Enterprising Breakthrough

WEB is a charitable organisation that works for women's well-being. It offers a wide range of activities and support to women and their families (some of which shown in Figure 12), in a place with positive atmosphere where they can relax, interact with each other and explore their own confidence and self-esteem. Recently, the work has also been explored with both adult and young men, through offering self-defence lessons and group activities which aim to build self-esteem and personal confidence.



Figure 12: Collage of pictures which shows a wide variety of activities offered by WEB mostly to adult and young women, but also to adult and young men

### ix) EDP – The Right Approach

Private business which works as a strategic consultancy to assist challenges faced by further organisations. Offers integrated support regarding sustainability, corporate responsibility, safety, health and well-being for companies from a broad range of sectors. It has worked not only in the United Kingdom, but also in locations as South East Asia, Central African Republic and North India.

Table 1: Data collected from social enterprises visited in Merseyside region

<b>Social Organisation</b>	<b>Location in the map</b>	<b>City region</b>	<b>Legal Structure</b>	<b>Main Field of Activity</b>	<b>People attended</b>
SEN Together	A	Central Liverpool	Social Enterprise	Entrepreneurial Support	Social enterprises
Life Story Network	A	Central Liverpool	Social Enterprise	Health	Patients with dementia
Ethecol	B	Central Liverpool	Cooperative	Finances	Commercial businesses
Progressive Lifestyle Solutions	C	Northern Liverpool	Social Enterprise	Social	Adult men
The Reader Organisation	D	Southern Liverpool	Charitable Social Enterprise	Education	Individuals of all ages
FRC Group	E	Southern Liverpool	Social Enterprise	Social / Environmental	Low-income families
Rotters Community Composting	F	Southern Liverpool	Charitable Social Enterprise	Environmental	Businesses, schools, households
Women's Enterprising Breakthrough	G	Wirral	Social Enterprise	Psychological Support	Adult and young women
EDP	H	St. Helens	Private	Entrepreneurial Support	Private companies

Among these organisations, Ethecol seems to be more similar from the Latin Solidarity Economy concept, because of being a cooperative, differently from the other organisations (however, in order to affirm that, there should still be checked whether this organisation fits the 8 Cooperativism Principles, presented in Section 3.2.2.).

## 5.2. Pointing out similarities and differences between both analysed realities

The empirical experience of living among a different place, added from the literature review, has enabled for similarities and differences between Latin and British realities to be pointed out, which would be the base to further indicate possible exchanges between them.

The main similarity noticed was that both contexts have social inequalities; França Filho (2002) also defends that both Social Economy and Solidarity Economy have similar roots, and have arisen from people who aim a less exclusionary economy as well as a less unequal society. Furthermore, both contexts have a public sector that currently does not fulfil the demands of their populations, and, consequently, have populations that still aim for better living conditions; moreover, both Social Economy and Solidarity Economy aim to focus on real consumer's demands, rather than creating needs and fetishes for consumption, which currently is a strong principle in capitalist economy.

The main differences noticed were described and organised in Table 2.

Table 2: Description and characterization of qualitative variables of comparison between Latin America and the United Kingdom social realities

Variable analysed	Perception
Radicalism of population against non-representative public decisions	Higher in Latin America
Historical levels of social inequalities and exploitation	Higher in Latin America
Historical delivery of good public services	Higher in the United Kingdom
Public support and policies to alternative economies	Higher in Latin America
Understanding of social problems in a more integrated way, more directly related to consequences of capitalist exploitation	Higher in Latin America
Strength and impact (social, economic and environmental) of local economies movement	Higher in the United Kingdom
Connections and networks between alternative economies organisations	Stronger in the United Kingdom
Involvement in the low-carbon worldwide environmental movement while in a scenery of climate change	Stronger in the United Kingdom



## 6. DISCUSSION

After better understanding how the social sector concretely works in the United Kingdom and, more specifically, in Merseyside region, through the results presented from visits to social organisations, the diversity between the analysed enterprises indicates that, indeed, there is not a closed concept for “social enterprise”; furthermore, social value seems to be attached to these organisations’ actions because of a real feeling of change that could be noticed, which moves those ones working with these organisations, no matter if it is a cooperative or a private organization. Moreover, it was noticed that, although the present work aimed diversity while choosing social enterprises to be visited, it has been noticed that the most deprived areas around Liverpool (which, according to Atlas of Indices of Deprivation 2010 for England, would be Northern Liverpool and extreme Southern Liverpool) are naturally given more attention from social enterprises and, this way, concentrate a higher number of these organisations.

Understanding crucial elements of both the British Social Economy sector and the Latin American Solidarity Economy background through literature review as well as through analysing the obtained results from the visits have raised some aspects in order to point out potential learnings between them, so that higher levels of effectiveness in the role of alternative economies in achieving social equality, as well as more concrete social outcomes, can be achieved.

Firstly, some considerations: every geographical location, according to Gallopín (2003), can be defined as a system where economic, political, social, ecological and cultural internal elements are interrelated, which also establish relations to and are affected by external elements as well (especially in a current worldwide context of globalisation, which, according to Friedman (2005), intensifies connections between places across the globe so that economic ties are strengthened). According to this conceptualisation, the deeply different historical contexts lived by the United Kingdom and Latin American countries have resulted in contrasting cultural aspects which characterize differently both places. This way, exchanges become more complex and less simplistic since both contexts are characterized by numerous different variables, even considering that alternative economies were similarly created from social struggles, which exist and have existed in both contexts.

Nevertheless, some may argue that the more intense are the differences, the stronger can be the potential for exchanges and dialogue between these contexts. According to Freire (1987), no one

sets anyone free, as well as no one achieves freedom alone: men and women achieve freedom together, collectively. This would suggest horizontal relations of exchange and dialogue in order to strengthen both social contexts, considering, once again, that social exploitation exists in both contexts and is the main reason for alternative economies to bubble.

Latin American countries, which have, in a general way, been through deep exploitative processes not only during past colonial times, but also as a result from international political and economic interventions until nowadays, have grown a more radical answer towards these strong interventions across time; after all, as it has already been defended in this work, there is a general tendency of people getting together in difficult times, in a fight to become socially represented (MOULAERT; AILENEI, 2005), while it is also argued that the “oppressed” should be the main subject of its own social freedom (KANE, 2001). This is also a fight for a less hierarchized structure and more horizontal relations, since oppressions are a result of hierarchical processes between the oppressor and the oppressed social elements. Also, the greater the gap between rich and poor, the more difficult it becomes to generate solidarity feelings of mutual respect and support (COOTE; ANGEL, 2014), which also states the relation between social hierarchies and solidarity relations.

Considering it all, the ideology behind solidarity economy defends the idea of cooperation over competition as a way to achieve social equality through less hierarchical relations, while people go through empowering processes (SINGER, 2002a).

However, this is a natural process conceived as a result from the specific historical process through which each geographical location has been across time: solidarity economy itself has developed numerous specificities even across different Latin countries, based on events and characteristics of each geographical location, as it has been shown in Section 3.3 of this work. This way, people empowerment and people getting together in order to pressure the State for more representative policies are processes that bubbled more naturally in Latin countries, rather than in the UK, which shows how delicate would be to explore empowerment processes in a British context that, according to Kane (2001), has historically been more dependent on the government and had good welfare conditions (even though the welfare policy has been limited by privatisations supported by Thatcher’s administration in the 80’s (FROST; NORTH, 2013)). These characteristics also justify British methodologies regarding the development of alternative economies, which have arisen as a more market-based structure and less confrontational to public decisions, as it was shown in Section 3.1.4. in the present work.



Considering all of that, to point out possible exchanges between the analysed contexts, which is the main aim of this work, is something to be carefully analysed, and is based on the main similarity between both contexts, which would be the existence of social inequalities. Moreover, British social enterprises and Brazilian cooperatives inserted in the Solidarity Economy logic, which have been studied by this work, have shown themselves as structures with profound differences between them, which compromises even more for exchanges between them to be pointed out. The possible exchanges get to be indicated mainly from organisational, structural and cultural differences between these studied realities in the United Kingdom and Brazil, from characteristics which already exist in one of these realities and face the possibility to be positive for further advances in the other reality.

## **6.1. Learnings from Brazil to the United Kingdom**

### **6.1.1. Different views and understandings towards social problems**

In order to achieve a more representative social structure, some may argue that it could be socially positive for British Social Economy to explore methodologies of articulation filled with stronger anti-capitalist feelings. Although this feeling is part of a Latin characteristic resulted from their own historical processes (and, this way, would not be simply “transferred” into Northern societies), it is manifested in the South through a more integrated view towards social issues, as well as a natural understanding of those aspects as integrated consequences of the capitalist system. Although, generally speaking, it is defended that Latin American approaches towards oppression can be excessively epistemological, and that theoreticians frequently find themselves simply depositing revolutionary knowledge into exploited groups (LARRABURE; VIETA; SCHUGURENSKY, 2011), others may argue that a process of epistemological immersion based on historical economic and social local aspects, as well as international exchange of experiences, could be beneficial especially for British local social actors, in order to bring more intensity, organisation and coherence to the alternative economies movement, as well as higher levels of comprehension about what the actual social problems are consisted on. After all, the entrepreneurial process of coming up with innovative alternatives for tackling social issues only truly arises from establishing a very clear understanding towards these problems (DAVISON; HEAP, 2014), which could be

further explored by social organizations and supported by social enterprises networks and cooperatives networks.

While focusing on Merseyside, this process of collectively achieving higher levels of critiques and social action towards the worrying social scenery could consist on an innovative process to be strategically applied into the already existent social economy context, through supporting a more integrated view of social issues, which would consequently demand more integrated actions in order to tackle social problems: in fact, Davison (2013) also argues that in social planning, linear solutions tend to fail, due to their incompatibility towards the real problem, which is usually not adequately comprehended. According to this logic, social enterprises could act closer from each other and establish stronger connections between them, in order to act together towards social issues. For example: a social enterprise that deals with social housing, instead of planning its actions and projects through focusing exclusively in the housing reality in a city, would also consider the situation of further social variables as employment, education and health (which are actually related), as well as to explore possibilities of acting together with enterprises which work in these social areas, in order to target these issues together, more effectively. One positive aspect related to Liverpool is how connected the social entrepreneurial sector actually is, which is supported by actions from networks as Social Enterprise Network – SEN Together, Social Enterprise North West, and Social Enterprise UK, as presented in Section 3.1.4. Considering this, there is an existent potential for bubbling these slightly different ways of understanding and tackling social issues, which could be supported through organising local Forums for the third sector, which already happen in Latin countries for Solidarity Economy initiatives, and actually work as a part of public policies for Solidarity Economy in Brazil, as it was introduced in Section 3.2.3. The Forums as organisational structures have the potential to associate higher levels of organisation and participation into civil society, and can make the already existing structure of alternative economies more representative and more focused on actual social demands, as well as more integrated in tackling social issues: for example, a Social Enterprises Forum in Liverpool would consist on a space of exchange between social entrepreneurs and civil society, so that social enterprises actions would become more representative.

#### **6.1.2. Public support for alternative economies and citizen's representation in public decisions**

Regarding public support for alternative economies, Latin America, and more specifically Brazil, have developed public policies and public organisations, as SENAES (National Secretariat of Solidarity Economy), in order to support and finance Solidarity Economy initiatives nationally (mainly through projects and local forums), as well as to support the educational process of acceptance towards this alternative economic approach, as it was also presented in Section 3.2.3. These experiences could consist on organisational public structures to be explored by Local Councils and Central Government in the United Kingdom as well, in order to pursuit higher levels of public support to these more equal and democratic ways through which economy can be consolidated.

Although the current British moment of austerity, economic crisis and consequently financial cuts in local budget may inspire negatively British population in demanding public actions of support for population, since, in a way, there is actually no financial resources for further investment in policies, some may argue that a fight for more representative public decisions could also be beneficial, as well as a more representative structure of the public sector itself, so that population would have power of decision over public spending. Experiences held in Brazil, as the Participatory Budget (OP) in Porto Alegre, exemplify how possible can actually be for population to hold power of decision over public spending: in Porto Alegre, OP was achieved, while in a scenery of re-democratization post-military dictatorship, through new social movements in late 80s, as an experimental consultative process supported by the municipal government (WORLD BANK, 2008). The main objective of this policy was to establish ways through which citizens and civil society would be directly involved in different phases of preparation and monitoring of public budget. These practices exemplify higher levels of democracy which can actually be achieved in society through popular organisation and pressuring of public sector, according to the Brazilian experience; Newcastle, in North-East England, has actually also been positively involved with processes and structures for participatory governance (WAINWRIGHT, 2009).

However, these processes confront an important British cultural and political feature: the fact that population hardly ever fights the government, while there is a general process of acceptance, rather than critique, of state withdrawal, as population organises itself on their own, in order to build up alternatives for delivering services rather than pressuring the public sector. Although Liverpool has been through years of militancy and fight against British Central Government in its past, by the 1980's (as stated in Section 3.1.3.), it has been an exception while in

a British politically conservative scenery (even that it has been a difficult moment of economic crisis and extremely high deprivation levels and, this way, this process of confrontation has not been easy, some Liverpoolians still argue nowadays that it would be beneficial for the city to revive the radicalism of these years, so that social outcomes could be achieved (FROST; NORTH, 2013)). There is no right or wrong in this context; indeed, as it was quoted in Section 3.1.4., the public sector currently supports that third sector organisations deliver public services, since it is defended that these organisations have a better understanding of local needs. Moreover, the model of post-war welfare state is told to no longer meet the needs of the population which was originally designed to serve (REED; USSHER, 2013). If strategies are planned according to a Latin American approach, though, it could be said that more participatory structures would be fought for, rather than outsourcing services which are considered rights of a population, considering also the representational role which should be performed by the government. Latin American social movements are related to this idea of people organising themselves and going through empowering processes, in order to achieve higher levels of participation and representation in the public sector. Eder Sader (2001) has studied this phenomenon of new social movements by the end of the 1970's and the beginning of the 1980's, in Brazil, and their role in the fight for democracy, while in a moment of conservative dictatorial government.

### **6.1.3. Legal structures for social enterprises**

Another aspect, regarding social enterprises, would be to consider that there is still no exact definition for this concept, as stated in Section 3.1.4: one's definition for social enterprise could be another's definition for a volunteer or aid worker (HARDING, 2004). This way, even though all these organisations aim to tackle social issues, some enterprises are more dedicated to achieve social value and, this way, easily tend to be "more social" than others, which was also confirmed after the visits to social enterprises in Merseyside. Methodologies to measure social outcomes from third sector organisations could be helpful in this deeper comprehension of the sector, and would support this view through concrete results of some enterprises investing more in social impact than others. There have already been developed methodologies as SROI (Social Return on Investment), which aims to "put a monetary value on social, economic and environmental benefits and costs created by an organisation" (ARVIDSON, 2010); however, it still finds deficiencies since it is not simplistic at all to relate monetary values to many qualitative aspects of an organisation, and, furthermore, there are still high costs behind conducting these SROI assessments. This way,

considering the importance of having social outcomes and better understanding and measuring those as a way to achieve higher levels of social equality, through accessible methodologies to all, there is still, on one hand, a need to reinforce British legal structures which would specifically characterise and regulate social outcomes (as well as methodologies for its measurement and comprehension); in the case of cooperatives, the 8 principles created by International Cooperative Alliance, presented in Section 3.2.2., can be applied to organisations in order to understand whether those legally registered as cooperatives are truly cooperatives according to its rooted definition, while these kind of frauds (institutions legally registered as cooperatives but which do not fit their definition) are very frequent in Brazil according to Singer (2002a) (even that cooperatives in Brazil exist over defined legal structures, as Federal Law 5.764, from 1971). On the other hand, an ideological shift to base this process of attaching social enterprises, cooperatives and further third sector organisations to their social role rather than only exploring a simplistic superficial approach of social outcomes becomes deeply important. This way, it is important to realise that legal definitions and the establishment of principles, although represent an important step toward work regulation, do not achieve social improvements entirely by themselves: without the educational work aiming to spread the conscience over the importance of working for actual social improvements and equality, frauds tend to be frequent, while the work of building a stronger social sector is not actually fulfilled.

#### **6.1.4. Internal equality between members of an organisation**

Also regarding legal structures, and as it has been already defended in this Discussion the relationship between hierarchical organisational structures and social oppressions, it is important to realise the positive role played by cooperatives as legal structures in the United Kingdom, since their work is settled over the idea of equality between all the members in the organisation (differently from social enterprises). Even that there might be failures in its functioning as horizontal and social structures, as it was already presented in this Discussion, it should be recognised as the legal structure which got closer from establishing internal equality; after all, if social equality is aimed, it is natural to build up equality internally from organisations as well.

#### **6.1.5. Educational process of ideological rupture**

Analysing all these aspects of an oppressive global reality, no matter which actions are taken in order to change it, it is of crucial importance that a process of ideological rupture is also

established, if real social changes are aimed. This process, according to Latin popular knowledge, can be concretised through a horizontal educational process based on Popular Education methodologies, which aim to collectively free the socially oppressed individuals from this condition firstly by seeking an understanding of the world: questioning and epistemologically understanding these inequalities, as well as understanding the importance of real democracy in this process, which will support, this way, empirical concrete processes and actions toward the desired and comprehended importance of social equality (FREIRE, 1984). “Popular”, in Portuguese and Spanish, means “of the people”, differently from its meaning in English, and refers to the working class, the unemployed, and sometimes even the lower middle-class (KANE, 2011). The same author believes that education cannot be politically neutral: “if it does not side with the poorest and marginalised sectors – the “oppressed” – in an attempt to transform society, then it necessarily sides with the “oppressors” in maintaining the existing structures of oppression”. Popular education methodologies would work collectively, with individual processes of awareness which would justify the horizontal and truly democratic strengthening of collective forces, aiming to fight social oppressions while there are strong feelings of mutual solidarity established among individuals, reciprocally. This approach could fit not only schools and universities, but also internally to every social organisation, as well as the relations between organisations. Since, as Solidarity Economy, popular education also aims higher levels of social equality through popular empowerment, their principles could positively work together and complement each other.

This way, these popular ideas of spreading questionings for awareness and, through that, naturally strengthening collective unit, which would embrace collective action, would be fundamental to the complex process of supporting an ideological shift from capitalist competitive hierarchical thinking, to popular education and solidarity economy actions and, consequently, social equality and higher levels of social representation. After all,

(...) the more people understand who really gains and who loses from an economic system based on accumulations of wealth and power, how the system generates inequalities and how it is heedless of planetary boundaries, the greater the chance of building solidarity between groups based on shared interests in social justice (...), and on understanding that there is a common challenge or adversary. (COOTE; ANGEL, 2014).

Consequently to this awareness process, is the development of true and deep human feelings of change, which bubbles from the educational horizontal democratic process of questioning and

recognising each one of us as actually oppressed in the current system, who will, this way, get together more organically for social change.

No matter what is proposed in this discussion (to have third sector organisations with clearer views of social demands, to establish organisational and legal structures for more efficiency in actions, among further possibilities), the aim of achieving social change can only be truly fulfilled if every action is moved by true human feelings and desires for change, which can only be achieved through a profound long-term ideological swift. Even though it may seem too idealistic and illusory to believe in the dream of such a social change (considered an utopia by many), Latin American usage of the word “utopia” generally describes a possible future, rather than an unattainable one, differently from its English meaning (KANE, 2011), which could also be related to the reason why alternative economies have arisen in a much more rooted and radical way in these Southern countries (even that these alternatives are still considered fragile).

#### **6.1.6. The importance of an educational process to attract investments for social change**

Going back to Liverpool, even after going through serious periods of crisis for the last decades, the city currently attracts high volumes of investment for businesses to bubble, while in a context of competition between cities across the world (ANDERSON, 2013). Indeed, ever since the nineteenth century, when Liverpool was considered one of the most important European economic centres, it is defended that there was already a “particular spirit of enterprise” in the region, due to the intense networking spirit favoured by the numerous economic activities of commerce and trade that flourished (MCDADE, 2012). This way, this potential for investment could theoretically be positively explored by Social Economy to be developed through social enterprises, in the form of social investment (a relatively new concept to define provision of finance that aims not only financial but also social returns (DAVISON, 2013)). This way, if Solidarity Economy principles are to be applied in order to support the search for a more equal and representative society, the educational process towards an ideological shift would again be important in order to avoid the competitive feeling between cities, and to further support cooperative policies and cooperative guidance for investments. These empowering processes of awareness would also be fundamental to grow investors’ conscience over the social importance of sharing equally the access to social services as housing, education and health, and, this way, attract investments in these fields.

### 6.1.7. The “solidarity” concept applied in Britain

Even that the “solidarity” concept as it has flourished in Brazil seems something which demands long-term ideological processes before its true acceptance in the United Kingdom, recently some steps have already been taken towards embracing the actual importance of this feeling in the British Social Economy reality (even that this concept already exists in Northern countries with a different meaning, more related to philanthropic actions). New Economics Foundation (NEF), which is a British charitable organisation that researches and proposes alternatives for social, economic and environmental justice, have recently released a report in defence of solidarity as a path to achieve a better society for all. According to the authors Coote and Angel (2014), under a British approach, “solidarity” refers to largely informal bonds between people, who promote mutual support. It involves collective action towards a common objective, and depends on collective policy and practice, while this feeling cannot be imposed or enforced, but might be held through leaderships and connections between groups. Differently from the Latin-American conceptualisation, the authors defend that “solidarity” is viewed as not being intrinsically virtuous (groups as the Taliban, for example, are defended by the authors as holding internal solidarity, although do not exist for fighting inequalities or aiming the development of economic alternatives). Also slightly differently from the Latin general approach, the authors relate its concept more strongly to the ecological idea of environmental sustainability and climate change, and establish a stronger relation between “well-being” and “sufficiency of material resources”, as the entire Social Economy sector in Britain in a general way. More similarly to the Latin idea of solidarity, though, would be the defended possible involvement of the state in supporting these more representative economies, through owning and managing resources in agreement to solidarity principles, and supporting more participatory decision-making processes. The Beveridge Plan, for example, published in 1942, which laid the foundations for British post-war welfare state, was also inspired by the idea of people sharing resources and find collectively solutions to risks. Furthermore, the European Union has also supported initiatives of social cohesion, firstly from the 1992 Maastricht treaty, which originated the EU, and further from published Cohesion Reports, as the 1996 version, which stated that “policies which promote solidarity and mutual support are themselves a factor in strengthening the productivity of European society and contributing to economic and social well-being”.



## **6.2. Learnings from the United Kingdom to Brazil**

After these reflections have characterised the different actions towards a common problem of social inequalities in both British and Latin American realities, now these exchanges are explored the other way around, so that the South also recognises what could be positively applied from experiences in the North, in order to strengthen popular representation and effectiveness in the process towards higher levels of social equality. Even that this project has been focused at first in exchanges from Latin America to the United Kingdom, it is natural for possibilities to arise from the studies and interpretation of these different realities, so that possibilities could also be recognised the other way around (after all, the very own concept of “exchange” is about the act of giving something and getting something in return as well, according to Oxford Dictionary, 1989).

### **6.2.1. The localism movement**

One strong aspect from the Social Enterprises movement in England, and especially in Liverpool, is related to the localism movement. According to Clarke (2013), the localism is supported by the current British Coalition government, and is related to a shift of power from the Central Government to Local Authorities, also assisted by public policies as the Localism Act of 2011 (even that, empirically speaking, local action became impaired in numerous British cities by financial cuts to local budget). These are actions of empowerment, since citizens are actually closer to decentralised power; however, Coote and Angel (2014) argue that it is not enough for power to simply be turned to local management, since it could be devolved from national to local elites, and not actually to the people. What would make a difference in representation is for power to become popular, and not only local. The same way, Marta Arretche (1996) also defends that, even though decentralization is related to building up institutions which support popular participation in public decisions and has the power to break with traditional conservative political structures, it is not enough to ensure that decisions taken will be representative, and it depends on the nature of the decentralized institutions.

Although the localism concept is complex and relates itself to political, economic and cultural geographical dimensions of empowering localities (CLARKE, 2013), it is approached by the Social Economy movement especially through supporting social and local commerce, through the “Buy Local, Buy Social” motto, considerably popular among Liverpoolians. The main idea of this movement is to support local producers and ethical consumption, while there is a shift from

consumption in big chains to local shops in order to expand investments in local communities and, consequently, strengthen community local ties (Figure 13 shows a street artistic manifestation for local economy, in Bristol, UK). This movement is supported by third sector organisations, and finds itself strongly sustaining numerous Social Enterprises actions. Further groups, as the Transitions Network, which is now an international movement based on the idea that local action is the answer to a problematic world, was born in the UK, and is responsible for communities getting together and collectively promoting projects which should be socially and ecologically friendly, so that some services are supplied for community. Some examples of projects related to the Transition concept are the London Creative Labs (charitable organisation which aims to address unemployment in disadvantaged communities by creating local jobs), Norwich FarmShare (which grows vegetables and offers them to this social enterprise's members), and Renewable Energy Cooperative (educating communities regarding their responsibility over energy expenditure) (DENTON; WARD, 2013).



Figure 13: Street art for local economy, Bristol, UK (2014)

Furthermore, in diverse British cities, local currencies have been developed as a way to support local economy as well and reinforce local identities and resilience, while it is recognised its power in the re-localisation movement (NORTH, 2010). This experience, even though it is not performed by a social enterprise, also finds initiatives of similar nature in Latin America, through experiences of local currencies, which can be considered in agreement of Latin Solidarity Economy principles. Figure 14 shows a local currency in Bristol, UK ("Bristol pound").



Figure 14: Local currency (“Bristol Pound”),  
Bristol, UK (DENTON; WARD, 2013)

### 6.2.2. Strong networks

Regarding further possible exchanges, the intense connections between British third sector organisations is something that has a concrete impact in organising collective actions and promoting general awareness (these networks are even named “green niches” (NORTH; BARKER, 2011)). One of the main examples of this phenomenon is how popular networks as Twitter have become among organisations, and their actual power in approximating individuals and groups, as well as promoting collective activities. This aspect would be certainly beneficial to sustain networks more strongly in Latin America, and not only there.

### 6.2.3. Governance strategies for low-carbon economy

Furthermore, and regarding the current environmental low-carbon global movement against peak oil and climate change (NORTH; BARKER, 2011), it is noticed that the United Kingdom, and Europe in a general way, are much ahead in this discussion, rather than Latin countries. In Liverpool, the “low carbon economy” is one of the key drivers of local economic strategies, and targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Considering the importance of establishing global networks in these anti-capitalist subjects, as well as the Latin concrete need for commitment with environmental agendas (since it becomes a global reference due to its highly deforested Amazon forest, as well as further highly threatened biomes), there is the importance of maturing these discussions in the South. There should also be considered how this fact is related to the Latin role historically imposed by the North (as well as further developing countries) in providing developed countries with resources and cheaper work force, which had an influence in developing environmental impacts in these locations, as well as a relatively late uprising of environmental concerns. This fact is related to the importance of understanding how differently it actually is to discuss environmental action in the North and in the South, and, this way, how it is not

actually simplistic to apply governance actions related to the environment in Southern countries the same way it currently happens in the North. Environmental agendas could be further explored in the South, but considering all the differences in discussing the environmental situation from the South to the North.

#### **6.2.4. Dialogue between groups**

Moreover, although it has been argued how important actually is to individually and collectively achieve higher levels of critiques against the abuses of the capitalist system, anti-capitalist excessive radicalism frequently compromises the dialogue between organisations and groups, which, consequently, also compromises for important networks and connections to be strengthened. This way, British social enterprises having established proximity not only from further social enterprises, charities and cooperatives, but also from private social businesses, could be a feature to be explored, in order to expand possibilities for dialogue, and achieve union among diversity. However, the scenery of social inequality, which is much more intense and problematic in Brazil, interferes in the expansion of dialogue between diverse groups, and should be considered in the process of establishing proximity between them.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Even that recognising possible exchanges between Solidarity and Social Economies did not show itself so simplistic and elementary due to profound differences in numerous aspects between the British and Brazilian analysed realities, possibilities of exchange could be pointed out after all between them, for citizens, civil society and governments, after the living experience in Liverpool and also going through the literature review. These possibilities were mainly settled over similarities and differences noticed and shown in Table 2, Section 5.2. Through that, possible learnings from Latin American reality which could be positive for British reality would be:

- Explore and demand public policies and government organisational structures in support of Social Economy development;
- Support and organise Social Enterprises Forums and debates;
- Demand more representative and democratic governance structures, as well as more power over public expenditures, rather than general acceptance towards state withdrawal of public services;
- Launch legal structures for social enterprises with more detailed features over their social outcomes;
- Establish less hierarchical structures and relations, internally and externally to organisations, while cooperatives as legal structures could be supported as well;
- Explore more integrated views and understandings towards social problems, and, consequently, more integrated approaches in tackling those more effectively;
- Promote an ideological shift through educational horizontal processes of awareness, so that what has been proposed here can be achieved from true deep human feelings of change.

Furthermore, the other way around, potential learnings from the British to the Latin realities could be consisted on:

- Explore more intensely the localism movement, and bring more collective attention to the “buy local, buy social” motto;
- Explore further connections between groups, have networks more strongly connected;

- Analyse possibilities for governance initiatives to organise environmental agendas and get more strongly involved in the low-carbon global movement, while considering specificities of the environmental situation in the South;
- Analyse possibilities to open groups to dialogue more with each other, while considering difficulties in this process from the social inequalities scenery in Brazil.

It is of deep importance to consider that both contexts of alternative economies are still minority in the geographical locations where they currently show themselves present, and still have a long path ahead in consolidating their principles and actions and finding ways to deal with all the numerous challenges present.

Regarding possibilities of continuity of the present work, it would firstly consist on further academic work on the presented topics about possible exchanges pointed out in this Conclusion, in order to explore ways through which they could actually become realistic (especially on who would be responsible for taking initiatives in concretising these actions).

In addition, since a part of this study consisted on visiting Social Economy organisations around Liverpool, Solidarity Economy organisations in Brazil could be further explored as well, and a more detailed process of comparison to the British organisations analysed in this work could be performed. This way, British experiences which would better fit the Brazilian Solidarity Economy concept could be better recognised (this work could also better explore cooperatives networks in the United Kingdom, as well as projects promoted by the Transition Network, which tend to be more similar to Solidarity Economy initiatives, but could not yet be achieved by this work). The same way, third sector organisations in Brazil could also be further explored, so that experiences more similar to the British social enterprise model would be recognised and, this way, more detailed and specific exchanges and dialogue between these organisations could be further possible. What is more, this contact established between the United Kingdom and Brazil through this work opens opportunities for further exchanges and dialogue between these countries and their realities for possible continuities.

Finally, and considering my own personal empirical experience of living abroad for one year and going through intense processes of noticing and living deep cultural differences (which enabled for this work to be performed), I personally defend that, no matter what is done for a better reality, or where it is done, what truly matters is how things are done: if actions are moved by an organic

and real feeling of change, either in a cooperative or in a private company, with millions of people involved or even individually, that is what seems to have, under my perspective, the potential to truly change our realities and achieve social improvement.

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