

IN MEMORIAM

RUI NAMORADO

Eduardo Graça

Remembering a figure such as Rui Namorado, upon his passing, belongs to the realm of political memory and ideas. We shared the same dream of a fairer and more compassionate society, each in our own way, he more through study, I more through action. Nothing deterred us from our youthful ideals until the end, with successes and deviations, of a fairer society reconciling the individual and the collective. Today more than ever our convictions, and Rui's in particular, show a guiding line that is not exhausted by isolated episodes, having at its centre the idea of the association of people pursuing goals of common interest, today called, in its broadest perimeter, the social economy.

This is the movement, founded on ancestral core values that can be summarised in two words, the common good, assumed by the Catholic Church and secular movements throughout history and which are still alive. From the associations themselves, to *misericórdias* (charitable institutions), co-operatives, mutual societies, communal lands, in their various legal forms and statutes, producing and distributing goods and services, without a profit motive.

António Sérgio was a staunch defender and doctrinaire of associativism, particularly in its co-operative form, and Rui Namorado one of its most notable continuators. What runs through both men's thinking is the call for the free expression of the will of citizens to associate in defence of their own interests and those of local communities, extending this idea to the national community, as a barrier of resistance to the empire of profit, without disdaining capital. Each in their own way, they defended what Sérgio calls "co-operative socialism", in his words "the grateful replacement of the supremacy of the state by the government of the economy by the people themselves or by legitimate representatives of that same people".

Unfortunately, there is little memory of the ideas and political institutions of the 20th century, prior to the *Estado Novo*, which, over the course of 48 years, produced a profound erasure of free thought and its works and institutions. Today, more than ever, in the face of the resurgence of autocracies, there is an urgent need to rekindle knowledge of freethinkers, among whom I recognise Rui Namorado.

To do justice to his work, I wrote, at his invitation, the prologue to his latest book "Social Economy – Uprising of Hope", published in April 2024, which I am reproducing in his honour:

Rui Namorado, a long-time friend, raised my interest in writing a text to accompany his book. There was no excuse, not only because of our friendship, but also because of the interest that unites us on issues of the social economy, its history, present and future. Rui Namorado is a scholar of great merit, with a published work, as well as being the creator of the foundations of the modern Portuguese social economy. I am very honoured by his invitation, as a modest manager of public affairs, to add my contribution to this "Social Economy - an uprising of hope".

Without further ado, I would like to emphasise the approach taken in these pages to the historical path that led to the resurgence of the social economy in our country in its current legal, institutional and operational form. First of all, the social economy was enshrined in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (CPR) after 25 April 1974, under the designation of "co-operative sector", as well as the processes of revision of the CPR, described with rigour with regard to this sector (a precious description) and which culminated in the designation of "co-operative and social sector", followed in 2013 by the unanimous approval by the Portuguese Parliament of the Basic Law on the Social Economy.

The author devotes a great deal of space to reflecting on the "social economy as a galaxy" which, whether going through periods of crisis or boom, of robust growth, stabilisation or withering away of some of its "families", has never ceased to be, and will be, in Portugal and around the world, without delimiting borders between its members, an ancient and leafy tree in which, without prejudice to the inevitable deviations, its co-operators see themselves in the principles of free associativism, a historical achievement that we must defend and preserve.

The remarkable progress made, particularly since 2009, through the implementation of legal, institutional, as well as operational reforms is highlighted, leading to what, in one sentence, sums up an entire strategic programme: "the process of converting a social economy in itself into a social economy for itself". We both benefited from a combination of circumstances that allowed us to take part in this process.

Along this path, I would like to highlight, in agreement with the author, the creation of four institutions that are the cornerstones of the social economy's recognition for itself. The António Sérgio Co-operative for the Social Economy

(CASES) - a public interest co-operative, created in 2009/2010 by the extinction of INSCOOP; the National Council for the Social Economy (CNES), created in 2010; the Portuguese Confederation for the Social Economy (CPES), established in 2018 and the Centre for the Economy and Social Innovation (CEIS), established in 2022. Each of these four institutions, although at various stages of maturation, has a solid legal framework, along with leadership structures that augur a new era for the Portuguese social economy.

Despite the constitutional, legal and institutional consecration of the social economy, its economic and social weight and its role in development and social cohesion, we are witness to the persistence of its invisibility and subalternity, which stems from the "insertion of the social economy in a socio-economic context where capitalist logic predominates". How can we face up to this subalternity? Resistance is the word taken up with courage. "A resistance that is rooted in emancipatory ethics, in egalitarian and democratic politics, in a humanist culture. A resistance that is nourished by a network of organisations and practices, in solidarity and cooperation with each other, animated by a logic that is different from the dominant one."

In fact, the social economy is a reality with a strong tradition, deeply rooted in communities and territories. It is enough to know, for example, a little about the history of the *Portuguese Misericórdias*, created in the 15th century, the *Caixas de Crédito Agrícola Mútuo* (Mutual Agricultural Credit Banks), created over a hundred years ago on the free initiative of citizens, their persistence, resistance to adversity, as well as ability to adapt to the challenges of various and diverse historical times to augur an emancipatory future, honouring their tradition.

This is a multifaceted and complex socio-economic and cultural reality founded on an esteemed and, in many ways, exciting tradition, heir to pioneering initiatives in man's struggle to achieve his fulfilment with dignity at work, full integration into society, creating networks of proximity, rooted in the promotion of local and regional development processes, almost always taking as the central criterion of their actions the fulfilment of man in the physical space of his working and entrepreneurial life.

We know from our own and others' experience at national and international level that the social economy and its representative organisations have enormous potential to contribute to the development of the economy, creating jobs and promoting social cohesion and responsibility, based on their principles, tradition and

roots in society. The Portuguese "Conta Satélite da Economia Social" (Social Economy Satellite Account), analysed by the author, is a unique instrument on the European and world stage, and expresses this reality in an expressive way.

The Social Economy is an economic/social conglomerate that in the EU contributes to more than 7.5% of total paid employment (5.9% in Portugal, 2020) showing that, in the case of Portugal, this indicator indicates a very high margin for growth. As I approach the subject of the Social Economy's contribution to development, here are a few key words that come to mind when I read this book and reflect on the role of this sector in the future and its comparative advantages over the public and private sectors of the means of production.

Network – The Social Economy is a network, woven of a thousand interlocking links, through people who organise themselves, with or without public support, to face and overcome situations of relative or absolute need, finding ways out and solutions, overcoming obstacles and problems in individual, family or community life.

Community – the Social Economy is embedded in local and regional communities, blending in with their physical and human geography. It is close to its citizens, more flexible in its actions than decentralised public sector organisations and, paradoxically, than many private companies, acting, in fidelity to its founding principles, in a free and disinterested manner.

Cooperation and Solidarity - the bulwark words that encapsulate the core values and key principles that guide the Social Economy and which, sooner or later, will be effectively incorporated into the emerging model of economic and social organisation, of which we can see more and more signs, which means that the work to promote Social Economy organisations, whatever their legal nature, is fully capable of bearing fruit, contributing to the construction of a fairer and more fraternal society in the future.

It is undeniable that throughout the world, and in the European area that interests us most, notable progress has been made in economic and social development, in the fight against poverty, inequality and for social inclusion. In recent years, governments, supranational organisations and civil society have made efforts to put the phenomena of poverty and inequality on the political agenda.

The systematic increase in inequalities between social groups within the same country and between the populations of different countries, in other words, the

massive increase in poverty in a relative sense, tends not only to undermine social cohesion - and in this way jeopardises democracy - but also has a negative impact on the economy with the progressive corrosion of "social capital", in other words, that set of relationships of trust, credibility and respect for the rules that are indispensable in any civil coexistence.

Alongside profit-oriented private enterprise and the various types of public enterprise, it must be possible for productive organisations pursuing mutual and social ends to take root and express themselves. From their reciprocal confrontation on the market, we can expect a kind of hybridisation of business behaviour and, consequently, a sensitive attention to the civilisation of the economy. This is a sensitive and emerging issue that is being debated around the question of social enterprise.

Therefore, the future model for the economic and social organisation of our societies, not allowing ourselves to be captured by short-term events and their sometimes painful consequences for the lives of families and organisations, will inevitably incorporate the principles and values that are the hallmark of the social economy in a new, more expressive and powerful way, in the interests of sustainable development, and which can be summed up in two words: cooperation and solidarity.

I don't believe in the inevitability of poverty or the endurance of wealth. All worlds intersect, either by accentuating the factors of exclusion, extremising the fields in which their heralds huddle, or by bringing them closer together when, through the action of nature or of man, the poor and the rich find themselves facing up to the dramas of the human condition.

We are only truly authentic when we are able to collectively reflect on the new paths, the new opportunities that open up before our eyes in every age. We will then be able, in the midst of differences and inequalities, to discover the virtues of certain concepts that ensure the hope of success in the fight against the injustices that hide behind poverty.

Not because we believe in a world without differences, and in equality as the ideal that leads to happiness, because historical experience has disillusioned us about the absolute goodness of this path. But because we truly believe that it is possible to fight realistically for equal opportunities, for ethics in the management of institutions, in freedom and with responsibility.

What touches me most about this book, as I share its core ideas, is the reaffirmation of the conviction that our era, which is the bearer of a deep crisis in the capitalist economic and financial system and has brutally revealed a crisis of conscience and values, is also a time of new hopes and opportunities that the social economy well personifies. Thank you, Rui, for persisting in thinking about the social economy with the depth and elegance that always accompanies you.