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Peasant and Indigenous Cooperatives: Perspectives on a Social Responsibility Model Rooted in Traditional Knowledge

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RESUMEN

Las cooperativas, enmarcadas en la responsabilidad social, promueven la unión social y el fortalecimiento de los vínculos comunitarios, buscando impactar tanto a sus miembros como a las comunidades en las que operan. Este enfoque socialmente responsable genera un profundo sentido de pertenencia y solidaridad entre los miembros, a la vez que impacta en las comunidades. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo explorar las conexiones entre las cooperativas campesinas e indígenas, la esencia del cooperativismo y la responsabilidad social. Se emplea una metodología de análisis documental de la información, adoptando un enfoque deductivo a partir de la categorización de diversos aspectos del cooperativismo y la responsabilidad social. De esta manera, se facilitó la clasificación de las bases teóricas que sustentan las diversas posturas sobre el enfoque socialmente responsable en el ámbito cooperativo, con especial énfasis en las cooperativas indígenas y campesinas. Dentro de los resultados se presentan algunos elementos de debate sobre la esencia del cooperativismo campesino e indígena a partir de un análisis reflexivo, destacando sus características distintivas y su papel como modelo de éxito replicable en otros contextos. Como aporte al estado de la cuestión, se pretende ofrecer una visión integral del cooperativismo campesino e indígena en un contexto de responsabilidad social, destacando su relevancia como modelo de desarrollo sostenible e inclusivo, con el potencial de generar valor compartido entre todos los grupos de interés.

Palabras clave: cooperativas indígenas; cooperativas campesinas; responsabilidad social; cooperativismo; grupos de interés

ABSTRACT

Cooperatives, framed within the scope of social responsibility, promote social cohesion and the strengthening of community ties, seeking to impact both their members and the communities in which they operate. This socially responsible approach generates a deep sense of belonging and solidarity among members, while also impacting communities. This article aims to explore the connections between indigenous and peasant cooperatives, the essence of cooperativism, and social responsibility. A methodology of documentary analysis of information is employed, adopting a deductive approach based on the categorization of various aspects of cooperativism and social responsibility. In this way, it was possible to classify the theoretical bases that support the different positions on the socially responsible approach in the cooperative field, with special emphasis on indigenous and peasant cooperatives. Among the results, some elements of debate on the essence of indigenous and peasant cooperativism are presented based on a reflective analysis, highlighting their distinctive characteristics and their role as a successful model replicable in other contexts. As a contribution to the state of the art, it is intended to offer a comprehensive vision of indigenous and peasant cooperativism in a context of social responsibility, highlighting its relevance as a model of sustainable and inclusive development, with the potential to generate shared value among all stakeholders.

Keywords: indigenous cooperatives; peasant cooperatives; social responsibility; cooperativism; stakeholders.

Introduction



Submissão: 10/02/2025



Aceite: 12/03/2025



Publicação: 05/06/2025



Peasant and Indigenous cooperatives represent a reflection of cooperativism and social responsibility in its purest form. Despite their differences and adaptations compared to modern cooperatives, these associative expressions have become engines of change for the regional and local economic development of communities located in rural or hard-to-reach areas (Nefale, 2016).

Framed within cooperative social responsibility, these cooperatives foster social cohesion and the strengthening of community ties, while also aiming to positively impact their members and their communities (Vargas Chaves, 2023; Vargas-Chaves et al., 2020). This socially responsible approach to cooperativism generates a deep sense of belonging and solidarity among members, creating a network of mutual support that enriches both their personal and professional lives, positively affecting all stakeholders—which is, ultimately, the core purpose of social responsibility (Bortoleto & Rogerio de Moura Costa, 2012).

This article is the result of the author's research as a professor at the Nueva Granada Military University, aims to explore the convergences between peasant and indigenous cooperatives, the essence of cooperativism, and social responsibility. It emphasizes social cohesion, community strengthening, and the equitable distribution of benefits within these cooperatives as part of their socially responsible actions.

To achieve this objective, a document-based information analysis methodology was employed, adopting a deductive approach based on the categorization of various aspects of cooperativism and social responsibility. This approach made it possible to address and compare different perspectives, synthesizing key findings. In this way, the theoretical foundations that support the various stances on the socially responsible approach in the cooperative field were classified, with special emphasis on indigenous and peasant cooperatives.

As results, the article presents key elements for debate regarding the essence of peasant and indigenous cooperativism through a reflective analysis, highlighting its distinctive characteristics and its role as a replicable success model in other contexts. It also discusses the importance of simplified processes for the formalization of peasant and indigenous cooperatives under current Colombian legislation, emphasizing the opportunity this represents for their integration into the market as legal entities under equal conditions.

Ultimately, this work seeks to offer a comprehensive view of peasant and indigenous cooperativism in the context of social responsibility, highlighting its relevance as a model for sustainable and inclusive development, with the potential to generate shared value among all stakeholders.

Materials and methods

In order to thoroughly understand the intersection between cooperativism and corporate social responsibility (CSR), a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology was employed, following the approach of Humanante-Ramos et al. (2017). This methodology, framed within documentary analysis, was based on the search for and collection of specialized information and formal literature on the subject.

The search was conducted in books, sustainability reports, management reports, and articles from journals indexed in SJR and JCR. Descriptors and keywords were used in both Spanish and English, such as "responsabilidad AND social", "cooperativas AND campesinas", "cooperativas AND indígenas", "stakeholders", and "cooperativismo", among others.

From this exhaustive search, ninety (90) bibliographic references were identified, serving as a basis for the extraction of new citations and sources. This process, carried out in reverse chronological order, allowed the identification of information sources directly related to the topics of interest, which in turn contributed to validating the findings and supporting the research results.

Using a deductive approach, the study began with general premises about business responsibility within the cooperative sector to reach specific conclusions focused on peasant and indigenous communities. This



approach enabled the tackling of major debates in the field, offering an analytical synthesis of various arguments and perspectives.

The critical and reflective analysis of the collected information, along with the identification of categories related to cooperativism, enabled a comparison of perspectives and synthesis of findings. This allowed for the classification of theoretical viewpoints that support the different positions on the socially responsible approach in the cooperative sector, with a particular emphasis on indigenous and peasant cooperatives.

Discussion of the state of the art

Cooperativism: its essence and values

Cooperatives are distinguished from traditional companies by their ownership and management structure. Instead of being owned by a small group of shareholders or investors, cooperatives are owned by their own members, who are also responsible for their governance and administration (Martínez Charterina, 2015). Furthermore, regardless of whether they are customers, employees, or community residents, all cooperative members have equal voting rights in decisions affecting the organization's operations and the equitable distribution of generated benefits (Bortoleto & Rogerio de Moura Costa, 2012).

This vision corresponds to the modern cooperative movement, whose origins date back to the mid-19th century when a group of textile workers in the United Kingdom, who had lost their jobs after a strike, created their own enterprise: the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. This initiative marked a milestone in the history of cooperativism.

Guided by a deep sense of solidarity and an innovative vision, these individuals—known as the Rochdale Pioneers—established a series of rules that would govern the operation of their cooperative. These rules laid the foundation for the cooperative principles and ideological bases that still guide the movement globally today, offering an alternative to a dominant economic system based on competition, individualism, and constant profit-seeking. In contrast, cooperativism proposes a model where collaboration and collective well-being are core values (Giovannini & Monroy, 2016).

This essence, which guides associative models that provide alternatives to the traditional economic system worldwide, has contributed to major achievements such as financial inclusion for low-income individuals, improved quality of life and income for historically marginalized populations, and—as noted by authors like Vargas Prieto & Rojas Mora (2022) and Nefale (2016)—the promotion of social and economic development, particularly in vulnerable sectors such as peasant and indigenous communities.

Cooperativism fosters the economic empowerment of its members—regardless of their background or contributions—offering opportunities to generate income, create jobs, and develop entrepreneurial skills (Gadea Soler & Atxabal Rada, 2015). In addition to helping reduce poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, it also promotes sustainable development by encouraging environmentally and socially responsible practices in resource management and the production of goods and services (Bustamante Salazar, 2009; Coraggio, 2011).

At its core, cooperativism promotes associative models that act as agents of social cohesion, strengthening communities and fostering collaboration among members. This generates a sense of shared identity, encourages participation, and contributes to the well-being of entire communities (Álvarez & Serrano Uribe, 2006; Ratner, 2009; Elizondo-Saltos, 2023).

Today, much like the Rochdale Pioneers, cooperative members adhere to ethical values such as honesty, openness, social responsibility, and respect for others. According to Villalba Giménez (2016), these values and principles have been essential to the effective functioning of these associations, and are enshrined by the



International Cooperative Alliance—a non-governmental organization founded to unite, represent, and serve cooperatives around the world.

In 1995, the Alliance promulgated the Statement on the Cooperative Identity, outlining a set of principles that reflect the essence of cooperativism. These principles include democratic and economic member control, voluntary and open membership, investment in education and training, solidarity, autonomy, inter-cooperative collaboration, and social responsibility as an expression of concern for others—leading cooperatives to act in socially and environmentally responsible ways (Wright, 2014).

Seven years after its adoption, the Statement on the Cooperative Identity reached a major milestone: its full incorporation into the ILO Recommendation 193 (2002) concerning the promotion of cooperatives. This marked a turning point in the global recognition of cooperativism, granting these principles significant weight in international arenas and opening new opportunities for promoting and strengthening the cooperative movement worldwide (Bonet Pérez & Olestí Rayo, 2010). It was also the first time that international cooperative standards were included in detail within an official document from a United Nations system organization.

Indigenous and peasant cooperatives

The term “indigenous” carries a broad range of meanings and connotations, depending on the context in which it is used. In its original sense, the word “indigenous” comes from the Latin “*indi-gena*,” composed of two roots: “*indu-*” (within) and “*genus*” (born). This etymology reflects the idea of an individual or group originating from a specific place, that is, born and having lived there since ancestral times. This contrasts with the misinterpretation arising from the Spanish conquest, where native Americans were erroneously labeled as coming from India: “Indians.”

In its broader sense, the term “indigenous” applies to any population native to a specific territory, potentially encompassing diverse ethnic groups—regardless of their cultural or linguistic characteristics—who maintain a deep historical and ancestral connection with the land they inhabit. However, the most common and widely used connotation refers specifically to ethnic groups that preserve and maintain their traditional cultures.

Indigenous peoples are characterized by their unique worldview, traditions, language, and social organization—distinct from the dominant structures and values of mainstream society. In this regard, indigenous identity is built upon a cultural heritage passed down from ancestors, along with the transmission of knowledge and practices across generations.

In the context of this paper, indigenous cooperatives are intrinsically linked to indigenous communities—a polysemic concept that encompasses social, economic, cultural, and even political and governance dimensions, especially in terms of collective decision-making. Indeed, indigenous peoples typically possess their own social and political organization structures, grounded in principles of autonomy, cooperation, reciprocity, care for one another, and the pursuit of the common good.

These structures stand in contrast to other associative or business models that are characterized by centralized decision-making, hierarchical structures, and benefit distribution favoring shareholders. Thus, scholars such as García (1970), Montoya (1996), and Giovannini & Monroy (2016) highlight the indigenous capacity for cooperation, which has allowed them to preserve their identity, values, and worldview in the face of imposed external ideologies and practices.

Through associative models grounded in cooperativism, indigenous communities aim to maintain their autonomy and self-determination—meaning the ability to make joint or democratic decisions, where the collective interest prevails over individual concerns—developing their own life plans (Vargas-Chaves, 2023).



In this context, Coral Guerrero (2018) emphasizes that, just as indigenous communities—recognized as holders of collective rights—have full legal capacity to acquire rights and incur obligations of all kinds, so do cooperative models developed by these communities.

In practice, this means that an indigenous cooperative can act as a legal entity, enter into contracts, and manage its own resources. The legal recognition of both indigenous communities and their cooperatives has been essential for safeguarding their rights and strengthening their autonomy (Sengupta, 2015).

Since Law 79 of 1988, which standardized cooperative legislation in Colombia, it has been established that in recognizing cooperatives as legal entities, the National Administrative Department of Cooperatives would play a central role in training indigenous and agricultural sectors in solidarity-based economics, facilitating their formalization with their own legal status (Law 79 of 1988, Art. 15, §1).

Moreover, Article 19 of this law recognizes the autonomy of indigenous cooperatives through their statutes, which must be adapted to the socioeconomic realities, cultural specificities, and worldviews of the communities forming such cooperatives (Law 79 of 1988, Art. 19).

This provision aligns with ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989), which sets guiding principles for protecting the customs and institutions of these peoples, emphasizing the integration of indigenous customary laws and traditions with national legislation. Accordingly, the legal recognition of indigenous cooperatives is based on the right of indigenous peoples to preserve their own social practices and structures.

In the same vein, the work of Tjaden-Steinhauer & Tjaden (1995) provides valuable insight into the various forms of cooperation that have characterized the traditions of Latin American indigenous peoples. Their analysis shows how these cooperative practices have coexisted and interwoven with models introduced since the conquest, giving rise to a rich mosaic of social and economic practices rooted in cooperation, solidarity, and the collective good.

Examples include the "milpa" system developed by the Maya culture, which involved rotating communal plots to ensure sustainable and equitable land access. The "calpulli" was a social and economic unit among the Aztecs that organized collective work for public infrastructure, agriculture, and resource distribution. Among the Incas, the "ayllu" was an extended family unit that shared land, herds, and responsibilities, fostering solidarity and cooperation (Tjaden-Steinhauer & Tjaden, 1995).

In the case of peasants, whose roots date back centuries to pre-Columbian times, it is noteworthy that their associative models share core values and principles with indigenous cooperativism. Indeed, peasants continued the legacy of their indigenous ancestors and, in 2024, were recognized as a protected group by the Legislative Act 001 passed by the Congress of the Republic of Colombia.

Peasant organizations engaged in agriculture, crafts, or other sources of livelihood aim primarily to strengthen group cohesion and unity, fostering a collective identity and working together to achieve common goals. This unifying role helps preserve peasant identity and promotes the common good.

As with indigenous associative models, peasant cooperatives do not prioritize economic growth as an end in itself (Vargas-Chaves et al., 2020). Their primary aim is to meet the basic needs of their members and promote *buen vivir* (good living)—a concept that goes beyond economic development by emphasizing harmonious relationships with nature and the strengthening of community values (Ortmann & King, 2007).

Moreover, just as indigenous communities respect their relationship with the environment—or "Pachamama"—peasant communities function through the responsible use of available resources, including natural, human, cultural, and technical assets (Kamenov, 2020). This sustainable management ensures the preservation of the environment and the proper use of resources for the benefit of current and future generations (Sengupta, 2015).



Like indigenous peoples, peasant communities value and safeguard the cultural traditions that shape their identity. These traditions are not seen as barriers to development, but as fundamental sources of wisdom, values, and ancestral practices.

Regarding decision-making, both indigenous and peasant associations tend toward participatory approaches, actively involving all community members in setting goals, strategies, and actions. According to Ortmann & King (2007), this participatory model strengthens a sense of belonging, empowers individuals, and ensures that decisions reflect the community's actual needs and aspirations.

In sum, the values held by peasant and indigenous communities—within their cooperative models—share multiple points of convergence. These communities also face challenges in the context of market economies and globalization—for example, the market value of their products when competing with companies using advanced technologies, or cultural erosion caused by contact with different cultures and value systems. For this reason, it is essential not to lose sight of policies aimed at strengthening the capacities of these cooperatives, so they can face these challenges without losing their core essence, values, and beliefs.

Formalization of indigenous and peasant cooperatives in Colombia

As previously mentioned, since Law 79 of 1988, cooperativism in the indigenous context has been a priority within the regulatory framework for the social economy in Colombia. With Law 100 of 1993, which organized the healthcare system, the role of organizations from the social and solidarity sector was formally recognized as providers of health services in indigenous communities. According to Article 181, this enabled the creation of associative models driven by the communities themselves to provide healthcare in line with their traditional practices and worldviews (Pardo Martínez & Huertas de Mora, 2014).

Regarding peasant cooperatives, although their recognition arises from the freedom of association provided in Law 79 of 1988, it was Law 160 of 1994 that further promoted this associative model for peasants within the framework of agrarian reform. The law stipulated that lands acquired by the state should be allocated for the establishment of family-based agro-food units and community associations in the cooperative sector.

Returning to indigenous cooperatives, Decree 0427 of 1996, in accordance with Decree 2150 of 1995, definitively laid the foundations for formalizing these cooperatives by including, in its second article, their registration as legal entities with the chambers of commerce. Thus, mutual associations as well as corporations, associations, or foundations created by and for indigenous communities would henceforth be recognized as nonprofit legal entities, respecting the essence of these associative models.

A final milestone in the formalization process can be found in the 2003–2006 National Development Plan entitled *Towards a Community State*, which stipulated the State's obligation to seek consultation mechanisms and guarantee free, prior, and informed consent with indigenous peoples—not only to improve their living conditions, but also to enable their effective integration into the financial and productive credit system (Law 812 of 2003).

Thus, while peasant cooperatives were formalized and regulated under the same legal framework that governs the entire cooperative sector in Colombia, indigenous cooperatives were granted a specific legal framework tailored to their worldview and life plans.

However, in both cases—indigenous and peasant cooperatives alike—they are governed by the principles established in Decree 4588 of 2006, which is the normative reference for associative labor cooperatives. This decree defines the nature of cooperatives and sets out minimum guidelines for their organization and functioning (Vargas Prieto & Sánchez Álvarez, 2020).

In practice, the process of establishing a cooperative in Colombia is a necessary step for the formalization and legitimacy of these organizations. The minimum legal requirements for both peasant and indigenous



cooperatives are the same and include holding a founding assembly, registering with the Chamber of Commerce, and undergoing a legality review by the Superintendency of the Solidarity Economy. This process is intended to ensure transparency, good governance, and compliance with basic operational standards applicable to such entities.

The bylaws define how the cooperative functions, including its social purpose, organizational structure, rights and obligations of members, decision-making mechanisms, and the distribution of surpluses. Meanwhile, the administrative and oversight bodies are responsible for the management and control of the cooperative, and the legal representative acts on its behalf in various legal and administrative matters. However, it must be noted that indigenous cooperatives have substantial differences in this regard, as their right to self-determination, autonomy, and decision-making in accordance with their beliefs and values prevails above all.

In any case, beyond their formal nature, the ease with which cooperatives can be constituted today also represents an opportunity to promote an associative model where solidarity, democratic participation, and responsible management are key pillars for achieving common social well-being and an economic development based on collaborative work and shared distribution.

Social responsibility and cooperativism

Social responsibility is not merely a complement or an add-on to the cooperative value system; rather, it stands as a fundamental principle that guides the activities and actions of these organizations. At the heart of cooperativism lies a deep commitment to solidarity, which manifests as the distinguishing feature that permeates every aspect of its operations (Bortoleto & Rogério de Moura Costa, 2012).

Unlike traditional companies, whose primary goal is profit maximization, cooperatives seek to go beyond this focus by generating a positive impact on society (Sánchez Álvarez, 2018). Their *raison d'être* lies in the well-being of their members, workers, and the communities with which they interact. Furthermore, the cooperative philosophy has laid the foundation for an alternative economic model based on values such as equity, transparency, and solidarity—pillars of any genuine social responsibility policy (Nagore, 2001).

In a context where businesses seek to add value to their products or services through social responsibility initiatives, cooperatives stand out for integrating this concept as an inherent part of their purpose and organizational ethics. Moreover, we align with what Ruostesaari & Troberg (2016) have proposed: that responsibility is neither a marketing strategy nor an external obligation, but rather a component of their very DNA, shaping their identity and their way of interacting with the world.

Not surprisingly, as with cooperatives in essence, organizations that adopt social responsibility as a guiding principle foster the creation of shared value. Thus, while cooperatives return profits to their members and positively impact communities, social responsibility promotes investment in communities, the environment, or the improvement of stakeholders' living conditions—all while generating wealth for their members or shareholders.

In the cooperative realm, responsibility translates into actions that contribute to the well-being and progress of the localities where these associations operate. These actions may include the promotion of culture, professional training, access to quality public services, the development of sports and recreational programs, the implementation of food security initiatives, or the incorporation of technologies that benefit the community. The strong social conviction embedded in cooperatives' DNA makes them agents of positive change, capable of generating a transformative impact in communities.

Unlike philanthropy or charity, *cooperative social responsibility* is not about giving something in return for nothing; rather, it involves maintaining a genuine and ongoing commitment to social and environmental



development—one that stems from the very identity and values of cooperatives. This commitment materializes in concrete actions that have a positive impact on communities, just as cooperativism itself encourages (Allen et al., 2023).

Previously, we discussed the principles proposed by the Rochdale Pioneers on cooperativism, which were adopted in 1995 by the International Cooperative Alliance. Among these principles is social responsibility, understood as part of the concern for “the other.”

In this context, it is important to clarify that, in the very DNA of cooperatives, the pursuit of the common interest has always served as a guiding principle. This means taking into account all stakeholders, while also benefiting members within the associative model. In this way, social responsibility becomes a foundation of the cooperative essence, distinguishing it from other economic models and positioning it as a viable alternative for comprehensive human development.

Discussion: Cooperative social responsibility and its DNA in indigenous and peasant cooperatives

In the case of cooperative associative models within indigenous and peasant communities, it is essential to emphasize that they represent an alternative vision of social and economic organization—one that prioritizes social cohesion, integral well-being, environmental sustainability, respect for cultural traditions, and community participation. This positions these cooperatives as exemplary models of socially responsible cooperativism.

In today’s context, marked by the dominance of a global economic model, indigenous and rural cooperation systems have become a stronghold of resilience and development for these communities. Indigenous and peasant cooperatives have emerged as a response to the need to mitigate the negative impacts of globalization in their territories (Vargas-Chaves et al., 2020).

When we add to this the fact that these forms of social organization are rooted in traditional values—such as solidarity, reciprocity, and communal labor, ingrained in the way of life of peasants and Indigenous peoples—the cooperative model in these communities becomes a successful case of social responsibility aimed at generating shared value. That is, a win-win scenario: the community benefits from the cooperative’s impact, and the cooperative’s members see improved incomes and living conditions.

Indeed, social responsibility is not a static or immutable concept; it is in constant evolution, adapting to the needs and challenges of the environment. This dynamism reflects the potential to conceive socially and environmentally responsible models within the framework of free enterprise. In the case of cooperativism—and of indigenous and peasant cooperatives—member participation and the pursuit of the common good are essential elements.

One frequently cited success story in Latin America, illustrating the integration of social responsibility and cooperativism as a shared vision within Indigenous peoples, emerged in the 1970s in the San Roque neighborhood of Quito, Ecuador. There, a social organization model took shape that exemplifies the successful transition from a popular economy to a solidarity economy: the urban Indigenous cooperatives (Morillo Palacio et al., 2022).

This process, led by urban Indigenous migrants who arrived in Ecuador’s capital, began with family or individual ventures that eventually evolved into financial cooperatives, credit unions, and housing cooperatives. In the study titled *Indigenous Cooperatives: Between the Rights to Autonomy and Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples and Their Life Plans* (Vargas-Chaves, 2023), this case is referenced, highlighting the success of the model based on two factors.

First, the solidarity-based relationships: Indigenous residents reproduced in the urban setting the solidarity they had cultivated in their original communities (Stracke & Girardello, 2023). These relationships of mutual



support and collaboration served as the foundation for creating and strengthening cooperatives that aimed not only to create value for their members, but for the entire community (Jaramillo Carvajal & Jácome Calvache, 2019).

Second, as a strategy to overcome exclusion from the traditional financial system, where limited job opportunities hindered access to housing. This led the community to promote alternative solutions rooted in a strong sense of community belonging and socially responsible action. Their statutes and operational regulations included transparent governance, accountability, and ethical decision-making systems—core values of both corporate and cooperative social responsibility (Medina Ortega et al., 2021).

The experience of the urban Indigenous cooperatives in Quito shows that community practices based on principles such as solidarity, transparency, cooperation, ethics, and the pursuit of collective well-being can form the basis for building viable and successful alternative models (Jaramillo Carvajal, 2017). Without a doubt, these models, grounded in Indigenous and peasant culture and values, can offer a real alternative.

Another success case worth highlighting is the Fundación San Isidro Cooperative in Colombia, which has made the empowerment of peasant women and their involvement in rural public policy development two of its cornerstones. Recognizing the crucial role of women in agriculture, the cooperative has implemented initiatives to strengthen their skills, knowledge, and leadership opportunities.

Additionally, the cooperative has expanded its work into the public sphere, seeking to influence this stakeholder group's participation in political dialogues at various levels, including the Intersectoral Roundtable on the Care Economy (Villamizar Niño, 2008). As a result, the cooperative has influenced policies that directly affect rural women's lives, ensuring their inclusion in decision-making processes related to caregiving work and other critical issues (Castaño Reyes & Parrado Barbosa, 2016).

From the perspective of cooperative social responsibility, the success of Fundación San Isidro can be measured through its collaborative alliances with other stakeholders and shareholders. The cooperative has entered into agreements with various actors such as Oxfam, the Mayor's Office of Bogotá, and institutions of higher education. In this regard, the cooperative has led numerous initiatives that have transformed the lives of its members and the wider community.

These initiatives include an adaptive crop intervention using agroecological techniques in the municipality of Susacón; the implementation of sustainable agroforestry systems in the páramos (high-altitude ecosystems) of La Rusia, Chontales, Verdegales, and the High Andean Forest, promoting biodiversity conservation and environmental protection; and the creation and strengthening of organic producer networks in partnership with Bogotá's District Department of Economic Development (Mayor's Office of Bogotá, Agreement 159 of 2009).

In sum, initiatives such as those of the Fundación San Isidro Cooperative or the Indigenous cooperatives in Quito's San Roque neighborhood have not only transformed the lives of their members, but also impacted their communities, while implementing sustainable practices in both economic and environmental terms—leaving a legacy that demonstrates that social responsibility and cooperativism are not only possible, but can serve as engines of economic progress.

Conclusions

Peasant and Indigenous cooperatives, despite their differences and adaptations, represent a living expression of cooperativism and social responsibility in its purest form. Moreover, these associative models serve as drivers of change for regional and local development. Indeed, by preserving the fundamental values of cooperativism—adapted to the worldview, needs, and expectations of these populations—they embody a successful model that can be replicated in countries where local communities face the challenges of globalization and the global economic system.



These cooperatives, which are also a reflection of cooperative social responsibility, foster social cohesion and the strengthening of community bonds. This is evident in how, by working together toward a common goal, the members of these associations develop a sense of belonging and solidarity, creating a mutual support network that enriches both their personal and professional lives, while also positively impacting all stakeholder groups.

Furthermore, beyond their differences, peasant and Indigenous cooperatives and modern cooperativism converge on fundamental principles that sustain their existence and operation. Thus, one observes a move away from individual ownership, giving way to a collective distribution of the benefits generated by economic activity. This enables greater equity and social justice, ensuring that the fruits of labor are shared among all members of the community.

As for Indigenous cooperatives specifically, while they share basic principles with their modern counterparts and with peasant cooperatives, they are distinguished by being guided by their inherent right to self-determination and autonomy. Their decision-making processes are deeply rooted in their worldview and cultural values, which ensures the preservation of their unique identity and traditions.

A notable success story can be found in the Indigenous cooperatives of the San Roque neighborhood in the city of Quito. It is worth highlighting how the integration of social responsibility into the DNA of their statutes and operational regulations has positioned them as regional benchmarks. From transparent governance to accountability measures and an ethical decision-making system respectful of the principle of legality, socially responsible values are embodied in a model that, at first glance, might be seen as rudimentary or atypical, but in reality represents a true example of the essence of cooperativism and social responsibility.

Finally, without drawing a strict distinction between peasant and Indigenous cooperatives, the simplified processes for formalizing these associative models—under Colombia's current cooperative legislation—represent an opportunity to revitalize this form of collective action. They also enable these organizations to integrate into the market as legal entities, on equal footing with other companies. All of this, of course, must be undertaken while respecting, in the case of Indigenous cooperatives, their fundamental right to self-determination, autonomy, and the ability to act in accordance with their belief systems.

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