

## OUTSOURCING, ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A DELPHI ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT IMAGINARY

### TERCEIRIZAÇÃO, ÉTICA E RESPONSABILIDADE SOCIAL: UMA ANÁLISE DELPHI DO IMAGINÁRIO ATUAL

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#### Abstract

Economic processes have become the vehicle of democracies and they follow their own logic; one that can seem detached from the experience of ordinary people. They often operate through speculation, a lack of ethics or the establishment of policies tailored to the vested interests that shape them. These practices are interrelated and tend to exclude the majority of the public from the system itself. Outsourcing is a clear example of such a practice that has been replicated and multiplied across the globe with unequal effects. There is a clear need to understand these asymmetric globalization processes that drive the existing economic dependencies. This study used a Delphi analysis of experts of recognized prestige, which de facto allows an economic organization to be analyzed in its production and distribution phase, and to understand the agility of current trends toward the maximization of profit, circumstances that are not always compatible with the principle of good living or the establishment of a fairer, or more ethical and supportive life.

#### Resumo

*Os processos econômicos tornaram-se o veículo das democracias e seguem uma lógica própria, que pode parecer desligada da experiência das pessoas comuns. Frequentemente, operam por meio de especulação, falta de ética ou estabelecimento de políticas adaptadas aos interesses pessoais que os moldam. Essas práticas estão inter-relacionadas e tendem a excluir a maioria da população do próprio sistema. A terceirização é um exemplo claro de tal prática, que tem sido replicada e multiplicada em todo o mundo, com efeitos desiguais. Há uma clara necessidade de compreender esses processos de globalização assimétricos que impulsionam as dependências econômicas existentes. Este estudo utilizou uma análise Delphi com especialistas de reconhecido prestígio, que, de fato, permite analisar uma organização econômica em sua fase de produção e distribuição, e compreender a agilidade das tendências atuais em direção à maximização do lucro, circunstâncias que nem sempre são compatíveis com o princípio do bem viver ou com*



**Keywords:** Outsourcing. Social Corporate Responsibility. Ethics. Economy. Globalization.

*o estabelecimento de uma vida mais justa, ética e solidária.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Terceirização. Responsabilidade Social Corporativa. Ética. Economia. Globalização.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Outsourcing processes have multiplexed, incorporating a wide variety of models, together with the vested interests that accompany them (Luque & Guamán, 2021). The market sets the rule, one in which no organization is willing to sacrifice a penny of its profits, and creates a trend toward tailor-made regulation that sweeps aside any norm that would slow down the prevailing economic growth model (Dooley et al., 2007; Laval & Dardot, 2017). In this paradigm, Varoufakis proclaims that "A new mutant capital has killed and replaced capitalism: capital in the cloud. It doesn't make things, but is made up of devices designed to modify our behavior. And it's going great" (2024). This is a precision-tuned model that aims to alter human behavior and place it at the service of production without receiving anything in return: giving up data for free, accepting cookies to track online activity, submitting reviews and being forced to agree to leonine or onerous contracts in order to open a simple email account or browse freely. Algorithms are constructed with political motivations within a scenario of disruptive policies (Luque, et al., 2024).

Companies such as Google, Amazon, AirBnb, Uber, Booking, among others, are no longer to be considered part of the market: they are the market. Jeff Bezos at Amazon, Brian Chesky, Nathan Blecharczyk and Joe Gebbia at AirBnb, and Travis Kalanick at Uber are people with seemingly unlimited power and influence who eagerly seek to expand their companies' outsourcing processes without limits. In the retail sector, Amazon is not the company that owns the most factories, Uber the one that owns the most taxis or AirBnb the platform that concentrates the most property: they simply decide what users can view or access by creating algorithms to match the goods and services that they control to the users' needs and desires. This model allows these corporations to reach profit margins of 40% or more with minimal risk. This de facto digital feudalism is a win-win for those at the top of the hierarchy. To continue the metaphor, in addition to

using the vassals (users) of the digital economy, this system needs serfs to provide fast and cheap labor on demand.

To comprehend this exponential economic growth, it is necessary to analyze the facilitating elements that contribute to its success, and one of the main factors is outsourcing (Knolmayer & Mittermayer, 2003; Varadarajan, 2009; Vaxevanou & Konstantopoulos, 2015; Dolgui & Proth, 2013). The global outsourcing market attached to business processes of all types is expected to reach \$525 billion by 2030, growing by over 9% per year between now and this date (Grandview Research, 2024). Radix (2024), points out that "66% of businesses in the US outsource at least one department. The IT outsourcing market will grow by \$98 billion during 2020-2024, and each year, 300,000 jobs in the US are outsourced. The US market generates \$62 billion of the total international income from the \$92.5 billion global outsourcing business. Since the pandemic, 45% of businesses have boosted their outsourcing, frequently emphasizing locating skill sets they can't access in-house". The sheer scale of these processes make it necessary to 1) critically and proactively analyze the processes of globalization and its associated elements and 2) focus the perspective of analysis through a Delphi analysis of experts on three interrelated elements of outsourcing processes: a) legislation, b) political subordination to the economy and c) globalization processes based on the globality-locality dichotomy.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

According to renowned international researchers and specialists, globalization represents a dynamic and valuable set of social processes that are expected to transform the present social condition of nationality into one characterized by very powerful global cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political interconnections capable to lead, in a relative short period of time, to an unprecedented intensification and development of economic interrelations (Edvardsson & Durst, 2017; Stiglitz, 2020). However, besides the positive aspects derived from globalizations, there are numerous voices that emphasize the dangers of mismanaged and destabilizing forms and models globalization, financial liberalization, and abrupt technological change, that might implicate sacrificing economic growth and raising inequalities, without building a fairer society as initially intended, promoted, and advertised (Stiglitz, 2024). That is the reason why in a socially

responsible society, globalization – through all its activities and processes that are particularly linked to the economic activities, has a paramount influence on business ethics in several main areas, namely: culture, law, and accountability (Popescu, 2022).

These days, specialists worldwide believe that the influence of globalization on all the economic processes and practices reached the highest peak imagined so far in the history of mankind (European Parliament, 2020). What is more, the entities activities on the environment and the society constantly affect citizens' lives and, in turn, policy-makers have to offer specific frameworks, rules, and regulations capable to determine and guide the way in which these entities have to perform their duties so that all the actions are done in an ethical and responsible manner towards the individuals, communities, and environment (Council of Europe, 2019). Furthermore, the asymmetric globalization processes which are specific to the modern societies these days are the ones that should constitute great concern for the public decision-makers in charge of the legislative and regulatory frameworks of the development, audit and use of the outsourcing tools and services (Popescu, 2023).

In the same line with the aforementioned aspects, while taking into account the valuable relationship that may be encountered between outsourcing, knowledge, and learning processes, it ought to be highlighted that outsourcing has become a clear example of a practice that has been replicated and multiplied across the globe with unequal effects, based on the fact that it tends to exclude the majority of the public from the system itself (Edvardsson & Durst, 2020). When referring to globalization and outsourcing there are several key issues that ought to be taken into consideration, as follows: (a) first of all, among the major components may be encountered the access to information, knowledge, learning tools and services, the deregulation of interest rates, the removal of credit controls, the privatization of government-owned banks and financial institutions (Kasemsap, 2020; Qin, 2019); (b) second of all, financial trading could be regarded as a valuable source for increasing mobility among different segments of financial industry, hence having fewer restrictions, while benefiting from greater investment opportunities (Popescu, 2021); and (c) corporate social responsibility (CSR) of business activities needs to provide the business organizations with all the necessary guidelines to comply with laws and regulations under which they must operate (Smith, 2025).

On the one hand, outsourcing has a major influence on knowledge management and learning processes due to its confirmed capacity to help identify new research,

teaching, and learning opportunities that will have the power to contribute to the development of outsourcing theories and practices (Smuts *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the concept of outsourcing has diverse meanings depending on the context positioned under analysis, having profound implications in those processes in which certain activities belonging to a specific entity are being transferred to a third party which may be in the same region or country or in a different offshore location (Wei & Ho, 2019).

Going further with the current analysis, outsourcing may be seen as a highly viable option for certain companies based on the following vital arguments: (a) the companies are able to employ a third party to set up, develop, and maintain the infrastructure requested within the entity or outside the entity, depending on the context, using substantially less resources and with notably less costs by comparison with those situations in which the companies would have had to allocate in order to perform those tasks themselves, making use of their own employees and infrastructure (Almunawar & Almunawar, 2018); (b) the companies are able to utilize the services provided by other enterprises, normally through a contract, which would implicate, besides cutting costs, significantly simplifying the management business processes, while offering to the service providers a potential long-term sources of income (De Vita & Wang, 2006); and (c) the companies can successfully make use of information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) services during the outsourcing process and practices in this manner making use of specialized expertise, the adequate technology, and the core competences of individuals specialized in the field (Benazeer *et al.*, 2025).

The aspects embodied in the powerful relationship that exists between outsourcing, ethics, and social responsibility makes reference to the overbearing desire as well as to the pressing necessity to move towards a sustainable business model (Auškāps *et al.*, 2021). That is the reason why these days' specialists constantly acknowledge in their works the fact that governance and business projects ought to benefit from the extremely progressive integration of key concepts such as “accountability”, “responsibility”, and “sustainability” so that the society will be able to become more committed to sustainable business models (Kendall & Kendall, 2008). Likewise, the outsourcing practices and processes are often encouraged with the aid of several fundamental measures among which can be highlighted the following ones: making use of extra-financial reporting; having access to responsible investment; showing respect to fundamental rights; and acknowledging the risks derived from capitalism and

globalization social and economic models that might lead to insufficient or poor regulations and even to systemic changes and challenges in the world (Legorreta & Goyal, 2010; Roussev & Akella, 2006).

In continuation, by acknowledging the increased importance of outsourcing in the economic processes while taking account of globalization, there are several aspects on which the attention needs to be drawn, as follows: (a) the management of available resources ought to be performed in a more responsible manner, so that the outsourcing of production that takes place in businesses will not generate, in time, any forms of crisis (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2023); (b) the businesses, the shareholders, and the market should focus on moving towards a social economy capable to assume and support collective benefits and challenges intended to identify responsibly and correct the negative effects of globalization in the earliest stages possible (European Union (EU) Monitor, 2024); and (c) leaders worldwide should become aware of introducing distinct managerial models into the governance activities so that increased transparency, social engagement, and cooperation with the civil society will be reached and ensured over time (European Comision, 2021).

There also additional aspects that should be taken into account when focusing on the relationship that may be encountered between outsourcing, ethics and social responsibility. Firstly, the creation of a responsible model that thoroughly considers energy saving as well as low carbon modes of operation represents a vital situation in which outsourcing the existing information, knowledge, and knowledge management on how countries and businesses can become more efficient and effective with less costs, while focusing on human and social rights, becomes crucial (European Parliament, 2022a). Secondly, the creation of such a responsible model may implicate the implementation of a green and a more sustainable capitalism derived from globalization and from the outsourcing of knowledge with the help of collaborative research and development activities (European Parliament, 2022b; European Parliament, 2022c).

### **3 APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM**

The analysis of outsourcing processes is notoriously complex, not least due to its vertiginous growth. Deloitte highlighted the problem in 2019, forecasting that, "The outsourcing and shared services (OSS) market is forecast to grow at an over 7.4%

compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2019 to reach US\$ 971.2 billion by 2023. At this rate, the OSS industry will exceed US\$ 1.0 trillion, within the next 6 years" (2019, p.6). The scale of the problem makes it necessary to clearly delimit the object of study in order to gain specific insights into its structure and incidence. Therefore, a Delphi analysis was carried out of the responses of 23 experts to a multidisciplinary questionnaire focused on concepts of globalization and environmental protections. It should be noted that this methodology is increasingly widespread, with a large number of research articles, business projects and doctoral theses endorsing its validity as a means to creating a consensus of opinion, which in turn leads to deeper understanding of the ramifications of the object of study (Gupta & Clarke, 1996; Landeta, 2006; Flostrand et al., 2020).

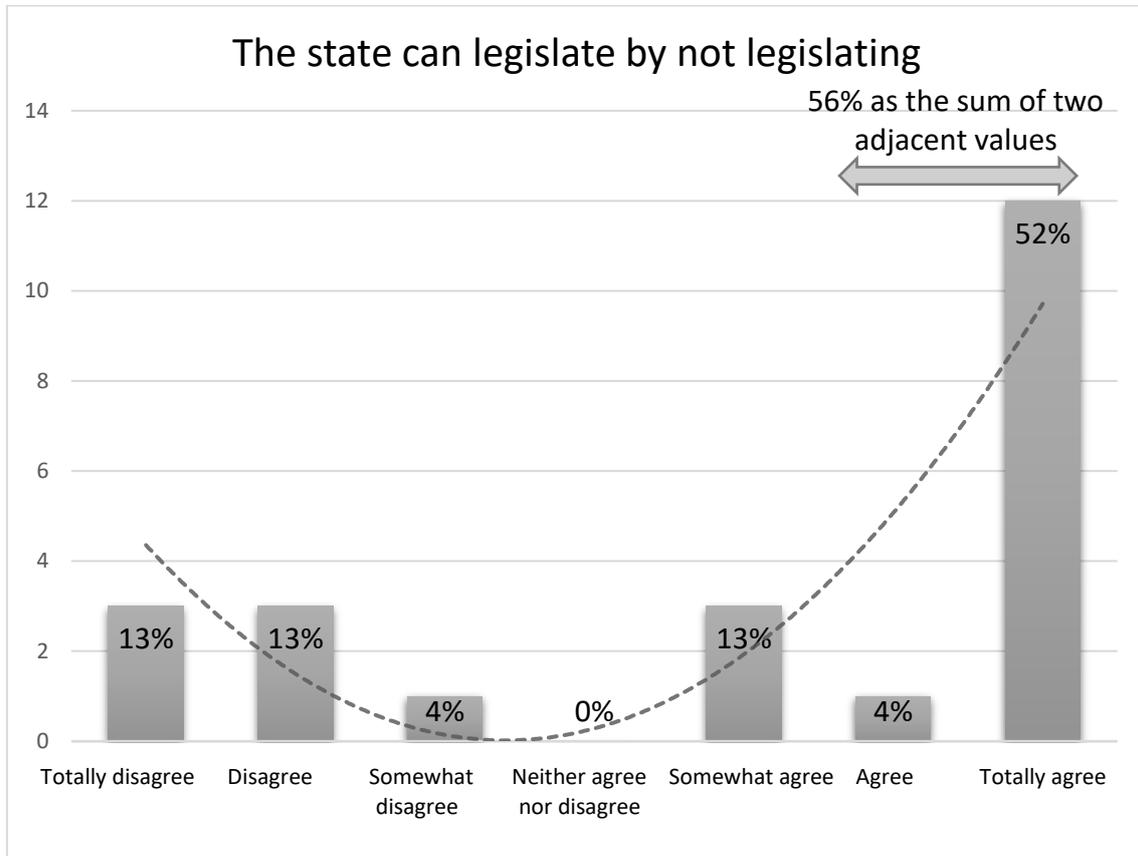
The Delphi method is a social research technique whose purpose is to obtain a reliable and consensual opinion in a group of experts. This technique has been widely documented and used in the contemporary literature (Turoff, 1970, 1971; Gordon and Pease, 2006; Gordon, 2009; Gnatzy et al., 2011; De Loë et al., 2016). It is a tool used to determine qualitative aspects that also require the establishment of some order (Lee, et al., 2019), characteristics necessary in order to be considered a reliable methodology (Infante & Zárate de Lara, 2010). To this end, the main aspects of the object of study are grouped together (Spranger et al., 2022). The technique makes it possible to analyze a complex problem from different points of view—even from different areas of knowledge, as long as they are related to the object of study (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Adler & Ziglio, 1996). It is a way of structuring a group-communication process in such a way that it allows a group of individuals to jointly address a complex problem. The technique has its origin in the 1950s in the Rand Corporation, which sought a consensus for its military planning and projects (Dalkey and Helmer, 1951). The methodology itself uses an iterative process, with participants asked to respond at least twice; it is carried out anonymously, so no participant knows what others have said; there is controlled feedback, since the opinion of the group can be communicated to all participants by requesting their opinion again; and there is the possibility of making a statistical response at the group level for later analysis (Rowe & Wright, 2001; Landeta & Lertxundi, 2024). It should be noted that at the time of writing, there is no accepted model of indicators derived from the Delphi method capable of establishing statistical or econometric contrasts with the endogenous capacity to quantify the reliability and validity of the set of selected variables (Diamond et al., 2014; Niederberger & Spranger, 2020). This lack of standardization

points to the impossibility of uniformity in the communication of results (Hardy et al., 2004; Humphrey-Murto et al., 2017; Belton et al., 2019; Niederberger & Spranger, 2020; Spranger et al., 2022).

The principal instrument, the questionnaire, uses a Likert scale of one to seven to respond to the statement, ranging from total agreement to total disagreement (Matas, 2018). It should be noted that the Likert scale is a tool for developing and interpreting an instrument of social perception. The selection of participants was made in mid-2023 and the questionnaires were sent out on 1/11/2023, with two rounds of questions ending on 1/2/2024. The questions were based on the processes of globalization and were grouped into five dimensions: social, economic, ethical, political and legal.

#### 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1, Legislation, there is a positive trend toward the acceptance of the concept that states can legislate by not legislating (56% of two contiguous values), although there is a degree of fragmentation in response to the statement, with 2 values, which add up to 26%, in disagreement. This is consistent with the complexity of the object of study in this regard. For example, at the environmental level, in 2023 only 81 countries had legislation on the management of electronic waste (up from 78 in 2019); only 67 had a legal instrument to regulate the management of this type of waste, with provisions that extend the responsibility of the producer. Furthermore, 8.2% of the global production of electronic waste (5.1 million tonnes) was sent to third-party countries during 2022, 65% of which was sent from high-income countries to low- and middle-income countries through clandestine movements that clearly constitute environmental dumping (Global E-Waste, 2024). Serious abuses are similarly camouflaged by the production of goods and services labeled sustainable and responsible; in many cases these are disguised by public policies that have buckled under pressure from transnational capital (Kurpierz & Smith, 2020; García-Oliveira et al., 2022). These circumstances generate de facto a conflict of interest between the global elites and the state (Skocpol, 1979) and show the current institutional weakness in the formulation of public policies (Weiss & Cattaneo, 2017; European Economic and Social Committee, 2023).

**Table 1***Legislation*

Source: compiled by the author

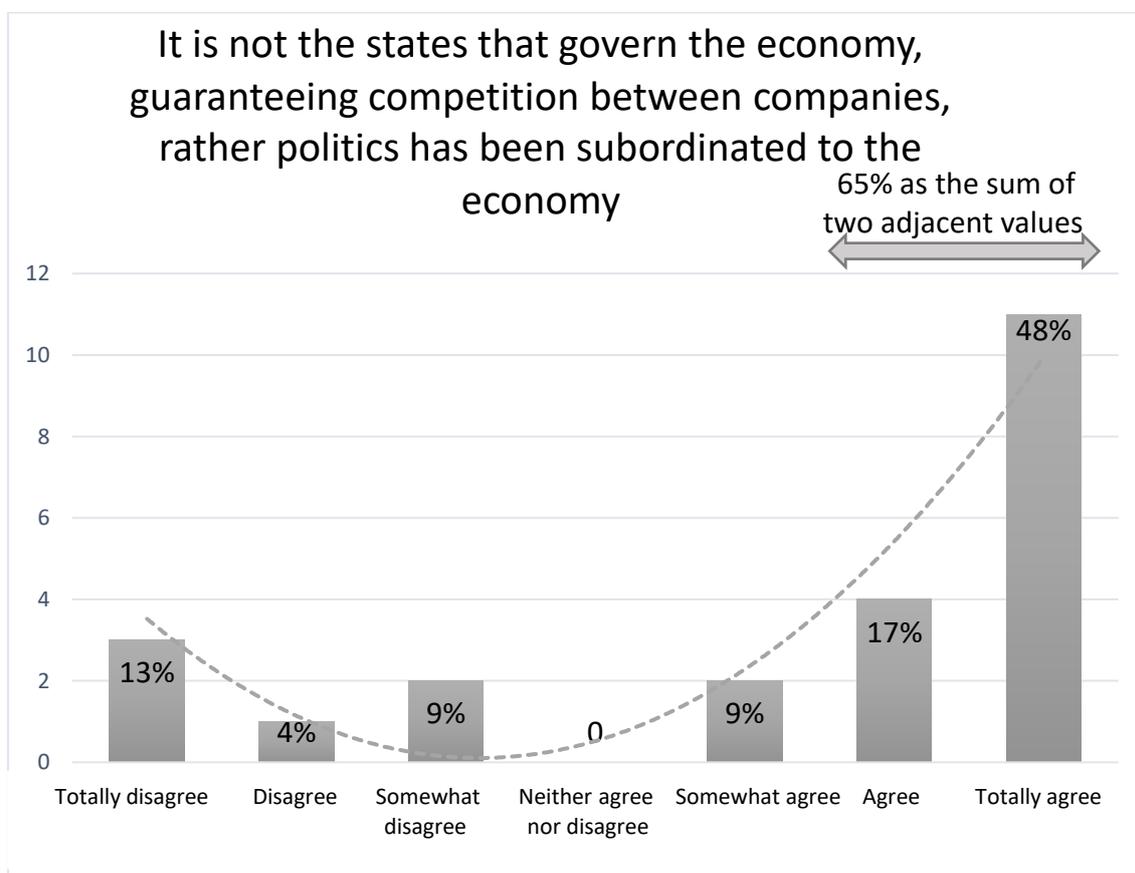
The lack of legislation brings with it processes of transnational corruption, as well as tax evasion and avoidance (Luque, 2018). The annual cost of money laundering and associated crimes is estimated to be between \$1.4 trillion and \$3.5 trillion. As financial services organizations struggle to contain compliance costs, and the threat of money laundering continues, the need for change and innovation increases (Ernst & Young, 2020). Financial crime devastates economies, and its consequences are far-reaching and pernicious, increasing inequality and ultimately costing lives (García-Vega, 2024). According to Millward-Hopkins (2022), in terms of energy consumption, an unequal society uses twice as much as an egalitarian one. Therefore, the establishment of public policies that favour the general interest is crucial to improving this disagreeable panorama. In the view of one expert in economic intelligence (Gógova, 2015), "Classical analysis models and typical competitive matrices, such as Michael Porter's 'four corners' or five forces, are no longer as valid as they once were. For example, an essential factor when analysing the competitive environment are banks and banking power, something

that was not included in any model, or technological advances, which can be more decisive than the regulatory or demographic factor. Another important element is the public administrations, which were not very proactive, and now, with subsidies and all the mechanisms of promotion and incentive, have become crucial. The framework of administrative policies, whether at the national or regional level, needs to be investigated more vigorously."

According to Table 2, Economic Subordination, there is a tendency towards agreement with the statement (65% between the sum of two contiguous values), despite the existence of fragmentation in the rest of the responses. There is no doubt that economics should not be divorced from ethics and, therefore, not be exempt from morality. Michael Daniel Higgins, President of Ireland, pointed out the need to "rebalance economics, ecology and ethics" as "eternal growth precipitates the destruction of everything" (2023).

**Table 2**

*Economic Subordination*



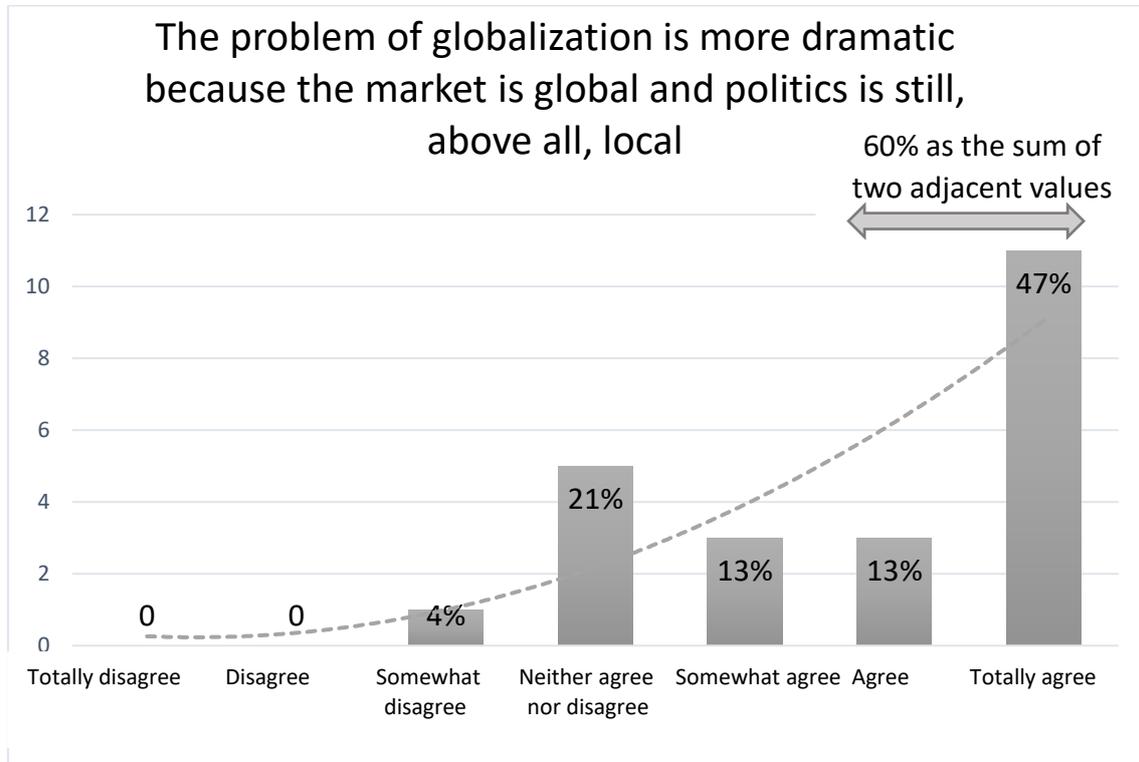
Source: compiled by the author

It is clear that companies, many of them transnationals, are reconfiguring geopolitics at a global level (Luque & de Pablos, 2016). According to Beck (1998, p. 19), "companies can produce in one country, pay taxes in another and demand state expenditure in the form of infrastructure creation in a third country". This is a tendency that states and supranational organizations cannot keep up with nor protect against. Donaghey et al. (2014, p.4) point out that "outsourcing, offshoring and other forms of production, such as modular production, are used by multinational companies to seek a competitive advantage based on cheap labour and to gain access to consumers in emerging markets". The treatment of the executive branch of government as subordinate to the economy and an instrument of the interests of multinationals is perhaps understandable, though never justifiable in this paradigm. A clear example of corporate domination is that of the hydrocarbon company, Repsol, which was accused by the Spanish Minister of Ecological Transition, Teresa Ribera, of climate "denialism and delaying", describing its discourse as "populist" and "increasingly disappointing"; in fact, the minister soon went on to confront both Repsol and Iberdrola for alleged unfair competition and greenwashing practices, pointing out on the social network X (formerly Twitter) that "the surfeit of #greenwashing reaches the courts" (Álvarez, 2024; X, 2024). Such behavior in dominant organizations amounts to polluting under the cover of so-called processes of corporate social responsibility, while putting profit above ethics and morality (Luque & Herrero-García, 2019). To return to the example of e-waste, the annual production of such waste is increasing by 2.6 million tons per year worldwide and is on track to reach 82 million tons per year by 2030; yet in 2020, the world was only able to manage 22% of this waste, and the percentage will likely fall to 20% by 2030 (Global E-Waste, 2024). These circumstances show that, as long as there is no solid public legislation combined with supranational tools of control, sanction and redress, the existing asymmetries cannot be corrected. The processes of accumulation and expulsion have become the norm, not the exception (Sassen, 2015; Harvey, 2017): "As a result, the real power today does not reside with the owners of machinery, buildings, rail and telephone networks, industrial robots. These old-fashioned land capitalists continue to extract surplus value from wage labor, but they no longer rule, as they used to. They have become vassals in relation to the owners of the cloud-capital, of the Nubists" (Varoufakis, 2024).

According to Glass and Saggi (2001), the trend in international outsourcing is

driven by a combination of push and pull factors, including the increase in taxes on production processes in countries with high salaries, the requirement for higher safety standards, the establishment of incentives to provide technologies in countries with lower salaries, the increases in production subsidies, and the reduction in costs when adopting production technologies in countries with low salaries. For Castles and Delgado Wise (2012, p. 185): "Workers in less developed countries have become part of global value chains controlled by multinational corporations. It has even become routine for scientific innovation to follow the pattern of outsourcing and be carried out in the countries of the South, where highly skilled work is readily available, while patents, production processes and profits remain in the hands of investors located in the countries of the North."

According to Table 3, Globalization, 60% of the participants agree with the statement. This shows the prevalence of the market over existing legislation, which has marked consequences for much of the public. The words of the German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1998, p. 29) ring truer than ever, when he stated that "globalization means the processes by virtue of which sovereign nation states intermingle and interweave through transnational actors and their respective probabilities of power, orientations, identities and various networks. The concept of globalization can be described as a process, which creates transnational social links and spaces, revalues local cultures, and brings third cultures to the fore...." This perspective on globalization connects directly with outsourcing processes, since in the current economic model it is nourished by low-cost labor and low resources. Krugman's recommendation on the article, *Does Outsourcing Reduce Wages in the Low Wage Service Occupations? Evidence from Janitors and Guards*, by Dub & Kaplan, (2000) shows the wage gap when the same employee works directly for the company or is subcontracted by the same company. At the same time, the explanations based on two categories—acquired competencies and developed skills—refute the theses of Elmuti et al., in which they point out that outsourcing processes "[...] are not universal solutions to organizational problems; they are not simple or easy to develop or support" (2010, p. 198).

**Table 3***Globalization*

Source: compiled by the authors

Externalization arises from several premises or constraints (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 2002) and the factors that produce it can remain independent or become interconnected (Barrar & Gervais, 2007). These factors include, 1) productive change, since both customers and business managers are able to make à-la-carte products (using different pathways) in response to growing demand from society to use, for example, low-cost clothing. Therefore, productive specialization is developed<sup>1</sup>, together with a high reaction capacity supported by information technologies that tend to group non-nuclear activities of production. Numerous authors have theoretically analyzed the characteristics of information-system outsourcing (see, for example, Venkatraman & Loh, 1994; Cheon et al., 1995; Cronk & Sharp, 1995; Earl, 1996; Insinga & Werle, 2000; Gottschalk & Solli-Sæther, 2005). In addition, there are noteworthy empirical studies on the strategic determinants of information systems (Willcocks et al., 1995; Nam et al., 1996; Ang & Cummings, 1997; Smith et al., 1998; Mayer & Salomon, 2006). 2) Economic business

<sup>1</sup>Law of comparative advantage by the English economist David Ricardo (1772-1823), which states that countries have to specialize in producing and exporting the products or services they produce at a lower relative cost than the rest of the competing countries.

models, which have changed over the past few years (Kotchan, Katz, & Mckersie, 1993; Recio, 2002) in line with the "hot potato" theory, in which no company wants to have legal responsibility for parts of its production developed in areas prone to conflict with workers over working conditions or pressure from non-governmental organizations, etc. This has sometimes reached absurdity, when no-one knows who the real company is behind a complex corporate framework. According to Gemzell (2015), "Globalization has an important part in this. It is becoming easier to move production and shorten lead times. This creates increasing pressure on suppliers, in turn pressuring the workforce to produce more for less." 3) Tailor-made labor, that is, a workforce customized in both quantity and quality, thus avoiding underutilizing labor as may happen in "old-style", contracted labor-relations. Regardless of the production cycle, outsourcing uses workers at the exact time needed for the development of that product, avoiding inertia and interruptions (Echeverría, 1998; Partida, 2001; Moner, 2008). Business organizations are increasingly using external consultants and temporary workers. This situation has led to a change in relations between organizations and employees, and workers have begun to specialize in different areas of knowledge, which they then offer to multiple companies, rather than one employer.

The once-dominant protectionist-paternalistic business model is disappearing. The generations of workers up to the latter-part of the 20th century largely remained in the same company all or at least most of their lives (perhaps changing to seek improvements or fulfill personal projects, but not due to the curtailment of work or service). For the Millennial generation, starting work from the year 2000 onwards, this situation is unthinkable. Most will have changed companies multiple times, and will have found themselves employed by temporary unions (UTEs) or consortiums for specific projects, before moving on (and in certain sectors, even having to move to other countries) (Korstanje, 2007). In some cases, this new model has driven the upskilling of the workforce, as reported in the USA by Grugulis et al. (2003), but workers between 50 and 60 years old often struggle, since they are specialized in a particular skill and find it hard to be retrained for new roles. In other cases, international mobility is made more difficult by the need to adapt to new labour markets: language barriers, specific skills required in other locations, the simple fact of having a family, and above all the consideration of having enough time in a new jurisdiction to develop a pension plan for retirement, are all serious obstacles to relocation (Pin et al., 2008). Of course, for this new paradigm to work,

today's workforce must be persuaded to give up their labor rights in favor of the interests of international capital; as commented in *El Mundo* newspaper, they must "work, unlearn, relearn and go back to work... Even in retirement: such is the perennial revolution. 50-year-old interns, working retirees and employees who jump from one job to another" (2024). The messaging deployed seeks to make the public see that not having a pension is not a problem, or that they are born to work and to die working (at least as long as they remain productive) since there will no longer be a welfare state: a clear example of a liquid society.

Indeed, this is the age of the precariat, when you can have a job, or several jobs, and still remain poor (Standing, 2018). The new labor landscape essentially forces the continual development of knowledge and skills that are sufficiently attractive to a future employer or successive employers. According to the study by Mallon & Duberley (2000), employees continue to draw on the previous knowledge and skills sets acquired in "paternalistic" companies to carry out outsourced work. This term and the associated business praxis derives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Le Play, 1855) to describe the acquisition of skills within the company itself, in a system of continuous training, promotion, mentoring and development, which today practically does not exist. The contemporary reality has led to uncertainty within the labor market, when the demands of outsourcing can range from the provision of a service to, in effect, a strategic partnership, albeit with greater interdependence.

The studies by Cohen, (2002) and Dreischmeier, (2005), show that the life cycle of an outsourcing process is composed of several stages. In total, 5 phases have been detailed: 1-preparation, 2-signing of the contract, 3-transition of the service, 4-provision of the service and 5-completion. Saunders et al. (1997) analyze how in many cases the main reasons for outsourcing are technological and strategic in nature, rather than for cost reduction (although according to Lacity & Hirschheim (1993, p. 76), suppliers are not strategic partners since the interest in profits does not become a shared interest: when the customer's costs increase, the same happens with the supplier's profits; or, according to Guterl (1996, p. 80), suppliers will have a greater interest in customers having additional costs).

Among the disadvantages in outsourcing processes we could point out the costs of management, responsibility, those related to production or purchase, and the costs of negotiation per se (when the parties act in good faith according to their own interest

(Williamson, 1985) and with the advantage of internationalization). According to García-Estévez (2006), mergers are the classic procedure of expansion and internationalization, since their costs are usually lower due to factors such as the lowering of the cost of communications, transport or in general of any type of international transaction and opportunism (i.e., when one of the parties involved acts in its own interest with an ulterior motive). According to Earl, (1996) any type of innovation requires a series of ample economic and human resources, a characteristic that outsourcing does not guarantee. Furthermore, according to the retrospective proposed by Morozov (2015, p. 22), in relation to the consequences of digital acts, "[Silicon] Valley doesn't lie: our daily lives have undoubtedly changed radically; but this great change has been brought about by forces far more unpredictable than digitalization or connectivity. The fetish of innovation does not have to serve as a pretext for us to bear the cost of the recent economic and political turbulence." In general terms, there are other negative aspects that may appear, such as possible dependence on the supplier (or the supplier of the multinational), hidden costs, loss of know-how, less effort put into research and development (with the possibility of reducing competitive capacity compared to other organizations), unfair attitudes on the part of the supplier, lack of training on the part of the supplier, or difficulties in communication and coordination. According to Corbett (2004), the application of a methodology, with correct management and an adequate execution process, should guarantee the success of an outsourcing project, in the same way that a bad application of that methodology can make it fail.

When the subcontracted activity is carried out in another country, the costs of termination or compensation claims skyrocket (official translations, travel and coordination of legal teams, trips to check the production cycle or results, etc.). These costs reduce the closer the outsourcing company is to the parent company with which it has reached the agreement, hence the greater progress of other countries with lower labor costs than in the most developed countries. Logistical savings will also accrue due to the proximity of manufacturing and sales centers. According to Nishiguchi (1994), companies can achieve a competitive advantage through strategic outsourcing arrangements since outsourcing reduces production costs in relation to in-house production as suppliers benefit from economies of scale. However, according to Kakabadse & Kakabadse (2002), there is a difference in behavior between European and US companies. The latter are characterized by the use of high value-added contracting

strategies, while the former focus more on obtaining economies of scale through the outsourcing of production programs with fewer obstacles, as well as the concentration of specialization (Anderson & Weitz, 1986; Tirado et al., 2006; Bekerman, 2014).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The processes inherent to economic development have become so complex and, at times, so far removed from logic that analysis may seem impossible. Historical factors such as land, capital, and labor are moving toward land, labor, and speculation, whereby it is possible to generate profits from financial speculation without any labor. Labor has gone from being the causal link of economic growth to being a subordinate and increasingly expendable element, with legislation tailored to transnational corporations, together with a trade union force that is now increasingly residual. In addition, outsourcing processes are implemented in order to optimize resources but also in order to avoid acquired rights, wage guarantees, strikes as well as all types of labor conflicts and better standards in developed countries.

The existence of tailor-made legislation and the sheer lack of legislation is evident (see Table 1). This situation is motivated by the exorbitant increase in profit founded on environmental predation, which distances states from processes of efficacy and legitimacy, and establishes a *de facto* social deconstruction. These circumstances offer no obvious way out, since if the protests of the workforce, jeopardize the profits on the corporate balance sheets, the affected companies simply close down their operations and go to countries with worse controls that allow them to continue producing under the conditions they require: investment-hungry governments will always exist (Bangladesh in the textile sector). The submission of states and their policies to economic powers is a *fait accompli* (see Table 2) while political-economic relations have become more complex, blurring the identity of each actor. In addition, it seems that democracy has been reserved for rich countries with high standards of security and quality of life, establishing a subaltern Global South that is mortgaged out to the countries of the North due to their lack of means. There are imperfections that run through the current political scene, which is incapable of reflecting the general interest, having perverted its own ethics and having bent to the will of its economic masters, such as lobbies, who have sufficient means to influence 100% of the existing legislation. One of the tools of economic domination is

outsourcing and this analysis (Table 3) shows the lack of adaptation of globalization processes to local markets, excluding and thereby impoverishing a large part of the world's production.

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