This is a draft of the entry for ***Encyclopedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy*** (forthcoming 2023) published by Edward Elgar Publishing Limited in partnership with United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE). This work has been funded by the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Peace, Non-Violence, and the Social and Solidarity Economy

Smita Ramnarain
University of Rhode Island

Bibliographic information

Smita Ramnarain. Forthcoming 2023. Peace, Non-Violence, and the Social and Solidarity Economy. Edited by Ilcheong Yi, Peter Utting, Jean-Louis Laville, Barbara Sak, Caroline Hossein, Sifa Chiyoge, Cecilia Navarra, Denison Jayasooria, Fernanda Wanderley, Jacques Defourny, and Rocio Nogales-Muriel. *Encyclopedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy*. Cheltenham and Northampton, MA. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited in partnership with United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE).

Or

Smita Ramnarain. Forthcoming 2023. Peace, Non-Violence, and the Social and Solidarity Economy. Edited by Ilcheong Yi et al. *Encyclopedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy*. Cheltenham and Northampton, MA. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited in partnership with United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE).

June 2022

UNTFSSE Knowledge Hub Draft Paper Series

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Abstract
This entry provides illustrations of the social and solidarity economy (SSE)'s contribution to peacebuilding and conflict resolution, its role in addressing structural forms of violence such as economic exclusion, and its non-violence, social justice, and solidarity aspects. Examples, achievements, and best practices are presented along three axes: SSE's role in informal and 'everyday' peace and non-violence practices; in framing an alternative economic framework for peacebuilding; and in promoting participation in formal political processes. The entry also presents some unresolved dilemmas around SSE's role in building sustainable peace.

Keywords: peace; non-violence; cooperatives; structural violence; community-based development; informal and everyday peace

Introduction: SSE as an alternative peace paradigm

Since the 1990s, peace – and peacebuilding as an active intervention in conflict-affected societies – have been closely integrated with a liberal approach to state-building. The liberal (or neoliberal) peace model emphasizes good governance, law, democracy, development, and constitution-building, based on the assumption that democracies tend to be more peaceful. As such, it advocates democratization and market integration as exemplary avenues for conflict resolution and peace (Duffield 2010, Murtagh 2016).

This model has come under scrutiny in recent times, as experiences in post-conflict settings have revealed its failures and omissions (see, for instance, Duffield 2010, Pugh 2006). Liberal peacebuilding is subordinated to top-down systems driven by the state or international donors and largely devoid of local ownership. Peace projects conceived and implemented by external donors/organizations without local input or ownership have created undesirable outcomes, including disenfranchising local populations, sidelining traditional or indigenous practices, and exacerbating inequalities and resentment. Further, peace is defined narrowly as the 'absence of physical violence and subsumed under a securitized form of state-building. Finally, the liberal model of peacebuilding and reconstruction also comes under scrutiny for its continued espousal of neoliberal and macroeconomic adjustment policies - promoting austerity and the withdrawal of the state from the provision of basic services and social protection - and an emphasis on 'development-as-usual,' provoking questions surrounding who benefits from the development and what is being 'reconstructed' (Pugh 2006, Ramnarain 2013).

Countering these failures of top-down, liberal approaches, diverse alternative approaches, ranging from critiques of peace conditionalities to hybrid forms of peacebuilding, community-based development (CBD), and social and solidarity economy (SSE) perspectives have emerged (Ramnarain 2013) (also see the entry "Community-based organizations"). Notably, however, the hybrid peace and community-based peacebuilding and development models do not jettison the liberal rubric entirely but rather make a case for the coexistence of its core norms – security and stabilization, reinforcing states, democratic governance, and marketization – alongside local agency and participatory methods. Therefore, in terms of articulating a transformative or radical alternative to existing peacebuilding paradigms, these frameworks are arguably insufficient. Using case studies from conflict-affected Burundi, Vervisch et al. (2013) argue that the CBD framework – with its overestimation of community homogeneity, translation of local participation into technocratic box-checking, and tendency to elite-capture – can be entirely unsuitable for repairing trust and promoting social cohesion. Further, the nature of networks, type and effects of participation, and the kind of resources/goods distributed played a critical role in determining the success of community-based peace interventions.

In contrast to hybrid peace or CBD frameworks, SSE offers what Murtagh (2016, 111) calls a 'critical political space' for resistance to the liberal peace model and a more radical, transformative, and emancipatory vision of peace and non-violence (also see the entries "Participation, governance, collective action, democracy and SSE" and "Activism, social movements and SSE"). In addition to an emphasis on broad political engagement and participatory processes within the communities they are placed in, a

key aspect of SSE is that it also offers the possibility of building alternative economics of peace from the ground up, providing a counterpoint to the neoliberal restructuring and austerity practices that generally characterize post-conflict macroeconomic policy and the liberal peace model.

SSE is underpinned by the foundational principle that surplus arising from economic activity such as production, trade, or distribution of goods and services is used for overall social benefit (as opposed to private profit) and that the tenets of redistribution, inclusion and equity govern its use (See the entry "Contemporary understandings of the SSE"). The pursuit of community benefit may also include ancillary and non-economic objectives focused on the building of trust and solidarity, resilience, mutual assistance and reciprocal exchange, and community self-reliance. As such, SSE organizations and enterprises (SSEOEs) can play a critical economic role in addressing the economic exclusion, poverty and deprivation that characterize conflict-affected societies by challenging the economies that drive the perpetuation of violence, and in providing the political and the economic foundations for peace and justice.

1. SSE, peace, and non-violence

The entry examines three pragmatic contributions of SSEOEs, with respect to the pursuit of peace, justice, and non-violence. These contributions include their roles within:

i. informal and 'everyday' peace and non-violence practices;
ii. framing an alternative economic framework underpinning peace (building) and non-violence; and
iii. fostering equitable participation in political processes, peace campaigns, and solidarity movements.

In documenting these contributions, the entry draws on accounts from a variety of contexts, based on documented successes of SSE in post-conflict contexts. While there are examples of SSEOEs developing useful interventions in many conflict-affected or fragile contexts, no systematic study of these examples exists. Neither is there a universal template for the evaluation of their potentially transformative or damaging effects. Equally, these examples pose questions and dilemmas for the contribution of SSE to peace and non-violence, which are considered in the subsequent section.

2. SSE and 'everyday'/ informal peace

SSE serves as a critical locale for the performance of everyday peace. Everyday peace consists of the methods and practices that individuals and groups may implement to navigate their lives in deeply divided societies, prone to direct violence as well as chronic or structural inequities (Mac Ginty 2014). In contrast to top-down, institutionalized, and technocratic approaches to peace and peacebuilding – which may consist of programs, projects, and interventions designed by 'experts' to build peace and which may render local actors passive – everyday peace focuses on how individuals and groups enact and perform peace as part of living. Some of these practices might simply include employing coping strategies and building resilience. Some forms of everyday peace may involve avoidance, 'ritualized politeness,' or 'blame deferring,' i.e. practices that only permit a 'façade of normality (Mac Ginty 2014, 555). But everyday peace can also be the starting point by which people and

communities create dialogue surrounding the proximate sources of conflict and division, and collaborate towards finding solutions to common problems with indirect links to conflict. In their most ambitious form, everyday peace practices can be exercises in the 'pooling of micro-solidarities' (555), subverting top-down liberal diplomacy discourses that are the exclusive preserve of the political elite or international donors, and become a conduit for new forms of contact between previously divided groups.

SSE creates an arena where practices of 'everyday' peace are intrinsic to the tackling of immediate issues around goods or service delivery. This is especially manifest in contexts where conflict has destroyed the mechanisms for their provision, or where neoliberal post-conflict restructuring has diminished capacities. Murtagh (2016) details an example from Northern Ireland where previously divided Catholic and Protestant communities established dialogue with respect to traffic and road safety measures on a major arterial road intersecting both communities, forming a social enterprise for the purpose (the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project). This social enterprise went on to collaborate on an urban regeneration project that not only had a sizeable economic impact, but also led to a steep decline in violence and the transformation of attitudes toward the 'Other.' Murtagh (2016, 119) concludes that the generation of resources for the local economy by social enterprises enables a legitimate counter to 'sectarian, market, or neoliberal hegemonies.'

As such, in general, SSEOEs can play a critical role in creating informal channels of peacemaking and peacebuilding. In societies impacted by structural violence, discrimination and exploitation, the activities of cooperatives, trade unions, and credit unions have served to bridge divides, unite groups in a common cause, and promote non-violence and peace. One example is that of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat, India, which was founded in 1972 as a trade union based on the Gandhian principles of truth, non-violence, and service. The trade union was initially formed in order to take up issues faced by self-employed women working in the informal sector, including home-based workers, traders, street vendors, service providers, and construction workers. SEWA currently comprises a large number of cooperatives that organize women by profession, and are concerned with the provision of financial, health care, and social security services for these women and their families. As such, SEWA brings together women from a variety of caste and religious backgrounds under the umbrella of its cooperatives, in a context where gender-based inequality and religious and/or caste divides are significant. Ramnarain (2011) discusses the ways in which co-operative membership provided material resources and greater economic security to women, broadened their social and political awareness (against practices such as dowry, sexual harassment in the workplace, and domestic violence), and built their capacities to translate that awareness into action, both in their daily lives and in their communities. Women interviewed in the study recognized the close relationship between peace and social justice, and the important role of the cooperative in pressing for greater equity, especially in cases of gender-based violence and harassment, and caste or religious discrimination. Similar examples emerge from a study of Ghana's 'market women', who were able to use their associations, networks and trading relations to bridge political, social, and ethnic divides, promoting peace in their communities during and after ethnic clashes in 2012 (Bukari et al. 2021).

3. SSE and an alternative political economy of peace and non-violence

SSE provides an alternative economic paradigm for peace and peacebuilding. Material resources play a central role in conflicts and are integral to sustainable peace. The neoliberal macroeconomic restructuring that accompanies the liberal peace package is based on the assumption that policies that liberalize markets and globally orient an economy have the best chance of ensuring economic success, thus eliminating the rationale for conflict. Multiple commentators have, however, remarked on the counterintuitive nature of the neoliberal policy package in countries divided by conflict, structural violence, and social exclusion, and its distinctly illiberal outcomes. New inequalities may be produced and old ethnic/class divisions may be inflamed as social spending is curbed precisely when it is critical to the restoration of peace (Pugh 2006, Duffield 2010). Austerity policies, currency devaluation, and the removal of food subsidies have, in several contexts, led to a rise in unemployment, social polarization, and heightened tensions (see Ramnarain 2013 for examples).

SSEOEs can emerge as spaces for an alternative and radical political economy that challenges the liberal peace model, and its market- and profit-centric tenets. SSEOEs are typically characterized by the collective ownership of the means of production, cooperative forms of labour and the provision of employment as a social necessity, and/or the sharing of profits or the combined resources generated from group activities (also see the entry "The commons and SSE"). The ethos of SSE – that of social benefit, equity, and redistribution rather than the pursuit of profit – provides both a means of resistance to neoliberal ideals and a measure of protection in the face of rapid commodification of labour and resources resulting from neoliberal policies (see also Utting et al. 2014).

This is exemplified in the case of Nepal, which holds a long history of savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs). The SACCOs provided a buffer for its member populations both during its decade-long Maoist conflict (1996-2006), as well as in the period after the conflict, through resource pooling and financial inclusion in an economy that depends significantly on remittances from migrant workers. Ramnarain (2013) details the ways in which SACCOs – especially women's SACCOs – were an integral component of members' livelihood strategies, assisting women and conflict-affected communities with the provision of credit services, livelihood programs and training, and protection against abuse, persecution, and violence during conflict. The SACCOs and other agricultural and workers' cooperatives were also platforms for local integration across caste and ethnic lines. It is worth noting that as a result of the reputation of cooperatives as institutions invested in the self-reliance, education, and well-being of local communities, they were left unharmed during the violent, anti-state conflict that saw several attacks on other kinds of state property.

Sentama (2009) provides examples of Rwanda's coffee cooperatives, which promoted reconciliation in the post-genocide period through a focus on poverty alleviation. Although they were started with economic motivations in mind, contact, communication, commonality of purpose, and cooperation initiated progress towards the restoration of damaged interpersonal relationships. Sanchez-Bajo (2019) expands on socio-economic development as a central aspect of the revitalization of Rwanda's cooperatives in the post-genocide period, ensuring greater food security domestically,

and price stability for primary exports such as coffee and tea. The cooperatives ensured members' economic security by offering discounts on necessities and food to their members, the provision of credit, pooling logistics facilities such as transport fuel stations, paying members' health fees, and subsidizing equipment such as solar panels. Unlike the liberal model where peace is rendered subsidiary to economic restructuring, SSE emphasizes the provision of these critical forms of material security as an integral component of peace and non-violence.

Neoliberal economic prescriptions for peace also tend to focus investments on programs and infrastructure that purportedly enhance competitiveness and business innovation, which in turn, are assumed to create jobs and employment (Ramnarain 2013). Evidence indicates, however, that SSE can play an equally significant role in generating gainful livelihood and employment opportunities at higher wages. Jaffe (2015) provides examples of worker cooperatives in New York City that have enabled its members to earn much more than the minimum wage. Similarly, worker-recuperated enterprises – defined as previously capitalist enterprises that were closed down by their owners, reclaimed by workers and resumed under collective and democratic self-management – have, in many cases prevented overall job loss, created labour sovereignty, and transformed the private property into 'collective property with a social purpose' (Azzellini 2018, 764). These accounts hold promise for the role played by SSE in conflict- and crises-affected societies in employment generation or revitalization, as also demonstrated in the cases of Ireland (economic regeneration through a collaborative enterprise by previously warring factions), Nepal (women's small enterprise enabled by SACCO loans), and Rwanda (coffee cooperatives bringing gainful employment to, and also reconciliation between, victims and former perpetrators of genocide).

An often neglected aspect of building sustainable peace, especially in the aftermath of conflict or crisis, is the gendered work of care provision. In conflict-affected societies and in crisis situations, the task of meeting essential material and care needs of households and communities tends to be disproportionately placed on women. The importance of unpaid work and social provisioning for the sustenance of communities is ignored in top-down approaches, which emphasize the value of paid work that occurs in markets through formal policies and schemes of job creation and employment generation. SSE recognizes the diverse economic practices that make up the economy, including the interconnected activities of social provisioning that are essential for sustainable lives and livelihoods (Gibson-Graham 2006). For instance, besides providing financial services, other beneficial services within SACCOs in Nepal included: health camps for women and children to provide vaccination and health services in a time when the state was unable or unwilling to provide these services due to conflict; pooling of resources so children could be sent to school; and informal pooling of childcare so that women could engage in livelihood-related activities (Ramnarain and Bergeron 2019). SSE thus provides an alternative economic template that centralizes life-making in processes of economic recovery and sustainable peacebuilding.

4. SSE, equity, and participation in formal political processes and campaigns

Despite being a less popular strategy, SSEOEs can nevertheless play a crucial role in promoting peace through encouraging participation in formal political processes, in formal reconciliation or peacebuilding activities, and in campaigns for conflict resolution (also see the entry "Participation, governance, collective action, democracy and SSE"). In particular, SSEOEs may act to represent groups that may not otherwise be represented in these exercises. If conflict and violence are exercises in perverse collective action, SSEOEs have played a countering role by restoring the inter-relationships that conflict may have eroded and by providing local platforms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Indeed, the very functioning of SSEOEs in local communities depends upon consensus building and conciliation practices.

As Nepal's violent conflict came to an end in 2006, and its transition to a democratic republic commenced, SACCOs played a key role in educating their members about the new Constitution, ensured women's full participation in the Constituent Assembly elections, and collected and delivered women's ideas and opinions on how the new Constitution might be more gender-equitable and inclusive. SACCOs thus contributed to creating the social infrastructure for participatory democracy in Nepal (Ramnarain 2013).

A raison d'être of SSE is movement building and developing solidarity among workers and groups on the basis of common social and economic issues (also see the entry "Activism, social movements and SSE"). SEWA has, on multiple occasions, mobilized street vendors against police persecution and organized campaigns to influence municipal and national policies to better protect informal sector workers from everyday forms of violence. In the aftermath of the 2002 communal riots, SEWA ran rehabilitation and peacebuilding programs and SEWA members facilitated reconciliation dialogues in their communities (Ramnarain 2011). In the United States, Alvord et al. (2004) discuss the Highlander Research and Education Center in the US, which focuses on educational interventions designed to empower local actors struggling against powerful adversaries such as mining corporations or white power structures by providing technical assistance and capacity-building for labour unions or civil rights movements. In Ghana, Bukari and Guuroh (2013) highlight the manner in which youth and women's community groups undertook a range of interventions to alleviate ethnic conflict and tensions, including peace education, arms control, and mediation between groups in the aftermath of ethnic clashes.

The role of the SSE and collective action on the part of rural workers, demobilized combatants, small farmers, and cooperatives to resist forces of decollectivization, marketization, privatization, and economic liberalization in Nicaragua following the collapse of the Sandinista regime in 1990 is well documented by Utting et al. (2014). The issue of land redistribution was central to these struggles, and agricultural producers' organizations mobilized farmers into waves of protest and resistance in defence of their assets and livelihoods. It was the constant advocacy of the cooperative movement that led to further legislation supporting the cooperative sector in Nicaragua, thus enabling the successful participation of Nicaraguan coffee growers in the global fair-trade movement.

5. SSE, peace and non-violence: key challenges

Experiences from diverse contexts demonstrate that SSE and SSEOEs can play key roles in everyday strategies for peace and non-violence. They encapsulate an alternative political economy approach that emerges from local needs, emphasizing social provisioning, redistribution, and equitable economic security, empowering political strategizing and building solidarity at the grassroots levels. Despite their contributions, the SSE is interlinked with broader political, social, and economic landscapes and is not impervious to their influences. The dilemmas created by these influences are as follows:

- elite-capture;
- the exclusionary practices embedded in fractured ethno-nationalist/classist milieus;
- the potency of the liberal peace model s to mould the SSE to their own objectives through donor agendas, short project horizons, financial sustainability and marketization pressures; and
- the manipulation of SSE to “responsibilize” the local through self-help dicta and to socially engineer the local into governable terrain, especially on the backs of women’s work in these organization

These dilemmas are discussed extensively elsewhere (see, for instance, Cooke and Kothari 2001, Ramnarain 2013, Murtagh 2016 among others).

With regard to the connection of SSE and SSEOEs to peace and non-violence, a significant question arises in how SSEOEs and their practices can transition from simply reactive approaches of peace and non-violence to more proactive and transformative modes. Everyday peace and sustainable peace are not mutually exclusive. Borowiak et al. (2018) argue that SSE may provide contact zones where people of different backgrounds are brought together, but equity, inclusion, and participation do not occur without conscious efforts at trust-building. Further, peace, as Galtung (2011) suggests, could simply be the absence of violence (negative peace). Even as members of SSEOEs acknowledge that negative peace is inadequate and that social justice and equity are prerequisites for lasting peace (Ramnarain 2011), the degree to which SSEOEs and their practices are able to realize “positive peace” – the absence of structural violence and an egalitarian distribution of power and resources – is, however, ambiguous and variegated at best.

Finally, the principles of compromise and negotiation are fundamental to the operation of SSE. Internal compromises underpin the functioning of SSEOEs which may truncate the emancipatory potential of the SSE for peace and social justice. For instance, in order for SEWA to remain functional for its women members and to preserve its moral and practical legitimacy in the communally charged milieu of post-riot Gujarat, religious divides remain more under the radar than gender discrimination. The second type of compromise emerges due to a paucity of resources which is an especially pertinent constraint in conflict-affected contexts, where decreasing state support – driven in turn by neoliberal macroeconomic policies – can drive SSEOEs to look to donors for assistance. SSEOEs may then be forced to defer their longer-term transformative agendas in order to conform to the pressures of meeting funding conditionalities and timelines set by external donors, some of which reflect the very neoliberal ideologies and impulses that SSE seeks to resist (Ramnarain 2013).

The emergence, scaling-up, and expansion of the scope of SSEOEs is also a critical concern (Ramnarain and Bergeron 2019, Murtagh 2016). When SSEOEs are well-established prior to the conflict, they emerge as a credible and legitimate alternative political or economic space. There are very few examples, however, of SSE and SSEOEs that have emerged and remained functional in deeply divided communities (Murtagh's example from Northern Ireland, discussed above, is an exception). Continued research is required to understand the conditions under which a vibrant and inclusive SSE may emerge in socially fraught environments and how SSE spaces and enterprises might be interlinked horizontally, vertically, and in terms of depth in order to achieve sustainable peace.

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