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# BRIDGING PRACTICES: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ECONOMY IN BUILDING PEACE



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The main lesson that can be drawn from recent international events is that **future challenges are increasingly interconnected**: climate change, economic instability, its relation to the escalation from violent discourse to violent practice, the emerging need to promote the digital transition in a sustainable and inclusive manner, only to name a few. **It is a priority to multiply the actors and sectors involved in facing these challenges and facilitate cross-sector cooperation to ensure that suitable and sustainable solutions are identified.**

In Europe, social economy is experiencing a momentum of expansion and recognition marked by the adoption of the **Social Economy Action Plan by the European Commission**, in December 2021. With the action plan, the EU takes a **commitment to unfold the transformative potential of the social economy**, and **reaffirms its contribution to building more inclusive, sustainable, and just societies [1].**

There is no formal link that bridges social economy and the promotion and restoration of peaceful societies. **The objective of this article is to investigate the role Social Economy has in the creation of peaceful societies, start the conversation about the transformative potential of highlighting this connection, and widen the knowledge and awareness about the impact of social economy practices.**

From the 1990s, in the peacebuilding field, there is a growing consensus on **the need to put in place, alongside the emergency response, long term strategies to properly address the underlying causes of conflicts and identify shared, sustainable solutions that can favour systemic change [2].** This approach follows the idea that the underlying causes of conflicts are interconnected, often deeply rooted within societal dynamics, and dependable on the behaviours of international and national institutions, local actors and individuals.



This tendency well fits **the goals and characteristics of social entrepreneurs and the social and solidarity economy**, which is moved by the objective of changing the systemic rules of an unsustainable economic model that contribute to the creation and increase of inequalities, social injustices, and ultimately conflict: **Its purpose, in conflict resolution terms, is not the mitigation or the alleviation of violence, rather the end of the system that perpetuates it [3].**



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Social Economy is based on a human centred-approach, promotes democratic, social and environmental principles, and places its social mission before profits, which are fundamental elements in addressing and subverting the dynamics that characterise unequal, unjust and divided societies, while ensuring sustainable economic empowerment.

Here lies the potential for bridging these two practices: **if current global challenges are increasingly complex, it is fundamental to enhance the cooperation among sectors and bridge the actors involved in the long-term systemic change that is envisioned as the end goal for both social economy and peacebuilding.**

This primary awareness leaves space for further reflection and gathering of experiences from the field: **how can we consolidate the contribution of the social economy to peacebuilding, and what are the lessons learnt so far?** Are there specific practices, already being implemented, that could facilitate the process of orienting both fields' strategies and increase cooperation?

The potential implications for this bridging are several: social economy/peacebuilding practices could be implemented to increase resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change, increase the responses to favour migrants inclusion and integration, provide further conflict resolutions mechanisms, ensure sustainable economic empowerment while securing inter-community dialogue and cooperation.

**The main takeaway from this article is that there is space and value in this intersectoral cooperation, the avenues, implications, and possibilities are only to be discovered.**

The full article is available [here](#).

#### References:

- [1] Miklian J. (2019) The role of business in sustainable development and peacebuilding: Observing interaction effects, *Business and Politics* 2019; Issue 21, Vol. 4: 569-60.
- [2] IPI (2017) "Sustaining Peace: What Does It Mean in Practice?" Issue Brief.
- [3] Roshan Paul, What is Social entrepreneurship in peacebuilding? 30 December 2011, originally published on the Ashoka Peace Blog, available at: <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/articles/what-is-social-entrepreneurship-in-peacebuilding/?location=&theme=development>