



Andrea Salustri Ph.D.

Sapienza University of Rome, Istituto di Economia e Finanza,  
Facoltà di Giurisprudenza, Rome, Italy,  
andrea.salustri@uniroma1.it, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7403-6765>,  
<https://ideas.repec.org/f/psa1440.html>

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### ABSTRACT:

The research suggests how the full potential of the enterprises and organizations of the Social and Solidarity Economy in promoting sustainable development may be better understood by representing cultural, social, economic, and environmental issues within an integrated analytical framework. On these premises, an extended version of Coraggio's scheme (2015) is obtained by adding a fourth sector of economic activity, namely the global economy, as opposed to the popular economy. Looking at Coraggio's integrated scheme, an additional institutional space related to the social and solidarity economy emerges, representing the field of digital solidarity and cooperation. Then, the research helps to clarify what a local context is and how it relates to the notion of place. Finally, the notion of place is contrasted with the notion of system, as the attractiveness of the former depends on its distinctive features, while the latter emphasizes the instrumental value of its elements.

### RESUMEN:

La investigación sugiere cómo el pleno potencial de las empresas y organizaciones de la Economía Social y Solidaria para promover el desarrollo sostenible puede entenderse mejor al representar los problemas culturales, sociales, económicas y ambientales dentro de un marco analítico integrado. Sobre estas premisas, se obtiene una versión extendida del esquema de Coraggio (2015) agregando un cuarto sector de actividad económica, a saber, la economía global, en contraposición a la economía popular. Al observar el esquema integrado de Coraggio, surge un espacio institucional adicional relacionado con la economía social y solidaria, que representa el campo de la solidaridad y la cooperación digitales. Luego, la investigación ayuda a aclarar qué es un contexto local y cómo se relaciona con la noción de lugar. Finalmente, la noción de lugar se contrasta con la noción de sistema, ya que el atractivo del primero depende de sus rasgos distintivos, mientras que el segundo enfatiza el valor instrumental de sus elementos.

### RÉSUMÉ:

La recherche suggère comment le plein potentiel des entreprises et organisations de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire pour promouvoir le développement durable peut être mieux compris en représentant les problèmes culturels, sociaux, économiques et environnementaux dans un cadre analytique intégré. Sur ces prémisses, on obtient une version étendue du schéma de Coraggio (2015) en ajoutant un quatrième secteur d'activité économique, à savoir l'économie globale, par opposition à l'économie populaire. En observant le schéma intégré de Coraggio, apparaît un espace institutionnel supplémentaire lié à l'économie sociale et solidaire, qui représente le champ de la solidarité et de la coopération numériques. Ensuite, la recherche aide à clarifier ce qu'est un contexte local et comment il se rapporte à la notion de lieu. Enfin, la notion de lieu contraste avec la notion de système, puisque l'attrait du premier dépend de ses traits distinctifs, tandis que le second met l'accent sur la valeur instrumentale de ses éléments.

### RESUMO:

A investigação sugere como todo o potencial das empresas e organizações da Economia Social e Solidária para promover o desenvolvimento sustentável pode ser melhor compreendido através da representação de questões culturais, sociais, econômicas e ambientais dentro de um quadro analítico integrado. Sobre essas premissas, uma versão estendida do esquema de Coraggio (2015) é obtida adicionando um quarto setor de atividade econômica, a saber, a economia global, em oposição à economia popular. Ao observar o esquema integrado de Coraggio, surge um espaço institucional adicional relacionado com a economia social e solidária, representando o campo da solidariedade e cooperação digital. Também, a investigação ajuda a esclarecer o que é um contexto local e como ele se relaciona com a noção de lugar. Finalmente, a noção de lugar é contrastada com a noção de sistema, uma vez que o atraente do primeiro depende de seus traços distintivos, enquanto a segunda enfatiza o valor instrumental de seus elementos.

### KEYWORDS:

SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY  
ECONOMY ENTERPRISES  
AND ORGANIZATIONS,  
CULTURALLY SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT, DIGITAL  
SOLIDARITY.

### PALABRAS CLAVE:

EMPRESAS Y  
ORGANIZACIONES DE  
ECONOMÍA SOCIAL Y  
SOLIDARIA, DESARROLLO  
CULTURALMENTE  
SOSTENIBLE, SOLIDARIDAD

### MOTS-CLÉS:

ENTREPRISES ET  
ORGANISATIONS  
D'ÉCONOMIE  
SOCIALE ET SOLIDAIRE,  
DÉVELOPPEMENT  
CULTURELLEMENT  
DURABLE, SOLIDARITÉ  
NUMÉRIQUE.

### PALAVRAS CHAVE:

EMPRESAS E  
ORGANIZAÇÕES  
DE ECONOMIA  
SOCIAL E SOLIDÁRIA,  
DESENVOLVIMENTO  
CULTURALMENTE  
SUSTENTÁVEL,  
SOLIDARIEDADE DIGITAL.



## INTRODUCTION

This research aims at developing and further articulating the role of the enterprises and organizations of the Social Solidarity Economy (SSEOs) in implementing the 2030 Agenda and contributing to the post-COVID-19 recovery, by adding new institutional fields of analysis (i.e., a focus on the cultural dimension of sustainable development, the introduction of the global economy in Coraggio's scheme of interinstitutional relations, and the identification of evaluation mismatches related to the adoption of different analytical perspectives), and further analysing the motivational issues for participating in social and solidarity practices.

Almost twenty-five years ago, Nyssens wrote that “[m]odes of regulation still remain locked into the market-nonmarket dilemma, and this seems to indicate a certain ‘blindness’ to the plurality of modes of organization which are intermeshed in socio-economic life” (Nyssens, 1997, p. 172). Nowadays, while recognizing an increasing institutional diversity, and numerous episodes of crossfertilization among different institutional frameworks, it is worth noting how a wide share of the debate is still focused on the state-market relations, even when the organizations and institutions pertaining to both domains are not (the only) key players in providing effective responses to the issues at stake. A case is that of the effectiveness of the balanced budget rule, another is that one concerning the enforcement of human rights, and, finally, state-market relations are at the forefront of the debate on the environmental sustainability of the socioeconomic system. Of course, in all those cases state and market institutions play a crucial role in a shared (and multidimensional) development process, but other players have comparable, if not more relevant, roles in determining the outcome of the policies adopted and of the processes implemented. In fact, there is a vast set of social and cultural institutions operating formally and informally, as well as a restricted number of public bureaus and self-interested innovators that, due to the systemic relevance of the services they provide, have achieved a geopolitical power going beyond a substantial responsiveness to the civil society and to the public opinion. Consequently, as suggested by Nyssen (1997), this research aims at overcoming a “binary picture” considering only market and public institutions, as the current “social mosaic” is more complex. Specifically, a wider perspective is needed to encompass the human and institutional variety that nowadays characterizes social relations, both in everyday life and within cultural, political, economic, and technological organizations.

While being often overlooked due to their limited impact on the financial dimension and on the aggregate outcome of macroeconomic policies, the renewed interest for the wide set of social and solidarity economy enterprises and organizations (SSEOs) must be put into a relation with the consolidation of the global economy and with the systemic crises that hit the global society in the last fifty years. Then, it becomes manifest how, while having a scarce influence at the macro scale, SSEOs play a major role in local contexts providing support to marginalized social groups and triggering development in peripheral territories, where neither the market nor the state can satisfy the local demand (Salustri & Viganò, 2018). Beside their instrumental value, SSEOs play a fundamental role in reviving political debates on the enforcement of the human rights of those kept behind and in advocating democratic and self-managed organizational processes both at political and economic level. Furthermore, SSEOs may contribute to the identification of those idiosyncratic issues that characterize the localities, reviving the intangible heritage of places and contributing to the accumulation of new cultural capital by alimentering a process of culturally sustainable development. Finally, toward a mix of democratic experimentation and grassroots innovation, SSEOs may provide a not-negligible contribution to the environmental sustainability, fostering ecoefficient commoning practices and promoting a cultural change towards more sustainable consumption and production practices.

Lying on these premises, in Section 2 the main traits of the Social and Solidarity Economy are briefly summarized by drawing on RPIESS Global Vision. Then, Section 3 provides a more operational definition of the SSE, and briefly illustrates how UN agencies and other international institutions perceive the SSE. Section 4 and Section 5 analyze, respectively, the issues related to the legal recognition of the SSE and SSEOs' role within a market economy. Moreover, Section 6 illustrates a four-dimensional analytical framework that may be used to represent the sustainable development paradigm and to identify SSEOs' role in the process of the implementation of the SDGs. Finally, Section 7 proposes some reflections concerning the implementation of the SDGs in the localities.

## WHAT IS THE SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY?

Since the first Global Forum in 1997, the SSE is represented worldwide by a unique organization, that is, the Intercontinental network for the promotion of social solidarity economy (RIPESS). RIPESS has a macroregional articulation, in which continental “member networks [...] bring together national and sectorial networks, thus ensuring strong territorial anchoring”.<sup>1</sup> RIPESS promotes a systemic transformative change based on SSE’s action in all those localities where the existing system fails in satisfying people and planet’s needs, and on a more general commitment toward the globalization of solidarity. According to RIPESS Global Vision, the Social Solidarity Economy is “a pathway to transformative and systemic change” (RIPESS, 2015, p. 2). Specifically, the SSE “is an alternative to capitalism and other authoritarian, state-dominated economic systems. In SSE ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. [...]. It also aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and third sectors [...]. SSE is not only about the poor, but strives to overcome inequalities, which includes all classes of society. SSE has the ability to take the best practices that exist in our present system (such as efficiency, use of technology and knowledge) and transform them to serve the welfare of the community based on different values and goals” (RIPESS, 2015, p. 2).

RIPESS definition of the SSE emphasizes its ethical and value-based nature,<sup>2</sup> as well as its political nature. Also, it emphasizes the multidimensional and multistakeholder approach to a transformative change based on poverty eradication and contrasting inequalities, pluralism, and welfare-enhancing grassroots innovation. Specifically, the SSE advocates a transformative action that “goes beyond superficial change in which the root oppressive structures and fundamental issues remain intact” (RIPESS, 2015, p. 2), by actively recreating aspirations and by learning how to prevent the numerous forms of discrimination and oppression.

RIPESS Global Vision emphasizes the value and the plurality of forms of self-management and collective ownership (sometimes redefined as collegial management), especially of workers ownership and workplace democracy, independently from their legal recognition. Furthermore, it recognizes the value of monetized and non-monetized work and exchanges as a source of “valuable output” and workers’ “satisfaction, happiness, and social recognition” (RIPESS, 2015, p. 6). Then, it connects the SSE to social movements fighting for social and economic justice and to environmental movements, prospecting bilateral and multilateral alliances (but not a unique platform), and fostering an influence through advocacy on political parties and national governments (RIPESS, 2015, pp. 6-7). Finally, RIPESS’ Global Vision fosters alliances with the popular and informal economy, with organic, green, and fair-trade organizations, and with consumers organizations anchoring social practices (RIPESS, 2015, p. 8).

## HOW UN AGENCIES PERCEIVE THE SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

Two years before the signature of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations (UN) created a task force “to rethink development in the wake of multiple global crises” and to compensate the insufficient attention paid to the SSE in the post2015 development agenda.<sup>3</sup> The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE) is participated by numerous UN and international organizations as members and by several other organizations as observers. In few years, the amount of information publicly available on the SSE and its enterprises and organizations has grown exponentially, and consequently it is now possible to draw a complete picture of a sector of activity that so far was rather overlooked.

According to the UNTFSSSE, the “Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) encompasses organizations and enterprises that: 1) have explicit economic and social (and often environmental) objectives; 2) involve varying degrees and forms of cooperative, associative and solidarity relations among workers, producers and consumers; 3) practice workplace democracy and selfmanagement”.<sup>4</sup> Also, the UNTFSSSE underlines the variety of institutions taking part to the SSE, including, among others, “traditional forms of cooperatives and mutual associations, as well as women’s

1 About RIPESS - RIPESS

2 The values expressed in the RIPESS Charter are the following: humanism, democracy, solidarity, inclusiveness, subsidiarity, diversity, creativity, sustainable development, equality, equity and justice for all, integration of countries and people, plural and solidarity-based economic development (RIPESSM, 2015, pp. 4-5).

3 <https://unsse.org/about/>

4 <https://unsse.org/sse-and-the-sdgs/>



self-help groups, community forestry groups, social provisioning organizations or 'proximity services', fair trade organizations, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprises, and community currency and alternative finance schemes".<sup>5</sup>

According to a recent report by UNIDO (2017), the SSE "is an umbrella concept bringing together two different perspectives, namely social economy and solidarity economy (p. 11). The "social economy" focuses on "social and environmental concerns" and is "perceived as being complementary to the private sector that seeks profit maximization at the expense of society and the environment" (UNIDO, 2017). In contrast, the solidarity economy "seeks to transform the whole social and economic system, giving primacy to the welfare of people and preserving the environment over primacy to profit maximization and economic growth" (UNIDO, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

According to a recent report by ILO, SSEEEOs "respond to current global challenges, thereby contributing to a more inclusive world of work based on social justice, meaningfulness and sustainability" (Fontaneau & Pollet, 2020, p. 15). Specifically, SSEEEOs provide a critical contribution in: i) (re)embedding economic activities in local social systems, ii) organizing economic actors and facilitating transition to a more formalized social status; iii) experimenting participatory governance and promoting a renewed social dialogue; iv) searching for sustainable economic performances while focusing on social purposes; v) finding meaningfulness in work; vi) foreshadowing the network society; vii) partnering with public institutions in the design and implementation of sound public (especially welfare) policies; viii) financing social policies through innovative financial instruments (Fontaneau & Pollet, 2020).

According to the UNDP, SSEEEOs may contribute to the implementation of the SDGs in local contexts by "acting as catalysts of a transition to more sustainable and resilient societies". Specifically, SSEEEOs can contribute to "leveraging the economic potential of territories whilst promoting socio-economic cohesion and resilience through more balanced, sustainable and inclusive development models and outcomes".<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, "enabling policy and institutional frameworks, and integrated local and multi-level governance and planning systems can serve as multipliers of the impact, sustainability and scale of SSE practices" (ibidem). In this perspective, the SSE may be conceived as "an alternative productive model that can raise the capacity of territories to compete within regional and global value chains" (ibidem). Also, UNEP has identified "links between SSE and local economic development, public policy and law, environmental protection, food security/agricultural development and sustainable cities", and is striving to achieve "inclusiveness and poverty alleviation through green economy".<sup>8</sup>

Of course, the most relevant contribution to the analysis of the SSE is provided by UNRISD, that launched its first inquiry on the SSE still in 2012, followed by a conference on potential and limits of the SSE in 2013, that led to the creation of the UNTFSSE.<sup>9</sup> Beside the involvement in the implementation of the UNTFSSE's SSE Knowledge Hub for the SDGs, UNRISD launched two major projects concerning the promotion of SSEEEOs through local public policies, and the measurement of the contribution of the SSE to the implementation of the SDGs. Furthermore, UNRISD was recently involved in three projects concerning the relations among the SSE, urban communities, and vulnerable groups, the feminist analysis of SSE practices in Latin America and India, and the contribution of the SSE to the implementation of the SDGs. Finally, after 2013 UNRISD hosted three major conferences on the SSE, concerning social and solidarity finance, SSE's role in implementing the SDGs, and the promotion of the SSE through (local) public policies.

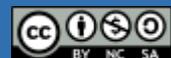
5 A similar definition is the following: "[t]he SSE encompasses a vast coalition of enterprises and organizations: associations, cooperatives, social enterprises, microfinance organizations, mutual benefit societies, NGOs, "which produce goods, services and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity" (UNTFSSE, 2014).

6 Beside the social and the solidarity economy, UNIDO also recognizes the rise of a "fourth sector", consisting of forbenefit organizations sharing two characteristics: advance social benefit and generate a substantial portion of income from business activities (UNIDO, 2017, p. 13).

7 <https://unsse.org/about/members/undp/>

8 <https://unsse.org/about/members/unesp/>

9 <https://unsse.org/about/members/unrisd/>



## THE LEGAL RECOGNITION OF THE SSE

As stated in a recent paper by UNRISD, “[t]he institutionalization of participation in decision-making processes is a powerful tool to support the development of SSE” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021, p. 2), and “[a]n effective course of action to meet these diverse aims is the co-construction of public policies for SSE by multiple stakeholders including government and SSE actors” (p. 5). Specifically, the co-construction of public policies can be framed within formal institutional set-ups, and/or informal arrangements between government and actors associated with SSE (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021, p. 8).

Furthermore, “adequate legal frameworks play a fundamental role in strengthening SSE ecosystems across all levels of governance [...]” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021, p. 11). Particularly, “[e]nabling laws and policies at various territorial levels (supranational, national, and sub-national) can significantly enhance the recognition, consolidation and expansion of SSE” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). In fact, legal recognition for SSEOs can take on diverse forms, and in the last decade there has been a multiplication of governmental and urban initiatives that support and promote social and solidarity economy at territorial level.<sup>10</sup> The adoption of SSE legal frameworks is often the outcome of “a ‘bottom-up’ process in which growth of the SSE sector at the grassroot level precedes the adoption of SSE-specific laws” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021, p. 12). [...] Consequently, “[d]epending on political and institutional context, laws on SSE can be adopted at the subnational level, sometimes as precursors to national level legislative action” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). Laws on SSE “can be classified into laws or legal frameworks on

SSE as a whole and laws or legal frameworks on specific types of [...] [SSEOs]” (p. 12). Concerning the latter, two approaches to defining SSEOs can be identified in laws: the legal institutional approach and the normative approach, and most laws adopt both. Based on these approaches, a wide range of SSEOs is legally recognized and defined, including: cooperatives, non-profit organizations, mutuals, foundations, and social enterprises (ibidem, p. 14).

While the absence of SSEOs’ legal recognition, or the design of an inadequate legal framework, may have a negative impact on the evolution of contemporary welfare state toward a “solidaritycentered welfare state”, SSEOs’ recognition within national, regional, and local legal frameworks may enable the implementation of the principle of solidarity, at social, political, economic level, but also at technological level. At social level, SSEOs play a fundamental role in anchoring commoning practices, providing people with an enabling environment for participating in local initiatives inspired to principles of redistribution, solidarity, and mutualism. At political level, it is worth noting how SSEOs adopt and disseminate forms of democratic governance and selfmanagement models of organization. Furthermore, in their interaction with the public sector, they may advocate the full implementation of the state of law, in a global scenario that since Seventies induced, instead, a retrenchment of the welfare state, followed, since the beginning of the New Millennium, by increasing difficulties in enforcing human and social rights. During the same years, legal studies made further improvements in the design of more comprehensive theory of social rights, that nowadays include four generations of rights:<sup>11</sup> civil and political rights (first generation), economic, social, and cultural rights (second generation), rights to peace, development, safe and healthy environment, and use of natural resources (third generation), and future generations rights (fourth generation) (Pocar, 2018). As the third and fourth generation of rights exert an influence over the life of all human beings, their implementation requires a common action and a common responsibility. Consequently, only by means of a “synergic solidarity” based on mutualism and altruism, common needs and aspirations concerning peace, quality of life, “unpolluted liberties”, and digital freedoms will be satisfied (Pérez-Luño, 2016).

## THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF SSEOS

At operational level, the retrenchment of welfare state calls for an expansion of SSEOs’ economic role, particularly in the current scenario of crisis. In fact, while people and institutions are still coping with the most harmful consequences of the covid crisis, there is a not-negligible risk that the fragmentation of social relations and the asymmetric impacts of the related socioeconomic shocks will radicalize the individual propensity to elaborating exit strategies in response to societal challenges. Instead, by anchoring mutualistic and solidaristic initiatives, SSEOs

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ripess.org/working-areas/public-policies-and-legislation/?lang=en>

<sup>11</sup> In opposition to the classification of human rights in “generations” Pocar (2018) notices how “human rights are inherent in human being and do not depend on their recognition under the law, which is only relevant for their protection, as it clearly derives from the 1948 Universal Declaration” (p. 1).

incentivize individuals to participating on voluntary basis in commoning and cooperative practices, and to operate some redistribution informally (Salustri, 2021).

Mainstream economics still hesitates (and sometimes fails) to recognize, beside its political value, the instrumental value of voice (here intended as participation in activities anchored by SSEEOs) in elaborating a way out of global crises. However, recalling Hirschman's discourse, voice "should complement and occasionally supersede exit as a recuperation mechanism when business firms, public services, and other organizations deteriorate" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 431). Consequently, during crises, rather than investing in the most competitive territories and social groups to benefit of efficiency gains, it may result more convenient to narrow the social and territorial imbalances and to eradicate epistemic injustices to put the economy on a sustainable pattern of development.

Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis "is, above all, a human crisis that calls for solidarity",<sup>12</sup> as it "has increased the level of uncertainty at the economic and work level", and "this situation does not affect everyone the same way" (UNTFSSSE, 2020, p. 3). In fact, inequalities within and across countries are deepening and differentiating their impact because of the crisis, fueling a need of resilient transformation (this is the novelty with respect to the previous crisis of 2008) toward a sustainable common future. But this, in turn, calls for a collective reflection on the root causes of the epistemic injustices that are keeping large strata of population behind.

Within this scenario, SSEEOs may play a crucial role, but to unleash their full potential, they need the support of public institutions. Specifically, the co-construction and co-implementation of supportive policies in favour of SSEEOs must contribute to levelling the playing field with forprofit organizations according to a principle of equal treatment. In turn, the existence of supportive regulations and fiscal exemptions for SSEEOs may foster the consolidation and further development of the SSE, and the latter may act as a driver of resilient transformation toward sustainable development, enhancing workers' productivity, creating new jobs, and opening new opportunities for social businesses.

On the other hand, it is worth noting how SSEEOs are made of people, and large strata of population are facing dramatic losses along all the dimensions of human development (health, education, decent income) and among their affections. Consequently, an improved access to healthcare, education, and a more pervasive income redistribution may be key factors in stimulating empowerment and participation in social and solidarity initiatives of those who are more exposed to the harshest consequences of the crisis.

Furthermore, at technological level, SSEEOs may facilitate a shift from the ongoing process of commodification towards a process of commonification of patents and, more in general, of innovation (Broumas, 2017), fostering an inclusive knowledge economy sustained by effective processes of dissemination of innovative products and services satisfying emerging people's needs. More in general, SSEEOs may counterbalance the economies of agglomeration and proximity that nowadays characterize central places, that are, those poles leading a process of technological progress. Agglomeration and proximity, if by one side are of fundamental importance in fostering competitiveness and catching-up processes both at technological and economic level, on the other hand are often associated with the marginalization and the exclusion of large population strata. A development paradigm driven by two engines of development, one endogenous based on innovation and competitive markets, one exogenous based on solidarity and social capital, may combine the benefits of technological progress with a fair distribution of economic and social benefits across the whole population.

## SSEEOs IN A FOUR-DIMENSIONAL FRAMEWORK OF GLOBALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Beside their human and social purposes, in the localities SSEEOs may play a crucial role both in expanding the access to services of collective interest and in triggering bottom-up processes of development (UNTFSSSE, 2014). Specifically, their action encompasses the three dimensions of sustainable development (the social, the economic, and the environmental dimension), but the element of novelty identified and further clarified in this paper is the recognition of a fourth dimension of sustainability, that is, the cultural dimension. Specifically, a four-dimensional framework of analysis may provide an integrated view of human and sustainable patterns of development, making, on the one hand, human development more interconnected with other issues in development studies, and, on the other hand, sustainable development less utopistic.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/above-all-human-crisis-calls-solidarity>

As stated in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), “sustainable development [...] meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 3). But here it is worth noting how “[t]he concept of needs goes beyond simply material needs and includes values, relationships, freedom to think, act, and participate, all amounting to sustainable living, morally, and spiritually” (Shah, 2008, p. 2). Then, the three-dimensional framework involving the social, the economic, and the environmental dimension, and their intersections may reveal inadequate to represent the complexity of the sustainable development paradigm. According to UNESCO,<sup>13</sup> in fact, sustainable development involves an additional dimension (namely culture), that is associated to improvements of people’s quality of life, and that, if considered as transversal to the other three dimensions, may be at risk of being overlooked. Clearly, quality of life and human development are both people centred paradigms, even if they have been conceptualized in different contexts for different purposes. Specifically, the former is defined by the WHO as “individuals’ perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the human development approach is “about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on people and their opportunities and choices”.<sup>16</sup>

By no means, the social dimension of sustainable development is focused on contrasting poverties, narrowing inequalities, and emphasizing diversities.<sup>15</sup> Still before the spread of COVID-19, multidimensional inequalities among people and territories were rapidly increasing, and the perception of widespread and rising social injustice was fueling resentment, but no collective strategy of development followed. To make this happen in the post covid scenario, there is need of an explicit recognition of the cultural dimension to foster a generative approach to sustainable development. Throsby (1995) defines culturally sustainable development as a process that encompasses both the idea of cultural development in its own right, according to culture an independent and valued role within society, where culture is intended as a set of attitudes and practices that can be instrumental in supporting, constraining, and/or contributing to economic and social development in the widest sense (Throsby, 1995, p. 202). In brief, the cultural dimension of sustainable development may contribute to improve the individual and collective “conversion factors” of resources in functionings and capabilities (Kuklys & Robeyns, 2003). Furthermore, the cultural dimension of sustainable development may provide that “thrivability” placed by numerous authors at the basis of the alignment among prosperity, abundance, and wealth. A promising debate is ongoing on the linkage between the four concepts, and in a certain way it resembles that one concerning the three (or four) dimensions of sustainable development. Finally, and most of all, the cultural dimension may promote the alignment among identity dynamics and the process of resilient transformation toward sustainable development, in a context where, instead, there is a non-negligible risk that the resilient transformation toward sustainability may favour a “liquid” conception of life based on consumerism (Bauman, 2006) to the detriment of more desirable and authentic forms of human development.

To sum up, the analysis suggests how the cultural dimension may play a role in the implementation of the SDGs, especially in the social and territorial localities, as people and communities are the main SSEEOS’ stakeholders and valueholders, and the quality and the consistency of their tangible and intangible heritage may be a crucial determinant in the design and implementation of common and generative development strategies. Lying on these premises, this research introduces an extended version of the scheme proposed by Coraggio (2015) by adding a fourth sector of economic activity, that is, the global economy, in opposition to the popular economy.

Coraggio’s scheme contrasted three polarities (government, market, and popular economy), placing SSEEOS at the intersection. His approach is consistent with that one proposed by Nyssens (1997), and more in general with a vast literature conceptualizing SSEEOS as a third way between the market and the state. However, it seems appropriate to consider a fourth polarity, that is, that part of the economy focused on a technologically led development enabling global value chains pursuing increasing returns to scale (say, the global economy).

<sup>13</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd/sd>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.who.int/tools/whoqol> <sup>16</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev>

<sup>15</sup> According to Talan et al. (2020), “From a social perspective, human wellbeing cannot be sustained without safe surroundings, a healthy environment and the presence of a vibrant economy that can fulfill all the basic needs of the communities residing nationally or globally. Government makes policies for the uplifting of social communities to achieve social sustainability but, alongside this, every nation needs informed citizens who participate actively. This is the essence of democracy and is essential for the protection of basic human rights. The three fundamental goals of social sustainable development are poverty reduction, social investment, and safe and caring communities. Nations, social communities and corporate communities are required to work together to achieve these goals”.

Consequently, on the one hand, an informal sector can be recognized, made of “unstructured economic activities” (Nyssens, 1997, p. 173). Since the recognition of an informal sector during Seventies, “both the popular economy developing in the big cities of the Third World and the nonprofit organizations emerging in the North have given rise to an abundant literature which questions existing theoretical frameworks”, as, by introducing “specific forms of socio-economic organization, these phenomena challenge the way in which modern models of development conceive of the market-state relationship” (Nyssens, 1997, p. 171). The popular economy is aligned in many ways with the solidarity economy because the actors often find collective ways to provide for social and economic needs (Kawano, 2013).<sup>16</sup> While the concept of SSE has been extensively analyzed in the previous sections, here the concept of popular economy deserves further attention. Specifically, the latter includes “a wide range of economic activities, developed individually or at a family level by the lower-income classes, with a specific economic rationality aiming to provide subsistence and reproduction of life of the members and their families” (van Zeeland, 2014, p. 2).

On the other hand, the main actors of the global economy are indeed large public and private organizations usually operating under monopolistic regimes at increasing returns to scale (state-owned enterprises, large multinational corporations, big-tech and digital platforms...). The global economy is the by-product of the space economy, that is, of the process of spatial development initiated after the end of the Second World War with the space race between the Western and the Eastern Block that led to disruptive innovations in the field of telecommunication and remote sensing, then to the advent of the world wide web and of personal computers, and finally to the popularity of mobile phones and smartphones after the beginning of the new Millennium. At the end of Nineties, the global economy dematerialized and evolved in the new economy, and in the last decade the latter triggered the digital revolution, generating pervasive spillovers on all sectors of social and economic life.

The interaction between the popular economy and the global economy (in particular, among SSEEOS and the new economy) may have either a cooperative, either a conflicting nature. In case of a conflict, people may perceive the global economy as a social construct legitimating a substantive expropriation of local resources, while public and private decision makers may overlook the local impacts of their decisions and may not consider SSEEOS as relevant partners or key interlocutors in the implementation of locally sustainable development policies. This vision is coherent with Nyssens’ discourse over the rise of capitalism: “[t]he victory of capitalist industry resulted from the fight between two modes of production, the ‘local social productive’ one and that of the mercantile elite. [...] [I]t was not the industry rising up from the bottom which triumphed, but rather the industry imposed and imported by the big merchants and protected by the state” (Nyssens, 1997, p. 175).

On the other hand, by integrating Coraggio’s scheme with the fourth pole of the global economy, it emerges an additional intersection with the social and solidarity economy (SSE) that may represent the space of the digital solidarity and cooperation, that is, a vast set of non-profit institutions pursuing goals as managing and reproducing the digital commons, fostering a sustainable use of natural resources, leading scientific research on climatic issues, preserving and deepening the ongoing digitalization process, evaluating new technologies for the exploration of outer spaces and fostering their re-use for socioeconomic purposes. Clearly, digital SSEEOS are gaining momentum within the SSE, especially in the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, as beside a short run effect of de-globalization, the digital revolution is becoming pervasive.

However, the digital revolution, if not supported by social and solidarity movements fostering a process of social innovation and cultural change, may raise issues concerning the persistence of multidimensional inequalities and the advent of new poverties, mostly related to the existence (and persistence) of a digital divide affecting a wide share of world population. Specifically, “almost half of the world’s population is not connected, particularly in poor countries”, and less developed countries “had almost no fixed-broadband connections owing to the high cost and lack of infrastructure” (UN, 2020, p. 59). In this scenario, it is worth noting how digital SSEEOS are promoting citizens mobilization by means of virtual mutual aid networks, providing a significant contribution to the rise of a generation of local activists operating at a hyperlocal scale (Georgeou, 2020). This phenomenon may be contextualized in the broader process of digitalization of cultural and social relations triggered by the adoption of social distancing measures, and consequently is mostly rooted in the action of established grassroots initiatives (Georgeou, 2020). Furthermore, this process is creating new translocal networks by incentivizing the coalescence among local initiatives, providing an alternative and more desirable approach to the “liquid life” (Bauman, 2006) offered by globalized pattern of development.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unrisd.org/thinkpiece-kawano&cntxt=F7711&cookielang=es>

## IMPLEMENTING THE SDGS IN THE LOCALITIES

To conclude the discussion on the role of SSEEEOs in implementing the SDGs in social and territorial localities, the research contributes to clarifying what a local context is and how it relates with the concept of place. To the purpose of this research, a local context is a portion of space, while a place is the multidimensional landscape (sensible and rational) that qualifies space (or a portion of it). Specifically, the notion of local context is opposed to the notion of global context, as they are at the antipodes of a continuum of geographic scales. Furthermore, the notion of place is contrasted to the notion of system, as the attractiveness of the former depends on its distinctive characteristics, while the latter emphasizes the instrumental and functional value of its elements.

**Table. 1. Local and global scales, places and systems**

		Spatial framework	
		Place	System
Geographic	Local	<b>Local places</b>	<b>Local systems</b>
scale	Global	<b>Global place</b>	<b>Global system</b>

Source: By author.

Of course, there is an interaction among local and global places and local and global systems, but as already discussed in a previous contribution (Salustri *et al.*, 2018) without the filter of intermediate institutions (regional, national, international...), a conflict may arise between local and global goals as well as between place-based and systemic approaches. If this is the case, the existence of intermediate bodies is of paramount importance in narrowing imbalances and turning potential conflicts into a synergic dialogue generating multidimensional benefits.

In this perspective, when discussing the implementation of the SDGs at the local scale, a first goal of the analysis should be that of identifying the alignment between global/local and placebased/systemic concerns. Furthermore, rational measures and concerns should be integrated with an assessment of the “unmeasurables” to have a complete picture of the phenomenon under inquiry. Moreover, the need of an institutional filter provided by intermediate public and private entities (i.e., state and market institutions populating intermediate scales) should be explicitly recognized and the intensity of the filter should be modulated accordingly.

Lying on these premises, it becomes manifest how the occurrence of a divergence in the evaluation of a phenomenon may depend on the scale adopted to measure its relevance, but also on the kind of value measured (intrinsic or instrumental, individual, or collective). Consequently, an evaluation may provide diverging results according to the perspective adopted (cultural, social, environmental, economic), where the four perspectives considered are obtained by intersecting geographic scales (local, global) and spatial frameworks of analysis (place, system).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the last fifty years, beside state and market organizations, other players have entered in the social arena, and nowadays exert comparable, if not more relevant, influence on the outcome of political and economic processes. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance to overcome a binary conception of the institutional matrix (North, 1990) focused on market and public organizations, as the latter is nowadays more complex. The current “social mosaic” requires the elaboration and adoption of a broad perspective of analysis, that may encompass, on the one hand, a wide array of social and solidarity enterprises and organizations (SSEEEOs), and, on the other hand, those private and public organization that are contributing to the consolidation of the global economy.

This research has focused the attention on SSEEEOs. Specifically, it has been recognized how the latter exert a general commitment toward the globalization of solidarity. Furthermore, SSEEEOs advocate a systemic transformative change, especially in the social and territorial localities where the socioeconomic system fails in satisfying people and planet’s needs.

While recognizing the merit of the UNTFSSSE in identifying the role of the SSE in the implementation of the SDGs and in making publicly available a wide amount of information on SSEEEOs, it is worth noting how the “ethical and value-based” nature of the SSE and the flexibility of SSEEEOs’ organizations make this sector more “evanescent”

that what may be deducted by the well-defined and structural definition required to operationalize the concept. That makes SSEEOs' legal recognition a complex issue, that, however, cannot be overlooked, as the implementation of the principle of solidarity at socioeconomic level may be thought as a first step to satisfy common needs and aspirations concerning peace, quality of life, "unpolluted liberties", and digital freedoms within the consolidated framework of the welfare state (Pérez-Luño, 2016).

In fact, to unleash their full potential, SSEEOs need the support of public institutions, in terms of co-construction and co-implementation of supportive policies that may level the playing field with for-profit organizations according to a principle of equal treatment. On the other hand, as SSEEOs are made of people, to incentivize the participation in social and solidarity initiatives of those who are more exposed to the harshest consequences of the crisis, an improved access to healthcare, education, and a more pervasive income redistribution is needed. At political level, by anchoring mutualistic and solidaristic initiatives, SSEEOs contrast the individual propensity to elaborating exit strategies in response to societal challenges by incentivizing individuals to participating on voluntary basis in commoning and cooperative practices, and to operating some redistribution informally (Salustri, 2021). At economic level, SSEEOs may counterbalance the economies of agglomeration and proximity that characterize central places, by anchoring bottomup and inclusive initiatives that may trigger development in marginalized and peripheral localities. Finally, at technological level, SSEEOs may foster an inclusive knowledge economy by facilitating a shift from the ongoing process of commodification towards a process of commonification of patents and, more in general, of innovation.

At theoretical level, it is commonly accepted that SSEEOs' action encompasses the three dimensions of sustainable development (the social, the economic, and the environmental one), but a fourth dimension of sustainability in which SSEEOs play a major role can be recognized (i.e., the cultural dimension). Specifically, to elaborate a collective design of social advancement in a context characterized by people's resentment for the persistence of multidimensional inequalities and increasing social injustice, there is need of an explicit recognition of the cultural dimension, as the latter may enable generative approaches to sustainable development, rather than zero-sum games or regressive interactions that may put at risk the inclusiveness and universalism of this paradigm. Furthermore, notwithstanding a non-negligible risk that the resilient transformation toward sustainability may favour a consumeristic and liquid conception of life, the cultural dimension may promote the alignment among identity dynamics and the process of resilient transformation toward sustainability by providing stability in the work-life balance and people-centred approaches to development. Lastly, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of people and territories may play a role in the implementation of the SDGs, as it may be a crucial resource in the design and implementation of common and generative local development strategies.

Theoretical advances need to find a confirmation in the structure of the institutional matrix, where, rather than cultural institutions, global actors seem to deserve specific consideration. Consequently, this research introduces an extended version of Coraggio's scheme by adding a fourth sector of economic activity, that is, the global economy, in opposition to the popular economy. The main actors of the global economy are indeed large public and private organizations usually operating under monopolistic regimes advocating an organization of business based on global value chains, enabled and supported by the digital revolution. Within the SSE, the integrated Coraggio's scheme leads to the identification of a relatively new area of action, namely the digital solidarity, in addition to the already established digital cooperation.

To conclude, if not supported by a process of social innovation and cultural change triggered by SSEEOs, the digital revolution may involuntarily support the persistence of multidimensional inequalities and the advent of new poverties, mostly related to the wide digital divide both within and among generations. On the other hand, the digital solidarity may contribute to creating translocal networks of local initiatives, that may provide an alternative and more desirable approach to the "liquid" and consumeristic life offered by the global economy. However, this process of "local reshoring" should be mediated by intermediate bodies (i.e., state and market institutions) to narrow imbalances and turn potential conflicts among the global and the popular economy into a synergic dialogue generating multidimensional shared benefits. In this perspective, mediators need to mature a transdisciplinary vision of social relations that may overcome those methodological boundaries supporting partisan approaches.

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