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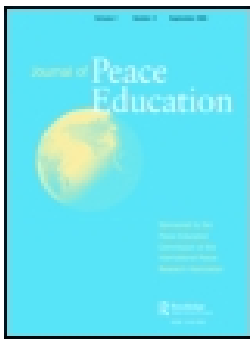
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Ana Margarida Esteves

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Peace education for the Anthropocene? The contribution of regenerative ecology and the ecovillages movement

Ana Margarida Esteves 

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), Centro de Estudos Internacionais, Lisboa, Portugal

ABSTRACT

The security risks posed by the Anthropocene requires peace education strategies aimed at developing the skills necessary for the emergence of regenerative social forms, based on sustainable synergies between humans and nature. This article explores how community-building and regenerative ecology frameworks developed in ecovillages can contribute to that goal, through the case study analysis of the peace education initiative carried out in Israel and the West Bank by Tamera – Healing Biotope I, an ecovillage located in southern Portugal. The findings illustrate the difficulty of creating regenerative social forms through the reproduction of whole system ideal models for sustainable human settlements, due to the vulnerability of intentional communities to the internal reproduction of ethnopolitical loyalties and conflicts. They also illustrate how a combination of local embeddedness and transnational connections contribute to the diffusion of social innovations produced in ecovillages. However, local ethnopolitical organizations and movements tend to promote resistance to the adoption of externally produced frameworks for the development of competences of collaborative sociability and non-violent conflict resolution. The article concludes with an appeal to a transdisciplinary collaboration among scholars, practitioners and public institutions in the development of synergistic models of peace education that are multipliable, but context-sensitive.

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Introduction

How can methodologies and technologies developed in ecovillages contribute to strategies of peace education that respond to the challenges of the Anthropocene? So far, scholarship on peace education tended to focus on the promotion of attitudinal and behavioral changes through the classroom-based transmission of curricula for understanding conflict and peace, as well as norms and strategies for non-violent sociability. The relationship between humans and the natural world is generally understood as a matter of access to commodities or factors of production. Only recently has the role of synergies and feedback loops between ecosystems and

societies been taken into account in the understanding of conflict and peace. On the other hand, scholarship on regenerative ecology tended to neglect how social forms and technologies that prefigure sustainability transitions interact with wider social structures, influencing their level of conflict, as well as the ability to solve it in a non-violent manner. It also neglected how local embeddedness and transnational connectedness (Avelino et al. 2019) impacts the multiplication of such social forms and technologies, as well as their adaptation to local contexts.

This article explores the above question through a literature review and the case study analysis of the peace education initiatives carried out in Israel and the West Bank by Tamera – Healing Biotope I. This ecovillage, located in ‘Monte Cerro’, a rural estate 25km north of the town of Odemira, in the Portuguese region of Alentejo, was founded in 1995 by a group of settlers originating from the Central European countercultural milieu. Tamera is the first ecovillage that self-identified as a ‘Peace Research and Education Center’¹. Its earliest and long-standing peace education activities happened in Israel and the West Bank.

The article begins with a dialogue between literature on peace education, regenerative ecology and the ecovillages movement. It suggests that the methodologies of the ecovillage movement contain a new approach to peace education, hereby defined as synergistic. After the methodological section, it continues with the analysis of Tamera’s peace education activities in Israel and the West Bank. Their analysis illustrates the difficulties of creating regenerative social forms through the reproduction of ideal models, due to a lack of embeddedness in local dynamics and institutions. These activities also illustrate how transnational connections, when combined with local embeddedness, contribute to the diffusion of social innovations produced in ecovillages. However, they also indicate that embeddedness in local ethnopolitical organizations and movements restricts the diffusion of context-sensitive methodologies for the development of competences of collaborative sociability and non-violent conflict resolution. The article concludes with an appeal to scholars and practitioners to take into account insights from scholarship on transformative social innovation and engage public institutions in the development of synergistic models of peace education that are multipliable, but context-sensitive.

Towards a synergistic approach to peace education

Promoting skills for regenerative social forms in the Anthropocene

Climate change-related resource scarcity and migration are increasing the risk of conflict worldwide, fueling inter-group tensions and political extremisms that threaten institutional stability and the rule of law (Schellnhuber 2008; Rogers 2017; Rogers and Reeve 2018; Abel et al. 2019). Controlling these threats requires addressing the erosion of traditional social forms and social knowledge, which paved the way to totalitarianism in the 20th century (Arendt 2004 [1951], 1990

[1963]). These factors linger as underlying causes of the rise of political extremism in the 21st century, reinforced by the disintermediation of relationships promoted by widespread virtual connectivity (Manzini 2019). They also underlie the commodification of the natural commons and their transformation into exploitable resources, which led to the current climate crisis and the biodiversity extinction caused by human activity, known as the Anthropocene (Op. cit.). Dealing with them requires an 'integrative' understanding of conflict and peace, which assumes that it is 'at once, a psychological, social, political, ethical and spiritual state with expressions at intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup and international areas of human life.' (Danesh 2006, 63). This should translate into regenerative social forms that link social inclusion and regenerative ecology, which can promote reskilling in terms of capabilities for non-violent and collaborative interactions between humans, as well as with nature (Guattari 2000; Alcaide 2019; Manzini 2019). The peace education methodologies used must be multipliable in a context-sensitive manner, taking into account embeddedness in local institutions, social structures and culturally-specific values and norms (Golding 2017). They must also take into account how participants (both students and teachers) interpret and respond to challenges in their environment (Clarke-Habibi 2018).

Dietrich (2014) claims that the 'integrative' understanding of conflict and peace is only complete if it takes a 'transrational' approach that 'holistically embraces all aspects of human nature for its interpretation of peace', including its emotional and spiritual dimensions (48). Although this approach 'acknowledges the importance of basic material needs for human life and therefore for human relations', it presumes that 'conflicts are rarely triggered only by an imbalance of resource supply or by a clash of mere material interests' (56). It assumes that conflict or peace 'are created in the minds of human beings' and 'can only be transformed in the minds of human beings' (56). The absence or non-violent resolution of conflicts depends up and foremost on 'the communication styles and the behaviours of human beings, understood as "contact boundaries at work" in the tradition of Gestalt therapy' (48–9). Conflicts happen when there are disturbances in the encounter or relations between different 'contact boundaries at work' (49). Such approach implies an understanding of peace education as an inherent part of a 'didactical praxis' of collaborative sociability that combines self-work and the promotion of horizontal solidarity (Dietrich 2013). Its development requires dealing with its intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions experientially in the here and now (Op. cit.).

Based on humanistic psychology, Dietrich developed the 'Elicitive conflict transformation' methodology at the Innsbruck School of Peace Studies. This methodology problematizes the traditional approach to peace education, focused on the intellectual understanding of curricula (Harris 2004). Instead of focusing on the provision, by specialists, of 'prefabricated models' for the abstract understanding of past or future conflicts, it 'draws out, highlights, and catalyzes

existing or communally held knowledge', among participating students, 'related to transforming conflicts between individuals, groups, and communities' (Dietrich 2014, 53). This includes the practice of 'mindfulness' and other techniques drawn out of the Eastern and Western spiritual and therapeutic traditions, with the purpose of bringing into conscious awareness unconscious values, attitudes and behaviours that might provoke conflict or hinder its peaceful resolution. This methodology aims to develop 'a toolkit that allows them to apply rationality and also methods that work on the sexual, emotional, mental and spiritual layers, which correspond to the familial, communal, societal and policy² layers.' (Op. cit.). The goal is to provide a framework for students to develop 'personal contact skills' for the non-violent resolution of conflicts (58).

'Regenerative design', ecovillages and social change

Daniel Christian Wahl, in *Designing Regenerative Cultures*, called attention to what he perceives to be an interconnection between the social and ecological dimensions of conflict and peace. The author claims that the way out of the climate crisis and its disruptive potential depends on the capacity of the human species "[t]o move from a zero-sum culture (win-lose) to a non-zero-sum culture (win-win) necessitates widespread collaboration to ensure that nature also wins (win-win-win) and wins first, as she is the provider of the abundance upon which we depend (Wahl 2016, 6). His concept of 'regenerative design' is based on 'Permaculture'³, a whole systems thinking framework for the development of regenerative social forms, based on 'permanent cultures' of collaborative interactions between humans as well as with nature (Mollison and Holmgren 1978). Such framework is based on a set of design principles utilizing patterns of resilience and inter-species cooperation observed in natural ecosystems (Op. cit.). Ecovillages are one of those possible regenerative social forms. They are based on a framework of community-building that is rooted in 'Permaculture' principles and aligned with the 'transrational' and 'didactical praxis' of peace education envisioned by Dietrich. Such framework is structured by a 'didactical praxis' of collaborative sociability and non-violent conflict resolution that is reproduced by social technologies for promoting transparent communication and trust building and multiplied by non-formal education activities (Joubert and Alfred 2014). Such approach is hereby defined as a synergistic approach to peace education.

Ecovillages take 'Permaculture' and the 'didactical praxis' of peace education out of classrooms and training centres, into prefigurative 'alternative spaces' where 'socio-ethical and counter-cultural practices' are experimented with, enacted and coordinated in everyday activities (Fois 2019, 108). They can be defined as prefigurative human settlements aimed at testing, developing and promoting practices and technologies for collaborative and mutually beneficial synergies between humans and with nature. The core goal of ecovillages is to

minimize the ecological footprint of human activity (Ergas and Clement 2015) by 'putting bioregional thought and permaculture methodology in practice at the community level' (Lockyer and Veteto 2013, 15). This is promoted by institutional arrangements and social technologies aimed at supporting the management of common pool resources by developing, through everyday praxis as well as non-formal education, collaborative capabilities such as diversity inclusion, participatory decision-making and the non-violent resolution of conflicts (Avelino and Kunze 2009; Dawson 2012; Joubert and Alfred 2014).

The core goal of the ecovillages movement is to promote a 'global transition from large, fragmented and centrally governed societal systems, to smaller, integrated and self-governed systems' (Avelino and Kunze 2009, 10–13) based on an institutional design that enables the management of common pool resources through direct democracy at the grassroots level (Manzini 2019). This vision of social transformation is based on a cosmopolitan, non-essentialist vision of community and culture, in which rootedness in territories and ecosystems takes precedence over identity concerns and arbitrary political boundaries (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Snyder 1995; Nabhan 1997; Veltmeyer and Petras 2000; LeVasseur 2013). It is based on radical ecological principles that tend towards biological essentialism in its explanation of the material basis of culture, as well as a focus on psychological factors in the understanding of social change, while underestimating the role of structural power relations and state politics (Nagel 2017). The development of ecovillages implies large scale mobilizations of capital and material resources and often faces significant regulatory and institutional barriers (Dias et al. 2017). As a result, they tend to reproduce, within their internal dynamics, hierarchies and exclusionary tendencies existing in wider society (Op. cit.; Turner 2006). All these factors underlie the tendency for ecovillages to be 'susceptible to self-selective homogeneity, dogmatic purity, and assuming away cultural differences', as well as become 'habitats for demagogues', vulnerable to cultic deviations, and experience high rates of attrition and failure (LeVasseur 2013, 255).

The ecovillage model results from an international study of sustainable communities, carried out in the late '80s by the Context Institute⁴ and funded by the Gaia Trust⁵. The main finding was that, at the time, full-scale, 'ideal' sustainable communities did not yet exist. However, each case study had best practices which, if shared, could contribute to the development of whole system models of sustainability (Context Institute 1991). The study led to the first international meeting of sustainable communities in 1995 in Findhorn, Scotland. One major outcome was the ecovillage model, composed by four basic dimensions: 1) worldview, based on a holistic and communitarian paradigm; 2) ecological, comprising of regenerative strategies of resource management based on permaculture and renewable energy; 3) economic, including cooperative strategies for the management of common-pooled resources, as well as the establishment of bioregional supply chains; 4) social, comprising of social technologies for participatory decision-making and community-building

(Joubert and Alfred 2014). Another outcome was the launching of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), aimed at connecting and supporting ecovillages world-wide through education, technology transfer and advocacy (Avelino and Kunze 2009).

The multiplying effect of non-formal education

The core multiplying program developed by GEN is the Ecovillage Design Education curriculum (E.D.E.), which addresses the four dimensions of the ecovillage model in an integrated manner (Joubert and Alfred 2014). The methodology can be summarized as a scaling-up of existing grassroots practices (tacit knowledge and institutions) according to the following steps (GENAFRICA s/d), 1) identification and training of local change-makers and community leaders; 2) development of a project-based learning methodology, based on the critical integration of local tacit knowledge in an integrated, whole system ecovillage development training program, based on the Ecovillage Design Education (E.D.E.) curriculum; 3) creation of education and training hubs for the multiplication of this methodology, which integrate local non-governmental and civil society institutions in a synergetic system of knowledge and skills sharing. The purpose is to capitalize upon the dimensions of tacit knowledge which support the attainment of sustainable development goals, by integrating them with permaculture and renewable energy-based technology, supported by social technologies for community-building⁶.

From the mid-2000s onwards, there has been a concerted effort within GEN to shift its networking, mediation and facilitation strategy from an inward focus on the organizational development of its members to an outward focus on building alliances for wider systemic change (Dawson 2012). These developments result from the difficulties experienced in setting up new ecovillages or guaranteeing the economic sustainability of existing ones, which requires large-scale capital and resource mobilization (Lockyer and Veteto 2013). High land prices, as well as restrictive government zoning and building regulations, have been making the creation of new ecovillages increasingly more difficult, especially in the Global North (Dias et al. 2017). Those who 'survived the test of time' geared their strategy of economic sustainability towards 'serving as educational models and living laboratories of sustainability' (Lockyer and Veteto 2013, 19). For the vast majority of ecovillages, the major source of revenue is non-formal educational activities for visitors looking for on-site experiential education on sustainable living. (Dias et al. 2017). Some of them also fill part of their labour needs by receiving apprentices for voluntary work (Op. cit.). Despite being geared towards a predominantly middle and upper-class clientele, this strategy generated a multiplying effect in society that led to the transposition of its social and ecological technologies to other social contexts (Op. cit.). This includes the development of refugee settlements (Burke and Arjona 2013), the promotion of post-carbon transition in

traditional villages in the Global South ([GENAFRICA s/d](#)) and the emergence of new social movement organizations, such as the Transition Towns movement ([Dias et al. 2017](#)). Such multiplying effect tends to be the result of social interventions by internationally connected third sector organizations, which provide alternatives to hegemonic notions of well-being and organizational development and facilitate access to public and private resources needed to materialize such visions ([Burke and Arjona 2013](#)).

Tamera and the 'Healing Biotope model'

Tamera is the first ecovillage to identify its mission as that of a 'Peace Research and Education Center'. Its methodologies are based on the assumption that a 'didactical praxis' of collaborative and non-violent sociability can only be effectively developed in 'alternative spaces' that prefigure sustainable forms of human presence on Earth ([Duhm 2015](#)). Since its foundation in 1995 in rural Alentejo, southwestern Portugal, Tamera has been gradually developing as a 'testfield' for what is aimed to be a replicable framework of a sustainable human settlement and culture of peace: The 'Healing Biotope model'. It originates from the experiences of the co-founders of Tamera, German-born sociologist Dieter Duhm and theologian Sabine Lichtenfels, with political activism and intentional community-building in Central Europe from the 1960s to the early 1990s. It is also informed by insights from humanistic psychology, psychoanalysis and Eastern and Western theology and mystical thought ([Duhm 2015](#)). The basic assumption of the 'Healing Biotope model' is the belief that societal challenges (e.g. war, ecological destruction, inequality) originate from psychological dispositions leading to distorted human relations ([Avelino et al. 2019](#), 11). It goes one step further than Dietrich's 'Elicitive conflict transformation' methodology by assuming that a culture of peace is only possible in the framework of sustainable synergies between human activities and natural processes. Its goal is to facilitate the emergence of trust and cooperation between humans, as well as between the human species and nature, leading to sustainable peace based on full integration, coherence and harmony in the interaction within and between community building processes and ecosystem regeneration ([Duhm 2015](#), 95).

The ecological dimension of the 'Healing Biotope model' consists in the building of a symbiotic, non-accumulative connection between human activity and local ecosystems, namely through the application of 'Permaculture' to the promotion of water, energy and food autonomy at the regional level. (Op. cit.). The social dimension consists in community building, through social technologies aimed at neutralizing the potential for conflict contained in inner tendencies and social situations that may contain elements of deception, distorted communication, competition, jealousy and hierarchy. The core social technology is the 'Selbstdarstellung Forum' (Self Expression or SD Forum), partially based on Wilhelm Reich's 'body armour' theory ([Richter 1990](#)). It is based on the inclusion of individuals in dialogical circles, in

which potentially conflictual inner questions and social situations are made transparent. Trust and cooperation are promoted through dynamics of mutual witnessing, accountability and collective self-reflexivity.

How do 'local embeddedness' and 'translocal networks' impact multiplication?

The existing literature on peace education and ecovillages lacks an account of the conditions under which their 'didactical praxis' can be multiplied as a pedagogy of collaborative conviviality and non-violent conflict resolution. It also lacks an account of the role of what Avelino et al. (2019) call 'translocal networks', including international social movement organizations such as GEN, in supporting the diffusion of social innovations that promote the development of such competences. The authors claim that 'a combination of local embeddedness and transnational connectedness' supports the development of transformative agency 'despite the unfavourable power dynamics that social innovators face in relation to dominant institutions' (18). The empirical part of this article corroborates this argument by showing the difficulties experienced by alumni of the 'Monte Cerro Experiment', which at the time of fieldwork was Tamera's major peace education program, in reproducing the 'Healing Biotope model' in Israel as a whole system by developing a new intentional community. It also expands Avelino et al's argument by showing how grassroots organizations reacted differently to the methodologies developed in Tamera for the development of competences of collaborative conviviality and non-violent conflict resolution, depending on whether their resource mobilization was focused on international NGOs or local ethno-political organizations and movements.

Methodology

Given the processual and exploratory nature of this analysis, I decided to use a hermeneutic methodology, based on a combination between aspects of the Grounded Theory Method (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006; Czarniawska 2014) and the Extended Case Study Method (Burawoy 1991). The inductive dimension of the Grounded Theory Method supported the preliminary coding of data directly from the triangulation and comparison of inputs from field notes, interview transcripts and archival material. The extension beyond the here and now and into the social context and trajectory of the case study is the hallmark of the Extended Case Study Method (Op. cit.). It helped to identify contexts and processes of evolution and change on the basis of a dialogue between preliminary codes from fieldwork data and existing scholarship, leading to the emergence of insights that expanded existing theory on peace education and identified topics to be explored in future research and practice.

Fieldwork data was collected in Tamera between April and October 2015, in the West Bank in December 2015 (Bethlehem and Tulkarem) and once again in Tamera in August 2017. Fieldwork included 24 semi-structured interviews, of which 15 took place in Tamera, two online with staff members of GEN, and the remaining among partner projects in the West Bank.

I used a snowball sampling method for identifying interviewees. The sampling process began with introductions from two community members of Tamera that, at the time of fieldwork, had public relations functions that included supporting visiting researchers. After the introduction to the initial interview participants, I asked each interviewee to indicate possible participants that could add further information or a different perspective to the topics developed in the interview. I finished the interviewing process when the data collected did not add any new information to that of previous interviews. All the quotes from interviews or conversations were transcribed in the original language of communication (English) and are inserted here in the exact way they were spoken. In quotes, I use the real names of people for which I secured consent for their use. In other cases, I omitted the name and didn't use pseudonyms, in order to secure the privacy of the respondents.

Fieldwork also included archival research in Tamera and the West Bank, as well as participant observation in a month-long meeting of partners of the 'Global Campus'⁷, Tamera's international program of cooperation with grassroots initiatives in crisis areas, which took place in July/August 2015. Fieldwork in the West Bank focused on visits to two project partners of Tamera, the 'Holy Land Trust' and 'Hakoritna Farm', during which I interviewed their main carriers and collected documents on their activities. This period of fieldwork coincided with the second part of the first Ecovillage Design Education program (E.D.E.) in Farkha. I was requested not to conduct fieldwork at this site during that period⁸, in order not to interfere with the program. However, in August 2017, I had the chance of interviewing the main carrier of the transition process in Farkha, as well as collect further information on the evolution of the process from 'Global Campus' team members, during an international gathering that took place in Tamera.

Attempting to reproduce a whole system 'didactical praxis' of peace education

A prefigurative 'alternative space' for peace education

We wanted to bring Tamera out into the world. We wanted to reach out, to offer peace projects in crisis areas the knowledge we accumulated during years of building ourselves as a community and working on living peacefully amongst ourselves and with nature.

These words from a resident of Tamera sum up its early days as a 'Peace Research and Education Center'. Its development was facilitated by the unique

conditions offered by European integration, often referred to in public discourse as the major peace project of the 20th and 21st century. Internal sources claim that the former owner of 'Monte Cerro' sold the estate to pay for debts resulting from difficulties in maintaining sales, which are related with market liberalization after accession to the European Communities in 1986. Free circulation of people and goods within the European Economic Area allowed for the relatively peaceful settlement of an international community which, at the time of fieldwork, counted with nearly 200 permanent residents originating mainly from Germany, Austria and the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland. A civil servant from a nearby village claims that Tamera's contribution to the regional economy, strongly affected by economic marginalization and demographic decline, contribute to its peaceful coexistence with the local population:

They and their guests also have a big impact in the local economy. They bring a lot of money to businesses in the area, cafes, restaurants, shops, the cooperative. They also order a lot of products from local farmers. (...) Thanks to these exchanges, people started opening up.

These conditions allowed Tamera to focus its first decade on the consolidation of its internal social dynamics and the 'Healing Biotope model'. In the early 2000's, this effort translated into a methodology of peace education based on temporary prefigurative 'alternative spaces' for praxis-based learning on non-violent conflict resolution, drawing on the experiential knowledge of participants and facilitated by SD Forum. In 2000, Tamera created the Institute for Global Peacework (IGP)⁹, with the goal of manifesting its purpose and seeking legitimacy as a 'Peace Research and Education Centre'. Motivated by the beginning of the Second Intifada, the IGP promoted in the following year the first prefigurative 'alternative space' for praxis-based learning on non-violent conflict resolution: The peace camp 'We Refuse to be Enemies', directed at Jewish and Arab participants from Israel and the West Bank, which counted with around 100 participants from each group¹⁰. In the words of Aida Shibli, a Palestinian resident of Tamera with Israeli citizenship, who has been accompanying the involvement of the community in the region since the beginning:

At that time, the community was in a very deep process about how to fulfil our purpose of being a Peace Research Centre by reaching out to the world (...) Sabine Lichtenfels, one of our leaders, came up with a vision: That if we manage to find a way for how peace could be developed between Israelis and Palestinians, we can truly help to bring peace to the world. (...) This initial focus on Israel-Palestine was motivated by the fact that so many worldwide streams of power, of geopolitical and economic interests intersect there ...

The follow up of 'We Refuse to be Enemies' was the organization of yearly 'Summer Universities', which included among its participants representatives of grassroots non-violence organizations from different parts of the world that

would end up adopting methodologies and technologies developed in Tamera. During the '00s, there was a gradual shift from a focus on the social dimension of the 'Healing Biotope model' to an integrated approach to its social and ecological dimensions. Such shift happened with the materialization of the ecological dimension of the 'Healing Biotope model' during the 'Monte Cerro Experiment', a three-year residential, praxis-based peace education program that took place in Tamera between 2006 and 2009. The social dimension of this program was based on the application of SD Forum to the promotion of non-violent communication and conflict resolution across cultural differences. Its ecological dimension was based on the development of the following prototypes for community-based decentralized renewable energy systems, as well as ecosystem regeneration:

- (1) 'Solar Village – Testfield 1'¹¹ for experimental research on renewable energy-based technology for pumping water, powering greenhouses, storing and processing food and supporting horticultural production. The technology is based on solar panels and Scheffler mirrors designed by German physicist Jürgen Kleinwächter, CEO of Sunvention International GmbH¹², as well as biogas digesters developed by American engineer Thomas H. Culhane¹³;
- (2) 'Water Retention Landscape' (WRL)¹⁴, a model of ecosystem regeneration, based on rainwater conservation, reforestation and soil renewal promoted by Austrian permaculture specialist Zepp Holzer.

These prototypes are regarded as 'particularly strong physical manifestations of idealistic philosophies' underlying the 'Healing Biotope model' (Avelino et al. 2019, 12). At the time of fieldwork, the renewable energy technologies and methods of horticultural production developed in the 'Solar Village' have been replicated among partners of Tamera in the Global South¹⁵. The replicability of the WRL is more context-sensitive. During a casual conversation, a Tamera community member made the following remark regarding the WRL:

There are people who argue that this vision of a 'healed' landscape as one that has a lot of water and a lot of green vegetation denotes a Central European bias of what a balanced ecosystem should look like. It's as if a desert, or a semi-arid region, weren't equipped with what's necessary to carry life. They are, in the measure of the latitude where they are located, in the measure of the kind of climate they are exposed to. It's only that the way life manifests in such biomes is much different from the way it manifests in the Alpine region or the great forests of Central Europe.

In order to assess the replicability and context-sensitivity of the social dimension of the 'Healing Biotope model', it is necessary to analyze its contribution to the development of competences for collaborative sociability and non-violent resolution of conflicts among alumni of Tamera's peace education programs. During fieldwork, I had access to alumni of the 'Monte Cerro Experiment' that became regular community members of Tamera after the end of the program, as well as two

others that left the community due to incompatibilities with its methodologies. One of them joined another intentional community and became a cadre of GEN. Another returned to her home country and started a family, after finding obstacles to the fulfilment of that goal in Tamera. The other participants were scattered around the globe. Some of them could not be traced by the other alumni. Those which could be traced refused to be interviewed.

Out of the protective matrix: the 'Peace Research Village – Middle East' project

The 'vision' that inspired 'We Refuse to be Enemies' and the 'Monte Cerro Experiment' included a more ambitious goal: To create an intentional community in Israel or the West Bank that would operate as a community-based experiential peace research and education center, based on the 'Healing Biotope model'. Its goal was to become a 'living model for a new culture of nonviolent coexistence between different ethnicities and religions in the Middle East'¹⁶. In 2012, a group of alumni of the 'Monte Cerro Experiment', composed by Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens, as well as internationals, moved together to Israel to find land to materialize the 'Peace Research Village – Middle East' (PRV-ME)¹⁷. The process turned out to be problematic, especially among Jewish and Arab participants, as pressures resulting with their reintegration into daily life in their home country, including family and kinship loyalties, rekindled their identification with the parts in the conflict. Such identification, which seemed to have been deconstructed in Tamera, compromised trust among these participants and shrunk the group into a much smaller cohort, composed by Jewish Israelis and internationals. A former Arab participant claimed that

[b]ecause of us being part of this project, Palestinians saw us as 'normalizing agents'. It became very difficult for us to do work in Palestine and to bring Palestinians to the project. It became a very Israeli group. There were internal conflicts. We could not stay there and ended up leaving.

In the beginning of 2014, the remaining group started negotiations with Ben Gurion University for the rental of farmland in the Negev desert. However, the Israeli-Gaza conflict and the Third Intifada, which happened later that year, led the Israeli Law Authority to cancel the contract. Some members returned to Tamera. One of them is Uri, a Jewish Israeli citizen who claims that

[r]eturning to Portugal did not mean that we gave up on the dream of building PRV-ME. We are contributing to the fulfillment of this vision by working on strengthening ourselves as a community, on building a sense of home among us, waiting for the conditions to improve in the field. Hopefully, when the conditions improve in the Middle East and the time comes for us to return to the field, we will be better equipped to materialize the PRV-ME.

Other members decided to stay in Israel, despite the setback, and work on developing grassroots networks of individuals and projects aligned with the

goals of PRV-ME. One of them is Emma, who is an active participant of the 'Women Wage Peace' network¹⁸. This Jewish Israeli citizen regularly organizes educational events on Jewish/Arab dialogue with Tamera community members and returns every year to the ecovillage for Summer gatherings. At the time of writing, Aida Shibli was working on setting up a group of PRV-ME supporters in Berlin, including Jewish and Arab expatriates. Both women claim that the networks and initiatives they are part of keep the PRV-ME project alive and promote conditions for its future materialization.

Local embeddedness, transnational connectedness and the diffusion of ecovillage frames

Grassroots organizations as multiplying agents

The experience of the PRV-ME project group corroborates the conclusions of Lockyer and Veteto (2013) and Dias et al. (2017) regarding the sociocultural and institutional barriers to the setting up of new ecovillages, as well as the tendencies of intentional communities in general to reproduce structural hierarchies, conflicts and exclusionary tendencies identified by Dias et al. (2017) and Turner (2006). Fieldwork data also corroborates Burke and Arjona (2013) and Avelino et al. (2019) analyses of the role of transnational connections in the multiplication of ecovillage-based social technologies. Such connections increase the access of grassroots organizations to resources, including organizational and strategic frames, beyond those that are available or made hegemonic by power structures in their local context. The grassroots organizations that multiplied methodologies and technologies developed in Tamera experienced an expansion of their organizational capacity. However, the multiplication of methodologies for collaborative sociability and non-violent conflict resolution was easier among organizations whose resource mobilization happens mainly through international NGOs than among those embedded in local ethnopolitical organizations and movements. One of those grassroots organizations is the 'Holy Land Trust', a Bethlehem-based NGO specialized in non-violence training for community leaders, which supported Tamera in the organization of two educational journeys to Israel and the West Bank, known as 'GRACE Pilgrimages' (2005 and 2007)¹⁹. Its founder, a US-educated Palestinian Christian named Sami Awad, has since then been a regular participant in Tamera's 'Summer Universities', both as a student and speaker.

Deconstructing stereotypes and inherited narratives of victimhood

Sami Awad claims that the relationship between the 'Holy Land Trust' and Tamera led to a methodological shift from a Palestinian resistance-centered approach to one based on a non-essentialist conception of community. This approach is in line with the perspective on social change promoted by the ecovillages movement:

In the year 2000, during the Second Intifada, I was engaged in non-violent resistance, protests, sit-ins, boycott campaigns, non-violent direct action, such as protecting trees from being uprooted. We developed a training book of non-violent resistance. (...) Tamera made us ask ourselves the question 'what comes after the occupation?'. It's very easy to point our finger at the perceived enemy. It's a lot more difficult to imagine ways of existing with that 'other' as well as with our own selves, which does not imply this 'us-versus-them' dichotomy. (...) Peace in the Holy Land is possible, but in order to achieve political peace, we need first to find communal peace, the recognition of the responsibility of all communities towards each other. Classifying people and assigning them a territory according to their religion and ethnicity is a heritage of colonialism. We have to overcome that. We need to recognize equality and the rights of all people to this land. (...) We still believe in non-violent resistance, that oppressive structures have to be resisted. However, we need to look beyond that.

Such shift was accompanied by the introduction of a methodology for the promotion of competences for collaborative sociability and non-violent resolution of conflicts, based on a psychosocial understanding of the effects of inherited narratives of collective trauma, privilege, domination and vulnerability. This methodology is the base of the 'Non-linear leadership transformation program' for village-level community leaders. It is also at the core of punctual initiatives such as the 'Vision Camp for Peace', co-organized with Tamera community members in the West Bank at the height of the Gaza War, as well as the Sumud Freedom Camp, set up in 2017 in the South Hebron Hills, with the purpose of rebuilding the Palestinian village of Sarura:

I discovered my enemy: The collective narrative of fear and trauma, and how Israeli society is motivated by fear and trauma, the effect of centuries of persecution leading to the Holocaust. Palestinians have also been motivated by trauma since 1948. (...) People like to amplify things. That's when we lose credibility. It's part of the human consciousness. When we don't learn to state the facts, we learn to tell stories. The intention is not to lie, but to justify positions. For me to be able to justify the present, I have to be able to convince you of the past. The only way I can present my past is to present it with all my cultural, religious lenses. In order to overcome that, we do a lot of work on narrative, stories, telling fact from fiction. Before, people worked with trauma individually, instead of at the community level. They focused on inherited narratives. We focus on what communities do with such stories and how to overcome their divisive power without silencing any part. (...) Our purpose is to reach the essence of what it means to be a human being on this earth, without denying identity.

Technological diffusion promotes autonomy from unfavourable power structures

Although Tamera was not a founding member of GEN, it became an active member of the network after 2009, being part of its response to the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean²⁰. It also paved the way to the involvement of GEN in the transitioning of the traditional village of Farkha into becoming the first ecovillage in Palestine. In 2013, the 'Global Campus' was created to structure the transfer of knowledge and technology between Tamera and community

organizations in the Global South. In the same year, there was a third GRACE Pilgrimage to Israel and the West Bank, which included a symposium on the WRL in Jericho, as well as seminars on renewable energy technologies and organic agriculture at the 'Hakoritna Farm', a family homestead and permaculture project in Tulkharem. Its owners are Fayez and Mona Taneeb, a couple that has been politically active for nearly 30 years as militants in the Palestinian Communist Party and coordinators of the Palestinian Farmers' Union, the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee and the local Women's Club. They first got in touch with Tamera in 2005 through Sami Awad, with whom they co-organized the first GRACE Pilgrimage. Their interest in regenerative ecology dates back to 1989, when the first out of 10 chemical factories were built in the area, with the support of the Israeli government:

We became aware of the danger that chemicals represent to human health. We started organizing protests against the building of the factories. We also started to look for ways to demonstrate how to do clean agriculture, produce clean food, guarantee that we have clean water. We travelled to France, Germany and Japan to learn about different systems of organic farming, grey water recycling and composting.

In 2002, the building of the Israeli West Bank wall, which resulted in the confiscation of 60% of the land of 'Hakoritna Farm', led to a change of strategy. Fayez started to mobilize his community against the wall, as well as look for technologies and farming strategies which could promote livelihood autonomy:

Israel controls gas, electricity, water. It has big tanks to collect water. In 2002, we started thinking about developing an economy of resistance, about how to get our energy from nature, from renewable sources, about recycling. (...) The first time the people of Tamera were here, in 2005, we had very good contact. They invited me to come to Tamera, but I could only go in 2012. My son went before me, in 2008. (...) In Tamera, we found an integrated model of a 'clean life': A system of water retention, solar energy technology, biogas, aquaponics. (...) Right now, we don't need to buy energy from Israel. We installed an autonomous solar energy model in 2013. We currently plan to build a big lake in the farm to retain rainwater, as well as a bigger biogas system than the one we already have.

Such improvements happened after Fayez and a team from Tamera's 'Global Campus' exchanged visits in 2013 and 2014. As a result, the Palestine Technical University invited the 'Hakoritna Farm' to become its demonstration centre on renewable energy technology and organic agriculture. At the time of fieldwork, the farm was receiving between 20 and 30 students per year from several Palestinian universities to do three-month internships on the construction and operation of biogas digesters, solar driers, aquaponics, raised beds and seed banks.

These developments expand Avelino et al. (2019) analysis in two ways: They indicate that the transnational diffusion of non-context specific regenerative ecology strategies supports grassroots transformative agency by promoting

autonomy vis-à-vis unfavourable power structures, through the production of endogenous resources. However, they also show how embeddedness in local and national political organizations and movements limits the diffusion of pedagogies of collaborative sociability and non-violent conflict resolution. The 'Hakoritna Farm' never adopted any of the social technologies developed by Tamera for non-violent conflict resolution and intercultural communication, as they could lead to conflict or marginalization by the militant organizations Fayez and Mona are part of. According to Fayez, engaging in dialogue on trauma, identity and historical memory with Israelis is considered by many Palestinians a transgression worthy of social and political marginalization:

Palestinians have a lot of difficulty with what they call 'normalizing', meaning interacting with Israelis. There is the assumption that, if you interact with Israelis, you are a spy or sold your soul. (...) I consider myself to be an open-minded man. Thanks to my political activism, I had the chance to travel extensively and understand how other cultures deal with these issues. However, I have to take the mentality of my peers into account.

The 2013 'Global Campus' seminars at 'Hakoritna Farm' were financially and technically supported by GEN and were offered again in 2014. Saad Dagher, member of the Arab Agronomists Association and cadre of the Palestinian Communist Party, was a trainer at both events, the second of which also counted with the expertise of Kosha Joubert, Executive Director of GEN. Their meeting in 2014 paved the way for the transitioning of Farkha, Saad's home village, into becoming the first ecovillage in the West Bank:

In the second training Kosha Joubert also came and we were discussing the establishment of the Palestinian Ecovillage Network. Then I said 'OK, but we don't have any ecovillages in Palestine, what if we started converting a traditional village into an ecovillage?' Kosha asked 'Do you have such a village which is willing to become an ecovillage? And I said yes, we have Farkha. I said yes and we organized a first visit. In that visit, we met with representatives of the Village Council, the Women's Cooperative and the organic olive oil cooperative, as well as with the Youth Association of Farkha. We started to plan for the first Ecovillage Design Education program (E.D.E.), which took place in 2015.

Since 1991, Farkha hosts a hub of 'translocal connections' that promote the diffusion of social innovations: The yearly International Youth Voluntary Festival, a 10-day event which receives an average of 200 Palestinian and international volunteers per year, to engage in activities such as public building and road renovation and reforestation, among others. The Festival became a point of reception and diffusion of ideas on regenerative ecology, which contributed to the introduction of organic methods of agriculture and gardening in the village. It also became a point of attraction for international volunteers who have the skills and inclination to apply natural building and agroecological techniques, as well as renewable energy technology, in helping transform Farkha into an ecovillage. Besides, Saad claims that the Festival

contributed to the receptiveness of the Village Council towards the introduction of solar energy in public buildings, as well as regenerative methods of management of rainwater²¹. In 2016, the mayor of Farkha joined Saad in a visit to Tamera, which in the following year sent two 'Global Campus' team members to help install a biogas system at the technology demonstration site of the International Youth Voluntary Festival.

Aida Shibli, who often represents Tamera at GEN meetings, had a leading role in the organization of the first E.D.E., namely by supporting Saad in mediating between the network and local leaders and mobilizing a team of public officials to participate in the program and then coordinate the implementation of the ecovillage model in Farkha. When interviewed, Saad claimed that the implementation of the ecological technicalities of the ecovillage model was already advanced, there were delays in the implementation of its institutional design in the governance structure of the village. It is not clear if such delay happened because, according to Saad, the officials needed more training, as well as time to mobilize consent from the villagers, or if there were political motivations like those which prevented the adoption and multiplication of Tamera's social technologies for non-violent conflict resolution and intercultural communication at the 'Hakoritna Farm'. Still, Saad hopes that, in the near future, the example of Farkha will encourage other villages in the region to adopt not only the ecological dimension the ecovillage model, but also its institutional design.

Discussion and conclusions

The project 'Peace Research Village – Middle East' illustrates the difficulty of multiplying ideal models of intentional communities that can serve as 'living laboratories' for peace education. The internal conflicts experienced by the project group, once it left Tamera and settled in Israel, corroborate Dias et al. (2017) and Turner's (2006) analysis of the tendency of intentional communities to reproduce mainstream power structures and conflicts. Once the group left Tamera, an ecovillage supported by exceptionally peaceful conditions, and settled in Israel, its 'didactical praxis' of non-violence (Dietrich 2013) became permeable to personal identifications with the parts involved in the Israeli-Arab conflict. The cancellation, by the Israeli Law Authority, of the group's land rental contract with Ben Gurion University, apparently motivated by the Gaza War of 2014, is another example of the institutional barriers that restrict the creation of new ecovillages (Dias et al. 2017).

Avelino et al. (2019) claim that local embeddedness, when combined with transnational connectedness, supports the diffusion of transformative social innovations by empowering grassroots agency vis-à-vis dominant institutions. Such combination promoted the introduction of regenerative strategies of ecological management at 'Hakoritna Farm' and the village of Farkha, increasing their autonomy vis-à-vis unfavourable power structures. However, their experience also indicates that embeddedness in local ethnopolitical organizations and movements

create resistance to the introduction of external methodologies for collaborative sociability and non-violent conflict resolution. The 'Holy Land Trust' was more open to the introduction of such methodologies, largely because of the international connections of its founder.

The previous analysis challenges scholars and practitioners to reflect on how the 'didactical praxis' of ecovillages, as well as their methodological and technological components, can be developed into multipliable but adaptable and context-sensitive peace education methodologies. The Anthropocene requires a synergistic approach to peace education that can be mainstreamed into educational policy, social development strategies and urban and rural planning. Such approach must promote the psychological, behavioural and material changes necessary for the emergence of regenerative social forms that promote sustainable and inclusive well-being, autonomy from unfavourable power structures and a sense of community beyond ethnopolitical boundaries. It must avoid psychological and biological essentialism by taking into account structural power relations and the role of the state, as well as culturally specific values, norms and institutions. How can organizations and movements who promote 'regenerative design' (Wahl 2016) collaborate with the state, international organizations and other political forces in the development of synergistic models of peace education that are multipliable, but context-sensitive? What role can transnational social movement organizations play in the pursuit of this goal? Deepening the dialogue between scholarship on peace education, regenerative ecology and transformative social innovation may help answer these questions.

Notes

1. <https://www.tamera.org> .
2. According to the author, '*Policity* is an artificial word, which we coined for the primordial human awareness of our existence in physical time and space, the pre-condition for the mental understanding of ourselves as social beings and any idea about social organization.' (51).
3. Term originally referring to 'permanent agriculture'.
4. <https://www.context.org> .
5. <http://gaia.org> .
6. <https://gaiaeducation.org> .
7. <https://www.tamera.org/global-campus/>.
8. Due to work scheduling and funding constraints, it was the only period in which I had the chance to conduct fieldwork in the West Bank.
9. <https://www.tamera.org/the-institute-for-global-peacework/>.
10. The peace camp also attracted the attention of community leaders and peace projects from other crisis areas. This includes Gloria Cuartas, former mayor of Apartadó, in Colombia, who mediated a relationship between Tamera and the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. This community, inspired by Liberation Theology, aims to be a model for peaceful and autonomous living at the heart of the routes of drug and weapons trade, as well as paramilitary activity, in the heart of the

Colombian jungle. Such relationship was developed in reciprocal visits that led to the organizational strengthening of the Peace Community through the transfer of technologies for non-violent conflict resolution and, since the late 00's, water management and renewable energy autonomy.

11. <https://www.tamera.org/energy-technology/>.
12. <http://www.bsrsolar.com> .
13. Thomas H. Culhane is the founder of Solar CITIES, a non-profit organization that works on capacity building in developing countries through the development of low-cost, high-efficiency biogas systems and system integration training for 'food-waste-to-fuel-and-fertilizer' biodigesters at the household and community level: <http://solarcities.blogspot.pt/p/what-is-solar-cities-and-how-can-you.html> .
14. <https://www.tamera.org/water-retention-landscape/>.
15. An example is the implementation of these technologies by Favela da Paz (<https://www.tamera.org/favela-da-paz-brazil/>).
16. <https://www.tamera.org/israel-palestine-peace/>.
17. <http://prvme.org> .
18. <https://womenwagepeace.org.il/en/about-eng/>.
19. These journeys gathered Jews, Arab Israeli citizens, internationals and, after crossing the West Bank border, Palestinians. The aim was to educate the participants about the impact of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the everyday lives of local people and their landscape, as well as develop competences for non-violent conflict resolution and intercultural communication, by facilitating interactions with participants and locals beyond stereotypes and inherited narratives. The process was based on the observation of social and ecological conditions in the field, visits to refugee camps, and community-based peace education projects, as well as on the inclusion of participants in SD Forum.
20. In 2015, Tamera community members took part in the RefuGEN team of volunteers at the Moria refugee camp in the Greek Island of Lesbos (<https://gen-europe.org/news-events/archive/latest-news/refugen/index.htm>).
21. This did not imply the construction of a Water Retention Landscape.

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Notes on contributor

Ana Margarida Esteves is a Senior Researcher at the Center for International Studies of the University Institute of Lisbon, ISCTE-IUL and Assistant Professor of the Department of Political Economy of the same institution. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University (Providence, RI, USA). Her research and teaching focus on the intersection between the Social Solidarity Economy, the Commons and the Transition Movement, as well as the application of critical pedagogies and strategies of non-formal education to social mobilization and the promotion of participatory democracy. She is a founder and member of the International Editorial Committee of the journal "Interface: A journal for and about social movements" (www.interfacejournal.net). She is also a member of the RC47: Social Classes and Social Movements of ISA - International Sociological Association and part of its editorial platform Open Movements / Open Democracy (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/openmovements>).

ORCID

Ana Margarida Esteves  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0417-6770>

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