Sustainability, the Social Economy, and the Eco-Social Crisis: Traveling Concepts and Bridging Fields

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BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)
Outline

- Sustainability
- Social Economy
- Traveling Concepts
- Bridging and Building
- Obstacles and Contradictions
- BALTA Research Directions
Sustainability

- sustainable development: “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”
  (Brundtland Commission, 1987)

- 3 Imperatives:
  - Social
  - Economic
  - Ecological
Sustainable Community Development
Hancock (1997)
Sustainable Community Development
Roseland (2005)
Social Economy

- “third sector” or “third system”

- “grassroots, entrepreneurial, not-for-profit sector, based on democratic values, that seeks to enhance the social, economic, and environmental conditions of communities, often with a focus on their disadvantaged members”
  (Social Development Canada)

- Principles:
  - Primary goal of service to members of the community rather than the accumulation of profit;
  - Autonomous management;
  - Democratic decision-making processes;
  - Primacy of persons and work over capital;
  - Redistribution of profits;

  (Chantier de l’économie sociale)
Theoretical Linkages and Conceptual Comparisons

- Green Political Thought
- Social Ecology
- Eco-socialism

Traveling Concepts

- Democracy
- Co-operation
- Mutualism
- Decentralization
- Progressive sense of place
Bridging and Building

- Beyond ecological modernization
- Models of organization and ownership
- Sustainability as a process – not a fixed outcome
“It should be axiomatic that an enterprise which has a social purpose will have a clear environmental policy, for to be environmentally irresponsible is to be socially irresponsible.”
Obstacles to Bridging

- Sense of immediacy
- Class issues
- Idealism vs. realism
- Contradiction of consumerism
BALTA Research Directions

- Mapping
- Controlling Land
- Farmers Markets as Social Economy Enterprises
- Heritage Buildings and Sheltering the Social Economy