

B4 - Social Economy Case Studies in Rural Alberta

Participatory Research with Mexican and Albertan Undergraduate Students

SERC 2: The Social Economy in Rural Revitalization and Development

(given the nature of this research there would certainly be ways to do research that cut across SERCs and cover more areas than presently indicated).

Principal Investigator:

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Co-Investigators:

Community Partners in rural Albertan Communities; co-instructors (Daniel Montes de Oca; Janet Wesselius; Hans-Dittmar Mündel); undergraduate participants in the Puebla-Alberta Community Service Exchange.

The Project:

In this project, undergraduate students who are participants in Augustana's and *Universidad de las Americas, Puebla's* (UDLA; www.udlap.mx) Puebla-Alberta Community Service Exchange (PACSE; www.augustana.ca/pacse) will conduct in-depth case studies (3-5/ year) with different actors in the rural Albertan Social Economy.

PACSE students (~10 Augustana and 10 UDLA students) spend 10 weeks in rural Mexico from August through October learning about community sustainability through living in host families, volunteering in the community (often in the social economy), conducting community-based research and participating and facilitating academic reflection on this activity. In the Mexican phase of this program—housed in Augustana's Global and Development Studies Program—students will be introduced to topics of the social economy through webcasts of the BALTA lead investigators. They will also be introduced to the case-study methodology of BALTA and complete podcasts summarizing their research project.

BALTA leads will be invited to view students podcasts from the Mexican phase and conduct further workshops deepening students understanding of the social economy. This second phase of the program will see students placed with different actors in the rural Albertan social economy including the sustainable agricultural and non-profit sectors. Students will live and volunteer alongside these actors and will therefore be well placed to conduct ethnographic case studies. Students will facilitate the social economy actors' completion of the social economy mapping survey as a first step in their time in Alberta. Their ethnographic case studies will be summarized in both the written form suggested by BALTA as well as in a video podcast which will be hosted on Augustana's podcasting server.

Significance of research

This project has the possibility, through ethnographic methods, to gather significant information about the social economy in several rural Albertan communities each year. For example, at the recent SERC 2 meeting, leadership in social enterprises was identified as theme common to many of the studies. Students would investigate this specific theme in their work. This will provide BALTA with a rich data set to draw on.

Undergraduate Student Researchers

Undergraduate students will conduct the primary fieldwork under the supervision of the PI of this project. One academic staff member is in regular contact with students and either onsite in rural Mexico and Alberta or accessible by internet and phone. Other academic staff from Augustana and UDLA will make regular visits to the exchange to facilitate academic reflection and to provide theoretical grounding in methodology, rural development and the social economy. The Mexican phase of the program will act as a training ground for the students. BALTA case studies will be the second major research project for most of these students. As case studies and other deliverables will be part of course assignments, they will not be paid directly for their research. Additional funding is being sought to offset some of students' subsistence costs.

Workplan

Research Assistant training during the Mexican phase of the program: August to early October
Ethnographic research in Alberta: early October to December
Assisting community organizations in filling out social mapping survey: November
Presentation of written and podcast reports: December

Dissemination

The PACSE program runs every year and thus 3-5 case studies—depending on the numbers of students enrolled in the program in a given year—will be conducted each year. After 3 years, all of the case studies will be brought together into a book format. The video podcasts will continue to be available and will be gathered into a DVD format. A minimum of 2 articles will be published from this project: 1) conducting ethnographic research with undergraduate students and 2) rural Albertan social economy—findings from case studies. Findings will also be presented at conferences in areas including Social Economy, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and Rural Development. As such, findings will be disseminated to academic audiences, actors in the Albertan social economy and the broader public (through video podcasts).

Monitoring and Evaluation

Students and community members fill out surveys as ongoing evaluation of the pedagogical and research aims of the program. At the conclusion of each year, faculty members compile a report highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of a given exchange. The research process will be continually evaluated through weekly meetings between students and the PI.

Research tools

This research project will make use of existing BALTA tools including the social mapping survey as well as the case study methodology. All of these will meet the REB standards outlined by BALTA as well as the University of Alberta.

Budget and Contributions

Category	Requested of BALTA	Other Contributions
Researcher Release Time	\$10,000	
Research Support Costs		\$8000 \$5000 Equipment: \$10,000
Knowledge Dissemination		Podcasting server: \$3000
Travel	BALTA events \$2000	Other Conferences \$2000
TOTALS	\$12,000	\$27,000

Note: Discussions about using release time funds to support this proposal are in process with the University of Alberta Research Service Office.