

# 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)  
Project B2

# Context & Focus

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- Context: climate change, peak oil, food and water security.
- A crisis that is complex and both ecological and social in nature.
- Need for middle-ground analysis – organizational and operational practices that will help move us toward a more just and sustainable society.

# Purpose & Summary

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- To explore how the social economy can help address issues at the organizational level and contribute to the transition to a more sustainable society.
  - Comparison of historical and ideological foundations of both the social economy and the sustainability movements.
  - Identification of theoretical similarities and 'traveling concepts'.
  - Argument: Effective community responses to the eco-social crisis would benefit from bridging and building between the two schools of thought and fields of practice.

# Murray Bookchin

(social ecologist)

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“To separate ecological problems from social problems – or even to play down or give only token recognition to their crucial relationship – would be to grossly misconstrue the sources of the growing environmental crisis. In effect, the way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis. Unless we clearly recognize this, we will surely fail to see that the hierarchical mentality and class relationships that so thoroughly permeate society are what has given rise to the very idea of dominating the natural world.”

# Theoretical Linkages and Conceptual Comparisons

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- Green Political Thought
- Social Ecology
- Eco-socialism

## Traveling Concepts

- Democracy
- Co-operation
- Mutualism
- Decentralization
- Progressive sense of place

# Bridging and Building

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- Beyond ecological modernization.
- Models of organization and ownership.
- An emphasis on process, not outcomes.

# Project Outputs:

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- Conference Presentations (2008):
  - Association for Non-profit & Social Economy Research (ANSER)
  - Environmental Studies Association of Canada (ESAC)
  
- Article Submission:
  - Journal of Organization and Environment (currently under review)