Exploring BALTA'S Future

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the future structure and function of BALTA once its 5-year SSHRC funding expires in 2011. BALTA has established itself as a regional research collaboration amongst universities and community based organizations in Alberta and British Columbia with an interest in the social economy. However, while most BALTA members feel that the relationships built through the research and collaboration are valuable, the general consensus is that BALTA's future existence is dependent upon a significant and steady funding stream. This report first investigates the literature on academic-practitioner research collaboration, in order to derive lessons for building successful partnerships. Several collaborative models are described and recommendations from the literature are pulled together. Part Two of this report describes a scale of network engagement, developed during the course of this research, to situate the various activities and governance structures of academic-practitioner networks discovered. Each level of the scale is accompanied by examples of networks operating at that scale. Part Two is meant to give the reader an idea of the scope of various academic-practitioner networks in existence in Canada as well as select examples internationally. In Part Three interview sessions conducted with BALTA members are summarized in order to establish BALTA members' priorities and thoughts about the future direction of the network. Part Four recommends directions for BALTA based on lessons learned in the previous three sections of the report.

The original research design indicated that determining possible models for BALTA would be done through an examination of the literature on networks. However, after immersing myself in the literature I have decided that it is more constructive to outline the recommendations contained within literature on research partnerships and collaborations more generally. There are several reasons for this. First there is the most obvious reason that BALTA is already a research partnership, which strives for equal roles and responsibilities to be shared between its academic and practitioner members. Exploring the research collaboration literature will uncover ways in which to strengthen BALTA's foundation. Second, networks are a sub-topic within the broader research collaboration literature, so it is restrictive to consider only the research network literature. Third, because of major technology advances in the past few years (for example Skype and video conferencing), research partnerships can exist across large geographic spaces – essentially operating as networks – making many of the past challenges of establishing and maintaining a research network fairly negligible and the corresponding literature somewhat inconsequential.

One final note: this research was undertaken to the explicit end of determining how BALTA can continue in the absence of any funding. Since BALTA had not put together a SSHRC application to obtain further CURA funding, it seemed reasonable and warranted to carry out the research with the explicit assumption that BALTA would be without funding in 2011. The very recent possibility of BALTA obtaining further funding from the newly restructured SSHRC partnership development grants is discussed in Part 4, but the vast majority of research for this report was completed before the partnership development grant possibility presented itself.

Part 1: Academic-Practitioner Research Collaboration

Academics and Practitioners: Differing Goals and Priorities

Discussions about academic-practitioner collaboration exist throughout several different bodies of literature. Although it is most prevalent within the organizational management literature, the challenges and opportunities faced when academics and practitioners collaborate on research

can also be found within the community psychology, public policy, public health, and education bodies of literature.

Research collaborations are rarely simple or straightforward and the divide between academics and non-academics is well noted in the literature (Rynes, Barunek & Daft, 2001; Kuhn, 2002; Alteroff & Knights, 2009; Nyden & Wiewel, 1992). Savan (2004) sums up the problem:

> *Research collaboration is never easy, and the difficulties of different agendas, competing interests and priorities are exacerbated when partners are based in very different cultural contexts. The value of investigation versus action, concerns with certainty versus risk and the focus on contrasting audiences to promote the research results can all create problems. The sense of urgency, concern for remedies rather than diagnoses of the problem under consideration, as well as an appreciation of students as a resource rather than as scholars in training can all separate university and community partners* (p. 382).

Kuhn (2002) agrees that while there may be "distinct barriers between academics and practitioners [...] it is more likely that there exist multiple and heterogeneous communities on each side of the divide that is created by university affiliation" (p. 106). In other words, academics who partner with community organizations and community organizations that partner with academics create their own sub-groups within their primary affiliations. Rynes et al. (2001) also acknowledge the gap between academics and practitioners, writing that the divide is "deeply embedded in academics' and practitioners' most basic assumptions and beliefs" (p. 340) but note at the same time that such assumptions are largely anecdotal and not empirical.

The academic-practitioner divide arises for two reasons: the kinds of research in which each group is interested do not always match and the ways in which each group communicates and transfers that knowledge is often very different. For academics, research is usually discipline-oriented and propelled by current debates in a particular academic field, whereas practitioners' research priorities change often to reflect pressing needs. Academic research tends to look more at broader issues in a flexible manner over the long-term in order to find generalisable rules to bolster theory, while practitioners are more concerned with studying specific issues within a narrow time frame, striving for research that produces utilisable results (Nyden & Wiewel, 1992; Roper, 2002; Cottrell & Parpart, 2006). In general academics have difficulty thinking about the practical applications of their research (Cortes, 1998). As Cottrell & Parpart (2006, p. 18) put it, "Academics often assume knowledge for its own sake has value, while [practitioners] are less convinced of this point."

In terms of how knowledge is communicated and transferred, the differences are again obvious. Academics immerse themselves deeply in the literature of a particular issue and focus on participating in often competitive debates within that area (Roper, 2002), while practitioners want positive results from research and friendly criticism (Nyden & Wiewel, 1992). Academics disseminate research results in specialized journals, using very technical language that can be difficult for those outside the discipline to understand (Nyden & Wiewel, 1992; Roper, 2002). Research is often presented by academics through "objective, declarative knowledge", which has been shown as an ineffective way of reaching practitioners (Rynes et al., 2001, p. 346).

Although distinct differences exist between academics and practitioners, there are many benefits to be gained when the two groups collaborate. As a result of working with practitioners, academics are often challenged to see issues in a new light, which can lead to new

interpretations and theories (Rynes et al., 2001). Because practitioners often are aware of certain phenomena before academics (Bartunek 2007), when academics work with practitioners they report being ahead in their field (Alteroff & Knights, 2009). In a study on academic-practitioner collaborative networks in the business management sector, academics reported that the ability to bring examples from practice into their teaching gave them more credibility with students. In this same study, practitioners viewed working with academics to be valuable training and learning opportunities (Alteroff & Knights, 2009).

Building Strong Academic-Practitioner Research Partnerships
Recognizing the problems inherent when academics and practitioners work together as research partners, building collaborative capacity is suggested by some as a way to overcome these challenges (Garcia-Ramirez et al., 2009; Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001; Langille et al., 2008). Collaborative capacity is described by Garcia-Ramirez et al. (2009) as the conditions needed for partnerships to work together toward common goals to create sustainable changes in a community.

A collaborative capacity framework presented by Foster-Fisherman et al. (2001) discusses the different levels at which to build collaborative capacity. Collaborative capacity can be built at the member level, by heightening the ability to cooperate and resolve conflict and strengthening the skills and knowledge needed to create and design effective programs. Collaborative capacity can also be built within internal and external relationships, which is known as 'relational capacity'. It is at this level that one of the most important determinants of partnership success is created: the identification and uniting of partners around a shared vision. Fostering an inclusive culture within the partnership is key and can be created through sharing decision-making power and incorporating diversity into the partnership planning process. Collaborative capacity needs to be built at the organizational level as well, through ensuring that there are formalized processes and clear guidelines that lay out each partner's roles and responsibilities in the partnership and ensuring that there is a strong internal communication system that facilitates problem discussion and resolution and the sharing of information (Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001).

Although establishing research partnerships between academics and practitioners requires thoughtful planning and consideration, there is much to be gained. From the university perspective, building community partnerships has been shown to boost university status and reputation through increased publication output, innovative research projects, opportunities for international research collaboration, and enhanced research skills (Buys & Bursnall, 2007). Communities gain from strengthened linkages across sectors and both horizontally and vertically among stakeholders as well as an "increased capacity to access, use, and influence" research and policy (Langille et al., 2008, p. 44).

Collaborative Models
There are many different terms to describe the structures through which academics and practitioners collaborate. Generally they are known as research partnerships, however there are different collaborative formations within this larger category, for example knowledge networks, communities of practice, and community-based research. These three structures will be described below, in order to provide some perspective as to the many different types of collaborative models in existence.

Knowledge Networks

Agranoff & McGuire (2001) clarify that the term 'network' "typically refers to multi-organizational arrangements for solving problems that cannot be achieved, or achieved easily, by single organizations" (p. 296). Within this very broad category, the term 'knowledge network' emerges, which is a blanket term for several other collaborative models, including 'internal knowledge management networks', strategic alliances', 'communities of practice', 'information networks', and 'formal knowledge networks' (Creech & Willard, 2001). Creech & Willard (2001) discuss the differences between each of these forms of collaboration. '*Internal knowledge management networks*', such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) do not usually cross national borders and refer to knowledge shared within an organization to meet that organization's objectives. *'Strategic Alliances'* are networks in which not all members are equal but each is strengthened in some way (through the appropriation of time, money, or influence) by the other alliance members. An example of this model is the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). '*Communities of practice'*, such as the Global Knowledge Dialogue, are formed around the primary goal of building the capacity and skills of each organization rather than collaborating to meet common objectives. Communities of practice are generally informal and voluntary. '*Information networks*' are passive, meaning that users must come to the network to benefit from the network's work. Essentially the goal of such networks, for example OneWorld International, is to provide access to information. Finally, *'formal knowledge networks*' focus on a targeted audience for research outputs (i.e. decision-makers) and tend to have more limited memberships of expert institutions. An example of a formal knowledge network is the Global Development Network (Creech & Willard, 2001).

Community Based Research

According to Community Based Research Canada (n.d.), CBR refers to the creation and mobilization of "knowledge for action by communities, civil society, policy makers, and stakeholders in all of the key areas affecting the future social, economic, and environmental sustainability of Canada. It engages communities and their citizens in the creation, design, implementation and use of research to meet their needs." CBR is an interweaving of action research and participatory research. "Action research involves iterative cycles of identifying problems, planning for change experiments, acting on those plans and evaluation" (Flicker et al., 2008, p. 240) while "participatory research is aligned with the emancipatory agendas of social movements […] and is premised on the notion that local communities ought to be full partners in the processes of knowledge creation and social change" (ibid). CBR recognizes the political nature of scientific research and the influence of researchers on the research process and outcomes. When community is involved as an equal partner as in CBR, research can lead to positive outcomes for the community (Savan, et al., 2009).

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice, identified above as a subgroup within the broader category of 'knowledge networks' can be described very simply as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). There is a great deal of literature on this topic within the business and organizational management literature, in terms of developing communities of practice for translating and sharing knowledge between and within companies and organizations, particularly in light of the necessary structural changes organizations have had to make in response to globalization. In the community psychology literature, communities of practice form between individual members in order to gain a sense of community and some influence over decisions affecting them (Garcia-Ramirez et al, 2009).

Recommendations & Lessons from the Literature
Recommendations for how research collaborations can survive and flourish come from the literature and from the various collaborative models discussed above. Together, these recommendations provide compelling and useful lessons for BALTA's future.

General recommendations for forming strong academic-practitioner collaborations include having a foundation of good social relations, common ground, empathy, mutual respect between the partners, and making the goals and outcomes of the collaboration explicit (Rynes et al, 2001; Cottrell & Parpart, 2006; Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). Academics and practitioners wishing to form partnerships with each other are instructed to recognize the tensions that exist within researcher-practitioner interactions and seek them out rather than avoid them as these tensions have the potential to improve the quality of research undertaken (Rynes et al, 2001; Cottrell & Parpart, 2006). Cottrell & Parpart (2006) emphasize the importance of ensuring that research activities are as transparent as possible and that practitioners are involved at all stages.

Alteroff & Knights (2009) have found that networks are at more of a risk of failing when the academic founder or manager loses interest or moves on, rather than "as a result of the steady churn of practitioner members" (p. 139). Offering advice for those establishing practitioner-academic research networks, Alteroff & Knights (2009) warn that the careers of academics may suffer if they are the main ones in charge of running the networks, since the research produced may not be robust enough to be published in higher impact journals. As well, the time spent by academics in administering the network may prevent them from doing their own research and publishing. As such, Silka (1999, p.350) posits that partnerships will be more sustainable if they pose "intriguing intellectual puzzles that remain to be solved and communicated to the larger scholarly community."

Drawing from the experience of academic-practitioner networks based out of a business or management school, Alteroff & Knights (2009) have found that some of the challenges identified above were overcome by either: recruiting a senior manager or administrator from outside the business faculty; having less senior academics or associates of the school who have a practitioner background run the network; or by creating a steering group composed of both academics and practitioners to oversee the operation of the network (Alteroff & Knights, 2009).

In compiling the recommendations from the literature, three main components of successful collaborations emerged: synergy, strong management structure, and funding. These three components will be briefly discussed below.

Partnership Synergy
A lengthy paper by Lasker, Weiss, & Miller (2001) discusses the importance of synergy to creating strong research partnerships. Synergy is defined as "the power to combine the perspectives, resources, and skills of a group of people and organizations" (Lasker et al., 2001, p. 184). Although the paper refers specifically to health partnerships, the recommendations may have relevance for partnerships outside of the health sector. Lasker et al. (2001) believe that partnership synergy will be enhanced through a variety of elements. First, resources such as money, space, equipment and goods, skills and expertise, convening power (the ability to bring people together for meetings), and connections to key people and organizations are critical. The relationship between partners is also a determining factor of partnership synergy. This means that there exists strong working relationships between partners and that partners are able to communicate with and be influenced by each other. Leadership can play a key role in helping a partnership to flourish as a strong leader can encourage differing opinions to be voiced openly and navigate conflicts among partners. Other roles for leaders include helping the partners

develop jargon-free language to improve communication, stimulate creativity among the partners, and the ability to relate and synthesize various ideas. Finally, governance is likely "key to partnership functioning and it is likely to have a profound effect on a partnership's synergy level" (Lasker et al, 2001, p. 195). Governance is the way in which the various perspectives, resources, and skills of the partners can be combined and formalized. Establishing clear governance procedures allows the partnership to be sustained beyond a particular leader or staff person (Lasker et al., 2001).

Strong Management Structure

Creech & Willart (2001) also identify components for success in terms of knowledge networks. Like Lasker et al. (2001), they note the importance of strong governance and decision-making mechanisms but continue to highlight the need for the network to be managed through a secretariat or coordinating unit, warning that failure to establish such a decision-making body will prevent the network from doing much beyond exchanging information periodically. The creation of a communications infrastructure to support the work of members is another key component, for example through the creation of an 'extranet' to serve as a virtual office space for members (Creech & Willard, 2001).

Funding

As expected, money is a key requirement for long-term sustainability of formal research collaborations and networks. Alteroff and Knights (2009) sum up the importance of funding, writing that money "keeps these networks in motion and maintains the production of knowledge and the texts (research reports, workshops materials, articles, and so on) through which it is distributed. It is also essential to the communication systems that are necessary to renew enrolments and mobilize other human and non-human actors and the embodied skills and knowledge required to administer the day-to-day activities of the network" (p. 133).

Buys & Bursnall (2007) offer specific recommendations for universities that wish to engage in community partnerships. First, partnerships must be viewed by universities at the same level as that of research and teaching and community engagement "needs to permeate institutional policies and practices" (Buys & Bursnall, 2007, p. 84). Universities should make the benefits of partnerships clear to academics and to this end re-evaluate the academic reward system to include formal recognition of community partnerships as well as invest more resources into ensuring successful partnerships (Buys & Burnsall, 2007).

Part Two: Scale of Network Engagement

During the course of this research, a scale was developed in order to better understand the levels of engagement of the different academic-practitioner networks investigated. This scale helps to situate these networks in order to understand their various structures and functions and will assist in understanding where a future BALTA might fit in relation to other existing academic-practitioner networks. The scale ranges from one to four, where four is an advanced network structure with high levels of engagement. Each stage on the scale will be described below and a table follows which contains examples for each stage. It is important to note that this scale is not meant to pass judgment on the efficacy of networks at the various stages. A network at the lowest level of the scale may be effective at reaching the goals it has set out for itself but may not have the requisite structure and means to be fully engaged in its particular issue area. The majority of the networks contained in the tables below are Canadian based and were discovered using basic Google searches. All explicitly strive to involve academics and practitioners. Because of the particular issues that emerge when academics and practitioners are equal

participants in research partnerships (see above), networks that did not make the claim to involve both academics and practitioners were deliberately excluded from this study.

An online survey was created and sent to each of the networks (see appendix for survey questions). Of the 23 networks contacted, seven responses were received to the survey; four sent me personal emails; and one network consented to a phone interview in lieu of filling out the online survey. From this research, one network was found to be inactive and another did respond to the survey but was found to be academic based; both have been excluded from this analysis. Another three did not respond to the survey and did not contain enough information on their websites to be included in the tables below. The rest of the networks contacted (17) are included in the analysis below, however **the names of networks which responded to the survey are in bold** and contain more detailed information in their descriptions. One network, the Canadian Rural Revitalization Network is excluded from the tables below, but a detailed description of that network is included in Part Four of this report.

Table 1. Summary of Academic-Practitioner Networks by Stage

Stage 1 Networks	Canadian Biosphere Research Network	**Community Based Research Network of Ottawa**	Urban Research Network	
Stage 2 Networks	School Health Research Network (SHRN)	**MacArthur Research Network on Mandated Community Treatment**	**Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation**	
Stage 3 Networks	**Financial Services Research Forum (UK)**	**Food Security Research Network**	**Canadian Homelessness Research Network**	**Community Forestry & Environmental Research Partnerships (CFERP)**
Stage 4 Networks	Catholic Peacebuilding Network	International Peace Research Association	**Refugee Research Network**	International Cultural Research Network (ICRN)
Defunct Networks	Community Research Network	Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network		

Stage One Networks

A network at this stage is engaged in very few activities that generally consist of maintaining a website and a listserv. It has only a small grant or no funding at all and no staff members. The network runs completely on a volunteer basis. There are very few networks – only three identified in the course of this research – that have managed to be active with such few resources.

NETWORK NAME	Canadian Biosphere Research Network	**Community-Based Research Network of Ottawa (CBRNO)**	Urban Research Network
Launch Date	1999	1999	2007
Mission/Goals	Connect people who are interested in biosphere reserve research	"facilitate research/evaluation partnerships and promote sharing and dissemination of information and best practices among universities, CBOs, and the broader community." Vision: "CBRNO aspires to be an inclusive, collaborative, community/university partnership that focuses on community based services and social change through shared evidence-based information."	To be a place where researchers and practitioners meet, discuss, share ideas and documents and create networks that will address urban issues in developing countries
Lead Organization	Not clear – seems to be in collaboration with Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association	Emerged from Carleton University	World Bank seems to have sponsored the initial website.
Activities	Host website; Compile bibliography of research on and in biosphere reserves; listserv	Partner in CURA project in the early 2000s (Voluntary Sector Evaluation Research Project); had a 3-year Partnership Grant from United Way ($25,000 for 3 years); grant from Trillium Foundation for website	Extensive list of publications in the library; web forum for discussion; long list of symposiums and conferences
Members	Government researchers, NGOs, biosphere reserve community residents, university faculty, grad students	Lunch & learn sessions, peer learning sessions, & community-based research workshops; linking people interested in CBR	Unknown
Ratio academic-practitioner	Unknown	1/3 academic : 2/3 practitioner	Unknown
Governance	No governance structure	Decisions made by consensus at Steering Committee meetings, held bi-monthly. Members of the Committee are volunteering members. Currently includes representatives from: Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre; Eastern Ontario Council on Mental Health and Deafness; Centretown Community Health Centre; Family Services à la Famille Ottawa; M. Rowe Consulting Services; Ottawa	Unknown

		Community Immigrant Services Organisation (OCISO); School of Social Work, Carleton University; Social Planning Council of Ottawa; United Way/Centraide Ottawa	
Staff	One network coordinator. Unclear if this is a paid position.	No paid staff so all communication is done electronically. No office space. One network coordinator.	Unknown
Notes	Not very active. In 2004 two approaches put forward to make network more active. Survey done in 2005 about function and role of network. Most recent news update from May 2008. Communication with the network coordinator was not fruitful.		It seems the symposiums and conferences are run by the World Bank and the network has stemmed from these events. Network seems to be very simple. *May not be a true Stage One network as it may receive some funding from World Bank.

Stage Two Networks

Networks at stage two have one or more staff members and some form of income or funding. They are involved in at least three regular activities. They may or may not have an advanced decision-making structure such as a board of directors

NETWORK NAME	School Health Research Network (SHRN)	**MacArthur Research Network on Mandated Community Treatment**	**Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation**
Launch Date	Unknown	2000	1987
Mission/Goals & Vision	bring together researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners who are interested in school-based or school-linked health promotion. Describes itself as an "informal mechanism for promoting school health research"	"create a scientifically sound evidence base for developing effective policy and practice on whether, and how, to require certain people with mental disorders to adhere to treatment in the community."	-education and research for rural leaders in the community, private sector, and government. "assembles creative minds from rural communities, governments, universities, and businesses to enable rural populations to succeed."

Lead Organization	Unknown	University of Virginia School of Law	Unknown
Funding Source	Unknown	MacArthur Foundation grant of $1.3 million/year	Varied and non-routine. Some spin-off money earned from SSHRC projects from individual members; one-off funding grant from FCM; provincial funding from host provinces since annual conference rotates across the country. No set budget. Conference is biggest expenditure ($12-15,000/year)
Activities	Conduct and disseminate research; connect researchers and organizations around the world; website includes a 'partner-finder bulletin board' for those looking for a research partner/organization	Workshops; research; reports	Annual conference, workshops, listserv, research publications/reports, regular newsletter, online discussion forum, occasional think tank sessions, inter-network collaboration (i.e. North Atlantic Forum)
Members	34 members – all names posted on website. Non-academic members include representatives from BC Ministry of Health Services, Canadian Association for School Health, Canadian Council on Learning	15 members	Over 600 members. Academics, professional civil servants, private consultants, economic development practitioners
Ratio academic-practitioner	24 academics and 10 practitioners	4 academic : 1 non-academic	70% academic : 30% practitioner
Governance	Unclear.	Decisions made by consensus	12-member, elected Board does financial planning and control, records management, meetings and conferences administration, other activities. Decisions made by the Board and at AGMs. Board active monthly
Staff	1 CEO, 2 co-chairs; 1 coordinator; 1 research assistant Unclear if they are	One paid staff member (administrators); no official office space. No	No paid positions – entirely volunteer. President is David

	paid positions	volunteers.	Douglas from the University of Guelph. No physical office space.
Notes	Website is temporary and many links do not work. Seems like it has potential	Scaled-back website with just a page of text	Registered charity. Aiming to build reputation as a private investor managed Foundation.

Stage Three Networks

Networks at this stage have managed to secure enough funding to have more than one staff member. In addition it has a steering committee (or similar) which guides the direction of the network. Network activities at stage three include hosting a regular conference and/or workshops.

NETWORK NAME	Financial Services Research Forum (UK)	Food Security Research Network
Launch Date	1992	July 2006
Mission/Goals & Vision	"to advance the knowledge of the behavior of consumers and organizations associated with financial services and thereby enhance consumer financial well-being and competitiveness"	"enhance connections to the broader community and build capacity in civil society around the theme of food security" Goals: increase marketing, production, and distribution of local food sources; build capacity of community volunteer organizations to address food security; enhance links between teaching, community services, and outreach; build knowledge base of locally effective food security practices
Lead Organization	Hosted by Nottingham University Business School; managed by The Canford Centre (provides Strategic leadership and direction, supporter recruitment and retention, financial management and control, business planning, research direction, communication and promotion services, delivery of supporter benefits, management of meetings programme)	Based at Lakehead University
Funding Source	Annual subscriptions from core commercial members. Annual budget of 250-300,000 pounds ($340 - $465,000)	6-year grant from the JW McConnell Family Foundation. $100,000/year in foundation money, work study grants, research funding and operating funds. $100,000/year in research grants

Activities	Conferences, workshops, seminars, research publications, reports, primary and secondary research, position papers	Conferences, workshops, research publications/reports, regular newsletter, multi-research grants (international, national, provincial)
Members	60 organizations from private, public, and third sectors. Approx. 250 individuals total.	125 (members are referred to as 'partners')
# academics & practitioners	40 academics & 210 practitioner	1 academic : 5 non-academic ratio
Governance	12-member Steering Committee is primary policy-making and decision-making body. Steering Committee is supported by the Research Planning Group and Financial Control Group	Based on the partnership model of governance call 'Contextual Fluidity'
Staff	CEO and CEO's assistant are paid. Steering Committee members are unpaid by the Forum but paid by their own organisations.	Admin assistant (2 days/week); Special events coordinator (20 hours/week); 8 research assistants (10 hours/week); Full-time academic director (part of academic load). Most members volunteer their time in some capacity.
Notes	The Forum makes use of a range of administrative staff at its host university to undertake tasks like website maintenance, financial control, and routine administration.	

NETWORK NAME	Canadian Homelessness Research Network	Community Forestry & Environmental Research Partnerships (CFERP)
Launch Date	2008	1996
Mission/Goals & Vision	"provide collaboration among the diversity of groups and researchers involved in homelessness across Canada" Links regional, national, and topical research clusters with a range of research and non-research focused institutions	"to nurture a new generation of scholars and university-community partnerships to build scholarly and community capacity for stewardship of natural resources in ways that are socially just, environmentally sound, and economically stable"
Lead Organization	York University partnership with City of Toronto	Based at UC Berkeley
Funding Source	SSHRC and Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy	Funding for past 10 years almost exclusively through the Ford Foundation; however this funding has ended and CFERP is undergoing a process to determine its priorities and where to go

		from here. It has used Skype conferencing as a way to keep costs down.
Activities	Conferences, workshops, listserv, research publications/reports, regular newsletter, online discussion forum	Annual workshop, monthly newsletter, graduate and undergraduate fellowship grants.

Annual workshops used to seek out community perspectives and space was made available for them to speak on their specific work and partnership (e.g. grad students and academic advisors were given substantially less time to present and a lot of time was allocated for the partners to work together). |
Members	25 official members and more than 50 unofficial members	Unknown
# academics & practitioners	1 academic : 5 non-academic ratio	More academics than practitioners but exact numbers are unknown
Governance	Director has the ultimate say on decisions but is advised by the National Advisory Board, which meets yearly, and the Executive Committee, which meets quarterly. 4 working groups assist with the development of the Network by reviewing and operationalising components of the Planning Priorities document.	Administrative decisions made by Executive Director, the PI on the grant, and a 6-7 member steering committee (volunteer). Decisions made using consensus model, which worked well.
Staff	Project coordinator, website coordinator, administrative assistant, 10 research assistants are all paid. All 25 official members donate their time to the functioning of the network	Executive Director is paid.
Notes		As CFERP reaches the end of its funding cycle, it has decided to revamp its structure substantially in order to increase on-the-ground benefits that community partners and their organizations receive from the fellowship partnership. Although grad students were thriving under the old model, CFERP decided to use its last year of funding to establish two new, more regionally-based networks in the northwest and southeast, to be run by former CFERP fellows with substantial ties to community groups to enable them to revise and seek substantive funding to carry CFERP forward in a new phase (annual meetings and fellowships make the current CFERP model very expensive

		to run). Some existing funds are also dedicated to developing two native American nodes in Hawaii and the Southwest tribes.

Stage Four Networks

Stage four networks are highly engaged and have managed to engage members from more than one country. At least two staff members are employed by the network and the network has an advanced governance structure which includes a steering committee and/or a board of directors. Stage four networks host regular conferences and events as well as engage in virtual activities such as a listserv, newsletter, and an up-to-date website.

NETWORK NAME	Catholic Peacebuilding Network	International Peace Research Association
Launch Date	2004	1964
Mission/Goals & Vision	"(1) deepening engagement among scholars and practitioners, (2) improving understanding of best practices in peacebuilding, (3) developing a theology and ethics of peace, and (4) enhancing the peacebuilding capacity of the Church in conflict areas."	"advance interdisciplinary research into the conditions of peace and the causes of war and other forms of violence." • to promote national and international studies and teaching relating to the pursuit of world peace, • to facilitate contacts between scholars and educators throughout the world, • to encourage the international dissemination of results of research in the field and of information on significant development of peace research.
Lead Organization	Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Relief Services	Secretary General at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago
Funding Source	Unknown	Membership fees form one portion of funding (200 euro for an organization membership; 100 for individual; 40 euro for student). In 1990 the IPRA Foundation was formed, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. Began as a depository of funds brought in by people with specific projects. These funds are invested in socially acceptable enterprises for a modest charge and are paid out as needed.
Activities	Annual conference; website acts as a clearinghouse of information; sponsors	Conferences; assistance in the co-ordination of peace research in different

	and stimulates scholarly research and publishing on theory and practice of Catholic peacebuilding; provides support for training programs; collaboration on strategies for policy initiatives Initiatives are divided into two phases. Phase 1 (2004-2008) involved a series of 5 international conferences to deepen engagement and understand best practices. Phase 2 (2009-2014) aims to build capacity for peacebuilding through training programs and strengthening peace studies programs and Catholic universities; developing education materials; and expanding access to educational resources.	countries and the stimulation of international peace research, including the exchange of lecturers and research workers; support of existing scientific journals devoted to peace research; establishment of national and regional peace research institutes, councils and associations; publication of scientific studies and the proceedings of IPRA conferences; directing the attention of scientists to aspects of peace research and peace education that might require further investigation.
Members	Unknown	1300 members in 90 countries
Ratio academic-practitioner	Unknown	Unknown
Governance	18-member steering committee	5 member elected Executive Committee determines policy matters. Secretary General does day-to-day administration
Staff	Coordinator; Associate Coordinator; Program Assistant; Event Coordinator	Exact staff positions are unknown
Notes		Publishes the International Journal of Peace Studies and the Journal of Peace Education

NETWORK NAME	**Refugee Research Network**	International Cultural Research Network (ICRN)
Launch Date	2004	1998
Mission/Goals & Vision	"seeks to generate and mobilize knowledge among scholars, practitioners and policy makers to benefit people who have been forcibly displaced. Our goal is to build a network of networks which will promote connections throughout the field of refugee and forced migration studies"	"promotes the intellectual exchange of ideas through world-wide interaction and co-operation." Goals: - to establish a network for the international exchange of ideas related to culture; - to promote international discussion on current issues and research; - to enable the publishing of peer reviewed books and articles; - to assist in the organization of biennial

		international conferences.
Lead Organization	York University is the administrative hub	Permanent office at the University of Alberta
Funding Source	SSHRC Strategic Research Clusters grant - $300,000 for three years	Membership fee of $100/year. Other funding sources unknown.
Activities	facilitates interactions among the academic, practitioner and policy-making sectors; engages new and established scholars from around the world in online activities; creates spaces for the presentation and dissemination of the experiences and concerns of refugees themselves conferences, workshops, listserv, research publications, reports, regular newsletter, online discussion forum, blogs, collaborative working spaces (shared docs), database development, other social media	Biennial international conferences; publish members' research in yearly volumes and the ICRN Interdisciplinary Journal; provides cultural awareness consultation/workshops
Members	248 members	professional researchers, professors, teachers, students, independent scholars, librarians, social workers, archivists, retired professionals, NGOs and all others interested in culture – several hundred members in total.
Ratio academic-practitioner	75% practitioner	Unknown
Governance	Four-member Executive Committee manages the day-to-day activities of the network including hiring and supervision of staff, budget management, facilitation of communications among network members, implementation planning, maintenance of documentation of activities and reporting to funders and members. A process has been put into place to annually rotate one member, with new members coming from the co-investigators outside of York University. The fifteen person Management Committee includes the Director, six co-investigators, and six collaborators and partners, of which two are be from the Global South. The committee is transparent and inclusive in its decision-making.	4-member Advisory Committee

Staff	One Network Project Coordinator; no volunteers.	Unknown

Defunct Networks

The following two networks were once quite active but due to funding cuts, among other things, they have collapsed. Neither of the networks listed below responded to interview requests, however, I have included them below as possible resources from which to draw lessons for BALTA.

NETWORK NAME	Community Research Network	Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network
Launch Date	1996	2001
Mission/Goals & Vision	To build a trans-national network of research and grassroots organizations conducting community-based research for social change	"create an integrated network of researchers, practitioners, and government policy makers in early childhood literacy and learning in Canada."
Lead Organization	Loka Institute, based in Washington, DC	University of Western Ontario
Funding Source	Unknown	Industry of Canada Networks of Centres of Excellence grant
Activities	Listserv; 6 conferences between 1998 and 2003; host website.	Quarterly internal newsletter, yearly external magazine, student newsletter, literacy resource kits, develop policy strategies, conferences, web-based Encyclopedia of Language and Literacy Development.
Members	Unknown	165 researchers at 37 Canadian institutions; 235 trainees; 100 partner organizations in public, private, and voluntary sectors
Ratio academic-practitioner	Unknown	Unknown
Governance	19-member advisory board; 11 academics & 9 practitioners	11-member Board of Directors; 7-member Knowledge Management Committee; 13-member Research Management Committee
Staff	Unknown	4 staff members
Reason for	Funders have cut ties with the network; member organizations were finding their	Funding not renewed and the government has rejected requests for funding from

Collapse	needs met elsewhere; and no grant proposals have been written because there are no staff. Website is still up but no updates since 2007.	alternate sources. Network closed its doors on March 31, 2010.

Part Three: Summary of Interviews and Online Surveys of BALTA Members

"If we don't work collectively and strategically there will never be policy change. We need to link up research and action on the ground more tightly to inform and change policy."
-BALTA member

The purpose of interviewing and conducting an online survey of BALTA members was to discern if and how much enthusiasm exists for maintaining BALTA in some form after SSHRC funding ends. Interviewees were asked what they think BALTA has done well to date and which activities they would like to see continue. Generally, there was reserved enthusiasm for continuing BALTA. The enthusiasm stemmed from the recognition that the relationships built within the network are valuable and the desire to see these relationships continue. The reservation, on the other hand, emerged from a pessimism that BALTA would be able to exist at all without funding, which BALTA seems unlikely to obtain. None of the interviewees expressed an interest in taking on the challenge personally of establishing some form of social economy network from the remnants of a post-SSHRC funded BALTA. The interviews and survey results are summarized below.

BALTA's Successes
All but one interviewee felt that BALTA's most notable accomplishment to date has been the relationships built between academics and practitioners. Several BALTA members noted the difficulty experienced in bringing together academics and practitioners for research purposes and the disjointed nature of collaboration at the beginning of BALTA's establishment. One BALTA member discussed how early in the process academics and practitioners each had their own projects; academic projects were not connected to community needs and practitioners did not understand the capacity of students. It was noted that academics and practitioners simply were not seeing eye to eye and building working relationships between the two groups was a lengthy process. However, by 2008 this had changed and people began to talk about what they had learned together; people began working as a team to avoid the problem of isolation between academics and practitioners. "The research that has been done since then [spring 2008] has been much better and there have been fewer struggles. There is a different sense of how to work together and people are working together as a team" (BALTA member).

The lengthy process of learning how to work together as academics and practitioners was expressed by several respondents as a prime reason for BALTA to continue in some capacity. One BALTA member said, "I've made good contacts and learned things – we have advanced the research on the social economy. We have made good progress. Academics & practitioners finding ways to work together and understand each other's values and needs has been a success." Another BALTA member remarked upon the value of the research that has emerged from these academic-practitioner collaborations. "BALTA has allowed academics to work with community people and do research that we couldn't have done by ourselves. If BALTA doesn't continue, then this sort of research stops."

Both academics and practitioners have gained from participating in BALTA. "BALTA has evolved into a platform where there is a deeper engagement between the two and both see the mutual benefits. Academics have benefited from student engagement and practitioners have gained from the research that can be leveraged through their networks or generally in the social economy" (BALTA member).

Similar thoughts were expressed in the online survey. Both academics and practitioners who responded to the survey overwhelmingly felt that the most successful activity of BALTA has been its ability to connect academics and practitioners and to strengthen the collective ability to engage in research together. Networking in general was also mentioned as one of BALTA's successes in terms of developing forums like symposia and other networking activities through which BALTA members can connect with each other. Two other respondents to the survey mentioned the value of the research itself and BALTA's ability to explore new research areas as particular successes.

BALTA's Shortcomings
Despite the notable success of academic-practitioner collaboration in BALTA, some BALTA members interviewed expressed some negative views about certain aspects of BALTA. One member brought up the issue of student supervision, saying that in many cases academic BALTA members are so over-extended that they don't have the time to involve themselves in the research and so do not provide the appropriate level of supervision for their students. Another BALTA member found that the research produced until recently by BALTA was not particularly useful for him. Yet another BALTA member questioned the usefulness of creating a future formal network structure, given that BALTA members have come to know each other well and are likely to collaborate in the future, whether or not BALTA exists. However, there were few negative comments about BALTA overall and all but one interviewee stated that it would be unfortunate if BALTA were not to continue on in some form.

The online survey revealed more varied responses in terms of BALTA's less-than-successful activities. A lack of dissemination and publication of research was brought up twice as well as the difficulty experienced by practitioners to disseminate research without dedicated journals or conferences. Two other respondents mentioned the difficulty in keeping in touch with members of different SERCs and other respondents expressed disappointment with the overall lack of a common vision and research/policy agenda to connect the various research projects undertaken.

Part Four: Options for BALTA

"Asking for more volunteer labor from people already overworked on their own local community issues is difficult but critical."

-Network Representative

Common Threads Among Networks
Evidence from the networks studied suggests that networks that have at least one paid member are more active and engaged. However, there are three exceptions to this rule. The Community Based Research Network of Ottawa (CBRNO) has very little funding and as such has no paid staff members. The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and The Canadian Rural Research Network (discussed in Part Four) rely entirely on volunteers as well.

Of those networks that have a source funding and have paid staff members, several require a fee to become a member. These include the Financial Services Research Forum in the UK; the International Peace Research Association, which has several different fee levels; and the International Cultural Research Network, which requires a flat fee of $100/year. This may be a reasonable option for BALTA. Some networks do not require a membership fee but have obtained a source of funding from non-government sources, including the JW McConnell Family Foundation (Food Security Research Network); Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) grants (The Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation); the Trillium Foundation and the United Way (Community Based Research Network of Ottawa); and the Ford Foundation (Community Forestry & Environmental Research Partnerships). Again, these alternate funding sources may be of interest to BALTA.

The majority of networks listed in Part Two are hosted by an academic institution. However, some BALTA members worried that if BALTA were to be hosted by a university, practitioners may feel excluded and not engage with the network. While this seems to be a reasonable fear, it does not appear to be true of all the networks investigated. The Financial Services Research Forum has vastly more practitioners than academics and is hosted at Nottingham University. The Food Security Network at Lakehead University has an academic:practitioner ratio of 1:5, as does the Canadian Homelessness Research Network at York University. Three-quarters of the membership base of the Refugee Research Network at York University is practitioners. If BALTA is serious about engaging both practitioners and academics in equal numbers, this is certainly feasible.

Case Study Network: The Canadian Rural Research Network (the CRRN)

Description of the CCRN
The CRRN seems to be a unique model in terms of research networks and its model is worth considering as one for BALTA to follow. The information contained in this section was obtained via phone interview with a representative from the CRRN, who was very enthusiastic about the CRRN's successes so far and the prospects of having other networks apply this model to their particular case. The CRRN is unique in that it receives no funding at all, has no source of income, nor does it seek financial resources. It is deliberately restrictive in the kinds of activities with which it engages, realizing that running conferences or workshops will require funding and significant amounts of time and organizing skills.

The CRRN describes itself as a "vibrant, free and comprehensive online community of rural research stakeholders that facilitates links, exchanges, partnerships and information sharing among all parties interested in rural research by means of new and innovative networking approaches." The network aims to appeal to as broad a range of people and organizations as possible, including the public and private sector, academia, practitioners, community groups, and government officials. Anyone can join this network – there are no barriers to membership. Those who join the network are interested in keeping up-to-date on rural research news, making connections with others interested in rural research, and perhaps in developing research partnerships.

The CRRN meets its objectives by maintaining a web portal and distributing bi-monthly updates on rural research to its membership list. The governance structure includes a Partners' Roundtable and a Management Committee. The Partners' Roundtable consists of one member from each of the CRRN's 32 partner organizations. Partner organizations are those that "are involved in the generation and/or use of research with relevance to rural areas, particularly but

not exclusively for Canada" (CRRN website). Current members include:
- Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities (U of A Augustana Campus);
- Atlantic RURAL Centre; Brandon University;
- Canadian Rural Health Research Society;
- Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation;
- Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership;
- Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research at Laurentian University;
- Chaire Desjardins en developpement des petites collectivites at the University du Quebec en Abitibi-Temiscamingue;
- Community Development Institute at UNBC;
- Coastal Communities Network, Nova Scotia;
- Concordia University; CCEDnet;
- Rural Secretariat, Government of Canada
- etc.

The Partners' Roundtable meets once per year online, where it "reviews the objectives of the CRRN, reviews the performance of the CRRN in meeting these objectives and discusses possible new ways to meet these objectives" (the CRRN website). The Roundtable is chaired by the Network Coordinator.

The Management Committee is made up of seven members, including the Network Coordinator. These members are volunteers who are willing to volunteer their time to the maintenance of the web portal and be active in the development of new ideas to further the objectives of the network. The Management Committee holds an online meeting every other month to prepare the bi-monthly email update that is sent out to members and to discuss the implementation of new features of the web portal. The Committee also "reviews material submitted for distribution through the network and ensures postings and information are consistent with the objectives and principles of the CRRN" (the CRRN website).

To date, the CRRN has approximately 3500 people on its email list and over the past year has received 17,000 hits total on the website, which translates to between 20 and 50 hits per day.

Why the CRRN is Successful
- The website is kept very simple and is hosted through blogspot, a free site. Blogspot makes it very easy to update information so this reduces the amount of time spent on updating or designing the website.
- The CRRN used its contacts at the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation to establish a membership base for the network. From this base, the network has grown.
- The governance structure is kept very fluid and informal. Anyone can join the Management Committee, for instance. Anyone can volunteer their time to help with the network. According to an informant involved with the CRRN, this informality is an advantage.
- The CRRN has no ambition to host any conferences or workshops. It only aims to promote events and activities related to rural research.
- The CRRN aims to be as broad and inclusive as possible. For this reason it has decided not to post research that appears in peer-reviewed journals, since not everyone can access these journals free of cost. There is also a fear that advertising peer-reviewed journal articles will result in excluding non-academics. As a compromise, a volunteer puts together one post per month containing all recent peer-reviewed journal articles of

interest (Representative of the CRRN).

- The network relies on volunteers to keep it running but has kept its goals and structure as simple as possible so that it is easy to and minimally time-consuming to volunteer. For example, tasks are divided among volunteers. One volunteer is responsible for scanning peer-reviewed journals for rural-related research. Another updates the calendar and someone else reviews news stories for rural-related content.
- There is a Network Coordinator position, but even this position is minimally time-consuming, requiring up to five hours per week of work mainly for creating new posts and communicating with members.
- Although the CRRN runs on a team of volunteers, initially a champion for the Network took the reins to set up the website and get the Network established. This seems to be a critical point.
- To appeal to current and future members, key players have to be involved in the network. In the case of the CRRN, the Rural Secretariat (Government of Canada) is the key player and hosted the online meeting in May. Both the demand and the supply side of the research needs to be met (Representative from the CRRN).

Why This is a Good Model for BALTA

If BALTA is unable to secure some small amount of funding, this model seems to be a good fit for BALTA in the future. The representative from the CRRN that I talked to was very enthusiastic about the CRRN's successes so far and its future prospects. There have been no difficulties to date in finding volunteers and website updates are occurring frequently. Since there is no cohesive social economy network in Canada, the CRRN model is particularly appealing as a solution for BALTA. Currently there is no single resource where people interested in the social economy can go to find out the latest information and to connect with others interested in the social economy. This may be a particular gap that BALTA is well-equipped to fill. The CRRN model requires little work and the website is easy to use. The representative from the CRRN that I talked to offered to send me the CRRN website template for BALTA to adapt.

Downsides to the CRRN Model

There are a couple of reasons why the CRRN model may not appeal to BALTA. First, the initial start-up requires a champion; someone who is eager to set up the network and get it running and receive no remuneration for this work. However, since BALTA does have a base from which to start, this initial work should not be too involved. If BALTA is interested in pursuing this model, perhaps a small bit of remaining SSHRC funding could be set aside to pay someone to do this initial work.

The absence of conferences may not appeal to some BALTA members. However, because BALTA members told me in the course of the interview process that they were eager to continue the relationships they had built through BALTA, this model would achieve this end.

The CRRN model relies on a key player to entice people and organizations to join the network. It is likely BALTA too would need a key player, and this organization would have to be identified somewhat early.

It is my impression that this model works better at the national scale. The more organizations and people who are involved, the bigger the pool to draw from to find volunteers: a crucial component of this network. BALTA members were not enthusiastic about trying to establish a

national-scale network, but if the CRRN model were to be pursued, there is no clear reason why membership should be restricted to just BC and Alberta.

A Note on Building a National Network

There was not a lot of take-up on the idea of trying to establish a nation-wide network on the social economy. One interviewee expressed frustration with the parochialness of the nodes and stated that it is exceedingly more difficult to create a national initiative than a provincial one because of the extra resources required. The general sentiment seems to be that the social economy varies too much from region to region and from province to province to make a nation-wide network relevant.

BALTA's Uncertain Future

The issue of funding was brought up consistently throughout interviews with BALTA members. A common sentiment was that BALTA will simply be unable to continue if there is not at least a small amount of funding with which to pay someone to coordinate the network. One member felt that to be successful, a BALTA network would need more than just a coordinator, including a financial officer and a director. Another BALTA member pointed out that even if a formal network were to be established, it would be very difficult to make it truly inclusive geographically, due to the large geographic distances and high costs of bringing people together from disparate regions. Summing up the problem, one BALTA member said,

> Networks and coalitions are continually resource challenged in terms of funds and in terms of time. The people who participate in those kind of entities don't want to drain their own organization's resources; they want someone to pay for it. In Canada that has been both the federal and provincial governments. For the last decade or more, those resources have been starting to dry up. What is even possible for carrying forward? On the HR side, maintaining a network is usually one of the last priorities for people. This means that it is very hard to find the time to do this kind of work, even when it is well resourced. It is difficult to find the time and carry it on one's shoulders, if there is not at least one staff to provide support.

In addition to the funding issue, BALTA members interviewed brought up a few other reasons to be wary about BALTA's future. The issue of keeping practitioners engaged was one particular issue of concern for several interviewees. It was mentioned that there is likely enough common research interest to keep academics engaged but perhaps not practitioners. Furthermore, it is difficult for practitioners to continue their involvement since they will likely not receive remuneration for it. As one interviewee put it,

> It's the academics that have the most interest in keeping it going. For academics, they have a salary. Practitioners are paid to do totally different things – working off the side of the table. The cost-benefit analysis doesn't look as good for the practitioners.

As was mentioned above, the large geographic area that BALTA encompasses poses difficulties in terms of bringing people together on any kind of regular basis. However, the geographic context of BALTA conjures additional difficulties. One interviewee reflected that if it had not been a requirement of the CURA, there was no reason for the provinces of BC and Alberta to be lumped together. However, this BALTA member continued on, saying that now that the two provinces have been grouped together and the relationships established, the partnership would be ideally kept intact. In opposition to this particular

viewpoint, another BALTA member thought that continuing to hold the BC-Alberta relationship together would be too difficult, because the politics in the two provinces are too different. While this interviewee did point to several issues that might keep both parties engaged – food, land trusts, and affordable housing – the interviewee felt it unlikely that these issues would provide enough natural affinity to maintain an ongoing conversation.

Given these various viewpoints, what are some options for BALTA's future? Acknowledging the funding issue, interviewees put forth some suggestions for how BALTA could continue. Four out of seven interviewees felt that BALTA ought to be hosted by an institution. While one interviewee suggested that BALTA might remain with CCCR, the other three thought it was more feasible for BALTA to reside within a university, to take advantage of better infrastructure. If one, two, or more universities were to partner with BALTA, as one interviewee suggested, this could "keep academics and practitioners connected to work on research projects that could leverage real opportunities for students." There were a couple of favourable mentions towards BALTA being hosted by Athabasca University. One interviewee said,

> *From the institutional side Athabasca University has been very important in bringing together critical resources. So if there is an institutional base that has resources and can sustain basic infrastructure to continue research with Athabasca or other universities then that could be a real outcome.*

However, some BALTA members expressed doubts as to whether practitioners would truly be engaged if BALTA were to be hosted by a university. As one BALTA member put it, "BALTA can't be entrenched in a university; it makes it too difficult for practitioners to have a role. Practitioner involvement can't be a token effort. This has been the value of BALTA as a node."

If BALTA were not to be officially hosted by an institution, one idea to keep the network going would be to establish a strong virtual presence via a website and/or listserv. This would be one way to maintain the relationships built during the course of BALTA, without actually continuing on with the research aspect. "Once the website is up and we have an online library, we could house research information and other news on the social economy. With a relatively small amount of capacity this could be kept going. We could maybe put out an occasional newsletter" (BALTA member). An online web portal or forum would be a passive way to keep BALTA going and a way to keep others up to date on current research. However, with this type of model there is the danger of slipping into a museum-type approach, where, as one BALTA member put it, "we place the work we have done behind a glass case and be self-congratulatory."

Ideas from BALTA members
Throughout the course of the interviews and in the online surveys, BALTA members came up with suggestions for possible structures and roles for a future BALTA network. These ideas are summarized here:

- Each SERC should discuss which research pieces to pursue and disseminate the information more widely. Engage the public around the most salient issues within each SERC.

- BALTA should look for funding partners, for example Vancity, the Cooperators, or in the real estate sector.

- Build a larger social economy network and establish sub-groups within it. We could then invite memberships for $100 each.

- We could put together a proposal for SSHRC to continue the network in some way.

- If we organized a symposium every two years, this might be enough to keep the fire alive. It is hard to imagine how BALTA could ever really have the means to fund research, but we could still work to raise awareness of the social economy.

- Examining ANSER is one option. ANSER seems to be developing a real presence and eclipsing CASC. Perhaps we should explore forming provincial nodes of ANSER? Unfortunately it is an academic society so it may not keep the spirit of BALTA going, in terms of involving practitioners. However, ANSER is a place where social economy research can be disseminated.

- Perhaps CCCR and AU could collaborate on a social economy journal or magazine.

- We could apply for a CURA to try to keep the bits and pieces of BALTA together.

- A way to keep the academic-practitioner relationship is to engage students in research questions that are derived from the field. This research would be linked to sector organisations where the academic support was brought in specifically to ensure that methodologies and rigour were followed.

- We could work to find venues that are happening anyway, where those of us who have this common background or interest could hold our own sessions. We could use this venue to get BALTA people together. For example, the Planning Institute of BC.

- BALTA could act as a networking hub or place to coordinate research activities

- BALTA should sponsor regional practice-oriented research and continue to hold symposia. Grants for further research should be sought out.

- BALTA should be continued if a strong practitioner component can be guaranteed.

- A university setting may be essential for BALTA's continued existence – University of Alberta or Athabasca University may be the best option

Pursuing Further SSHRC Funding
Many in BALTA will be aware that BALTA is the only one of the social economy nodes to not have put forth an application to SSHRC for additional CURA funding. Three nodes – Atlantic, Prairies, and Southern Ontario – have already been successful in their CURA applications. Quebec's application was denied; however, a key informant interviewed recently suggested that this is because Quebec has already been the recipient of several CURAs to date. Many BALTA members will also be aware of the recent email sent by Stuart Wulff regarding SSHRC's recent grant restructuring to include a Partnership Development Grant under the umbrella of the new *Insight and Connection* programs. Due to launch in July 2010, the details had not yet been released as of the writing of this report. However, Stuart has been able to collect details through one of his contacts at SSHRC. According to this contact, the Partnership Development Grant will be worth up to $250,000 over 3 years and can be used for developing new partnerships, doing exploratory work towards a full program grant application, and for work related to evolving a current partnership to a new stage. The grants may also be used for follow-up work to a

completed CURA, such as further dissemination and mobilization or engagement around research results. Stuart's SSHRC contact feels that BALTA may be reasonably well positioned to obtain one of these grants. Such a grant could help BALTA to explore different models of engagement in order to maintain and build contacts in the social economy sector and build a robust, sustainable network. Through this grant, BALTA may also explore ways to further disseminate and mobilize existing research.

Of course, this option is only viable if BALTA members are enthusiastic about pursuing future funding. The online survey conducted of BALTA members in June attempted to ascertain the level of support for exploring further SSHRC funding. In general, the responses to the survey can be characterized as supportive with a small degree of reluctance. No respondent was overtly opposed to the idea, but some were certainly less enthusiastic than others.

Among academics, support was mixed. Two respondents wrote that they would support pursuing further SSHRC funding on the basis that the research done to date needs to be more visible; another wrote that the BALTA model ought to be institutionalized in some form so that it can become more mainstream. Among the less-than-enthusiastic responses, one respondent wrote that research done to date has not had much of an impact, but if future research could be focused on applied approaches and building relationship capacity, pursuing SSHRC funding to this end could be fruitful. Another respondent wrote that serious reflection is needed before applying for further funding to ensure that people are really serious and committed to keeping BALTA going. A third academic wrote that he/she would support funding to facilitate further networking and relationship-building but not for infrastructure development.

Among practitioners, responses were more positive. All respondents stated outright that SSHRC funding should be pursued, although with some caveats. One respondent felt that future BALTA funding should be dedicated to partnership development and capacity building for community engaged scholarship, with another respondent writing similarly that BALTA has much more to contribute in terms of applied research. In the same vein, another practitioner wrote that a future BALTA should not be based at a university. One other respondent felt that the current form of BALTA was successful and should continue, but should be opened up to new members.

My overall impression from the interviews and from the online survey is that while no one I spoke to was ready to take the reins and champion the continuation of BALTA, most current BALTA members would support any efforts to this end. If one or more BALTA members were to collaborate on putting together a proposal for a SSHRC grant, the majority of BALTA members would support them in their endeavour.

APPENDIX

International Examples of Social Economy Networks

Merthyr Tydfil Social Economy Network (MTSEN) – Wales
- a local body representing the interests of all organizations operating in the social economy
- an elected steering group formed in 2005 composed of local organizations and support agencies
- provides a forum for communication and a voice for the sector in national and regional government

http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/MTSEN/Home.htm?Language=English&View=Full

Social Economy Network – Northern Ireland
- membership-based
- lobbies for the sector and works on policy formulation
- provides links with other relevant networks outside Northern Ireland
- funded by Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Investment for a four-year period, until 2011 → This grant reduces year on year so the network must generate income for future sustainability
- An email exchange with Stephanie McManus, Office Administrator for the Network revealed that the Network doesn't believe it will ever achieve 100% sustainability and so are trying to make this case to the government in order to secure some core funding. Currently their primary source of income generation is membership fees and training sessions.

http://www.socialeconomynetwork.org/

EMES - European Research Network
- "Building Europe's knowledge on the social economy and social entrepreneurship"
- activities can be divided into: research, educational programs, dissemination
- ongoing dialogue with researchers working in similar areas in North America and other regions, and European practitioners in the field
- 11 institutional members – each member institution has official representative
- 10 individual members – five founding members and five joined after successful research collaborations
- 6 major research projects undertaken (i.e. Third System and Employment; emergence of social enterprise in Europe)
- published 7 books as well as papers
- runs PhD international summer school; hosts a student network
- partnered with 4 other research networks: Network of Latin American Researchers on Social and Solidarity Economy (RILESS); University Network for Social Entrepreneurship (UniNet); International Society for Third Sector Research **CINEFOGO** Civil Society and New Forms of Governance in Europe –The Making of European Citizenship (CINEFOGO)

Wrexham Social Economy Project – Wrexham County Borough, England
- ended March 2006
- goal: "to develop a culture of entrepreneurship in Wrexham, to encourage social enterprises to thrive" → through raising awareness and providing guidance and sign-posting service to new and existing social enterprises
- conducted mapping exercise to determine current levels of community and social economy activity in Wrexham County Borough → mapping determined gaps in provision, barriers faced by organizations and level of support needed by these groups to help them generate their own income
- Social Enterprise Toolkit – produced step-by-step guide to starting and running a social enterprise
- Social enterprise training – this continues even though the official project has ended. The Social Enterprise Awareness Training sessions include information on funding, business planning, cash flow forecasting, social audit, etc.
- Social Enterprise Visits Programme – provides an opportunity for those setting up social enterprises to visit similar enterprises locally or further afield. This program is still running for those based in rural Wrexham
- Wrexham Social Economy Network (WSEN)
    - Held quarterly networking events
    - Provided information on current funding and training opportunities
    - Published a quarterly newsletter
    - Produced a social economy support directory listing local, regional, and national support organisations
- Wrexham Social Accounting & Audit Cluster Support Programme – ran in partnership with a few other organizations & charities

http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/business/social_economy/index.htm

Euro-Mediterranean Social Economy Network (ESMED)
- France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain
- network of various organizations and institutes in these countries
- publicize and defend the interests of the social economy in policy-making bodies
- promote and support establishment of transnational co-operation agreements among enterprises in the sectot to improve the competitiveness and strategic position in the global economy
- permanent secretary, assured by Spanish Business Confederation of the Social Economy (CEPES)
- established in 2000
- doesn't seem to be any information past 2002

http://recipes.cepes.es/i_30_frameset1.cfm

Online Survey Questions

The list of 10 questions sent to academic-practitioner research networks:

1. What is the name of your network and how many members do you have?

2. What is the approximate ratio of academic network members to non-academic network members? (For the purposes of this research, an academic is someone who holds a position at a university or college.)

3. What administrative roles does your network have (if any)? Are they paid or volunteer positions?

4. Do any network members volunteer their time on a regular basis to help with the functioning of the network? If so, how many?

5. Does your network have physical office space where network administrators/staff/volunteers work on a regular basis?

6. How long has your network been in existence?

7. With which of the following activities, if any, is your network engaged?
   Conferences
   Workshops
   Listserv
   Research publications/reports
   Regular newsletter (online or paper)
   Online discussion forum
   Other (please specify):

8. Briefly describe the governance structure of your network. How are decisions about the activities/functions of your network made?

9. What are your network's primary sources of funding? What is your network's approximate annual budget?

10. Does your network, or any of the organizations involved in your network, have any formal partnerships with municipal/local government(s)? If yes, please give a brief description of the partnership(s).

BALTA Members Online Survey Questions

1. Do you self-identify as (check one): practitioner? academic? student? other:

2. In your opinion, what have been the most successful aspects/activities of BALTA to date? The least successful?

3. SSHRC funding for BALTA will end in 2011. Would you like to see BALTA continue in some form after SSHRC funding ends? If so, in what way would you like to see BALTA continue? If not, please explain why.

4. If there was potential for further SSHRC funding to keep BALTA going, do you think BALTA should pursue this course? On what basis or in what form?

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