PART THREE

NATURAL RESOURCES, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Mark Cabaj, in his *CED and the Social Economy in Canada: A People's History*, notes the fundamental and pervasive role of natural resources in the evolution of Canada's peoples and communities. Landscapes carved by natural forces aeons before the advent of human existence have shaped our communities, our livelihoods, our cultural identities, and our expectations.

It is interesting to consider how this history reflects itself in our current relationship and attitudes towards nature. What assumptions have been at the center of our approach to the use and development of nature's bounty? How does our past reflect itself in the struggles of today and the issues of tomorrow? These are big questions; certainly beyond the scope of our enquiry. Nevertheless, the astute reader will find in the contributions that follow some clues, some threads that when woven together constitute rich raw material from which some tentative hypotheses might be drawn.

Implicit within many of the articles, and explicit in a few, is a perspective that represents a critique of the status quo. It goes something like this:

People living in the midst of the natural resources within and adjacent to their communities have become disconnected from the use, care, and benefits of those natural resources. Ownership and/or control are vested in distant shareholders and corporate managers that historically have placed priority on profit maximisation over other values, recent trends in corporate social responsibility notwithstanding. Unsurprisingly, many governments exercising their legislative and regulatory mandates have favoured corporate approaches to development. Social and environmental interests are paid lip service, but seldom find their way into government policy. Indeed, where they have, they are often eroded, for example, in BC's forest industry where export of raw logs is accelerating. Given the large amounts of capital employed by resource developers, natural resource-based communities are dependent on those with the capital for their jobs and their local tax base. Faced with price volatility in global markets for product lines that seldom extend very far up the value chain (e.g., exporting logs or lumber rather than value-added products with more diversified markets), vulnerability is heightened, uncertainty exacerbated.

The articles and papers in this section reflect a sophisticated and nuanced counterpoint to the story line embedded in this description. It might be said they represent a small part of history in the making, an example of that segment of Canadian life flowing from what Cabaj invoked as a "a history of people organizing and innovating to defend the ties that bind them together and survive, even prosper. Despite the odds, some communities have striven to retain or regain a say in their future."

It sounds good, doesn't it? Of course it does, and this section demonstrates it can be true. It also demonstrates just how hard it is, how complex it can become, and how important determination and organisation are for success.

There is a particular dynamic in what follows that needs careful attention by the reader; a dynamic foreshadowed by the title "Natural Resources, Local Development, and Social Enterprise." What this section facilitates exploring is the linkage between how development of a particular locality—by this I include economic, social, cultural, and political development—can be strengthened through increasing local control over the use, care, management, and benefit derived from natural resources. The second dimension that can be explored is the role of social enterprise as a superior vehicle for organizing production with community benefit higher on the priority list than it is with most conventional private sector businesses in the resource sector.

Forestry, land, agriculture, food, and a smattering of other resource sectors are the "natural" domains through which this inquiry weaves. And there are tons of interesting and instructive linkages. The first two articles illustrate the rich tapestry of struggle, tension, inspiration, thoughtful debate, and dogged hard work to be expected by putting local, social enterprise, and natural resources in the same phrase. The Revelstoke Forest Corporation combines CED strategy and the social enterprise tool in a way that has led to it being widely heralded as an example of the multiple benefits to be derived from a community gaining control of the forest resource (Weir and Pearce, 1995).Very well, suggests the co-founder of Greenpeace International, who asserts that while many advances are being made in Revelstoke, it is still not up to snuff

because the new enterprise is constrained from being a true "community forest" because of the exigencies of provincial legislation(Burda and M'Gonigle, 1996).

The linkage between CED as a strategy concerned with the revitalization and renewal of particular places, and social enterprise as tool that can vitally contribute to such goals, is richly illustrated by the West Chilcotin Forest Products joint venture (Julian, 2002), a social enterprise solution that succeeded in bridging deep cultural, economic, and social divides to achieve a more viable future for a struggling community. Similarly, in the food sector, social enterprise is being leveraged as a means through which to reconstruct a food system on the island of Kauai (Lenthall, 2006) that is leading to a greater measure of family and organizational self-reliance and greater food security for this tiny island in the South Pacific. Back in Canada, prairie farmers have imported a new tool for making their businesses pay for themselves: new generation co-operatives(Herman and Fulton, 2001). Climbing up the value chain through very focused, co-operative processing of a wide variety of agriculture products, their exclusiveness to member producers gets the backs up of old co-op as well as CED activists. However, while there are differences, the real story is in the role the can play as one tool in broader CED rural revitalization strategies.

Faced with a very real risk of having no one to take over the farm, Manitoba farmers consider the idea of a land trust (Hamilton, 2006) but find themselves stymied by their own conflict in values—between family, community and rural living on the one hand, and market success in a global economy on the other. It is interesting to reflect on their dilemma in light of earlier musings (Lewis and Conaty, 2004; Baum, 2001; Lewis, 2007) about the role of ideology and unexamined assumptions shaping the way we think about the past, present, and future.

This problem of unexamined assumptions may be part of the reason for the failure of the Quesnel Hardwood Co-operative (Wall et. al, 2004). Opportunity and hard work could not make up for being undercapitalised and for the failure of key actors to carefully examine and then consciously accept the roles, responsibilities, and relationships co-operation entails. Coming from a culture of free enterprise rooted in the myth of the "lone pioneer," and of "making on the strength of personal attributes" did not foster the respect required to make an interdependent value chain effective. The need for mutual benefit and reciprocity between every link in the chain was insufficiently understood and accepted (Baum, 2001).

From California, an activist academic researcher undertakes a provocative and thorough analysis of what it will take to dislodge industrial agriculture in favour of a more sustainable strategy (Campbell, 2000)**.** A systems approach combined with grassroots street smarts and a sense of what it takes to advance the political and social changes needed provides a stimulating foray into the linkages between place, enterprise, and industry. The culture shifts required for real change are reminiscent of Neamtan's earlier reflection on the "Political Imperative" that is central to empowering people and institutions to make real changes (Neamtan, 2004).

Finally, weaving a number of these pieces together is somewhat serendipitously advanced by the final contribution in this section: a paper on rural policy and sustainable livelihoods for the federal government. (Lewis, 2004) This policy paper explores what we have learned in Canada about what is working, what is not, what supports advances and what thwarts progress, and what policy options might help stem the tide of rural decline and impoverishment. The paper thus provides an excellent framework and discussion from which to critically reflect on and integrate the learning from articles read thus far.

I want to make one final comment before moving on. What none of these cases addresses is the most critical "natural resource" issue of our time, one that will dominate our lives in the decades to come: Climate change, triggered by the emissions from **our** fossil fuel-dependent lifestyle and industrial practices, cuts across all sectors, indeed across all spheres of life. The radical implications for how we think, live, and organize our lives have only begun to be contemplated. That being said, just perhaps in this most pervasive and global of challenges, the experience and learning of innovating at the margins may become one strategic link in the multi-faceted struggle humankind must undertake to preserve our home and our species.

Of the seven BALTA research interests set out in the introduction, I believe all are touched on by one or more of the contributions in this section.

1. ***Re-inserting social goals into economic life***: to better understand and *critically analyze* the impact of inserting such social processes of reciprocity, solidarity, and sustainability into economic life, in practice and in theory.

2. ***Relationship between territorial and enterprise approaches***: to better understand and *critically analyze* how territorial (CED) and social enterprise approaches can interact to enhance the overall potency of the social economy.
3. **Understand the social economy as it current exits**: to better understand and critically analyze the social economy as it exists.
4. ***What is working and why:*** to understand and *critically analyze* the characteristics of exemplary practice wherever it occurs.
5. ***What supports or thwarts adaptation & scaling up:*** to understand and *critically analyze* key issues, opportunities, and constraints for adapting and scaling up what is working into the BC and Alberta contexts.
6. ***What are the central public policy and political factors:*** to identify how key factors play themselves out in debates related to CED and the social economy.
7. ***What might the future role and relevance of the social economy be***: to think about what contribution the social economy might make in the rapidly changing economic, political, social. and environmental landscapes.