

B.C.-Alberta Research Alliance on the Social Economy (BALTA)

SERC 2 Workplan – 2007-2008

General

1. SERC ID:

SERC 2 - “The Social Economy in Rural Revitalization and Development”

2. SERC members involved in developing the workplan:

Mark Roseland – Co-Chair, Darcy Mitchell – Co-Chair, Douglas Gordon, Mary Beckie, Michelle Aasgard, Sean Markey, Mike Gismondi, Sandy Lockhart
Staff: Tim Brigham

Specific project proposals (Annex As) were developed as a group effort, but development was generally led by Sean Markey and Mary Beckie (B1) and Mike Gismondi (B2).

3. Has the workplan been ratified by the SERC?

The workplan has been ratified by the BALTA steering committee and implementation has begun.

4. New SERC members (if any):

Herb Barbolet, Noel Keough and Karsten Mundel have been approved as participatory collaborators.

5. New co-investigators (if any):

In addition to the current co-investigators in SERC 2 that are playing research lead roles (Roseland & Gismondi), several other SERC members will be playing direct roles in leading and managing research. Dr. Mary Beckie and Dr. Sean Markey have been approved by the steering committee as additional co-investigators:

6. Statement of strategic vision for the SERC and its work for the balance of the project (February 2011). Include priorities, broad outcomes projected and rationale, making reference to BALTA’s analytical domains, central research questions and strategic research priorities as relevant.

Vision Statement:

To explore and understand the social economy in relation to natural resources and sustainable rural development in order to:

- increase awareness;
- identify and build capacity;
- effect policy to scale up the social economy; and
- examine urban-rural solidarities

Our goal is that the social economy become the dominant issue two federal elections from now.

Priorities and Outcomes:

A decision was taken to change the name of the SERC to better reflect our interest in the concept of sustainable rural development and the role of the social economy. Our goal is to explore, enhance, and build the role of the social economy in rural revitalization.

Our *focus* is on over-all community development but with specific emphasis on sectors/enterprises including:

- shellfish aquaculture
- community forestry
- eco-tourism
- alternative energy production for local sustainability or market
- organic agriculture

These topics will all receive attention over the course of the next 3 or 4 years.

Broad outcomes for the SERC:

- The engagement of social economy, natural resources, and environment is a relatively new relationship and has been under-theorized. We anticipate developing some new theoretical work examining the implications of greening the social economy, and the consequence of environmental issues for the solidarity economy in general. This may well become a cross-SERC topic, but should start out of SERC 2 where the bulk of the researchers have experience in these areas.
- We intend to produce a book similar in design to Mark Roseland's *Toward Sustainable Communities* that looks at social economy and rural revitalization, with an emphasis on concepts and issues, practical and policy options for all levels of government, and contact information and web resources.
- PowerPoint presentations for use at annual conferences of Municipal Districts and Counties (and Municipal Associations) in both provinces exploring various practical and policy implications of our findings on SE and natural resources (2008).
- Articles for Alternatives Magazine / and Policy Options

7. Preliminary plan for organizing of the SERC's work over the next four years to reach the projected outcomes.

As outlined in the previous section, we have determined some general areas of research we intend to focus on in Year 1. Because we believe we are in an emerging area in terms of the linkages between the social economy, natural resources, and the environment, SERC members feel we are not yet in a position to develop a solid four year plan for research. The scoping project proposed for this year that will examine the role of the social economy in advancing rural revitalization and development will contribute essential information for refining our program of research over the coming year. The literature review underway on the general topic of rural revitalization and the

social economy will also include the identification of obvious gaps for possible future research activities.

The Sustainability and the Social Economy project which is proposed to run over two years, will also involve mining existing studies of rural revitalization, looking for work on the social economy or attitudes towards sustainability reflected in the SE-related literature.

We also intend to work with the Mapping Project to identify additional case studies in each province that are clearly focused on the connection between the social economy, natural resources, and the environment. Because this is an area we feel is relatively poorly understood, it will be essential that we work closely with the mapping team to ensure relevant information and organizations are identified and captured effectively.

Another major task will be to continue to work on identifying new team members – academics and practitioners – to strengthen the SERC's expertise in the various key topic areas we have identified. The initial suggestions for new SERC members listed in #4 are an attempt to begin addressing these gaps.

8. What priorities has the SERC identified for mapping?

We have begun work on a list of potential networks/organizations and will pass those on to Mike Gismondi and the Mapping Committee. We also believe that the results of the initial literature review currently underway will provide valuable input to further define our mapping priorities.

9. Identify SERC members who are prepared to play a role in supporting the mapping program.

Mike Gismondi and Sandy Lockhart are involved in the development of the mapping program. Sean Markey will act as our liaison to support the BALTA mapping program.

Detailed 2007-2008 WorkPlan

10. One year priorities for research development and a rationale for these in terms of the criteria for assessment of workplans (see workplans policy).

Our research priorities for this year include the completion of 'scoping' research on the role of the social economy in selected natural resource sectors and rural revitalization, and initiating a research project (proposed for two years) on exploring the concept of sustainability in terms of the social economy.

Understanding the role of the social economy in advancing rural revitalization and development

This will involve 4 project co-leads (two from each province) working with 2 students. Two students, one for each province, will work for an initial term of 4 months and, provided initial work is satisfactory, followed by a further 8 months to complete scoping studies on the role of the social economy in the following areas:

- non-timber forest products;
- local and organic food systems;
- eco-tourism
- fisheries
- renewable energy forestry and agricultural biofuels systems, wind, small-scale hydro, solar, tidal, waste.

Sustainability and the Social Economy

This research – to be led by Mike Gismondi – will explore broad questions (theoretical and operational) connected to sustainability in the future of the social economy. The research will focus on the role that could be played by the social economy sector in the transition to a more sustainable society.

Rationale in Terms of Criteria for Workplan Assessment

The two research projects proposed for year 1 effectively address the BALTA research domains and strategic research questions.

1. *The impact of inserting social processes of reciprocity, solidarity, and sustainability into economic life.*
Project B1 will explore how (and where) these social processes have been inserted into different areas of the resource-based economy, and the possible role of the social economy in revitalizing rural communities. Project B2 examines in detail how the question of sustainability is addressed within the social economy.
2. *How territorial (CED) and social economy (enterprise) approaches can interact to enhance the overall potency of the social economy.*
This will be one of the key questions addressed by the project on the role of the social economy in rural revitalization (B1), including how the SE sector can contribute to and be supported by broader CED approaches in the area of natural resources.
3. *The social economy as it exists.*
Both of the proposed projects clearly contribute to improving our understanding of the role of the social economy in the areas of natural resources, rural revitalization, and ecological sustainability.
4. *The characteristics of exemplary practice wherever it occurs, i.e. what is working and why.*
Both projects will look for and explore cases of exemplary practice, B1 through its scoping of the overall role of the SE in rural revitalization, and B2 through its goal of developing a clearer picture of how the SE can contribute to the transition to a more sustainable society. Both projects will also be looking outside of Alberta and BC for examples of exemplary practice in other provinces and internationally.
5. *Key issues, opportunities, and constraints for adapting and scaling up what is working in B.C. and Alberta.*

The research into sustainability will specifically look at opportunities or obstacles for scaling up practical social enterprises that focus on sustainability. The scoping research on the SE and rural revitalization will assist in identifying future case studies that will help us better understand the constraints and opportunities for the SE to play a greater role in various natural resource sectors.

6. *Being directly relevant, even if only modestly, to addressing major cross-cutting trends and issues relevant to Canadians.*

Both projects address major cross-cutting trends and issues of key concern to Canadians. It is well known that many rural areas and resource-based segments of the economy are facing major challenges in terms of their future viability. The old models of economic development are no longer perceived as addressing the needs of communities, and many are searching for new ways to ensure their communities survive and prosper into the future. Similarly, in the face of climate change and other significant environmental challenges, Canadians are concerned that economic growth not be pursued without consideration of potential environmental costs. The politics of sustainability is a cross-cutting trend in Canada and the research could identify opportunities for alliance building between green and CED practitioners / activists. As well, the research could contribute to strategizing policy development and lobbying tactics around SE in an age of climate change, bioeconomics, and shifts in the make-up of the economy as Canadian's explore new approaches to a more sustainable society.

7. *Leveraging current social economy assets and resources to scale up exemplary practices and stimulate social innovation.*

Both projects are working to improve our understanding of areas of the social economy that are currently relatively poorly understood. Improving our understanding of these areas is a precursor to understanding how we can leverage both current and potential new resources for the social economy in natural resource-based and other sectors.

8. *Contributing to the building of strategic relationships and alliances relevant to the central purpose of BALTA.*

One of the challenges of our areas of research is not only are these areas relatively poorly understood, but those within the sector may not as yet identify themselves as being part of the 'social economy'. By making these roles and relationships explicit through our research, we believe we can make an important contribution to building strategic relationships and alliances which will in turn help strengthen and expand the social economy. The social, cultural and political debate on sustainability creates opportunities to change the way that citizens, governments and CED practitioners see the social economy, offering some prospects to increase the role of the social economy in Canada as we debate the transition to a more sustainable economy.

We believe the research activities proposed for this year are reasonable given the resources available and are well within the ability of the SERC team to complete. Both projects are well defined in the annexes in terms of objectives, plans, outputs and outcomes (criterion 9). Each project has also identified the necessary human and financial resources and plans for managing the work (criterion 10).

The resource requirements have been clearly specified and are generally manageable within the notional budgets provided to the SERC (criterion 12). There is a request for cross-cutting funding to support project B2; co-funding has also been confirmed for this project. In both projects, BALTA's policy on student employment and management will be followed. We also believe the roles outlined for students in these projects provide substantial opportunities for student learning and other benefits (criterion 13).

11. Brief summary of each proposed research project/activity. Append project summary for each project (see Annex A template).

Project / Activity Description	Budget, Resources and Other Support Requested from BALTA	In-Kind and Cash Support Provided from Other Sources
Scoping studies – Alberta and BC	\$27,000	Possible contribution from University of Alberta (not confirmed)
SE and Sustainability	\$13,000 (over two years)	AU matching funding
Total Budget Requested from BALTA 07-08	\$27,000 from potential SERC 2 allocation; \$6,500 (year 1) from BALTA cross-cutting research funding	

12. Identification of research and activity roles for all SERC members, including projects and activities identified under #8. Include which SERC members will lead and/or be involved with each project/activity.

Project / Activity	SERC Members Involved	Role Played
Scoping study – Alberta	Mary Beckie – Academic lead	Supervision
Scoping study – Alberta	Michelle Aasgard – Practitioner lead	Supervision
Scoping study – BC	Sean Markey – Academic lead	Supervision
Scoping study – BC	Sandy Lockhart – Practitioner lead	Supervision
SE and Sustainability	Mike Gismondi	Supervision – Lead
SE and Sustainability	Mary Beckie	Supervision
SE and Sustainability	Mark Roseland	Supervision

13. In projects where SERC members will not be responsible for developing and managing the project, identify how requests for proposals from researchers will

be solicited and how the project relationship will be managed to ensure that such projects meet the priorities and research needs of the SERC.

Year 1 projects are all managed and led by current SERC members.

14. Explanation of how research results will be gathered, documented, stored, etc.

We anticipate that for each project the lead researchers will need to develop specific methods of data gathering and analysis. Some initial ideas have been outlined in the Annex A for each project, and more detailed plans will be developed after projects are approved. Each project specifies outputs in the Annex A, including some form of research report. Research reports and papers will be stored on the database being developed for BALTA and will be accessible through the BALTA website.

15. Explanation of communication, dissemination and learning/animation plans/needs during the first year and what support would be needed from BALTA to assist with this.

A number of research communication and dissemination opportunities for each project are summarized below:

- B1 – The Role of the SE in Rural Revitalization
 - i. A research report outlining findings will be produced and disseminated through the BALTA network and web site.
 - ii. A research paper will be published in either or both of an academic journal and a practitioner targeted publication.
 - iii. A short ‘research note’ targeting a broad audience will also be prepared summarizing the findings.
 - iv. A presentation or presentations will likely be made, based on the above paper, including either or both of an academic conference or tele-seminar, municipal and provincial meetings/conferences.
- B2 – Sustainability and the Social Economy
 - i. This is a two year project with few communication or dissemination outputs expected for year 1, other than perhaps a popular magazine piece for the wider public and opinion pieces in major newspapers. Some preliminary research results may also be disseminated via the BALTA network and web site.

BALTA staff assistance may be requested with the preparation and distribution of specific reports or publications, but it is anticipated that lead researchers and students will have the primary responsibility for preparing these materials.

16. General plan for monitoring and evaluation of the research activities of the SERC. (Specific arrangements for monitoring and evaluation will be worked out in detail with BALTA’s Academic Coordinator after approval of workplans.)

Detailed monitoring and evaluation plans for each project will be discussed and developed with the lead researchers for each project prior to commencing research

activities; student research assistants will also be made aware of M & E requirements when they begin their work. In general, the approach followed will be consistent with the approach being proposed for the other SERCs as outlined below.

Monitoring and evaluation will address both evaluation of the research projects and project results as well as evaluation of the students' performance, student learning and potential impact on the students and their future careers. It is assumed that this will include a mix of written and other reporting, as outlined in BALTA's emerging approach to monitoring and evaluation. A specific plan and tools will be worked out with BALTA's evaluation coordinator, but will include such elements as:

- Written final reports on each project;
- Written interim reports near fiscal year-end for projects extending beyond the year-end;
- Written evaluations for each student employed, both self-assessments and supervisor assessments (Projects A1, A2 and A3);
- Some follow-up evaluation interviews and focus group sessions to explore other evaluation aspects;
- Some form of collective evaluation by the SERC of research results, SERC functioning, etc.

17. Describe how students involved in the proposed plan and projects will be adequately supervised and supported, and what steps will be taken to ensure a clear benefit to all students in terms of learning.

Both SERC 2 projects identified for this coming year (see Annexes B1 and B2) involve students, and both have lead researchers identified from academic institutions; Project B1 also has co-leads identified from practitioner organizations. The descriptions of project roles and responsibilities clearly define responsibilities for ensuring adequate student supervision and support. BALTA's Academic Coordinator will work with project supervisors to ensure that each student contract and project makes provision for addressing learning objectives for students. This is a potentially long-term research arrangement with the students involved in the identified projects, presenting significant opportunity for the development of knowledge and expertise in the described areas.

18. Explain how the workplan addresses issues of academic/practitioner balance, gender equity and diversity in decisions about SERC membership, project identification and student recruitment.

We believe the distinction between 'practitioner' and 'academic' is somewhat blurry in our SERC (and perhaps throughout BALTA) because many of our academics also work very closely with practitioners in applied research projects. In any case, we feel SERC 2 has an acceptable balance of academic/practitioners, and a conscious decision was taken during the January meetings to have co-leads - a practitioner and academic - on each project wherever possible. Where we have recognized short-comings in terms of areas of expertise, we are trying to address these issues by attracting a continuing balance of strong practitioners and academics to our research cluster.

Project identification has been a collaborative effort and a consensus was reached on pursuing the scoping research project. We expect the results of that research will provide the information needed by both practitioners and academics to propose new research initiatives in coming years.

There has been no specific attention to issues of gender equity or diversity in either the SERC membership or plans for student recruitment. However, the SERC is well balanced in terms of gender as reflected by the make-up of current and proposed SERC members. Student recruitment will be based on the strongest candidates, but we will monitor the situation as we proceed with the hiring of research assistants.

Appendix A

Summary of BALTA Steering Committee Discussion

The BALTA Steering Committee met on Saturday, March 24, to discuss and approve the SERC 2 workplan. Several observations, concerns and recommendations were noted with respect to proposed research directions and plans for SERC 2. It was agreed that these would be appended to the SERC workplan as points to be considered by the SERC in further planning.

1. A concern was expressed that the number of sectors SERC 2 has chosen to investigate may be too many. It was suggested that the scoping process might lead to some focusing of sectors. It was noted, however, that SERC 2's chosen approach was to re-frame and re-name the SERC to bring focus. These five sectors are now seen as sub-sets of the broader theme. That will focus the range of research fields that they will examine.
2. Mike Lewis raised a concern about the appropriateness of bio-fuels in terms of sustainability analysis. He sees support for bio-fuels as a contradiction for the co-op sector. He asked if SERC 2 has looked at energy efficiency and retro-fitting in their research plans, both as environmental and housing affordability issues. The answer was 'no', but Mike Gismondi said that his B2 project will look at some of these issues/tensions and he hopes to elevate these issues in later years of the BALTA research.
3. John explained the community stewardship project that BCCA is developing with Mountain Equipment Co-op. Commencing this Spring, they are developing a model for multi-stakeholder co-ops to manage national parks. He asked whether SERC 2 would be interested if this takes shape. Mark & Mike G. replied: "Yes, it would be a good fit for SERC 2." John noted that the concept also includes a co-op youth program.
4. It was suggested that the concept of community ownership and resources is important. It is impossible to think about rural revitalization and not look at the ownership issue.
5. It was agreed that it would be interesting to look at what environmental organizations are doing regarding revenue generation and social enterprises. It was agreed that this should start with the mapping process.