

# Defining the social economy and the research process

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Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités

# The Québec approach to social economy

- (originates from work of Desroches)
- The social economy was based on the democratic life of associations that form an enterprise in order to produce goods and services.

# English Canada has a different perspective

- All that is volunteer work – associative life, cooperatives and mutuels are part of the social economy
- This includes work done by community groups working for environmental health
- In a broader sense, all activities that contribute to a better society, a better future for the collectivities (versus individual or private) are part of the social economy

# Characteristics of research within the social economy

1-The use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) which focuses on democratic partnerships between academia and collectivities;

This co-construction of the research objectives places collective interest at the center of all actions in order to build community capacity.

# Characteristics (cont.)

- **The strength of sharing and openness between cultures:  
An example from Africa:  
Women and men in a  
Burkina Faso context –  
Collective enterprise instead  
of individual  
entrepreneurship.**
- **Research is oriented  
towards actions and policy  
changes-example of sea-  
level rise and local  
governments**

# How do we proceed?

- When the idea of a project arises, researchers and practitioners negotiate the research objectives and possible outcomes;
- The process and approach are also part of the negotiation-how will this research be lead, what is the calendar; the responsibility of each partner;
- Researchers must keep in mind that the outcomes must focus on the general interest;
- Respect and inclusion of local knowledge is crucial.

# How do we proceed?

- As researchers we must keep thinking of what will be left behind when we leave...
  - Are we building local capacity?
  - Do people have tools to continue to evolve?
  - How do we encourage local ownership of the project?

# What are we learning from the field?

- Partnerships are essential (watershed associations and municipalities for example)
- Cooperation amongst cooperatives in Lamèque-Miscou shows how synergy can be attained –development of a renewable energy with the municipality and part community owned – many actors negotiated with the private sector

# What are we learning from the field?

- Research in the social economy is about involving and evolving.
- It is a long term process!
- Meetings face to face are numerous and on a regular basis.
- There is a movement of back and forth between what we have done in the past and where we are now.