Social Innovation in Green Communities Canada

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Project # 8
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Date: May 1-2, 2008
Introduction

- Social Innovation examined in Green Communities Canada
  - a network of non-profit environmental service organizations (ESOs)
- Social Innovation:
  - links “new ideas” with “pressing unmet needs” to create solutions which “improve peoples’ lives”
    » (Mulgan et al., 2006)
  - flourishes in areas where:
    - problems are worsening (e.g. climate change)
    - existing models are failing (e.g. federal climate policy)
    - new possibilities are not being adequately exploited (e.g. community solutions to climate change)
    » (Mulgan et al., 2006)
Background

- Social innovation contributes to collective renewable energy development in Japan:
  - Citizens strongly influenced by:
    - an environmental movement
      - citizen movement to mitigate climate change
      - socially responsible energy investment
    - social commitment
      - sense of ownership of community wind turbine
  - Citizens less influenced by:
    - expected economic return

- Maruyama et al. (2007)
Project Methodology

- Literature review
  - Social innovation
    - Moulaert et al. (2005); Mulgan et al. (2006)
  - Environmental sociology
    - Hannigan (2006): ‘emergence model’ of environment and society
  - Social capital
    - ‘bonding’ responds to shocks (Johannisson and Olaison, 2007)
    - ‘bridging’ important to regional innovation (Hauser et al., 2007)
    - ‘creative social capital’ (Tura and Harmaakorpi, 2005)
  - Green community entrepreneurship
    - Gliedt and Parker (2007)

- Key informant interviews
  - executive directors of ESOs

- Data analysis
  - project creation; factor identification
Main Findings

- ESOs use social innovation to:
  - empower citizens to mitigate climate change
    - Tools: social marketing, education, relationship building
  - mobilize resources to improve the capability of communities to satisfy their energy needs
    - Tools: multi-sector partnerships and social capital
  - overcome tension between business, and social / environmental objectives
    - Process: green community entrepreneurship
  - contribute to sustainable development
    - Output: program and service creation and delivery
# New Services Created

## Energy Related
- Revised Residential Energy Efficiency Audit
- Provincial Low-Income Energy Audit / Retrofit
- Community Energy Planning
- Sustainable Transportation
- Solar Audits
- CFL replacement
- Retrofit Services
- Greening Sacred Spaces

## Non-Energy Related
- Watershed Management Program
- Active / Safe Routes to School
- Waste Management / Deflection
- Septic Tank / Well Assessments
- Local Flavour Slow Food Program
- Community Environmental Education Program
REEP House for Sustainable Living
REEP House Site Plan

Southern Ontario Social Economy Community-University Research Alliance Symposium 2008
Conclusions

- ESOs are agents of social and environmental change
  - create new services
  - influence behaviour and values
  - incorporate social justice into the economy
    - (e.g. concern for intra and intergenerational equity)
  - link sectors and scales for community energy governance

- Green communities influence and promote sustainable community development