

Can action research be of use for social economy practitioners



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Questions to be addressed



- 1. What are the conditions for research-action?**
- 2. What is feasible or out of range in a research-action process?**
- 3. What kind of results can we expect?**
- 4. What are the keys elements for good results dissemination?**
- 5. How can we increase dissemination and address the question of transfer of knowledge and know-how?**
- 6. What are the limits of partnership in research-action?**
- 7. What kind of impact on the community or on sector development?**

Conditions for research-action?



⌘ From research action to partnership research

- ⊞ A step above research-action: definition, production and governance of a research program on a specific topic / question

⌘ Conditions

- ⊞ A collective process from the start
- ⊞ A clear definition of responsibilities based on specific strengths and weakness of stakeholders
- ⊞ A mutual sharing and understanding of advantages, responsibilities and benefits with a clear commitment of resources
Mutual openness to critics
- ⊞ Consideration of political and ethical questions related to the research activities

System of Quebec partnership research on the SE



⌘ Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) :

☒ Community-University Research Alliance Program (CURA)

☒ CURA on the social economy

- **January 2000 to December 2004 (Phase I)**
- **January 2005 to December 2009 (Phase II)**

☒ Grants for the Social Economy Program

☒ Réseau québécois de recherche partenariale en économie sociale (one of six regional nodes on Social Economy)

- **September 2005 to August 2010**

☒ National Hub for the Social Economy

- **September 2005 to August 2010**

Partnership research : CURA - SE model

⌘ A consortium between four universities and social economy organizations or related organizations

⊗ Universities

📄 UQÀM, UQAC, UQO, Concordia University

📄 Research groups

⊗ Milieu

📄 Main partners: Chantier de l'ÉS, CSN, FTQ, Fondation, Fonds de solidarité, RISQ, CSMO-ÉSAC

📄 Sectorals partners: CQL, AGRTQ...

⌘ Five partnership areas of research :

⊗ Social housing;

⊗ Social leisure and tourism;

⊗ Regional and local development;

⊗ Solidarity finance;

⊗ Social Services

What is out of range? and the limits of partnership?


⌘ What we are not:

**consultants or practitioners
in the social economy**

**☑ It is vital to identify clearly the
boundaries of what we can do
in research**

**⌘ The limits are those of the
partnership project**

What kind of results : 2000-2004 (CURA-SE)?



- ⌘ A mobilization of 50 researchers and 20 organizations
- ⌘ 17 symposiums
- ⌘ Participation of more than 1 000 people from outside universities
- ⌘ More than 80 research projects
- ⌘ 75 documents published

Impact & results



- ⌘ **New knowledge : practical and theoretical**
 - ☒ Direct impact on the construction of a collective identity around the social economy
 - ☒ Direct impact on social and political recognition of the social economy in Quebec
- ⌘ **Contribution to the definition and orientation of public policies**
- ⌘ **Innovation :**
 - ☒ In the field of partnership research and research-action
 - ☒ In the construction of a Community of learning
- ⌘ **Networking (observatory& transfer ; dissemination)**
 - ☒ In Québec and recently in Canada
 - ☒ Internationally: mainly in Europe et Latina America
- ⌘ **Tools**
 - ☒ On governance
 - ☒ On evaluation
 - ☒ On finance
 - ☒ On accounting...

Keys elements for good results dissemination

⌘ Research organization

- ⊞ Each project implies the creation of a Research Committee
- ⊞ A clear definition of the object of research that integrates the dissemination objectives from the start
- ⊞ A strong partnership in the Committee between practitioners and researchers
- ⊞ A leadership by the two co-directors of each research-action project with
 - ⊞ A clear understanding of the work to be done
 - ⊞ A culture of deliberation based on formal and informal learning
 - ⊞ A good support from the overall structure of research
 - ⊞ An allocation of resources (time, money, people) for dissemination

How can we increase dissemination?



- ⌘ **The ultimate goal : transfer**
 - ⊡ **How : from classical diffusion to clinical intervention**
 - ⊡ **How : for researchers it is important to be able to popularize (make accessible) the main findings**
 - ⊗ **from banking knowledge to culturally adapted information**
 - ⊡ **How : for practitioners it is important to be able to mobilize different kinds of people**
 - ⊗ **Have the information circulate in the different levels of a sector, of a community, of a specific organization**

Specific impact on communities?

⌘ On questions related to :

- ☒ Poverty
- ☒ Community capacity building
- ☒ Affordable housing
- ☒ Community economic development

1. The impact is diverse : not one but many communities (Stakeholders)
2. We are working on knowledge development and not on delivery of services or resources
3. Knowledge that allows for:
 1. A better understanding, knowledge and comprehension of a question, problem or issue
 2. The opportunity to test a hypothesis, to highlight “directions” for action or to simply be able to ask the right questions
 3. The opportunity to develop a rigorous reflection on a question
 4. The mobilization of university resources to help communities in their actions and struggles