Prometheus, Trojan Horse or Frankenstein?: The SSE as Community Creation, Market Wedge, or State Monster

J.J. McMurtry
York University
jmcmurtr@yorku.ca
First, the definitional problem
Second, the architecture of liberalism at the base of the SSE
Third, the basis for conceptions of alternate value
Fourth, ethical value added and “case studies”
Defining the SSE

- Old debate, often reflecting factionalism
- “Neither state nor private” idea at its core
- However practically and conceptually neither is true
- What values does this idea express?
- Question of values in economics – where do these come from?
Tension between aspirational and practical values

Theorist often focus on former, practitioners on the latter

SSE highlights "radical" (Promethean) values

How are these Promethean values realized in practice and have they been internalized/expressed by practitioners?
Liberalism has established itself as the value framework for most social/economic realms.

As self-conceptualized alternative, the SSE needs to be mindful of importing these values into its rationales and practice.

Basic premises have been internalized, especially in economics.
In terms of economic “justice” values of Liberalism have been imported into SSE
Specifically the idea of a “rule creating state” and an “actualizing individual”
Concepts such as democracy, community control, entrepreneurship, all fit BOTH with neo-liberal and SSE values
Problems of Hierarchy and Capitalism

- The key issues is that the *conditions within which rules and individual actualization occur* determine their likelihood of success
- SSE needs a clear alternative framework within which values and practices are developed
- “Anti”-position is not sufficient
Nowhere is the need for an alternative clearer than economics.

The idea of the rationale self-interested market-driven individual dominant.

In development, capacities and common pool economic theory the values of liberalism are an a priori assumption.
There are some basic frameworks from which alternative economic and values based solutions can be built

- Co-operatives – movement, values, practice
- Microcredit – community, collective, capital
- Alternative Energy – empowered democratic community ownership via state transfer
Solutions must be flexible and rooted in (developing) community capacity

1) What Social/Community value does our economic activity aim to create?

2) How can we effectively measure this Social/Community value in ways that reflect our impacts on community needs?

3) How do we plan to increase our impacts on community needs and how can community contribute to our strategic planning?
SSE is threatened by importation of Liberal Values in its:
- Definition
- Economic practice and assumptions
- Developing an alternative value and practice frame requires rooting out these assumptions
- Building on history and EVA
Questions/Comments Welcome

J.J. McMurtry
Graduate Program Director
Social and Political Thought Program
York University
jmcmurmtr@yorku.ca