

BSE 2025 Annual Report



Dear Friends, Collaborators, and Supporters of Building Solidarity Economies (BSE),

Fascism is on the rise and extractivist economies are rapidly destroying the life-giving relationships that sustain us. The coming months and years will require deep relationship building, intellectual clarity, and an opening of imagination and desire in order to survive and thrive. BSE strives to advance economies of care and abundance through engaged researching and teaching efforts at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and with community organizations and movements.

The following report highlights some of the projects and efforts that we have been involved in over the past year. A more full accounting of BSE projects and efforts can be found at www.buildingsolidarityeconomies.com.



“BSE was the most important experience I had during my time at UMass...I left with an entirely new understanding of the world we perceive...it was a transformative experience that reshaped the way I think, process information, and envision the possibilities for change...every article and conversation built deeper understandings, demonstrating the careful and intentional curation of the material curriculum. Outside of the classroom, we built community and engaged with each other to experience the lessons we were learning. This structure of simultaneous learning and experience was an incredibly effective and impactful way to learn. The lessons I've learned in BSE will shape the rest of my life, influencing not just what I do but how I approach the world.”

=Fay Paicos, Class of 2024

“It was such a joy to get to collaborate with the students at BSE. The students helped us answer questions that have been challenging our community land trust for years, and they presented their findings in ways that were tangible, applicable, and incredibly useful on the ground. BSE really pushes beyond the boundaries of what I thought was possible within academia. I feel inspired by the power that we can build when academia works in solidarity with social movements! I'm grateful for the energy, brilliance, creativity and dedication the students brought to the work; every student from BSE I've met is an incredible community organizer.”

-Jesse Saffeir, Land in Common Co-Director

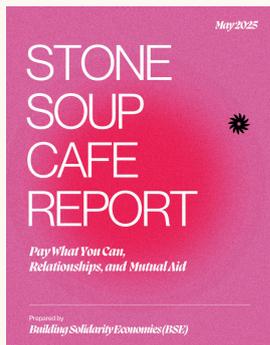
2025 Projects

Research



Ethnographic research provides a foundation for and fuels BSE teaching and learning efforts. Current research projects include *Solidarity, Economy, Transition, and Worldmaking* that explores the proliferation of solidarity economy efforts in Massachusetts; and *Student Well-Being and Post-Capitalist Belonging* that seeks to understand and cultivate student desires for ways of being beyond the dictates and desires of capitalism. More information about these ongoing research projects are available on our website, www.buildingsolidarityeconomies.com More contained research and teaching efforts conducted in 2025 are described in more detail below.

Pay-What-You Can, Beyond Market Exchange: Participatory Research with Stone Soup Café



A research team including BSE Alum Abby Brooks worked with Stone Soup to help envision and support their efforts to better align their Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC) model with their own vision and mission. We researched existing PWYC models, and conducted a series of interviews and group conversations with Stone Soup leaders. This resulted in a report for Stone Soup, an in-process academic article for publication, and a series of ongoing solidarity workshops.

Solidarity Workshops



With BSE alum Juliana Green and community partner Stone Soup Café, we have launched a monthly workshop series. Solidarity Workshops are designed to teach, learn about, and connect through different mutual aid efforts in the area. These include: timebanks, participatory budgeting, gleaning, housing and land decommodification, community production, and more.

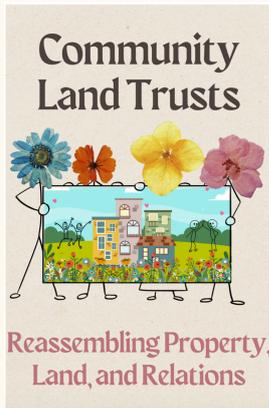
Workshops are held over dinner at Stone Soup and attended by Stone Soup community members, students, activists, and organizers.

*WSIP Mellon
Fellows
Internships*



BSE continued to partner with the World Studies Interdisciplinary Project (WSIP) at UMass to shepherd three Mellon Foundation Internships. We met weekly as a group in order to co-design and carry out projects with two of our community partners, Cooperation Vermont and Land in Common in Maine. Working with Land in Common, fellows conducted research to help develop a cohort-based learning model for moving land from individual owners and into commons. For Cooperation VT, fellows did research that will contribute to a knowledge commons for land based organizations in VT.

*Solidarity
Economy Zines*



BSE continues to work on our popular education zines that brings to life difficult concepts and workings of solidarity economy movement, institutions, and practices. Our first two zines on Community Land Trusts and Pay-What-You-Can enterprises will soon be joined with zines describing Worker-Owned Cooperatives, Time-Banks, Community Production, and Solidarity Economy Organizing.

*Mutual Aid Project
(MAP)*



A collaboration between students, staff, and faculty on campus, MAP has continued it's regular Thingswaps which meet basic needs while building relationships. In 2025 MAP, established UMass's first Timebank, an effort that replaces monetary currency with the time needed to provide a service or product.

*Community
Reading Groups*



BSE hosted two community reading groups, including a collaboration with local ecovillage, the Sirius community. The reading groups brought together students, faculty, and community members to think and talk together about how to deepen and expand practices of relational care.

*Campus
Infrastructure and
Ecosystem*



Over the past year, BSE has continued to assemble and weave relationships that can help to better support our work. We have deepened and expanded our community partnerships, commissioned a new mural in our offices by BSE alum Nellie Marshall-Torres, hosted a weekly writing group with BSE aligned graduate students, and created a direct-line account for financial support through the UMass Foundation.

*Campus Courses
and Efforts*



In addition to the Mutual Aid Project, in 2025 BSE courses included an undergraduate course *Other Economies are Possible!* that explores diverse economic practices and projects across time and space, and a new graduate seminar *Whiteness, Power, Ontology*.

Plans for 2026

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| <i>Collaborative Research</i> | In addition to the ongoing research described above, BSE will be carrying out two mapping projects: 1) UMass Diverse Economy and 2) Mutual Aid in Western Massachusetts. Other research will be conducted directly through engaged coursework in <i>Anthropology 341 Building Solidarity Economies</i> (see below) |
| <i>Solidarity Workshop Series</i> | BSE is continuing our community, Solidarity Workshop series described above throughout the spring of 2026 |
| <i>Popular Education</i> | In addition to continuing our solidarity economy zine series, BSE is developing a pop-ed game around economic subjectivity and desire in collaboration with current and former students and community members. |
| <i>Infrastructure and Ecosystem</i> | BSE is in the initial stages of proposal writing to acquire land for diverse economic research and practice including community production and cooperative housing. In addition, BSE, through the Mutual Aid Project will be developing a plan for the potential development of a community free store for clothing, furniture, and more. This free store will be both a site of mutual aid practice as well as research. |
| <i>Campus Courses and Efforts</i> | In Spring of 2026, BSE's signature course <i>Anthropology 341 Building Solidarity Economies</i> will be working closely with community organizations <i>Cooperation Jackson</i> , <i>Cooperation VT</i> , <i>Land in Common</i> and others. <i>Building Solidarity Economies</i> . Undergraduate and graduate students will conduct collaborative research that directly supports the work of our community partners and can make contributions to a broader movement politics that is organizing around economies of care. In Fall of 2026, a new graduate course exploring historical and contemporary projects of decommodification will be offered as part of the Decolonial Graduate Certificate Program. |