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Situating the eco-social economy: conservation initiatives and environmental organizations as catalysts for social and economic development

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Abstract The social economy is a third sector of the economy, besides the public and private sectors, that provides critical social and economic services to society. Though there is broad recognition that both society and economy are dependent on functioning and healthy ecosystems, theories and definitions of the social economy rarely include reference to environmental and conservation-focused activities or outcomes. This paper empirically situates the concept of an *eco-social economy* within the context of a community conservation initiative. Through a case study of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation and the Thaidene Nene Protected Area in northern Canada, this paper demonstrates that: (i) for indigenous people, conservation is as much a social, economic, political, and cultural endeavour as it is about the protection of nature; (ii) outside environmental non-governmental organizations are also aligning their conservation mandates with the broader social, economic, and cultural goals of northern indigenous communities; and (iii) local social economy organizations are emerging to advocate for conservation as a means to achieve social and economic development ends. These examples compel us to envisage a social economy that incorporates environmental organizations and conservation initiatives and movements and that makes explicit a distinct *eco-social economy*. This theoretical concept has global applicability.

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Introduction

In theory as well as in practice, the environment and development are often envisaged as separate spheres or entities. For example, the social economy is a third sector of the economy, besides the public and private sectors, that provides critical social and economic services to society (Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009). Though there is broad recognition that both society and economy are dependent on functioning and healthy ecosystems, theories and definitions of the social economy rarely include reference to environmental and conservation-focused activities or outcomes. In a similar manner, conservation initiatives have historically been based on a Cartesian view of humans and nature as separate (Adams and Hutton, 2007). Conservation was seen as a means to protect areas of natural values and wilderness. This required the exclusion of local communities and traditional activities (Colchester, 1994; Nepal and Weber, 1995).

However, ongoing critiques of the impacts of strict conservation on local cultures and communities (West, Igoe and Brockington, 2006) and of big environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs; Dowie, 2010) – often the leading proponents for the establishment of protected areas – have resulted in different approaches to the establishment of protected areas. The development through conservation approach seeks to reconcile conservation with community economic and socio-cultural aspirations, the argument being that win–win outcomes are not only possible but also necessary for the achievement of successful conservation outcomes (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari and Oviedo, 2004; Bushell and Eagles, 2007; Roe and Elliot, 2010). This fundamental shift in thinking has been adopted by ENGOs that now strive to achieve conservation objectives along with social and economic development goals. The conservation *with* development mandate of ENGOs might also be more aligned with the holistic way that traditional and indigenous communities approach conservation since humans and the natural world are seen as interconnected. In the indigenous way of seeing the world, culture, society, and economy cannot be separated from the environment (Kemf, 1993). Aboriginal groups and local communities also often advocate for conservation of the local environment and areas with cultural continuity and appropriate local development as a primary objective (Ghimire and Pimpert, 1997).

This paper focuses on a case study of the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation (LKDFN) and the Thaidene Nene conservation initiative in northern Canada to demonstrate that: (i) for local and indigenous people, conservation is as much a social, economic, political, and cultural endeavour as it is about the protection of nature, (ii) the agendas of ENGOs that work with northern communities are aligning their conservation objectives with the broader

social, economic, and cultural goals of northern indigenous groups, and (iii) local organizations are emerging to advocate for conservation cum socio-economic development. Indigenous conservation movements embodying holistic worldviews and objectives, community-based organizations that support conservation as a means of achieving social and economic development, and ENGOS with conservation and development mandates all challenge us to conceptualize a more inclusive definition of the social economy that includes environmental organizations and conservation movements and initiatives and that makes explicit a distinct *eco-social economy*.

Theoretical framework: situating the eco-social economy

Social economy and community development theorists suggest that the economy can be envisaged to have three segments, which includes the private sector, the public sector, and a third sector. The private sector includes businesses and corporations whose principal mandate is maximizing economic gains. The public sector includes all aspects of the economy that fall under the auspices of local to national governments. The third sector, which includes activities such as the operation of philanthropic trusts, creation of community cooperatives, and capacity-building programmes, has been alternatively labelled the social economy (Borzaga, 2001). However, some authors also argue that the social economy is one aspect of a broader third sector (Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill, 2009), which includes family activities such as childcare and other informal forms of social capital. Many authors have sought to define social economy organizations based on the type of institution, principles of operation or identity, and the intention or mandate (Borzaga, 2001; Quarter *et al.*, 2001). Three types of institution can be part of the social economy: cooperatives, mutuals, and associations. Molloy, McFeely and Connolly (1999) differentiate the three forms of institution in the following way: cooperatives focus on for-profit self-help; mutuals focus on not-for-profit self-help; and associations are philanthropic and not-for-profit. It is generally agreed that social economy organizations have four principles that are common to their operation that 'cannot be considered as an optional complement': (i) provision of a service to members or community; (ii) an independent management; (iii) a democratic decision-making process; and (iv) a focus on social over economic outcomes (Borzaga, 2001, p. 6).

It is this fourth and final principle – intention or mandate – that is somewhat problematic: what allows a democratic, independently managed, and service-oriented cooperative, mutual, or association to be part of the social economy? A cursory review of a broad range of definitions and literature provided an extensive list of organizations that are active in a diverse array of activities, including financial services, home care and assisted living, health

care and social services, community economic development, arts and culture, heritage, education, child care, community media, social movements, job training and worker reintegration, capacity building, housing, community recreation, tourism, and ethical purchasing. What of organizations that meet all of the other pre-requisites of the social economy but whose primary mandate is environmental issues or ecological conservation?

For the purposes of furthering this discussion, four Canadian definitions of the social economy are interrogated below. According to Western Economic Diversification Canada (WEDC), social economy organizations 'provide social, cultural, economic and health services to communities that need them' (cited in CSERP, 2007, p. 3). For the Government of Canada – Policy Research Initiative (GoC), social economy 'organizational missions are based on a combination of common interest and public service objectives', but what constitutes a common interest or public service is not defined (Government of Canada, 2005, p. 1). The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDN) states that social economy organizations focus on 'service to members of community rather than generating profits'; however, their list of activities does not include the environment in any way (cited in CSERP, 2007, p. 3). Environmental organizations or conservation initiatives are often not directly incorporated into these definitions. The exception is the view of the Social Sciences and Human Research Council (SSHRC), which allows for social economy organizations that 'seek to enhance the social, economic and environmental conditions of communities' through 'redirect[ing] their surpluses in pursuit of social and environmental goals' and 'addressing environmental concerns' (cited in Restakis, 2006, p. 8). Yet even in this definition, the environment is placed in a subsidiary position to economic and social development. Yet as is demonstrated in the remainder of this paper, indigenous environmental movements and supporting conservation organizations are framing their conservation activities as integral to and supportive of appropriate local social and economic development. It is this perhaps utilitarian and anthropocentric logic or perhaps integrative and holistic indigenous way of seeing that situates environmental and conservation organizations within the social economy.

In order to account for this lack of inclusion and place conservation and environmental organizations within definitions of the social economy, the authors propose the term *eco-social economy*. The term *eco-social economy* has seen little use to date in academic writing. A Google Scholar search, for example, results in fourteen items (as of 27 November 2012). The majority of this literature in some way references a parallel term, the 'eco-social market economy', which was initially spawned by Josef Riegler and the Austrian People's Party in 1989 (Radermacher, 2004), proposed in Al Gore's book *Earth in Balance* (Gore, 1992) and later adopted in the Global Marshall Plan

(Riegler and Rademacher, 2004; Riegler, n.d.). In this framing, the term eco-social market economy refers to a means of achieving balance through pursuing three goals: (i) a competitive, innovative, and technologically oriented economy, with (ii) a focus on social equity, and (iii) the protection of nature. But this framing of the eco-social economy is largely market orientated, both in the emphasis that it places on the free market and on economic outcomes. The focus is also on macro-level political support and economic functioning at broader scales. An effective eco-social economy should operate more from the periphery through democratic participation and action than through centralized structures: 'The distributed systems of a social economy handle complexity not by standardization and simplification imposed from the centre, but by distributing complexity to the margins' (Kvieskiene, 2010, p. 81). In other words, the eco-social economy should be locally rather than globally focused. It is worth mentioning that Tremblay (2010) refers to a parallel term – the conservation-based social economy – defined as 'social economy initiatives that focus on conservation-based development' (p. 8).

Owing to the limited use of the term in the academic literature, this article puts forward a definition of the term *eco-social economy* in an effort to argue for the rightful place of conservation initiatives and environmental organizations within conceptualizations of the social economy.

> The *social economy* places primary importance on social over economic development outcomes. The *eco-social economy* is that portion of the social economy that is focused on the environment and on conservation as part of or as a means to social – including cultural, political, and spiritual aspects – and economic ends. Eco-social economy *organizations* are independently managed, democratically run, and support either the mandates of their members, other groups, or broader society.

This definition explicitly recognizes that the social sphere of development is comprised of cultural, political, and even spiritual dimensions. In addition, the environment is not placed in a subsidiary position to social and economic development but rather is on par with or even above these concerns.

A demonstrative case study of Lutsel K'e and Thaidene Nene

The following section explores the emergence of an eco-social economy in Lutsel K'e, Northwest Territories, that centres around the negotiation of a national park (or protected area) in the traditional territory of the LKDFN. It draws from fieldwork conducted in Lutsel K'e and the Northwest Territories of Canada and a review of secondary documents.

Site description: a brief history of conservation in Lutsel K'e

Lutsel K'e is a community of approximately 400 people situated on the shore of Christie Bay on the East Arm of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories of Canada. Lutsel K'e is the sedentary home of the once nomadic LKDFN, who roamed the northern Boreal forest following vast herds of caribou (Ellis, 2003). Established in 1960 around a school and a Hudson's Bay trading post, the community of Lutsel K'e now consists of approximately 150 buildings. In 1969, the Government of Canada initiated a process to create a national park in the traditional territory of the LKDFN without the knowledge of local people (News of the North, 1969). At that time, the LKDFN actively and successfully opposed the creation of the protected area.

More than thirty years later, after many changes in the political and economic landscape of the Canadian north, the LKDFN approached Parks Canada to re-initiate conversations around the creation of a national park (Ellis and Enzoe, 2008). In the subsequent years, the LKDFN signed a 2006 Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canada to conduct feasibility studies, recommend a boundary, examine the impacts and benefits of the park, and conduct consultations. A community vision for the park has been put forward and the proposed 'East Arm National Park' has been renamed 'Thaidene Nene' (meaning 'The Land of Our Ancestors' in the Dene language). Community development and capacity-building options are also being examined. Currently, negotiations between the LKDFN and Parks Canada are proceeding on an area of 33,000 km^2 as a part of the ongoing Akaitcho negotiation processes.

Methods and analysis

As part of these ongoing community-advocated processes of protected area creation, a collaborative research project was undertaken between the LKDFN and the authors. Field research, which consisted of a series of forty-six qualitative interviews, was conducted in Lutsel K'e, Yellowknife, and Fort Smith in the Northwest Territories of Canada during 2008. Interviews focused on perceptions of the national park initiative, capacity building, and the role of the social economy in supporting conservation and development. Interviews were conducted with three groups: (i) members of the LKDFN ($n = 26$; 16 male; 10 female), (ii) non-indigenous community members ($n = 10$; 6 male; 4 female), and (iii) conservation and development professionals from outside the community ($n = 10$; 7 male; 3 female). Community participants were selected using snowball sampling whereby an initial contact suggests possible participants who in turn suggest additional participants (Neuman, 2000). The indigenous community members were also chosen to represent an array of perspectives and positions within the community, including leaders, professionals, hunters and trappers, elders, youth, housewives,

and the unemployed. Non-indigenous community members who were interviewed included seven temporary professionals who worked in the community as nurses, teachers, or police, and three long-term (more than ten years) residents. Outside participants, who were identified using purposive sampling to find particularly knowledgeable and specialized individuals (Neuman, 2000), came from environment- and development-focused government and non-governmental organizations and the private sector. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and imported into the NVivo qualitative research software for inductive analysis.

Results: the emergence of an eco-social economy

Indigenous and local perspectives on conservation in Lutsel K'e

Elsewhere, the broad array of benefits that the LKDFN associated with the creation of a protected area has been examined. Bennett, Lemelin and Ellis (2010) show that the perceived and desired benefits of the protected area fall into eleven categories: aesthetic, cultural, economic, educational, employment, health, environmental, infrastructure, political, social, and spiritual. The perceived benefits are connected to other benefits in an intricate web that could be seen as representative of the holistic way that the LKDFN envisage both the world and conservation. For the LKDFN, the creation of a protected area is as much a social, cultural, political, and economic endeavour as it is about the protection of nature. All benefits are seen as both an extension of and integral to conserving the environment. For example, conservation of the area is seen as a means to safeguard caribou populations so that local people can continue to hunt them, as caribou hunting is an important social, cultural, and subsistence activity. In turn, the act of subsistence hunting and harvest are shown to be an integral part of the functioning of the ecosystem within a broader cultural landscape. As one elder participant stated 'It [the caribou] is what people survive on.' Another elder said 'The caribou is what it means to be Dene.' Even the development of a protected area-related eco-tourism industry is seen as a way to support environmental conservation and cultural revitalization and to provide meaningful employment opportunities. According to one participant, the development of eco-tourism would allow people to 'practice their traditional lifestyle while at the same time showcasing it . . . [so] they don't really lose their culture . . . [while] generating some income.' The conceptualization of conservation as a means to social and economic ends demonstrates that, in ideology alone, the protected area initiative is representative of the eco-social economy.

It should also be added that the level of local support for the protected area initiative could be seen as a civil society response to failings in the market economy and current political and decision-making structures. These

forces combined have neglected to create meaningful livelihoods for local people, to safeguard the traditional cultural and social structures of the community, to provide adequate health and educational services, and to safeguard the environment (Bone, 2003). The traditional territory of the LKDFN is threatened by one of the biggest exploration and staking rushes in Canadian history (Ellis and Enzoe, 2008). For many local people, the threat of resource extraction industries, particularly mining, to the caribou upon which local livelihoods depend and to human health and ecological integrity were very real and present dangers. As one indigenous community participant states: 'I realize that exploration and staking have interfered in our way of living and we don't want it.' Many community members saw the creation of a protected area as offering a way to achieve desired social and economic development outcomes through conservation, without being a detriment to the environment. In short, the protected area is seen as one means, alongside much broader self-actualization processes associated with Akaitcho Treaty 8 negotiations, to overcome the Government of Canada's fiduciary 'irresponsibility'.

The shifting mandates of ENGOs in north: from eco to eco-social

While historically Canadian protected areas were established for ecological outcomes with negative outcomes for local communities, the mandate has shifted towards the recognition of aboriginal rights, the creation of co-management structures, and the balancing of local development with conservation objectives (Parks Canada, 2008; Dearden and Langdon, 2009; Héritier, 2011). This shift is also reflected in the changing mandates and roles of ENGOs that work on conservation initiatives in northern Canada. For example, three conservation organizations – World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI), and the Canadian Parks And Wilderness Society (CPAWS) – that have been supporting the LKDFN in the conservation of Thaidene Nene focus on both conservation and socio-economic objectives.

Local rationales for protecting the area include community social and economic development. While the primary mandate of ENGOs remains the achievement of conservation objectives, these organizations' mandates and mission statements often contain statements that recognize the need to consider local communities and indigenous groups. CPAWS mission statement, for example, states that the organization will achieve its objectives of 'protecting Canada's wild ecosystems in parks, wilderness and similar natural areas, preserving the full diversity of habitats and their species' through 'working co-operatively with government, First Nations, business, other organizations and individuals in a consensus-seeking manner, wherever possible' (CPAWS, 2009). The Boreal Conservation Framework of the CBI has a more balanced vision of 'maintaining the health of the Boreal Forest' while considering

'sustainable commercial interests', 'long-term economic benefits', 'lands, rights and ways of life of First Nations', 'environmental, social and economic benefit', 'impact on the workforce', 'traditional knowledge and local perspectives' and 'cultural values' (CBI, 2009). On the other hand, WWF's mission focuses on the 'conservation of nature' but does not state their support for local community development or consideration of local communities (WWF, 2009).

The active roles that ENGOs could fulfil or have fulfilled in supporting local development outcomes also make them an integral part of the social economy. Northern indigenous community realities may alter not only the mandate but also the activities of these organizations in ways that greater reflect the social and economic needs of local communities while still striving to achieve environmental conservation objectives. 'They fund what they call "acres on the ground" said one interview participant who works closely with ENGOs, later adding, '[*but*] I think that they realize that they have to work with communities.' Interview participants perceived ENGOs to have a significant role in supporting local communities to achieve local development objectives. There were four areas where participants felt that ENGOs have helped or could assist in achieving social and economic development objectives: (i) supporting community conservation initiatives through funding, providing intellectual and capacity inputs, and playing an intermediary role; (ii) providing funding supports for community capacity building and social, cultural, and economic development objectives related to conservation; (iii) advocating for the community vision for the area through exerting political influence; (iv) advocating for the community through increasing external awareness of the place and the issues, and (v) assisting in the creation of a community compensation fund to ensure long-term financial support for local initiatives.

Local eco-social economy organizations

In addition to the outside ENGOs, interviews revealed that a number of local eco-social economy organizations have emerged or will likely be created to support the achievement of community goals. The most important of these organizations is the Thaidene Nene Working Group, which is an extension of the LKDFN that has focused on issues related to the creation of the park, including convening meetings, organizing capacity building and training workshops, seeking funding opportunities, liaising with outside ENGOs, academic organizations, and governmental bodies, and working alongside the Akaitcho Treaty negotiation processes. It is democratically run, has a board that is appointed by the chief and council of the LKDFN, and is dedicated to serving the members of the LDKFN. The working group's primary mandate is to work towards the conservation of Thaidene Nene as is envisioned by members of the community. The working group was created

and has matured around the processes associated with negotiating the protected area.

Four more eco-social economy organizations are envisaged and will likely result from the creation of the national park: (i) a co-management or joint-management body, (ii) a trust fund, (iii) an eco-tourism cooperative, and (iv) a local ENGO. First, the creation of a co-management body in conjunction with local indigenous groups is the norm for northern protected areas since the mid-1980s (Lemelin and Johnston, 2008). Participants in Lutsel K'e envisioned a co-management body where local people hold the majority or all of the seats and with sufficient capacity and funding to carry out their mandate independently of the government. The LKDFN would like to move beyond a co-management body that serves an advisory role to the Minister of the Environment towards a 'joint management' arrangement wherein authority is delegated by both the Minister of the Environment and the Chief of the LKDFN.

Second, the creation of a board-run trust fund oriented towards local development, such as the one created with the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve, was also a desired outcome of protected area negotiation processes. The trust fund money could be invested locally in social, cultural, educational, economic, and infrastructure initiatives. Participants felt that it was important that local people had control over their own money instead of 'always having to ask for a hand out' from Parks Canada or the government. The trust fund would fulfil this desire.

Third, many participants felt that a cooperative was the ideal structure for supporting the development of an eco-tourism industry related to the protected area (Bennett, Lemelin, Johnston and LKDFN, 2010). The roles of the tourism cooperative would include coordination, training and education, administration and accounting, writing funding applications, procuring insurance, handling bookings, product development and marketing, liaising with wholesalers, hiring local peoples, capacity building, and representing tourism in other park-related processes. Finally, several participants suggested that the community should create its own local ENGO, for example, a 'Dene cultural, conservation, non-profit association' or a 'Friends of Thaidene Nene' to support the protected area and the community over the longer term.

Discussion and conclusion

In brief, this paper argues for a greater place of environmental organizations and conservation initiatives within definitions of the social economy through proposing a conceptually integrated but distinct *eco-social economy*. To support this position, this article drew from an empirical study of Lutsel K'e, Northwest Territories, and the creation of a national park or protected area in the

traditional territory of the local First Nations. The case study demonstrates that: (i) local and indigenous perceptions of conservation as an integral part of local social and economic development situate these initiatives within an eco-social economy ideology; (ii) ENGOs involved with Lutsel K'e are engaging with the social and economic mandate of communities in order to achieve environmental ends and are thus embracing an eco-social economy mandate; and (iii) a number of local eco-social economy organizations are emerging in Lutsel K'e to support the conservation as development mandate envisaged by the community. These points are further elaborated and situated within the literature in the discussion below.

First, the concept that the eco-social economy can include an ideological position (e.g. conservation) or even an initiative (e.g. the Thaidene Nene conservation initiative) is supported by those who attempt to define the social economy as a political or an ideological approach rather than in a utilitarian or stop-gap manner. For more on this, see Bridge, Murtagh and O'Neill (2009), who suggests that various definitions of the social economy are based on three arguments: (i) an economic/entrepreneurship approach, (ii) a socio-economic policy approach, and (iii) a political/ideological approach (p. 79). In defining the protected area initiative as part of an eco-social economy, the authors take the position that the eco-social economy can include ideologies, movements, policies, and organizations, and that what constitutes part of the eco-social economy can be determined by ideals, mandates, institutional structures, principles of operation, and activities.

Labelling the move to protect Thaidene Nene as an eco-social economy initiative, rather than a conservation initiative, might also be more closely aligned to indigenous perspectives on the interconnectedness of all aspects of life (Kemf, 1993). As Ellis (2003) puts it, 'The traditional values, practices, and knowledge of aboriginal people demonstrate recognition of the necessity for a healthy, synergetic relationship between people and nature' (p. 112). Another example of a similar envisaged protected area initiative is the Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Initiative on the west coast of Vancouver Island. This initiative is guided by the principle of 'Hishuk ish ts'awalk', meaning 'Everything is one', and is part of achieving a holistic vision of community development (Tribal Parks, 2010).

Second, there is a need for greater incorporation of environmental and conservation-focused organizations within the social economy. On-the-ground realities and necessities of neighbouring communities often make protected area creation processes social endeavours as well as environmental endeavours. As early as the 1970s, 'the idea that parks should be socially and economically responsible slowly began to become a part of mainstream conservation thinking' (Adams and Hutton, 2007, p. 150). This thinking resulted in the entrenchment of ideals such as co-management and community-

protected areas (Western, Strum and Wright, 1994; Stolton, Dudley and Gujja, 1999), indigenous rights (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari and Oviedo, 2004; WWF, 2008), conservation with development (McNeely and Miller, 1984; McShane and Wells, 2004), and poverty reduction (Fisher and IUCN, 2005; Roe, 2008) in the literatures of conservation organizations. Moreover, conservation policy and praxis has shifted towards considering the needs and aspirations of local communities. The inclusion of local communities in protected areas' establishment and management is *de rigeur* in concept if not completely in practice.

ENGOs, in the context of Lutsel K'e, have been and continue to be an important proponent of conservation-related community social and economic development. It is noteworthy that these ENGOs seem to situate their mandates and, even more so, their activities increasingly in relation to the needs and aspirations of the communities with whom they work rather than the mandates of their international counterparts. The local focus is a hopeful indication of an eco-social economy that is distributed to the margins (Kvieskiene, 2010) or that is locally relevant rather than globally oriented. And yet a more effective cross-scale integration of eco-social economy organizations locally to nationally to globally might allow for more effective policy and practice at all levels. This is a topic that deserves further discussion.

Finally, the current Thaidene Nene Working group, and the envisaged co-management board or joint management arrangement, trust fund, and community tourism cooperative, all seem to be laudable and realistic eco-social economy organizations. Both co-management boards and community trust funds have resulted from the creation of other national parks – e.g. Torngat Mountains National Park and Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve. Given the social and cultural context of Lutsel K'e – for example, the collectivist orientation of the Dene and the importance of all voices being heard – both social economy and eco-social economy organizations may be more effective and suitable means of achieving the community's development goals related to the creation of a protected area. However, there may be significant barriers to the success of this type of organization including lack of local capacity – particularly, in business and management, the sustainability of funding sources, the number of boards requiring participation in the community, and declining levels of civic engagement and participation. These are all issues that need to be considered in the development of the eco-social economy. In this case, ensuring ongoing government support for the effective functioning of these eco-social economy organizations should be an integral part of ongoing negotiations with Parks Canada.

In conclusion, there is a need for continued support for the development of the eco-social economy, first and foremost, through explicit recognition of

the eco-social economy as a distinct but integral part of the social economy. The eco-social economy fulfils an important sustainable development mandate through conserving the environment, supporting local social and economic development, and building governance capacity. Yet the term *eco-social economy* deserves a significant amount of additional debate and re-definition, and an agenda for further research should be established to broaden the discussion. An examination of additional case studies could serve to develop a typology of eco-social economy organizations. Moreover, it is clear that the ideals behind the creation of a protected area in Thaidene Nene and the organizations – as defined by their mandates, actions, and structures – working on and emerging from this initiative are demonstrative of the emergence of an eco-social economy in the Canadian north. These and other environmental and conservation-focused organizations and initiatives, both in Canada and abroad, should be incorporated into definitions of the social economy so as to receive more broad support from governments and civil society.

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