

contribution to our understanding of the nature and scope of the social economy within Canada's North. In doing so, it identifies a range of activities and diversity of approaches used by northern organizations. This collection arises out of research conducted as part of the Social Economy Research Network of Northern Canada. Its primary purpose is to help close a gap in northern political economy literature by examining "overlooked institutions" in the third sector, which are "neither state driven nor profit oriented" (p. x). By demonstrating the contributions made by the profiled social economy organizations, the collection aims "to help convince others that given more resources, some of the best answers to what communities in the region need can come from the communities themselves" (p. xi).

The contribution of this collection is strengthened by the diversity of its 15 case studies. First, the diversity of cases illustrates a continuum of organizational types within the northern social economy. On one side of the continuum are social purpose businesses, cooperatives, and enterprising non-profits, which place a greater focus on blending financial returns with social outcomes. These organizations are applying market-based strategies to achieve a social purpose. For example, Walker, Moise, and Staples' portrait of Raven Recycling in Yukon demonstrates how this enterprising non-profit has been able to divert significant quantities of waste from landfills by operating as a recycling business. Through Raven Recycling community-based education programs, it also has helped foster a culture of recycling. Four of the case studies highlight cooperatives in the North. Boutet's overview of the Torngat Fish Producers is an excellent example of how a northern cooperative has been able to create significant local employment by adapting to changing conditions in the sector. Nunavit Creations, as highlighted in Drouin and Moisan's case study, is an example of a subsidiary business of an Indigenous Economic Development Corporation. On the other side of the continuum are volunteer-only organizations such as Alternatives North, profiled in Sabin's case study. Second, the diversity of case studies also highlights a range of community sizes, from Christensen's portrait of a greenhouse project in Inuvik to Hernandez and Rawat's overview of the YWCA in Yellowknife. Although significantly smaller in comparison to their southern counterparts, territorial capitals have more resources available than the smaller communities. Third, the mix of cases from the provincial North (Labrador and Nunavik) and the territorial North (Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and Yukon) is commendable as it helps close a gap in scholarly research as many studies exclusively focus only on one area. Lastly, the goals of these organizations vary from economic diversification, provision of social services, culture vitality, to advocacy. The integration of other goals with economic ones is the hallmark of many social economy organizations. A prime example of this is the Yukon Artist @ Work Co-operative, as highlighted in Staples' study, which helped to strengthen Yukon's cultural community while providing artists with

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Examining a continuum of northern organizations from a social purpose business to an entirely volunteer organization, this collection makes an important

a shared space in which to sell their work. While each case study is “intrinsically interesting” (p. 211), the power of the collection derives from the reader being able to draw conclusions that extend across organizational type, community type, region, and primary focus.

Abele and Southcott’s concluding chapter draws out many of these linkages. Common challenges facing the profiled northern social economy organizations include the difficulty recruiting and retaining staff and securing sufficient and stable funding. These challenges speak directly to the human and financial capacity available within these organizations but also in the communities at-large. The collection highlights how some northern realities, such as remoteness and higher costs, can exacerbate these challenges. Conversely, the collection also identifies some common traits that have helped to strengthen the northern social economy, namely, “strong traditions of self-reliance and community volunteerism characteristic of northern communities” (p. 221). Although many of the case studies provide evidence of this obtained through their key informant interviews, at first glance, Staples and Walker’s case study provides contradictory evidence, as both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have some of the lowest volunteer rates in the country (see table 15.1 on p. 204). Additional lines of evidence and the use of common metrics would have strengthened the collection’s overall conclusions. Common metrics could include variables such as variability in year-to-year funding, number of jobs, and percentage derived from government sources. These metrics would help paint a stronger image of the overall capacity of northern social economy organizations to respond to challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

The inherent tension between a reliance on government funding and a social economy organization’s ability to pursue other priorities is underexplored in the collection.

The proposed solution to the constant preoccupation of securing adequate and stable funding is “a more conscious and supportive territorial or provincial policy framework... capable of delivering stable and predictable core funding” (p. 271). However, many of the case studies considered only how a loss of funding, or its absence, impacted the organization’s activities rather than exploring how the receipt of funding impacted the types of services offered or projects pursued. An exception to this is Hernandez and Rawat who noted that the “unequal relationship inevitably, if inadvertently leads to pervasive government control over organizational decision making” (p. 158). The relationship between government and social-economy organizations can be mutually productive when based on shared understandings and goals. This is particularly important as governments are increasingly turning to social economy organizations to act as their third-party delivery agents as several of cases in this collection highlighted. Including a more nuanced understanding of this public-private relationship into the conceptualization of social economy would be beneficial.

While this collection is a natural fit with northern scholars and students; it should also be of interest to those working in the public sector who are working within and with northern communities. Enhancing the vitality of northern social economy organizations will positively contribute to a community’s overall well-being. Lastly, this collection of northern scholarship makes a positive contribution to our understanding of social economy, and therefore, should be of interest to general researchers as well.

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