Realizing Rural Community Based Tourism Development: Prospects for Social-Economy Enterprises

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Abstract

Community-based tourism (CBT) is often considered as one component of a broad-based plan to improve rural economies. CBT development is characterized as a form of locally situated development that uses tourism to generate economic, social, and cultural benefits within a community. This process occurs through increased community participation in decision making and the sustainable development of both natural and cultural resources. Recent work in the field of community economic development has shown that social-economy enterprises, often called the *third sector* of the economy, can fill multiple areas of need within rural communities, contributing to economic, social, and cultural goals. As opposed to services and businesses controlled by private or public interests, the social economy is made up of community-based and mutually controlled enterprises that exist to serve the identified needs of a specific community. Examples of social-economy enterprises include worker-owned cooperatives, credit unions, community-based training organizations, and volunteer-run projects. This paper examines the potential for social-economy enterprises to contribute to the implementation of CBT within the Canadian rural tourism landscape. Two main roles for the social economy are identified: supportive and product delivery. Each role is described with reference to examples from across Canada. Challenges and benefits within each are evaluated, outlining areas for further research and on-the-ground development of social-economy enterprises to support rural CBT.

Keywords: rural tourism, social economy, Canada, social-economy enterprises

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1.0 Introduction

Many rural communities have turned to tourism as a way to diversify their economic base (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Mair, 2006). In establishing or developing a tourism industry, rural communities seek to transform themselves from an economy of commodity production to a site of consumption (Gill & Reed, 1997). Tourism has the potential to make a positive economic contribution, yet the success of this industry is not a given and the outcomes are not always positive. Tourism can be exploitative and culturally, socially, and ecologically damaging and can fail to provide a desired economic boost (Sharpley, 2002). These negative impacts of tourism can be particularly severe in rural areas, where temporary visitors are more visible in the landscape, compared to urban areas (Lane, 1994). In looking to develop tourism in a way that is more compatible with the rural context, the approach of community-based tourism (CBT) has been proposed (Murphy, 1985).

CBT is different from traditional top-down tourism planning approaches in that it emphasizes local input and control over the type, scale, and intensity of tourism development. By retaining or proactively obtaining control over tourism decision making, communities can direct development according to their values and interests (Gill & Reed, 1997; Mowforth & Munt, 2003). A defining characteristic of CBT is that it is a process generated from bottom-up community engagement to develop tourism products and services or to craft and implement a tourism strategy (Hall, 2000; Murphy, 1985). CBT looks to support community-appropriate types of tourism and equitable distribution and retention of benefits within a local area, presenting an alternate response to traditional forms of tourism development driven by a focus on profit maximization (Blackstock, 2005; Hall, 2000; Hatton, 1999).

Though the benefits of CBT as a way of developing a tourism industry are generally recognized (Hall, 2000; Hiwasaki, 2006; Nyaupane, Morais, & Dowler, 2006), actual benefits to the community can be difficult to achieve (Becker & Bradbury, 1994; Briassoulis, 2002; Laverack & Thangphet, 2009). Blackstock (2005, p. 45) calls CBT "naïve and unrealistic," claiming it fails as a community-based approach by (a) being too focused on industry development compared to community empowerment, (b) ignoring the internal dynamics of communities, and (c) ignoring the external barriers, such as inequality between developers and community members that affect the degree of local control. These critiques are made with reference to a development context where external private investment is attempting to enter a rural community. For example, a private developer may purchase land in a community to build or open a tourism business, such as a hotel or resort, and then seek cursory community input on the scale, design, and nature of the structure. In this way, the community is subjected to the *outcome* of a development, rather than being an equal partner in the *process* of developing rural tourism (Bahaire & Elliott-White, 1999).

This paper considers the realization of CBT through the use of social-economy enterprises. This alternate form of development is led by the community, using community resources, and frequently in the absence of external private or public capital. This independent community-based development context is supported by neoliberal policies that devolve the responsibilities of the state to individual citizens (Amin, 2005; Mair, 2006). This withdrawal of government provision of services has created voids in many rural communities that are increasingly filled by social-economy enterprises providing a variety of services and products, such as job training, health care, and services to disadvantaged or marginalized groups (Ninacs & Toye, 2002; Quarter, Mook, & Richmond, 2003). As a community-based effort, the development of rural tourism provides an additional site where social-economy enterprises can be used to fill the gaps left by receding government intervention and support.

The social economy, often referred to as the *third sector* (Mertens, 1999), is a term and type of economic organization that has risen to prominence in recent years as a vehicle for broad-based community economic development and as a way to mitigate the impact of neoliberal government policies (Amin, 2005; Teague, 2007). As opposed to services and products controlled by private interests, or publicly via governments, the social economy is made up of community-based and mutually controlled enterprises that exist to serve an identified need and return benefits accrued back to the community (Lukkarinen, 2005; Mertens, 1999). These needs often include health, employment, cultural

enrichment and preservation, training, and small-scale production (Amin, Cameron, & Hudson, 2002). Examples of social-economy enterprises include a variety of worker-owned cooperatives, credit unions, community-based training organizations, and volunteer-run projects. Though often adopting some methods of private businesses, social-economy enterprises have a focus on engaging community members in the provision and development of their own economic, social, and cultural futures, valuing principles of engagement, mutual benefit, and people before profits (Lukkarinen, 2005; Quarter, 2000). The social economy operates both alongside and separated from traditional market economies. As a form of local economic development and democratic expression, it seeks to provide "… a significant source of work, welfare, and participatory democracy in a new stage of capitalism" (Amin et al., 2002, p. 14).

The general objectives of the social economy parallel those of CBT, with both aiming to create community benefits (broadly defined as economic, social, and cultural) through a bottom-up process of local involvement in decision making, capacity building, and neoliberal economic diversification (Blackstock, 2005; Koster & Randall, 2005; Mair, 2006; Simmons, 1994). This represents a shift from the increased entrepreneurial involvement of governments in economic development to a devolution of this responsibility to the local level and to the individual citizen (Harvey, 1989). Despite the philosophical similarities between CBT and the social economy, research into this alternate form of economic organization for the production and support of rural tourism lags. This paper considers the potential for the social economy as a way to realize CBT by investigating how social-economy enterprises are currently used within a rural Canadian context. The purpose of this paper is exploratory: to trace linkages between these two concepts and highlight specific applications. I define two broad areas where the social economy can be leveraged for rural CBT: first as a support structure for private development and second as a direct tourism product and service provider. Examples from within Canada are used to investigate benefits and constraints to the use of the social economy in a rural tourism context. This paper concludes with a discussion of the way forward—how Canadian rural communities can use these social-economy structures to facilitate rural CBT, and what the implications are for policy makers.

2.0 Identifying the Role for Social-Economy Enterprises Within Rural CBT

Traditionally CBT is seen as a way in which private developers or government planners can interface with the community in the process of tourism development. This involves local residents and communities not simply as the "nucleus of the tourism product" (Simmons, 1994, p. 98) but as active participants in the process of development. The level and nature of community involvement in tourism development varies dramatically, from degrees of tokenism to full community control (Arnstein, 1969; Connor, 1988; Tosun, 2006). Taking a social-economy approach to CBT moves the role of the community from one of participant in a process enacted by private or government interests to one of entrepreneurial instigator. This independent development of the social economy offers community members a greater degree of autonomy and control compared to forms of top-down tourism development typified by partial forms of participation.

There are several ways to describe the nature and form of the social economy. According to Quarter, Mook, and Richmond (2003), the social economy can be divided into three broad types of organizations or enterprises: public-sector nonprofits, market-based social organizations, and civil-society organizations. These three types of social-economy enterprises cover a range of connections to traditional markets, draw on different revenue sources, and provide a variety of services. At their core, each of these organizations is focused on services to members above profits, has some degree of volunteer participation, and is driven by social objectives. For example, public-sector nonprofits are related to government agencies yet draw funding from a mix of sources, including grants and private donations. Hospitals and universities fall into this category, as they operate at a distance from governments yet are largely supported by tax dollars. Market-based social organizations include nonprofit or cooperative organizations, such as credit unions and general service providers such as the YMCA. For these organizations, revenues are generated from the market and surpluses are either returned equally to members or reinvested in the organization. The third category comprises civil-society organizations such as religious groups, unions, and membership-based services. These organizations operate by membership fees or donations to serve a more narrowly defined group or purpose. This broad typology of social-economy enterprises should be considered as one defining characteristic—there are many types and degrees of implementation of the social economy. The following section outlines specific roles where social-economy enterprises can be used to realize rural CBT, first by acting as a support, through developing business capacity and providing access to capital, and second as a vehicle for direct product or service delivery.

2.1 Support for Rural Tourism Development

Social-economy enterprises have been used to develop capacity in many areas of the rural economy and to deliver community services (Ninacs & Toye, 2002; Quarter et al., 2003). Capacity building refers to the increase in ability and skills of a community to facilitate development actions (Laverack & Thangphet, 2009). A key way in which the social economy can be used to build capacity for rural CBT is through the development of a unified industry or destination voice, such as a local tourism advocacy or development organization. These types of not-for-profit organizations consist of community stakeholders, ranging from individual citizens to tourism business owners, and often have a mandate to pool resources to develop the local tourism industry. A tourism advocacy group provides a base from which many other initiatives can be developed, such as quality-assurance programs, new product development, and operator training sessions. These organizations are also flexible, in that they can grow with the scale of the tourism industry, from being volunteer led to hiring a paid director and staff. Tourism advocacy organizations can act as a conduit through which the local connects to provincial, national, and international partners, for example, through leveraging government programs, such as development grants. These activities fulfill many of the goals of CBT, in that by cooperating, community members are able to proactively gain control of the tourism development in their area, reinforcing the ability of local people to solve problems without depending on outside experts (Murray & Dunn, 1995).

Many tourism advocacy and development organizations are found throughout Canada. A standout example from Manitoba is the Interlake Tourism Association (www.interlaketourism.com). This nonprofit, membership-based association acts

as a unifying banner over 13 communities and numerous tourism businesses within the Interlake region. This association provides both marketing and training support to members. A similar example can be found in Newfoundland, with the Viking Trail Tourism Association (www.vikingtrail.org). Formed as a member-driven nonprofit, the Viking Trail Tourism Association links together five areas in the northwest part of Newfoundland, including Gros Morne National Park and L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, emphasizing the Viking archaeology and natural heritage of the area. This organization demonstrates the potential for a social-economy enterprise to serve as a partnership conduit, as the Viking Trail Tourism Association has had significant success in bringing government funding to the area to develop tourism. This funding has been used to market the area and implement projects to develop signage in key points and build an interpretive centre in celebration of the 1,000th anniversary of Viking landfall in Newfoundland. These two organizations are examples of a type of capacity-building support for rural CBT that can be facilitated though a nonprofit tourism development association. In these cases the social economy has provided a vehicle with which to tie together regions and businesses that may be too small individually to capture the attention of potential tourists or to advocate their needs to various levels of government.

Another way in which the social economy can play an important supporting role in the development of rural tourism is through the provision of financial capital via credit unions. Credit unions are a type of member-owned financial institution that exists to serve the needs of its membership. Credit unions are a very common form of social-economy enterprise in Canada, with a strong tradition in rural areas (Halseth & Ryser, 2006). In a rural tourism context, credit unions can play a valuable role in easing access to financial capital, lending to organizations such as cooperatives and other nonprofits. Developing tourism products and infrastructure often requires access to financial capital, and the presence of a local lender can make accessing this capital easier for both private tourism business development and social-economy enterprises. The largest network of credit unions in Canada is the Caisse Populaire Desjardins (www.desjardins.com), with branches in Quebec and Ontario. Desjardins provides a full-service financial institution to members but also has a particular focus on providing access to capital and loans for members, including not-for-profit members and cooperatives. For rural tourism development, the presence of a willing lender and supportive financial institution can prove instrumental in the development of rural tourism businesses.

2.2 Social-Economy Options for Delivering Tourism Services and Products

The delivery of tourism services and products is the central part of tourism and is a role in which social-economy enterprises can support rural CBT. Rural tourism services and products can take many forms, from a simple roadside farm market stand to accommodation such as bed-and-breakfasts or farm stays, and experiential activities and tours of working farms. Festivals and events are also important tourism products in many rural areas. Within each of these categories of tourism product or service, there are opportunities for the use of social-economy enterprises. The following section presents Canadian examples where the social economy is used to provide services for tourism operators and tourism products directly to tourists. Though these examples are specific instances, the general type and role that they fill can be found in rural communities across Canada.

Cooperatives that provide group marketing for a region and services to operators are one way in which social-economy enterprises are used to support rural tourism in Canada. One example of this type of organization is the North Caribou Agriculture Marketing Association, also known as FARMED (Farm Agriculture Rural Marketing Eco Diversification: www.farmed.ca). This British Columbia–based organization comprises farm tour and agriculture operators in the Quesnal area. FARMED provides cooperative marketing for members and serves as a central portal for approximately 20 agricultural, farm, and rural tourism products. FARMED hosts events, conferences, and training for members and publishes a product guide that highlights regional tourism and provides an advertising opportunity for members. FARMED operates as a member-driven agency, filling a need within the tourism operator community. FARMED is supported through membership fees and through funding partnerships with federal and provincial agencies. In this manner, FARMED acts as a service aggregator, creating a stronger and more cohesive rural tourism product. Considering that one of the challenges to developing rural tourism is the diffuse and small-scale nature of the tourism product (Garrod, Wornell, & Youell, 2006), FARMED fills a valuable role in bringing together both similar and complementary tourism products in a way that they can jointly market and develop a particular rural region.

Social-economy organizations can be used in the management, ownership, and operation of publicly owned tourism attractions and resources. Often, a tourism resource can be owned by a provincial, regional, or city government but operated by a volunteer, membership-based, or not-for-profit association. There are many examples throughout Canada of rural museums and historical attractions that have been preserved by either governments or not-for-profit citizens groups. This is a similar arrangement to what can be found in many rural town museums, often operated by local historical societies. Without volunteers from the local community, many of these museums would not be able to operate. These types of museums serve as a service to local residents and as a tourist draw, filling a need within the community, both as a testament to local history and as a tourist attraction. One example of this can be found in Chester, Nova Scotia, where a local historical building, Lordly House museum, is owned and operated by the not-for-profit Chester Municipal Heritage Society (www.chesterbound.com/heritage.htm). This organization purchased the building and now maintains it as a museum, local archives, and Community Access Point site for Internet access and computer training. Another larger-scale example is Sainte-Marie among the Hurons historical park in Midland, Ontario (http://www.saintemarieamongthehurons.on.ca/), an attraction owned and partially operated by the government of Ontario. At Sainte-Marie, a social-economy organization, the Friends of Sainte-Marie (http://www.friendsofsainte-marie.ca/), acts in partnership with the government, connecting the attraction to the local community by providing volunteers to run special programs, as well as operating the on-site gift shop. Both of these examples show how the social economy can be used to deliver tourism products, with a variety of levels of investment.

The social economy can be used to manage resources that may have multiple owners and types of ownership. The Bruce Trail (http://brucetrail.org/) is an 800-km-long volunteer-maintained hiking trail that crosses public and private land along southern Ontario's Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. A nonprofit organization, the Bruce Trail Conservancy is made up of nine regional member clubs that each maintains a section of the trail. The Bruce Trail

provides a free resource for tourists and residents alike and is a major attraction within the numerous small towns along its length. This is a tourist resource that itself may not generate income but provides an anchoring draw for other tourism businesses within close proximity, such as restaurants, accommodations, and services. In this example, the role of the social economy is instrumental in the development and maintenance of a shared resource with spinoff benefit for private rural tourism enterprise.

Compared to the use of social-economy enterprises to manage public or mixed public/private resources, the use of social-economy enterprises as direct owners and providers of tourism products such as accommodations, restaurants, or attractions is much more uncommon. MacDonald and Jolliffe (2003) describe the example of Le Village de l'Acadie, in Caraquet, New Brunswick (http://www.villagehistoriqueacadien.com/). Developed in the 1960s by a cooperative of community members as a way to maintain the Acadian culture in the area and create employment, Le Village de l'Acadie is a re-created period village staffed by costumed interpreters and includes a hotel, restaurant, and theatre. These amenities function as typical market-based tourism businesses, but profits generated are returned to community members by supporting employment in the region. This provides an example of how the efforts of a volunteer group developed a major regional rural tourism attraction that is a representation of local history and culture and also a valued economic contributor. In a similar fashion, community festivals can celebrate local culture and be developed as a rural tourism product. One such example is the lilac festival in Cap-à-l'Aigle, in the Charlevoix region of Quebec (http://www.villagedeslilas.com). Building on the local interest in lilacs, a not-for-profit citizens group created a yearly festival, permanent garden park, and branded the town as a destination for garden and rural tourism. This festival now forms the central tourism draw to Cap-à-l'Aigle and an example of a social-economy enterprise that provides an important rural tourism product, which in turn supports private businesses, such as accommodations and restaurants.

3.0 Advantages and Constraints

The application of the social economy to rural tourism development in Canada can best be characterized as an emerging area of study. For rural economies affected by disinvestment in manufacturing, resource extraction, agriculture, and increasing global competition facilitated by relaxed trade barriers, the development of a tourism economy can be an attractive alternative (Mair, 2006). In exploring the potential role of the social economy within this development, several broad areas of advantage can be identified, including the support and utilization of community capacity, a lack of reliance on traditional sources of private capital, the retention of tourism benefits within the community, and the ability to support succession planning. Though not an exhaustive list, these areas of benefit should be considered to justify the further examination of the use of the social economy in rural CBT.

A first area of advantage is how social-economy enterprises focus on community and the development and utilization of community capacity. A core property of CBT is the development of tourism for community benefit, with control of tourism development resting in the hands of community members, rather than in those of private developers (Blackstock, 2005). The creation of not-for-profit tourism advocacy or development associations is an example of how communities can

develop a united voice for industry and community, as well as pool resources and expertise among members. This type of partnership approach can be leveraged to link across scales from the local to the national or international (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001), opening up new opportunities, such as sources of investment and expertise. These types of partnerships can also expose a community to increased pressure from partners and provide an entryway for unwanted development and exploitation (Bahaire & Elliott-White, 1999). Despite this possibility, the use of social-economy enterprises can begin to fulfill much of the rhetoric surrounding CBT, moving it away from a process of external control to a type of tourism development and industry structure that is more the product of community members, for community members.

A second area of advantage examined is the use of social-economy enterprises as a way to support rural CBT without the use of traditional sources of financial capital. Credit unions are an example of a social-economy enterprise that provides loans to members that would otherwise not be made with conventional banks. In many rural communities credit unions represent the only local banking institutions, and accessing financial capital and services locally is an important factor in the development of rural businesses. The use of outside financing can lead to higher levels of leakage, a loss of local control, and higher potential for exploitation. This underlines a third area of benefit to social-economy enterprises, that the potential for leakages of economic benefits outside of the community are reduced. Social-economy enterprises such as Le Village de l'Acadie were developed by locals to promote culture and generate employment, with the expressed goal of keeping tourism benefits within the community. This contrasts to development via external tourism industry players, where the risk of leakages are greater (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). This emphasis on the retention of community benefits is also evidenced in the FARMED tour operators: As an organization of local landowners and tour operators the benefits obtained through cooperative marketing are accrued to members. As entrepreneurial and community-based enterprises, these examples of the social economy fulfill fundamental goals of CBT: the retention of community benefits and the minimization of economic leakage (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Lane, 1994).

A fourth area of benefit is the potential for social-economy enterprises to overcome challenges of succession in rural businesses. The continuity of rural businesses is a challenge tied to rural depopulation and changes in rural demographics, where small business owners, upon retirement, close a business rather than pass it on to children or sell it to other operators (Getz & Carlsen, 2000). Social-economy enterprises avoid this succession gap by having multiple "owners," such as in a cooperative. In a cooperative, ownership, risk, and financial benefit are distributed among the shareholders, so that resources may be pooled to achieve a scale of impact that would otherwise not be possible. This organizational structure is more fluid, providing for the ability of members to leave and new members to join (Carpi, 1997). By spreading responsibility between many members, a co-op member who wishes to leave can sell his or her share to the other members or to a new member and the cooperative can continue functioning.

Despite the benefits of applying social economy to rural CBT, there are a number of constraints and challenges to their implementation. These challenges are generated by factors at the site of tourism production, including the specific community context and process of developing a social-economy enterprise itself,

as well as externalities over which communities may have little control (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). At the community level, tourism development is a highly contextual process, and as such the internal dynamics and attributes of each community can greatly affect the path of development. For example, CBT development in rural areas may be limited by characteristics such as a lack of infrastructure, whether in the form of a highway link, the availability of Internet access, or opportunities for skills training. The social economy can play an advocacy role in these developments, encouraging the input of external capital and expertise, whether public or private or making connections with outside institutions, such as universities and community colleges (Gurstein, 2000).

In addition to contextual CBT development challenges, there are numerous challenges to creating and operating a social-economy organization itself. The successful development of a social-economy enterprise is based on the willingness of participants to cooperate and work together for mutual benefit. As largely volunteer-run organizations, social-economy enterprises also face difficulties with attracting and maintaining volunteer interest and engagement (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Wilson, Fesenmaier, & Fesenmaier, 2001). This type of collaboration may be difficult to accomplish due to a weak history of cooperation among members of the same community or among communities within a region (Markey, Halseth, & Manson, 2009). Also, as not-for profit organizations, it may be difficult to ensure the long-term viability of social-economy enterprises. Financial security is not a goal for all social-economy organizations, but for more market-oriented ones, becoming self-sustaining financially can be a struggle (Lukkarinen, 2005). Ultimately many social-economy enterprises may not need to turn a profit. For some organizations, a lack of profits is beside the point: a nonmarket service or good is provided to society or membership at large. The Bruce Trail is an example of this, as an attraction that itself does not need to earn income to operate but in turn generates cultural and financial benefits for nonmember citizens and private businesses in the local area.

Lastly, there are substantial challenges to the development of rural tourism that are often beyond the direct influence of communities. These types of externalities include global economic trends and fluctuations, such as the recent economic troubles in the United States that greatly affected travel to Canada. Similarly, national monetary policy can create situations that are more or less favorable for tourism destinations, depending on their visitor markets. These types of tourism development challenges are not unique to rural communities, but it is possible that the social economy in its various forms can be used to buffer a local tourism industry from these effects. The mutual, community-based ownership model of the social economy, coupled with a lack of a profit-driven motive, is a type of economic organization that would be better positioned to navigate these turbulent economic cycles, effectively "internalizing the externalities" that adversely impact privately held tourism businesses (Novkovic, 2008, p. 2173).

4.0 Conclusions

This paper outlines the potential for realization of rural CBT through social-economy enterprises, providing examples from across Canada of the diverse forms of the social economy. As an alternate form of economic organization, the social economy responds to modern political trends that look to devolve economic responsibility toward grassroots organizations and individual citizens. In this way,

the social economy is the entrepreneurial manifestation of an active, democratic, and involved citizenry, something that is certainly not easy to achieve. For rural Canadian communities that are considering tourism development but find that they lack resources or structure to direct their efforts, the social economy is one potential solution that can be applied at various stages of the tourism development process, both as a support and for direct tourism product delivery.

Despite the potential benefits of the social economy in developing rural CBT, there are several key challenges to its implementation. Like many approaches to economic development, the nature and process of implementation can greatly affect the success of a social-economy enterprise. Developing a better understanding of the process of social-economy enterprise implementation, including constraints and challenges, is an important area of future study that follows from the work presented in this paper. The examples of social-economy enterprises presented here should be considered as generally successful cases, and further research into the history and process followed by each could be used to form a set of best practices to guide future rural CBT developments.

To help overcome the challenges of implementing social-economy enterprises, partnerships and support should be secured from a variety of agencies. At the local, provincial, and federal levels, support of social-economy enterprises in the form of start- up loans and grants as a component of a rural development strategy would be an appropriate way to encourage rural CBT. As indicated, financial capital can be difficult for social-economy enterprises to access, and a system of government grants or matching funds could spur further development of the social economy. Beyond financial assistance, efforts of nongovernmental organizations, such as the Canadian Social Economy Research Hub (www.socialeconomyhub.ca) and *le chantier de l'économie sociale* (www.chantier.qc.ca) are instrumental. These organizations continue to push the research and political agenda on the social economy and create networks of experience and communities of practice accessible by communities and individuals for the purpose of sharing expertise.

Research on tourism and the social economy is only recently emerging, and this paper serves as a preliminary effort to merge these literatures and identify areas where the social economy can be best leveraged in rural tourism development. Future contributions from policy makers, practitioners, and academics can build on these identified areas and challenges, supporting efforts to frame tourism as a viable development option for rural communities. As an area of study, CBT has at times been dominated by an industry-first viewpoint, one that may include the host community but often as an accessory within the development process (Blackstock, 2005). The social economy presents a flexible range of options for communities to circumvent this type of CBT by taking control of the development process and truly placing the community at the centre, as an entrepreneurial entity unto itself. Though this process is not without challenge, the social economy is a way for rural residents in Canada to develop a tourism industry that is both more reflective of their desires and more rewarding for their communities.

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