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An Exploration of the Motivations Behind Committee Membership in Food Networks

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ABSTRACT

Food Tourism has been recognised as a fast growing niche area where Ireland can gain competitive advantage. In recognition of the importance of collaboration among diverse stakeholders in the development of food tourism, networks have been identified as essential. This article presents findings from research conducted with three networks and reveals the motivations for committee membership. Data was gathered in 2012 through participant observation and interviews with steering committee members on three food networks using an action research approach.

A framework for examining motivations for collaboration is offered in this article which will contribute to effective network management. Motivations are aligned on a spectrum with individualistic motivations on one end and altruistic motivations on the other. Individuals expressing motives for committee membership at the altruistic end of the spectrum tended to focus on the benefits to the community as a whole and to all the businesses involved in network initiatives. At the individualistic end of the spectrum, personal or organisational gains are the motivators for collaboration. The majority of participants were motivated to become involved by recognising the potential benefits to others in the region *as well as* the personal benefits that could be gained from committee membership. The desire and ability of individuals to volunteer for committee membership was also influenced by contextual factors in the social and business environment within which they operated.

Understanding that within a committee, all committee members have their own, possibly different motivations for participation and that there are contextual elements that encourage or prevent them from acting on these motivations, will allow for more effective collaboration and will contribute to the sustainability of networks.

INTRODUCTION

Food Tourism has been recognised as a fast growing niche area where Ireland can gain competitive advantage. In recognition of the importance of collaboration among diverse stakeholders in the development of food tourism, networks, which are the non-hierarchical governance structures where individuals from across the public and private sectors collaborate (Hall 2011), have been identified as essential by Fáilte Ireland.[1] This article presents findings from research conducted with three networks and focuses on *why* individuals from the private sector choose to join network steering committees.

Food tourism networks with a community development agenda are highly dependent on volunteers from the local community and sometimes there is a distinction made in the literature between this type of volunteerism, termed social activism, and 'traditional' volunteerism. Perhaps because of this distinction, cross-fertilization between the literature on collaboration and the literature on volunteerism is not widely evident. However, Musick & Wilson (2007) suggest that viewing volunteering and social activism as distinct, unrelated activities is unhelpful. They suggest that social

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[1] Fáilte Ireland is the national tourism development authority in the Republic of Ireland

activism is in fact "*a subtype of volunteering distinguishable by a number of characteristics. Not only does it demand collective action, it is intended to achieve a collective good*". We agree with this perspective and demonstrate in this article that the body of knowledge on collaboration can be enriched through engagement with the literature on volunteering. Understanding individual's motivations to collaborate is largely ignored by those studying collaboration, despite its importance (Hibbert et al 2008), and we draw from the results of a research study as well as the literature on volunteering to contribute to the limited research on motivations for collaboration.

Conceptualising collaboration

The primary aim of collaborative entities like networks in the tourism industry is generally to attract more tourists to a region which in turn can result in benefits for the partners within the collaboration and for the community (VonFriedrichs Grangsjo & Gummesson 2006). There is no one commonly accepted definition of collaboration. This is not surprising since collaboration can describe a range of different types of relationships between individuals and between organisations such as alliances, joint ventures, partnerships and networks, and the relationships can be difficult to define due to the uniqueness of the context and actors involved in each. Additionally, collaboration is studied across a wide range of fields which has led to some fragmentation of research perspectives. Broadly speaking, collaboration can be viewed as the co-operative, coordinated relationship between two or more actors who come together to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity through on-going negotiation (Lotia and Hardy 2008, Schruijer 2008)

Communities can be viewed as geographical, limited to a region, town, neighbourhood etc. or relational, such as online communities, based on relationships or shared interests (Stukas and Dunlap 2002). By their nature, networks focused on community development are generally linked to geographically defined communities. Such community-based networks may have public sector representation but mostly depend on individuals from private enterprises, or other individuals from within a community, for committee membership.

By becoming involved in a network, individuals can gain *collaborative advantage,* in other words the benefits that result from co-operating with others that cannot be gained by acting alone (Huxham 2003). The advantages of collaboration can include cost reductions, increased customer satisfaction and greater organisational effectiveness through a reduction in task replication across organisations, for example through co-operation on product development or distribution (Nedovic-Budic and Pinto 1999). Collaborative initiatives also have the potential to reach wider audiences for example through joint marketing campaigns (Provan and Kenis 2007). Additionally, collaboration can impact positively on the collective competitive position of geographic regions which in turn creates competitive advantage for partners within a food tourism network (Boari et al 2003). Although individuals do not need to join a network to engage in networking activities, defined as exchanging information for mutual benefit (Himmelman 2002), the benefits mentioned accrue from collaboration within a network, activities which go beyond networking. Nevertheless, individuals may not be aware of the potential benefits of collaboration and it cannot be assumed that the potential for collaborative advantage motivates their desire to collaborate. In fact, it is unclear why individuals volunteer to become part of tourism networks as this topic is not well studied (Morrison et al 2004).

Studying motivations for engaging in collaboration

As mentioned previously, research on collaboration does not generally draw from the research on volunteerism, yet this research has many insights to offer. Studies on volunteerism provide information on who is most likely to volunteer, why they are likely to volunteer, their experiences of volunteering and the consequences of volunteering (Hustinx et al 2010, Omoto et al 2010)

When studying why individuals volunteer, some researchers have attempted to categorise individuals by a single motivational perspective. Behavioural theorists, for example, have suggested that human action is motivated solely by self-benefit arguing that altruism is never truly disinterested unselfish behaviour. They use cost-benefit models to argue that individuals displaying this behaviour gain in some tangible or intangible way themselves (Campbell 1998). Other research suggests that individuals do not have to see tangible benefits to themselves and can be motivated by the potential benefit to others (Batson and Ahmad 2002). More recent research studies have indicated that individuals can in fact be motivated by both individualistic and altruistic reasons simultaneously and not see a contradiction between these perspectives (MacNeela 2008). The phrases *altruistic individualism* and *impure altruism* have been coined to explain such mixed motivations (Rehberg 2005, Hustinx et al 2010).

Research on volunteering suggests that when studying the motivations of individuals who volunteer to engage in community-based tourism development, they should not be regarded as a homogenous group motivated by similar reasons (Handy & Hustinx 2009). Yet, Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) in a review of the theories and approaches to collaboration note that motivations for collaboration have been framed almost exclusively within what they term optimist and pessimist perspectives and there is little acknowledgement of the possibility of mixed motives for engaging in collaboration. Those taking an optimist perspective view collaboration as driven by a desire by individuals to gain positive outcomes for the system (i.e. the community) as a whole. From this perspective, individuals are viewed as motivated by the possibility of achieving positive outcomes for all stakeholders rather than their own desire for short-term gain. Pessimist perspectives, on the other hand, are underpinned by a theoretical framework highlighting personal or organisational gain as the motivation for collaboration. From a pessimist perspective, individuals are viewed as engaging in collaboration in order to maximise their own power, resources and autonomy. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) suggest that a third perspective, a realist perspective, is under-utilised. Within this approach to theorising collaboration, motivations for engaging in collaboration can be mixed to include personal gain as well as a desire for mutually beneficial outcomes.

The impact of Social Context

When determining motivations for volunteering for committee membership of tourism networks, it is not enough to focus solely on individuals. How individuals construct meaning and choose to behave is influenced by the social world around them, thus contextual elements are also important to consider (Omoto et al 2010). As Mdee (2008 p399), utilising a structure-agency framework to examine community participation suggests, each individual is a "*reflective social being embedded in social networks and collective configurations*". These social relationships and configurations may

have an impact on the likelihood of volunteering. To take one example, people are more likely to volunteer if they are asked (Musick and Wilson 2007). Accordingly, an individual may be motivated to engage in community development activities but may never act on this motivation unless they are asked to volunteer by others and they may only be invited to volunteer if are a member of a particular social group. Thus, as Handy and Hustinx (2009) suggest, there can be a "*structural selection bias*" built into the demand for volunteers as certain people may be targeted above others.

Other contextual elements have also been found to impact on volunteerism. For example, research has shown that married couples with school age children are more likely to volunteer than those with young children or the childless. This has been attributed to the fact that parents of school age children are drawn into school activities, potentially have more time to spare when children are at school rather than at home, and may have more of an interest in community development in order to provide a positive environment for their children (Musick and Wilson 2007). Social networks have also been found to be important as individuals are more likely to volunteer if they have friends who are volunteering in the same organisation (Schneider 2004). Similarly, marital status, church membership and active membership of other associations have also been shown to impact on the likelihood of volunteering (Musick and Wilson 2007).

The research study described in this article takes account of individual motivations to volunteer for network committee membership as well as some of the contextual elements impacting on their choice to volunteer. The entire research study focused on both the formation and functioning phases of the network, but this article deals solely with the formation phase of the networks and addresses:

(1) why individual participants chose to volunteer to join the network steering committees and
(2) the contextual factors that impacted on this choice.

RESEARCH APPROACH

We took an Action Research approach in the study. The epistemological assumption underpinning this approach is that the purpose of academic researchers is not just to describe, understand, and explain phenomenon but also to become involved in changing something (Coghlan and Brannick, 2009). Huxham and Vangen (2001) suggest that action research is an appropriate approach when studying collaboration.

Within action research studies, research can be conducted with single or multiple cases. We chose a multiple case approach because of the complexity of factors that can impact on network development. Studying more than one case allowed comparing and contrasting across cases thereby allowing a richer and more robust analysis taking different contexts into account (Pereira and Vallance 2006). Three networks, located in Southwest Ireland were chosen as case studies. They were chosen because they focused on community development and they intended to develop food tourism either as their main strategic objective or as one component of their overall strategy. One

was a food tourism network (Network A), the second was a food festival network (Network B) and the third was a network of food producers (Network C)[2].

Data was collected through participatory observation and interviews. We interviewed twenty eight past and current steering group members of the three networks using a semi-structured interview technique. We engaged in participant observation during three committee meetings and during a number of network activities. Field notes and interview transcripts were analysed together and thus integrated in the interpretation of the overall results.

There were three personnel from public sector agencies on the network committees. They were committee members as part of their job remit, thus could not be considered volunteers. Accordingly, their interview data is not presented in this article as the aim is to elucidate the motivations of members of the private sector for volunteering for committee membership.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The potential benefits of food tourism

Before discussing their own motivations for joining the community-based regional development committees, committee members acknowledged the potential benefits of the development of food tourism in their region.

A common thread running through discussions with participants in all three case studies was the potential economic benefits of food tourism. It was seen by participants as a means to increase visitor numbers to a destination for economic benefits.

> *Every time a tourist spends another night in the town, the tourist spend goes up and that benefits the area* (Committee Member, Case Study A).

Participants noted that tourist spend can be increased by food tourism events and initiatives which extend the tourist season in an area by encouraging visitors to come at times when they might not otherwise.

> *The festival gets people to come to the town at a time when there would be no reason for them to come otherwise* (Committee Member, Case Study B).

These advantages of food tourism have been previously documented, as well as the economic benefits that can accrue due to reduced leakage of economic resources from an area since money for food purchased locally circulates within the local economy rather than leaking out of it (Morrison et al 2004, Hall 2010).

The promotion of food tourism also leads to a greater focus on local foods and participants highlighted the potential benefits to the region:

> *In terms of publicising local food, there is a tourism opportunity within that because publicising the foods benefits the community as a whole because being known for producing*

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[2] Due to the fact that participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, the networks are not identified by name.

and providing good quality local foods then can become part of what this community is all about (Committee Member, Case Study C).

By differentiating a tourism region from its competitors and focusing on making a destination different through the creation of unique food experiences, food tourism can increase the competitiveness of a destination in the tourist market (Hall 2010, Mak et al 2012).

Potential benefits to individual accommodation providers, food providers and food producers were also acknowledged.

The aim is to get more people to the area....and by getting more people to the area, we're also getting them in the hotel and getting them in the bar (Committee Member, Case Study A).

Individual operators can benefit even more if they position themselves as providers of local food in this environment (Robinson 2008). This was recognised by some participants:

*Because the query would be 'how come his restaurant is always full and mine is not?' Well, because he's using local food (*Committee member, Case Study A).

Participants commented on the obligatory nature of food consumption and how more use of local products by local food providers can translate directly into more sales for local food producers. Additionally, if food providers and other local businesses are highlighting locally-produced foods, this results in increased consumer exposure and greater brand awareness which can also translate into more sales:

If a local brand [is on the menu], it's like subliminal advertising, everybody's talking about it. And if [the visitors] are Irish or English and they are leaving, they might buy it, or if not they might go online to buy it (Committee member, Case Study A).

The above comment highlights the potential for tourists to export the experience of place by exporting the food. Further examples are provided in Grant Thornton's (2012) survey on food in Ireland which reports that tourists, upon returning home, purchase food from Irish food producers whose facilities they have visited on holiday.

As well as encouraging the export of food, one participant describes how this type of 'subliminal advertising' can result in the tourists themselves requesting local brands while on holiday, which can, in turn, benefit the local food producers:

There are tourists coming into the restaurant saying 'that's Wexford cheese, why didn't you buy off the local cheese maker?' (Committee member, Case Study A)

Some food tourism activities, such as food trails, food markets and food festivals, bring about direct interaction between producers and tourists. It has been previously illustrated that this gives producers an opportunity to build brand awareness and increase margins through direct sales (Fitzgibbon 2009, Hall 2010) and these sentiments were echoed by members of all three networks. The comment below highlights that consumer feedback is also an important element of this interaction:

> *[Food Producers] can take a stall where they can sell their product directly and get feedback from the customers on that* (Committee member, Case Study A).

Finally, a key theme that emerged from the data centred on community development. Participants noted that benefits to local food producers can also translate into regional benefits since increases in sales of local foods can create employment. Ecker et al (2010) provide similar findings from rural regions in Australia where food tourism provides employment opportunities, particularly for women and young people, which would not otherwise exist. Thus, food tourism in a rural area can support rural development as it provides a means of economic diversification (Fitzgibbon 2009, Ecker et al 2010).

Motivations for committee membership

Participants were asked about their motivations for volunteering to become committee members. Individuals expressed different reasons for joining, and some expressed mixed reasons. The reasons could be aligned along a spectrum with altruistic reasons on one end, individualistic on the other and mixed motivations in between.

Committee members who expressed motivations for collaboration on the individualistic end of the spectrum focused on these types of benefits to their businesses:

> *I'm here to try and make money for my business and the only way to do it is by meeting others* (Committee Member, Case Study C)

These comments illustrate how, at the individualistic end of the spectrum, personal or organisational gains are the motivators for collaboration. Thus, individuals seek to maximise their own power, resources and autonomy, as previously highlighted (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Individualistic motivations can lead to committee work being given a low priority:

> *I do also think that there is that natural instinct of people to focus on their own business rather than the bigger picture. I see that.*

> ***And does that impact on the work of the committee?***

> *Well it does when they can't show up to meetings and things* (Committee Member, Case Study A).

Such lack of prioritisation has been shown to impact on success in collaboration (Mitchell 2011). Von Friedrichs Gransjo & Gummesson (2006), for example, in a study on a tourism network in Sweden found that active participation, evidenced by commitment in terms of time and resources, was one of the essential elements in the success of the network.

As well as having an impact on willingness to prioritise committee activities, individualistic motivations could also discourage individuals from initially volunteering for committee membership. Participants in the study acknowledged that individuals could gain from network activities without network membership because the vision for the networks in the study centred on regional

development with the concept of the 'greater good' to the fore. This presented a dilemma which was highlighted by a number of committee members:

> *If they are benefiting anyway; they are part of the events guide, the menus, they are given great advertising, so why should they come and spend any extra time or money?* (Committee member, Case Study B)

In contrast, to those on the individualistic end of the spectrum, individuals expressing motives for committee membership at the altruistic end tended to focus on the benefits to the community as a whole and to all the businesses involved in network initiatives. Most stated explicitly that they did not see much personal benefit to committee membership beyond *personal satisfaction* (Committee Member, Case Study B), instead focusing on community benefits:

> *We are all volunteers. We are not getting anything at all for it. But it brings out the community feeling* (Committee Member, Case Study B).

Thus, individuals exhibiting these motivations entered into collaborative arrangements with others in order to achieve goals that benefit all stakeholders.

Although, as described above, some individuals exhibited either an altruistic or individualistic motivations, the majority of participants were motivated to become involved by mixed motives. They recognised the benefits to others in the region while simultaneously acknowledging the personal benefits that could be gained from committee membership:

> *A lot of our market is American business…and the first question they ask is what is local. And we do have local food on our menus now, we indicate what is locally produced and its good for us…. then this opportunity came up to really get food tourism out there, so it was natural to get involved… and it benefits food producers and also benefits the people committed to using local produce* (Committee Member, Case Study A).

Interestingly, while participants suggested that a number of their colleagues on the committee had volunteered for reasons other than personal gain, when asked how they would encourage others to volunteer for network activities, they all suggested highlighting potential personal benefits rather than any appeal to altruistic motivations.

> *The easiest way to convince people to join a network is show them one that works or introduce them to someone who joined a network and increased their profits by 10%* (Committee member, Case Study A).

This focus was likely because personal benefits are tangible while it is more difficult to market the more intangible benefits (the 'feel good' factor) accrued from more altruistic behaviour. Nevertheless, even tangible benefits can be difficult to highlight. Participants suggested that this was because they were often linked to a long term strategy:

> *Is there a monetary payback? No. it's down the line. It's very difficult for people to say ok, I'll come to the meeting because in 3 years' time there will be another 1000 visitors coming or there will be another 10,000 visitors coming (Committee member, Case Study A).*

This suggests that network goals should be structured into achievable objectives, since success in smaller term objectives allows a group to celebrate success and maintain momentum (Hackman 1990, Von Friedrichs Grangsjo and Gummesson 2006). Successive failures, on the other hand, can result in individuals believing that they are not capable of succeeding and groups who experience failure early tend to enter into a negative spiral of lack of achievement (Hackman 1990, Reisel and Kopelman 1995). This is not to say that one or more failures result in the overall failure of a collaborative effort. Any endeavour has positive aspects and focusing on these aspects can enhance collaboration (Collabor8 2012). Nevertheless, by setting achievable objectives, a group can avoid numerous difficulties.

CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS IMPACTING ON THE CHOICE TO VOLUNTEER

Logistics

Food tourism is a complex notion, spanning both food production and tourism sectors. It has been previously reported that this can lead to difficulties with collaboration due to different attitudes and cultural beliefs as a result of self-identification by individuals with their own profession or their industry sector (Beech and Huxham 2003, Mitchell 2011). The food and tourism sectors are very different and this would imply that collaboration could be difficult. Surprisingly, in this study, this proved not to be true and the difficulties outlined by participants related to logistical issues only. From a logistical perspective, it was difficult for food providers such as restaurants and hotels to engage with food producers as there were conflicts in the times when they were free to attend meetings. Food producers were engaged in production during the day, meaning that they were free to attend evening meetings while restaurant and hotel stakeholders were busy in the evenings and at night, meaning that they were only free to attend meetings during the day.

Other difficulties associated with time demands were a common thread running through almost all interviews. Most committee members were small business owners and dedicating time to committee duties was problematic, as highlighted in the following comments:

> *If you are in a restaurant and you're running your own restaurant, you're the chef, you're the chef maybe 6 nights a week or maybe 7 and where do you find time for a meeting? And if you are a sole producer time might be a problem…. For me personally it's another job I've got to do on top of my own job* (Committee member, Case Study A).

Thus, even if individuals were motivated, logistical issues impacted on their ability to actually volunteer.

Co-opetition

Horizontal collaboration involves collaboration which occurs between individuals from businesses at the same point on a supply chain who may be in competition with each other (Baratt 2004). This is sometimes referred to as 'co-opetition' and has been previously shown to create difficulties as individual businesses are unwilling to enter into collaboration with competitors (Von Friedrichs Grangsjo and Gummesson 2005, Plummer et al 2005). There were a number of individuals from the same sectors e.g. food production and accommodation provision on each of the network steering

committees, and several suggested that co-opetition was a reason that others from the sector did not volunteer.

> *If one restaurant is participating, the other won't. They don't look beyond a blinkered vision.* (Committee Member, Case Study B)

However, this was not the only perspective offered and some participants felt that the market was large enough to accommodate existing competitors:

> *Even though we are in competition, we accept that there is enough there for us and what we do is watch each other's backs* (Committee member, Case Study A).

Thus, economic security reduced fears that might have arisen from potentially collaborating with competitors. Other participants suggested that the potential benefits that could be gained from regional development outweighed the risks of collaboration. These views resonate with the notion of cluster theory which suggests that the appeal of a region as a tourist destination can be enhanced through the development of a cluster of interrelated tourism businesses (Flowers and Easterling 2006).

Other participants noted that it was easier to find volunteers for successful initiatives already in existence.

> *I think sometimes if you can get the wheel rolling, other people see the opportunity and they step on board* (Committee member, Case Study C).

This implies that individual's motivations for volunteering for tourism development can be influenced by their prior experience or knowledge of collaboration or if a network is already in existence, by its level of success.

Having a Voice in the Conceptual Development of the Network

A participative style of decision making in a public forum can encourage stakeholders in a region to get involved in strategic decision making around regional development (Pederson 2002, Mitchell 2011). All the networks in the study held public meetings at least once during the network development process and participants suggested that it was an effective way of building support:

> *We had a well-attended event and a lot of people turned up and there was great energy and great excitement about the prospect* (Committee member, Case Study C).

Many committee members volunteered as a result of attending one of the meetings.

Participants noted that to ensure that a public meeting motivates volunteerism, one of the outputs should be an action plan to ensure that decisions are translated into action. Not taking this step can have a deleterious effect on a network as highlighted by one participant:

> *If people don't see things coming from all the talk, they are going to drift away anyway* (Committee member, Case Study C).

The action plan can help ensure that any momentum gained can be built upon.

Social Capital as a motivating factor

Studies on volunteering suggest that being asked to volunteer is a motivating factor and social capital has been examined in this context. There is no universally accepted definition of social capital, but it can be viewed as the quality and quantity of social resources that an individual can draw on because of their network of social relationships (Rostila 2011). It appeared that if individuals were prepared to leverage their personal social capital for the benefit of the group, they could persuade others to become involved.

> *It helps a lot when people know you personally, that makes it easier* (Committee member, Case Study A).

To take one of many examples provided by participants, a new member on Network B who was a chef succeeded in getting other chefs involved in food festival activities where they had not been involved previously, due to his personal relationships with them. Similarly, Network A included a number of the same committee members from another successful initiative in the area and they were able to leverage the social capital they had built up through their involvement in that initiative in order to benefit the current network.

> *The seed was set before the network even got together* (Committee member, Case Study A).

As more people become involved, the network of relationships within and outside a network can increase its influence and potential for individual benefits. As a result, the collective social capital of the network as a social unit can increase as the network as a unit can have more influence, access to resources and recognition than single individuals (Lin 1999). Participants noted that these benefits were highlighted to others in order to encourage their involvement.

Being motivated to volunteer by learning from others

Getting the involvement of international experts at initial meetings was highlighted by participants as one way of motivating others to become involved.

> *I would definitely bring in an expert on international best practice. I think that was great…they give people a great sense of 'oh great, we're not just looking microscopically at something, we are listening to someone who is talking from an international setting… And I suppose it helps break down the message to everyone a bit better* (Committee member, Case Study A).

Individuals with experience and expertise can endorse the advantages of network membership as they have experienced them personally and are not viewed as having a vested interest. Accordingly, they can influence attitudes as highlighted by a committee member in Network A, commenting on an expert that came to talk to the group:

> *She changed our way of thinking overnight.*

Hall (2005) in a study on wine tourism development in New Zealand, reports a similar finding, and notes that experts can provide independent advice and endorse the advantages of network

development. Individuals with celebrity status can also be useful in this regard, and their support can encourage others to become involved.

As well as learning from experts, an enormously beneficial aspect to engaging in network activities highlighted by many participants was the potential to learn from their peers and Hall (2005) notes that this is one of the benefits of membership of food tourism networks. Participants noted that individuals in early stages of developing their businesses benefit from engaging with others in their sector in order to understand and negotiate government regulations, business supports and funding possibilities. Participants further along in their business lifecycle suggested that involvement on the network committee provided them, and therefore could provide others, with insight and a better understanding of aspects of their own businesses. Highlighting the benefits of peer guidance can be one way of motivating volunteerism.

DISCUSSION

This study adds to the limited body of knowledge regarding motivations behind committee membership in food networks. Understanding of these motivations will contribute to effective network management, although it must also be recognised that in the case of a group of individuals, different motivations may not always work in harmony (Batson and Ahmad 2002). We recognise the limitations of this study in having only interviewed volunteers rather than also interviewing individuals who did not volunteer. Additionally, we interviewed individuals not at the time they volunteered, but after they had been committee members for a period. It is possible that over time they may have reconstructed their views on their original motivations.

Motivations are aligned on a spectrum with individualistic motivations on one end and altruistic motivations on the other rather than a dichotomy of altruistic versus individualistic. This framework takes account of the fact that individuals may join a committee for a mix of reasons. Individuals expressing motives for committee membership at the altruistic end of the spectrum tended to focus on the benefits to the community as a whole and to all the businesses involved in network initiatives. It is not assumed that an individual exhibiting altruistic motivations is necessarily located at the extreme end of the spectrum, with no self-interest exhibited whatsoever, but that their behaviour is instead motivated *more* by the common good than individual gain. At the individualistic end of the spectrum, personal or organisational gains are the motivators for collaboration. The majority of participants were motivated to become involved by recognising the benefits to others in the region *as well as* the personal benefits that could be gained from committee membership.

When setting up a network, it is important to acknowledge that individuals will have different motivations for getting involved. It must also be recognised that people are most likely to volunteer if they feel that doing so will serve those motivations (Omoto et al 2010). This indicates that a *functional* approach to the development of community-led tourism networks can be useful when attempting to gain stakeholder buy-in. Functional approaches entail examining the needs, goals, plans and motives that drive volunteering behaviour (Stukas and Dunlap 2002). In other words, those setting up or expanding community-based tourism committees must acknowledge that each committee member may have different motivations for volunteering and accordingly, there are a range of different needs and goals that should be met. Those committee members who are involved

due to altruistic motivations must see a benefit to the community and all stakeholders to feel that their efforts are worthwhile. Simultaneously, those taking a more individualistic perspective on involvement must experience personal or business benefits as a result of committee membership. There must be a balance achieved where benefits to individuals co-exist with benefits to the system at large. In the context of food tourism, this means finding ways to recognise the potential for individual benefits, such as cost savings or increased profits through product development, innovation, funding applications and joint purchasing/delivery arrangements, as well as recognising the potential benefits to the community as a whole, such as making a region more attractive to tourists or maintaining a regional identity.

Individual motivations are not the only factor of importance in determining whether individuals volunteer for food tourism committee membership. It has been observed that volunteering "*is rooted in a multi-layered complex of factors that are microlevel and macrolevel, subjective and objective, cultural and structural, individual and organizational in nature*" (Handy and Hustinx 2009 p 557). The results of the current study bear out this observation and demonstrate that the ability or desire of individuals to volunteer is influenced by a range of contextual factors resulting from social, organisational and business sector structural systems within which they operate. Accordingly, along with individual motivations, these contextual factors must be taken into account in any attempt to encourage individuals to become committee members. This will allow for more effective collaboration and will contribute to the sustainability of networks.

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