

The Social Economy and a Special Event: Community Involvement in the Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games

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Abstract: This article is premised on the idea that our understanding of the social economy can be developed through an examination of community engagement in a special sporting event. It explores the extent to which hosting a special event in Whitehorse, Yukon provided involvement opportunities for community members, and it explores the related outcomes for individuals and the community. The particular nature and attributes of Whitehorse as a northern community and the nature of the event—the Canada Winter Games—set the context for how the community and its members engaged with the event. The research explored involvement with the event in order to come to an understanding of specific outcomes in Whitehorse, and in relation to special events in the social economy more generally. Findings indicate increasingly positive assessments of the Games' impacts and resident involvement in the event through support, attendance, and volunteering. The highest-ranked motivations for volunteering suggest a strong connection to the event, linked in with the opportunity to contribute to the wider community goals of hosting the event. The findings of the study reiterate the importance of considering the local context of the social economy when exploring its expression through a special event. The basis for this article is a longitudinal research project that includes surveys, focus groups, and interviews in the community, with an emphasis on event volunteers.

Introduction: The Social Economy and Special Events

Special sporting events have become a key component of the economic development plans of many Canadian communities, particularly in the interests of diversifying the local and regional tourism industry. Events are held for a variety of reasons, including celebration of culture and landscape, creating awareness of a region or activity, enabling competition, and encouraging interaction among participants of all types. Ranging in scale from local tournaments to international elite competitions, special sporting

events have at their core the interests of broader society in bringing together individuals in a setting that marks something special and contributes to larger goals. Usually these events are managed by non-profit organizations that rely largely on volunteer labour to plan, implement, and evaluate the event. These managing organizations are often funded through a combination of government agency support, private sponsorship, and community fundraising.

Given these typical features of sporting events, there are many possible connections to the social economy—the broad sector of society where social and economic goals are combined in organizations, associations, and activities to help communities meet their goals (LePage, 2006; Quarter, 1992). Research on the social economy examines the interactions of social organizations and their members in order to understand their functioning within particular communities and broader society. Much of the research in this area is at the organizational level, rather than the societal or individual level, and it examines activities in social and human services, education, and business development (see Canadian Social Economy Research Partnerships, n.d.; MacKinnon, 2006; Painter, 2006; Quarter et al., 2001). Though there are numerous perspectives on what constitutes the social economy, Murray (2008) argued that researchers should keep an open mind to the concepts and insights of the following four related areas: civil society, social economy, community development, and the third (or independent) sector. Despite the potential for examining special events from a social economy perspective, there has been little work in this area.

Beyond looking at organizational and governance features, economic impacts, and infrastructure development, an investigation of the intersection of the social economy and special events appears particularly relevant to understanding the social impacts for the community of hosting events. It also seems important to consider community engagement with the event and how this helps elucidate links with the social economy. Whether community members are engaged in the event—and the nature of that involvement—should provide a sense of the resonance of the event goals and its draw beyond those immediately affected. Further, how this involvement influences outcomes, such as intentions and behaviour, speaks to the social impacts that are less obvious than the economic ones, but that are clearly important in the social economy with its emphasis on understanding outcomes related to communities and their social goals. The purpose of this article is to explore how the social economy and a special event intersect in the community of Whitehorse, Yukon. Specifically, it looks at interactions that can be categorized as involvement and outcomes for both the general

community and for a group of volunteers. It then considers the implications of involvement and outcomes for the social economy more generally.

Communities and Special Events

Regional, national, and international sporting events bring into a community a variety of visitors: athletes, trainers, coaches, spectators, and, sometimes, volunteers from other communities. In addition to the immediate economic impact engendered by these visitors, numerous benefits are expected when communities host such events. Community support for, and involvement in, special events relates to expectations about benefits as well as costs, at individual, sub-group, and community levels, and this changes over time as information becomes available about the nature and distribution of those benefits and costs (e.g., Mihalik & Simonetta, 1999; Soutar & McLeod, 1993; Waitt, 2003).

Waitt (2003), for example, found that enthusiasm for the 2000 Olympics among the majority of sampled residents of Sydney, Australia intensified between 1998 and the three-week period of the event in September 2000. Waitt (2003) noted that levels of enthusiasm were highest among younger residents, those with children at home, and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Further, residents living closer to the event site were more positive in their reactions than those living further away. Concerns and uncertainty about economic implications of hosting the event rose over time and Waitt (2003) related these to themes of social injustice and a lack of personal rewards. Nonetheless, the majority of the respondents agreed that the benefits of hosting outweighed the costs.

In order to explore residents' views of the impacts from hosting an event, Twynam and Johnston (2004) modified the Tourism Impact Attitude Scale, described in Lankford and Howard (1994) and Lankford (1994), to fit the special event situation, and looked at resident involvement in a winter sporting competition. Based on surveys conducted over a one-year time frame, the study found generally high support for hosting the event, with the highest levels in the pre-event survey and the lowest levels in the final survey. Similar to a pattern in the literature, residents were more positive about the event impacts immediately after the event, though the survey six months later shows less positive reactions. Twynam and Johnston (2004) concluded that it is important to consider how involvement in the event affects reactions to impacts and to undertake surveys beyond the immediate post-event time frame.

In the Twynam and Johnston (2004) study, community involvement was explored through support for the event, interest in the event, and attendance behaviour. Both support and interest were linked to attendance in their study. A number of other studies have indicated that intentions to volunteer and actual volunteering participation can tell us something about community support for an event. Beyond the pattern of such involvement, it may be useful to consider volunteer motivations and how these relate to the social economy. Ten years ago, a special event researcher (Getz, 1997) noted that research had not identified substantial differences between special event volunteers who volunteer for a specific event, and the more traditional social service volunteers who volunteer on a longer-term basis (see also Green & Chalip, 1998); however, several studies, especially more recently, have suggested that there are motivations specific to special event volunteers. Volunteers at special events report those motivations that are particularly related to factors such as making the event a success, displaying cultural pride, and having an attachment to the activity (Elstad, 1996; Farrell, Johnston & Twynam, 1998; Saleh & Wood, 1998; Johnston, Twynam & Farrell, 2000; Monga, 2006). The Special Event Volunteering Motivation Scale (SEVMS) has been used to categorize and rank volunteer motivations at a variety of events (e.g., Twynam, Farrell & Johnston, 2002; Reeser, Berg, Dhea & Willick, 2005; Grammatikopoulos, Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2006), providing a sense of the variety of motivations and differences between event volunteering and other types of volunteering. A number of the top motivations in these studies have relevance for understanding the place of special events in the social economy, especially in relation to events as opportunities to strengthen the social and economic foundation of a community.

Youth sporting competitions have as their primary object the promotion of sport and interaction among young people. Personal and social benefits for participants were explored at the Arctic Winter Games in Whitehorse in 2000, where it was found that participants benefited in a variety of ways, such as feelings of excitement and challenge, and positive personal experiences (World Leisure Professional Services, 2001). Beyond these benefits to individual competitors, government sponsors and municipal leaders expect concrete outcomes from community hosting and involvement in the event, in addition to very specific outcomes such as infrastructure development. One of these is the hope that hosting the event, along with the construction or enhancement of recreation facilities, will lead to increased sporting and recreation participation levels in the community. Kariel (1991) noted that hosting the 1988 Olympics increased sport participation in Calgary and increased sport-mindedness among residents. Further, for the

subgroup of volunteers, there can be particular expectations of increased recreation interest and participation, though such hopes do not always result in identifiable changes (Downward, Lumsdon & Ralston, 2005; Downward & Ralston, 2006).

Another aspect of the expected legacy is the development of the volunteer pool, again reflecting immediate needs of hosting a successful event, and providing human resource skills that are available afterwards (Farrell et al., 1998). The development of a specialized, trained, and committed pool of volunteer labour that is available for future events or other venues within the community also has the potential to strengthen the community fabric in other ways through later achievements by individuals in their own work, business, leisure, education, or social activities.

Though a special sporting event will never engender the financial outcomes and physical investment of major natural resource developments in northern Canada, economic benefits of hosting can be significant in diversifying local and regional economies and important to sectors of the economy not influenced strongly by resource development, such as tourism. The economic impact of the 2007 Whitehorse Games between 2003 and 2007 was estimated to be \$94.8 million (Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games Host Society, 2008). The facilities legacy includes new developments such as the Canada Games Centre (a \$45 million venue) and the Athletes' Village, now converted to a housing facility, as well as improvements to existing sites (Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games Host Society, 2008). Much of the focus in a community is on the cost and longer-term impacts of such development, yet the non-economic, smaller-scale, and incremental benefits of events are also important to communities. These other potential benefits of hosting events provide opportunities for communities and individuals to pursue a social legacy that has implications for community development. This article explores community involvement and outcomes in an attempt to make this aspect of the legacy a little clearer.

Setting

The 2007 Canada Winter Games took place in Whitehorse, Canada over a two-week period in February–March. This quadrennial sporting event brings together youth from across Canada's ten provinces and three territories for competition in individual and team sports for males and females. The 2007 Games also celebrated the northern culture of the three territories through music, art, and traditional competitions of the Inuit and the Dene; this was the first Canada Games to be held in the territories and it was promoted as the pan-northern Games. In addition to the actual Games competitions

and cultural activities, a series of pre- and post-Games events was hosted in Whitehorse and viewed by the Yukon Territorial Government as a means of maximizing the tourism and other benefits of hosting the Games (Hinch & de la Barre, 2007).

The Whitehorse 2007 Canada Games Host Society was incorporated in 2002. This non-profit committee was formed to organize, manage, market, and stage the 2007 Canada Winter Games. The Host Society began seeking volunteers immediately upon incorporation, relying on 500 planning volunteers and 3900 volunteers overall (Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games Host Society, 2008). Volunteers were needed to support activities related to competitions, athletes, venues, transportation, media, spectators, and even volunteers themselves. Over 2600 athletes participated in twenty-two sports, with 800 coaches and managers attending (Whitehorse 2007 Canada Winter Games Host Society, 2008).

It is important to note that the population of Whitehorse at the 2006 census was 22,898 and the population of the Yukon was 30,372 (Statistics Canada, 2007). Whitehorse is the largest centre in the region and it has no sizeable neighbours for hundreds of kilometres, a situation which presents tremendous demands on the local population for an event of this size. It is a tribute to the commitment of the people of Whitehorse that they succeeded in hosting this relatively large event (Inukshuk Planning, 2007). This event and community were selected for the study because of mutual interests on the part of the researchers and the community partners: the Yukon Volunteer Bureau and the Yukon government's Community Development Branch.

Methods

Community involvement and outcomes were examined through a series of door-to-door surveys in August 2005 (167 respondents), May 2006 (205 respondents), December 2006 (102 respondents), and November 2007 (130 respondents), based on a neighbourhood surveying procedure to ensure broad representation across the community. Survey design intentions were to have 150 to 200 respondents for each time period, though it must be noted that overall numbers of respondents in the fall surveys reflected logistical constraints related to hours of daylight and poor weather conditions. These surveys provide snapshots over time and demonstrate patterns in residents' views of particular aspects of the Games and their own participation. Community involvement was assessed through support for, interest in, and knowledge of the Games and intentions to participate. Outcomes were assessed through views on changes in recreation participation, and level of

agreement with possible impact statements, based on the modified tourism impact attitude scale (see Twynam & Johnston, 2004).

Participants for the volunteer component of the project were recruited at volunteer orientation and recruiting events in fall 2006, with 122 individuals agreeing to take part in the study. Though surveying a larger number of volunteers through a random selection process using the Host Society's database would have been ideal from a research design perspective, this was not possible because of the Host Society's concerns about privacy of information. The group of 122 was surveyed in December 2006 before the event (seventy-one respondents), and in October 2007 after the event (seventy-six respondents). In order to examine volunteer involvement, motivation to volunteer for the event was assessed through the Special Event Volunteer Motivation Scale (SEVMS) developed by Farrell et al. (1998). As part of the volunteer surveys, outcomes of participation for volunteers were assessed through skill development and intentions to volunteer.

Results

A descriptive analysis was performed on the data. This section outlines frequencies and means in order to highlight characteristics and views of respondents. Community survey respondents were asked about their event involvement in terms of interest, knowledge, support, intentions to volunteer, and intentions to attend. Table 1 illustrates the change over time and notes statistically significant differences determined through either chi-square statistical analysis or Kendall's tau-b test.

The percentage of respondents who supported hosting the Canada Winter Games event decreased over the time period from 87% in August 2005 to 75% in November 2007 ($p < .001$). Level of interest results are displayed in two categories: those with moderate to high levels of interest and those with low to no interest. Level of interest remained stable over the four surveying periods, with over 75% of respondents being moderately to highly interested in the Games. Level of knowledge results are displayed in two categories: those with moderate to high levels of knowledge and those with low to no knowledge. Percentages of respondents with moderate to high levels of knowledge increased over the time period from 64% in August 2005 to 78% in November 2007 ($p < .0001$, Kendall's tau-b).

Table 1. Support, involvement, and outcomes of the Games held in Feb-Mar 2007 (Community Surveys)

Views and Aspects of the Games	Responses	Aug 05 % (n=167)	May 06 % (n=205)	Dec 06 % (n=102)	Nov 07 % (n=130)
Supported hosting Games in Whitehorse $p < .001^b$	yes	87	76	78	75
	no	4	12	19	15
	don't know	8	12	3	9
Level of interest in the Games	Very high, high, or moderate	83	78	77	79
	Low, very low, or no interest	17	22	22	21
Level of knowledge of the Games $p < .0001^a$	Very high, high, or moderate	64	73	76	78
	Low, very low, or no knowledge	36	27	24	22
Planning to / Did serve as a volunteer for the Games $p < .05^b$	yes	52	36	34	46
	no	43	56	55	54
	already doing so	4	3	11	
Will attend / Did attend Games events as a spectator $p < .001^b$	yes	62	51	52	50
	no	10	17	22	50
	don't know	28	32	26	
Effect of the Games on my winter recreation participation $p < .001^b$	no effect	86	79	87	74
	an effect	4	15	8	17
	don't know	10	6	5	9
Hosting the Games has encouraged the local population to become more active in recreation	yes	65	56	57	62
	no	24	31	30	18
	don't know	11	13	13	20

^a Kendall's tau-b

^b Chi-square test

Intention to volunteer and actual volunteering behaviour was examined after removing those that had already committed to volunteering; 56% responded positively in the first survey and 46% of respondents in the final survey reported that they had volunteered for the event ($p < .05$). Similarly, intention to attend was highest in the first survey, with 62% indicating that they intended to attend the event, while actual attendance reported by the final group was 50% ($p < .001$), with the category *did not know* removed from the first three time periods.

The vast majority of respondents at all time frames thought that hosting the event in Whitehorse would have no impact on their own winter recreation participation (table 1), but percentages indicating this did decrease over the time period from 86% in August 2005 to 74% in November 2007 ($p < .001$). Of those who thought there would be a change, almost all said the change would be an increase in participation. However, the majority of all respondents also thought that hosting the event would result in other people becoming more active.

In relation to other community outcomes, table 2 describes views of respondents about aspects of hosting the event. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of a number of statements using a Likert type scale from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Table 2 shows the percentages for each response and the means, and identifies significant differences between groups. All seven items showed significant differences when compared across the samples using one way analysis of variance and Bonferroni pairwise comparisons. These results show general agreement with positive statements and disagreement with the negative statement. The November 2007 group was significantly higher in agreement with *hosting the Games will improve/has improved opportunities for Whitehorse to host other sporting events; because of the Games, I will have/have more recreational opportunities available to me; community spirit improved because of the Games; I support/have supported the Games as having a vital role in our community* and significantly higher in disagreement with *visitors to the Games will interfere/interfered with my enjoyment of Whitehorse*. The August 2005 group was significantly higher in agreement with *I believe the Games should be/should have been actively supported in Whitehorse*.

Respondents in the volunteer surveys were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert type scale the importance of each of the twenty-eight items on the SEVMS in their decision to volunteer for the Games. Table 3 provides means for each of the motivation items for both time periods. Of the twenty-eight items, twenty-six showed no significant difference between samples and thus were stable across the two time periods when compared using one way

Table 2. Views about hosting the Games in Whitehorse (Community Surveys).
Means on a 5-point scale from (1) strongly agree to (5) strong disagree.

Item Statements	Responses	Aug 05 % (n=167)	May 06 % (n=205)	Dec 06 % (n=102)	Nov 07 % (n=130)
Community spirit has improved because of the Games F=9.83 P=.0001 ^a	Strongly agree	10%	6%	8%	22%
	Agree	30	36	43	42
	Neutral	46	40	40	30
	Disagree	11	16	9	6
	Strongly disagree	3	3	0	1
	Means	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.2
Because of the Games, I will have / have more recreational opportunities available to me F=5.69 P=.006 ^b	Strongly agree	20	19	26	42
	Agree	48	50	46	36
	Neutral	19	13	17	16
	Disagree	10	13	10	5
	Strongly disagree	3	4	2	2
	Means	2.3	2.3	2.2	1.9
I believe the Games should be / should have been actively supported in Whitehorse F=4.81 P=.002 ^c	Strongly agree	32	18	19	37
	Agree	53	55	61	38
	Neutral	13	23	17	21
	Disagree	1	3	4	3
	Strongly disagree	1	1	0	1
	Means	1.9	2.2	2.1	1.9
I support / supported the Games as having a vital role in our community F=5.61 P=.001 ^d	Strongly agree	26	12	7	31
	Agree	39	43	59	36
	Neutral	26	29	28	23
	Disagree	7	13	7	8
	Strongly disagree	2	2	0	2
	Means	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.1
The benefits of the Games will outweigh / have outweighed any negative consequences of hosting F=8.41 P=.003 ^e	Strongly agree	12	12	7	31
	Agree	36	35	43	36
	Neutral	37	30	28	22
	Disagree	12	17	21	8
	Strongly disagree	3	7	1	3
	Means	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.12
Visitors to the Games will interfere / interfered with my enjoyment of Whitehorse F=251.98 P=.0001 ^f	Strongly agree	1	6	1	5
	Agree	8	10	14	11
	Neutral	23	26	27	12
	Disagree	49	43	39	37
	Strongly disagree	19	15	19	36
	Means	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.9
Hosting the Games will improve / has improved opportunities for Whitehorse to host other sporting events F=125.1 P=.0001 ^f	Strongly agree	24	23	28	46
	Agree	61	58	63	45
	Neutral	11	16	8	8
	Disagree	4	2	1	2
	Strongly disagree	0	2	0	0
	Means	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.6

^a Bonferroni pairwise statistical significant comparisons: Aug vs. Nov, May vs. Nov; ^b Bonferroni comparisons: Aug vs. Nov; ^c Bonferroni comparisons: Aug vs. May; ^d Bonferroni comparisons: May vs. Nov; ^e Bonferroni comparisons: Aug vs. Nov, May vs. Nov, Dec vs. Nov; ^f Bonferroni comparisons: all time periods

Table 3. Motivations for volunteering for the Feb-March 2007 Canada Winter Games: Means on a 5-point scale from not at all important (1) to extremely important (5)

Motivation Item Statement	Dec 06 (n=71)	Nov 07 (n=76)
it was a chance of a lifetime	2.6	3.0
my skills were needed	3.0	3.1
I wanted to interact with others	2.0	3.0
I have more free time than I used to have	2.0	1.9
I wanted to gain some practical experience	2.0	2.1
I wanted to broaden my horizons	2.4	2.3
being a volunteer at this Winter Games is considered prestigious	1.4	1.6
volunteering at this Winter Games makes me feel better about myself	2.3	2.3
most people in my community volunteer	1.9	2.5 ^a
volunteering creates a better society	3.9	4.0
I am expected to volunteer	2.1	2.0
I wanted to develop relationships with others	2.6	2.4
I wanted to work with different people	2.9	2.8
I wanted to do something worthwhile	3.6	3.6
I wanted to put something back into the community	3.8	4.0
a relative or friend is involved in the Canada Games	1.8	1.8
I have past experience providing similar services	2.5	2.8
I wanted to vary my regular activities	2.2	2.1
I wanted to continue a family tradition of volunteering	1.8	1.8
I could obtain an educational experience	1.7	1.6
I am involved in a sport represented	1.9	1.8
I wanted to help make the event a success	3.9	4.0
I wanted an opportunity to meet the athletes and be involved in the activities	2.3	2.4
if I did not volunteer, there would be no one to carry out this volunteer work	2.4	2.1
I did not have anything else to do with my time	1.1	1.2
I wanted to help out in any capacity	3.0	3.2
I wanted to feel part of this community	3.9	3.4
my friends/family were also volunteering	1.9	2.4 ^b

^ap < .001 ^bp < .05

analysis of variance. Two items showed significant differences ($p < .05$): *most people in my community volunteer* and *my friends/family were also volunteering*.

The five highest-ranking reasons were the same for both 2006 and 2007. These are: *volunteering creates a better society*; *I wanted to help make the event a success*; *I wanted to put something back in the community*; *I wanted to do something worthwhile*; and, *I wanted to feel part of this community*. The five lowest ranking reasons in terms of importance for the 2006 group were *I had nothing else to do with my time*; *being a volunteer at this Winter Games is considered prestigious*; *I could obtain an educational experience*; *I wanted to continue a family tradition of volunteering*; and, *a relative or friend is involved in the Canada Games*. For the group in 2007, the item *I wanted to continue a family tradition of volunteering* did not appear in the lowest five, but the item *I am involved in a sport represented* did appear in the lowest five.

Table 4 describes the skills obtained through previous volunteering experience for the 2006 respondents and the Games volunteer experience for the 2007 respondents. The three areas with the highest reported skill development related to volunteering were communication, interpersonal, and organizational or managerial skills. For the 2007 respondents, these were also the highest categories of skills obtained through Games volunteering but the order was interpersonal, organizational or managerial, and communication skills.

When asked how the experience of volunteering with the 2007 Canada Winter Games would affect the likelihood of volunteering for other special events in the future, an increase was estimated by around 40% of respondents in both 2006 (40%) and 2007 (45%). In both groups, 51% anticipated no change in the likelihood of volunteering. In 2006, 6% reported a decrease in the likelihood as the outcome, while in the 2007 group, 1% did. Respondents who said they did not know equalled 14% in 2006 and 3% in 2007.

Discussion

Community involvement in the Canada Winter Games relates to expectations and experiences over time: support throughout this time period was high as were intentions to participate and actual participation through attendance as a spectator or through volunteering. This pattern of changing levels of support is similar to other studies on community reactions to special events (Mihalik & Simonetta, 1999; Soutar & McLeod, 1993; Waitt, 2003), though it is important to note that surveys immediately around the time of the event tend to show an increase in support that does not necessarily follow through at later surveys (Twynam & Johnston, 2004). Initial enthusiasm in this case

did decline over the time period. The level of support in this study appears to be linked to the pattern of increasing knowledge and decreasing intentions to attend; the former could be a moderating influence on both support and intention to attend.

Table 4. Skills gained from previous volunteering (Dec 2006 volunteer survey) and Canada Games volunteering (Nov 2007 volunteer survey)

Skills Gained from Volunteering (previous or CWG)	Dec 06 % From previous volunteering (n=71)	Nov 07 % From CWG volunteering (n=76)
Skills that you can apply directly to your job (or business)	54.5	24
Fundraising skills	54	4
Technical skills	54	28
Organizational skills or managerial skills	73	45
Increased knowledge	54	20
Communication skills	79	32
Interpersonal skills	78	49

Expectations of a positive impact on recreation participation resulting from hosting the Games were also high, though individuals did not necessarily think this applied to themselves. This suggests, as Kariel (1991) found, that there is some sport development potential associated with events. As in other studies (e.g., Twynam & Johnston, 2004; Waitt, 2003), assessments of the Games' impact on other community outcomes were also positive, with increases over the time period. This suggests that initial expectations for positive impacts in these areas were exceeded as time progressed. Perhaps as experience with and knowledge of the Games increased, neutrality in these assessments was replaced by more positive views. These measures suggest that community engagement in the event was generally high and positive. The decline in support over time is not mirrored by a decline in positive assessments, suggesting that respondents viewed the event as having a beneficial effect on the community, perhaps echoing the findings of Waitt (2003) that community members recognized some negative aspects of hosting an event, but retained positive assessments.

This general assessment from community members ties in with the motivations expressed by volunteers (see table 3); these motivations combine both the broader benefits of participating in community events (e.g., *volunteering creates a better society*) and the personal benefits (e.g., *I wanted to feel part of this community*). But the highest ranked reason—*I wanted to help make the event a success*—clearly reflects the particular nature of this volunteering experience. In combination, the five top-ranking motivations present a picture of community engagement with the event through volunteering that suggests a high degree of connection and support for the event as a meaningful community endeavour. It should not be surprising that these same motivations rank highly in other special event studies given that successful events rely on engaging volunteers with the mission of the event, and with high levels of community buy-in (Farrell et al., 1998; Grammatikopoulos et al., 2006; Twynam et al., 2002).

The 2007 Winter Games contributed to the development of the volunteer pool in Whitehorse. Volunteers reported skill development in a variety of areas that should be seen as building on and complementing existing skills obtained through previous volunteering, alongside the development of new skills and enhancement for some members of the group. In addition to this formal capacity building, informal capacity building is also an effect of volunteering, whether for events or other community activities. This study did not explore the informal capacity building that develops through meeting new people, trying new activities, learning about others, and making connections in the community; however, in determining social impacts of events that have relevance for the social economy, this area, too, needs exploration. Both formal and informal capacity building are outcomes with relevance. The effect of Games volunteering on intentions to volunteer for future events also suggests a positive outcome, with about 40 percent of both groups stating that the experience would increase their likelihood of volunteering again, and only a small percentage indicating a decrease was likely to result. Seen in conjunction with the acquisition of skills and capacity, this outcome reiterates the importance of events in the development of the volunteer pool for Whitehorse. These individuals are available to assist at future events and to help recreation organizations, to which they belong, in everyday volunteer activities using their new and enhanced skills.

The results on community and volunteer involvement and outcomes illustrate some of the connections between special events and the social economy. These events provide an opportunity for people to work together in support of the event, not only to make it a success and to contribute to the community, but also to contribute to wider community goals. Such

goals cannot normally be met through government or private sector alone, but rather they require a third sector approach that relies on the support of the community in general terms and specifically through volunteering. Volunteer motivations signal this commitment through this particular subgroup. These kinds of events cannot happen without volunteers, for whom community benefits are an important component of their motivations. The skilled and unskilled labour pool remains available for other activities, both for the community and the individual, and so volunteers continue to develop themselves through event experiences and their other volunteering. What remains unclear is how the size of Whitehorse contributes to volunteer commitment and participation. The requirement of this special event for nearly 20 percent of the adult population of the city to participate meant that some of the volunteer commitment was met by individuals who were paid to “volunteer” during the working week by their employers. This is not typical for event volunteering, and probably not for volunteering in Whitehorse, yet reflects the needs of this relatively large-scale event. This is a particular outcome of the partnership between the territorial government and the non-profit organization that organized the Games, that reiterates the need to consider the context of the social economy when exploring its expression in the North.

Limitations

There are several limitations that must be noted in relation to this study. Findings presented here are part of a larger study that explored the community’s social outcomes of hosting the event. This article has focused on the components of that research with relevance for the social economy. These results should not be seen as representing the full extent of the interaction of the social economy and a special event, but rather as an exploration of some of the connections between the two.

One of the limitations of the research reflects logistical aspects of data collection. The privacy concerns of the host society precluded a random sample of volunteers; purposive sampling was necessary and this means that the results might not represent the whole group of volunteers. Community sampling in the fall of 2006 was hindered by unusually cold weather that prevented research assistants from meeting the door-to-door surveying targets. This resulted in the lowest number of respondents for the four time frames (102). Further, findings are limited by the context of the study and they reflect the views and experiences of community members and volunteers at particular time frames in a particular northern community. Findings might

relate to tasks, situations, and events in relation to the demands or outcomes of the Games that were temporary in nature rather than ongoing.

The context, though, is one of the important pieces in the social economy puzzle as it is the foundation for the ways in which social economy organizations operate and succeed. The community of Whitehorse, with a volunteer commitment that is higher than the national average, a strong volunteering presence in sport and recreation organizations (Statistics Canada 2005, 2006), and a history of hosting special sporting events, clearly has a voluntary sector that contributes to this foundation.

Implications and Future Research

This is an exploratory study, in an area with considerable potential for further work, that outlines how special events function as part of the social economy. Clearly, the non-profit nature of most event management organizations provides some direction for further work, as does the heavy reliance on volunteer labour. But in order to understand the place of special events in the social economy, it will be important to examine how community goals related to recreation, health and fitness, tourism and economic diversification, and community development are advanced (or hindered) through a special event. It is also necessary to examine community engagement through support, interest, attendance, and participation as volunteers. This engagement changes over time and should be seen as a reflection of how connected residents feel to the goals of the event and the possible consequences for the community in general, and for particular sub-groups.

Given the reliance on volunteers to make these events happen, it is worth exploring how volunteers view their participation in relation to event and community goals. Is there congruency between what volunteers, organizers, and communities are hoping to achieve? Are there social economy implications of paid volunteering that can be assessed? Research is needed to examine whether special events are simply places where people gain skills that are useful to them as individuals or whether they might also be avenues for people to become part of networks and have access to resources with implications for the development and functioning of the social economy. Though it is important to consider the complex nature of volunteering motivations and outcomes in respect to social capital creation and use (Arai, 2000), Kay (2006) suggests that an increased awareness of the processes of social capital development has the potential to improve our understanding of the social economy.

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