TITLE PAGE

Title: Many-to-Many Exchange Without Money: Why People Share Their Resources

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Abstract:

This paper extends our knowledge of the growing movement of collaborative consumption, or people sharing with others, in a collective shift away from the outright purchase of things. The focus of the study is on the sharing of land, one of our most widely held and debt-laden assets, for food production, a fundamental human need that has not been the topic of other collaborative consumption research. The research presents a netnographic study of the motivations to participate in Landshare, a non-profit scheme operating in the UK, Canada, and Australia, which “connects growers to people with land to share”. The study finds there are significant social belonging and other benefits stemming from collaborative consumption and, in the case of Landshare, a new finding not previously reported in consumer behaviour research, of physical and mental health benefits. This expands the study of exchange as a consumer-to-consumer phenomenon, where no money changes hands.

Keywords: netnography; collaboration; community; sharing; marketing exchange; food production.

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Introduction

Collaborative consumption, or people sharing goods and services with other people, is an ancient and universal human behaviour (Belk 2010). With the advent of the internet, however, “the sharing economy” has reached critical mass. Sharing and renting, instead of buying and owning, is established across industry sectors from cars, bikes, tools, fashion, and accommodation, to workspaces, money, and land.¹ The consumer-to-consumer rental market alone is predicted to become a \$US26 billion sector according to Rachel Botsman (*The Economist*, March 9, 2013), who launched collaborative consumption as a recognisable movement through her 2010 book.

The rise of the sharing economy will have significant impact on both consumption and production, and expand how we view the notion of exchange beyond the standard business-to-consumer dyad. Collaborative platforms allow everyone who owns an asset to become a micro-entrepreneur (Surowiecki 2013), and “Just as YouTube did with TV and the blogosphere did to mainstream media, the share economy blows up the industrial model of companies owning and people consuming, and allows everyone to be both consumer and producer” (Geron 2013). Not just producers will be affected by lost sales, but the whole supply chain, and government tax revenues too will decline (Plouffe 2008).

The shift towards renting rather than buying is explained partly by the downturn of economic fortune across the globe and, indeed, the arrival of many collaborative schemes coincided with the onset of the global financial crisis. Renting is more affordable than buying, and sharing schemes offer, in addition,

the exchange mechanism to “monetise” our underused assets. In Australia for example, there were an estimated \$9.1 trillion of assets, at June 2014, of which \$5.6 trillion were tangibles such as housing and land, cars, tools, and other durables. On the other side of the ledger, household debt totalled more than \$1.7 trillion, of which more than 76 percent was money owed on housing and land (Ruthven and McArthur 2013). For the entrepreneurs behind for-profit schemes such as Airbnb, Uber, or peer-peer lending service Zopa, sharing offers a low-cost business model that harnesses other people’s idle assets. Sunk capital, risk, and heavy overheads are replaced by the marginal costs of brokering rentals.

Economic explanations for the growth of sharing behaviour are inadequate, however, to explain the success of platforms where no money changes hands, for example such not-for-profit communities as Couchsurfing, Wikipedia, Landshare, Freecycle, open source software Linux, Firefox, and Android, and the “Really Really Free Markets” movement. Such schemes explicitly eschew commercialism and economic exchange, in line with ideals that are as yet not well understood.

Although sharing, swapping, and buying from consumers (rather than producers) has been a growing movement since the 2003 formation of Freecycle, and craigslist spreading abroad around the same time, “the state of knowledge and research on the topic remains scarce” (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012, 894). One champion of the need to study sharing behaviour is Belk, who argues (2010, 716): “Because contemporary consumer behavior has been characterized as being tied to marketplace exchange, the possibility of non-exchange-based sharing as a common, if not dominant, mode of consumption, challenges existing thought in

the field... Despite its pervasiveness, the ubiquitous consumer behavior of sharing remains not only a theoretical terra incognita, but a nearly invisible and unmentioned topic in the consumer behaviour literature.” Collaboration is “the life-giving element” in open source software development, in which the contributions of users lead to better products. Companies “can reap Schumpeterian (innovation) rents that stem not from their employees, a traditional source of innovation, but from their users” (Levine and Prietula 2013, 4). Understanding motivations to share is also essential for user-generated sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, and many others, which exist only and entirely because of users’ contributions.

Problems “too immense” for one organisation become solvable through collaboration, “for instance, thousands of volunteers each contributing just a fraction of a solution, have been discovering and solving problems too immense for traditional organizations. Contributors classify celestial objects in Galaxy Zoo, decipher planetary images in the Mars Public Mapping Project and labor over terrestrial maps... Such open collaborations have drawn scholarly interest because of their social and economic impact. However, what affects their performance – even why they are viable – remains a puzzle” Levine and Prietula (2013, 2).

Finally, sharing behaviour deserves attention because it makes all aspects of consumption – the acquisition, the use, and the disposal of a product – more sustainable (Luchs et al. 2011, de Burgh-Woodman and King 2013). The two categories responsible for the largest environmental impact are transport and food production (Tukker et al. 2006), and while there are several studies on

transport-sharing (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012, Lamberton and Rose 2012), food production has been neglected in the field of marketing. This research aims to begin to fill that gap with a study centred on Landshare, a scheme that connects “growers to people with land to share”. Landshare launched in the UK in 2009, followed by Australia in January 2011, and later Canada. The scheme was chosen because Landshare is unmediated and non-profit, which eliminates the profit motive, and allows observation of unfettered peer-peer exchange. Moreover, food is a fundamental human need and “one of the most culturally significant categories of consumption” (Schneider and Davis 2010, 33). While a corpus of literature exists on the preparation and consumption of meals, and the cultural “food-lives” of women (for example, Cronin et al. 2014, McDonagh and Prothero 2005, Schneider and Davis 2010), this study concerns the opposite end of the system: the growing of agriculture, raw items that are as yet unadorned by cultural or gender overlays. In addition, food production has not been the subject of other research in the field of collaborative consumption. A study by Moraes et al. (2010) examined sustainable communities in the UK, but their purpose was to examine the existence, or otherwise, of anti-marketing motives for participating in communal living.

Literature Review

Possibly the first use of the term “collaborative consumption” is found in the 1978 paper by Felson and Spaeth, though their definition has little in common with definitions post-internet: “for example, drinking beer with friends, eating meals with relatives, driving to visit someone or using a washing machine for

family laundry are acts of collaborative consumption” (Felson and Spaeth 1978, 614). Definitions that have emerged since the advent of the internet centre on access instead of ownership. Botsman (2013) defines collaborative consumption as “An economic model based on sharing, swapping, trading, or renting products and services, enabling access over ownership”. Similarly, Lamberton and Rose (2012, 109) refer to “systems that provide customers with the opportunity to enjoy product benefits without ownership.”

The classifications of collaborative consumption, however, are not commonly agreed in the literature. This may be partly explained by its newness, but also because collaborative platforms cover a diverse array of products and services that operate with or without commercial mediators, and vary in their expectations of reciprocity. Some systems insist on one-way non-obligatory traffic including Freecycle, open source software, and the “Really Really Free Markets” movement. Others schemes operate on a reciprocal basis, such as the Clothing Exchange, which arranges clothes swapping events. These differences - reciprocity, profit or not, and type of good - make an agreed nomenclature difficult.

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) suggest a typology of six variables to distinguish between “the range of access-based consumptionscapes”, namely, temporality, anonymity, market mediation, consumer involvement, the type of accessed object, and political consumerism. Lamberton and Rose (2012, 110), in contrast, use a classification framework derived from the public goods literature, which distinguishes between sharing schemes based on their rivalry and

exclusivity. Rivalry is defined as “the degree to which use of the product by one consumer subtracts from the availability of the product to other consumers”, for example, the use of bike and car shares reduces their availability for others. In the service side of the collaborative economy, examples of rivalry include micro-labour employment sites such as TaskRabbit, or Airtasker in Australia, where one-off chores like fetching the shopping, or assembling IKEA furniture are outsourced to registered “runners”. The “exclusivity” variable in Lamberton and Rose’s framework refers to the “degree to which access to the product can be controlled and restricted to a group of consumers according to some criteria.” Examples include “crowd funding” sites such as Pozible, or the peer-peer lending platform Zopa, where recipients for funds are screened.

Why people participate in sharing

The majority of published work on collaborative consumption is based on specific schemes, including ZipCar (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012), Couchsurfing (Rosen et al. 2011), Flickr (Nov et al. 2010), Freecycle (Nelson et al. 2007), open source software (Roberts et al. 2006), and the defunct music site, Kazaa (Plouffe 2008). Motivations for participation appear to vary by scheme, and also when a commercial mediator governs the scheme. For example, in their study of the USA-based “Really Really Free Markets” movement, in which people transact directly with each other for no commercial gain, Albinsson and Perera (2012) found an array of motives including anti-capitalism, sustainability, economic necessity, development of community, and caring about others. In contrast, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012, 891, 894) found in their study of for-profit ZipCar, a system of

“negative reciprocity (with) no sense of mutual responsibility towards others”, which the authors suggest is because ZipCar adopts a “big-brother” approach to regulate the scheme, and the effect of this is “a deterrence of brand community”. Coercive governance is a “tragedy of the commons” approach (Hardin 1968), that we need policing, rather than laissez-faire, or common goods will come to ruin.

The type of product category also appears relevant in explaining motivations (Williams and Windebank 2005). Novelty and variety are motivations that drive sharing behaviour in categories “that diminish in appeal after usage”, for example books, DVDs, and toys (Botsman and Rogers 2010, 148; Ozanne and Ozanne 2009). Novelty and an “authentic” experience have also been found to be key appeals for accommodation sites such as Airbnb (Yannopoulou et al. 2013). Finally, motivations for participation appear to change with a member’s length of tenure in a scheme. For example, Roberts et al. (2006) found that the motivations of open source software developers changed over time, and according to feedback on their performance. This short review of the multi-faceted nature of sharing behaviour suggests the unfeasibility of a single typology for collaborative consumption, given that variables and motivations to participate are likely to be case-dependent.

Data and methodology

Many of the existing studies of collaborative consumption use a survey methodology and categorise assumed reasons for participation using the binary of either extrinsic or intrinsic motivations (Nelson et al. 2007; Nov et al. 2010; Oreg and Nov 2008; Roberts et al. 2006; Rosen et al. 2011). The methodology adopted

for this study, however, takes a qualitative approach to exploring motivations to join and contribute to Landshare, and thus avoids the assignation and reduction of motives. The study adopts an ethnographic approach, which has been adapted to online marketing research by Kozinets as “netnography”. Netnography is analysis of internet content, and has the benefits of being “faster, simpler and less expensive than traditional ethnography and more naturalistic and unobtrusive than focus groups or interviews” (Kozinets 2002, 61). This methodology is appropriate for a study on sharing because it draws on the statements of members who wanted to publicly share their thoughts, in a community that exists entirely because of the act of sharing. It also captures data from the total population of bloggers, who were dispersed over large and otherwise unreachable distances, from inner-city community gardening groups in Sydney’s Woolloomooloo, to rural groups in Tamworth, and far-flung outposts in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

The data collection process comprised reading and downloading blogs, authored mainly by growers (actual and hopefuls), and the offers of land by owners, which had been posted to the Landshare Australia website. At the time of writing, the Australian website had 2,496 members as shown in the screenshot in Figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Landshare members use pseudonyms for privacy protection, as recommended by the site at the time of joining, and furthermore, all informant identifiers have been removed in the body of this research. I fully disclosed my research intentions

by posting a profile and blog, in which I assured anonymity and invited contact by email. My pseudonym, “Researcher”, was easily unmasked by the inclusion of my email address, which includes my name and university. The terms and conditions of use of the Landshare website contain no exclusions on the right to reproduce content for academic or commercial use, and instead advise: “If you post anything, remember anyone and everyone will be able to see it.” In addition, a near-final draft of this article was emailed to Landshare Australia and comments from their side were invited. Co-founder, Phil Dudman, responded and wanted to add the following:

A major factor in the future of our food security depends on individuals and local communities taking greater responsibility for food production. To do that, people need access to land. Landshare Australia is helping to make this possible by providing an online facility that allows those who want to grow food to connect with others who have land they are willing to share. Phil Dudman, Co-founder Landshare Australia.

The data was collected during the period October 2013 to June 2014, and the blogs covered a time span of more than three years from the first post in January 2011, when the Australian site came online, to the most recent (at the time of writing) in June 2014. Altogether, 133 blog posts were reviewed, of which five were discounted, since two were duplicate entries, and three were off the topic (which implies the site is not moderated). Along with the 128 remaining blogs, 75 comments posted by other members on these blogs were also collected, yielding 203 total postings. These between-member conversations offered a form of triangulation in validating the interpretation of blog content. Some 80 of the 128 blogs had no posted comments, but since members can email bloggers

directly, it is impossible to know if any private communication ensued. The 128 blogs were produced by 66 unique bloggers. Bloggers included self-nominated beginners and more seasoned hands who could be identified by the content and frequency of their postings, such as “Milkwoodkirsten”, a heavy user and evangelist, who described herself as “an artist, writer and organiser who is passionate about good permaculture design, pattern literacy, local food and seed sovereignty.” She and several other bloggers also included links to their own websites.

The blogs ranged in length from a few paragraphs to long educational “how-to” narratives and tales of triumphant makeovers of unruly land plots. Many of the longer blogs included photographs, and these were also analysed as a data source, but are not reproduced in this study because of copyright. Photos showed males and females in roughly equal numbers, aged (apparently) from early 20s to middle age, with a range of ethnicities apparent (and also suggested in such blogger names as Asianveg). Pre-school-aged children were also commonly featured in photos. Observations about the blogs and photos were recorded at the time of data collection and, in addition, four members made direct contact to share their stories, and these data sources were also included in the analysis.

In general, the bloggers were articulate, and their language was often emotionally charged with such words as “passion”, “excitement”, and “exuberance” in expressing views that were about more than just gardening. Their concerns included genetically modified produce, the giant agribusiness Monsanto’s domination of seed stock, and food kilometres, the notion that food should be

sourced from within a local radius to reduce the carbon footprint of distribution. A visual representation, or “Concept Cloud”, of the Landshare blog data is provided in Figure 2. The image shows a random arrangement of the keywords in the collected data, with the size of font denoting the frequency of those words, grouped into themes by colour.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Analysis by software provides a visual depiction of the recurrence of words, but it cannot explain context, meaning, or nuances. Thus, the blog data was coded manually, and the process of analysis followed the hermeneutic method, which places significance on the interpretation of the meanings of texts and the context in which they were generated, unlike the micro-textual focus in content analysis with its numerical measures of words and phrases. The hermeneutic method begins by understanding individual posts in their own right, and as each blog was read, rough notes were also made. The next stage of hermeneutics requires the researcher to develop a basic understanding of the whole body of data. This entails a “continuous back-and-forth process between the parts and the whole” (Forster 1994, 150), while attempting to search for themes within individual postings and, more broadly, within clusters of postings. This required an immersion in the data, because of the volume (approximately 17,000 words), and because many blogs contained several potentially emergent themes. The findings of this hermeneutic approach are presented in the next section.

Findings

The bloggers documented a range of unique individual and also shared experiences, and reasons for participating in Landshare that evidenced social, political, and economic motifs. The key reasons why people participate, in descending order of prevalence, included social connection and belonging; political drivers of accountability and ethics; health benefits including mental wellbeing; adventure and self-development; and financial savings. These five themes are explored in the next section. Each individual post is signified by the use of the symbol “◇”, and quotes are verbatim.

Community

The most common motivation for participation in Landshare was a need for connection and belonging to a community. This need embraced sharing with, helping, and educating others, akin to the “social networking practices” identified in commercial brand communities by Schau et al. (2009). Networking behaviours reinforce social bonds through welcoming and encouraging others, and emphasising the homogeneity of the community, as depicted in this post:

◇Last Monday we arrived at a soggy sports field early in the morning. Would anyone else show up on such an unfriendly, rainy public holiday in winter? Unlikely. But in our heart of hearts, we hoped they would. And you know what? They did. Over 40 fabulous folks turned up to dig, plant, shovel, learn, and grow some community.

Social connection also manifested in the sharing of expertise, which was reflected in many blog headlines beginning “How to”, and open offers of help and advice, as typified in the following:

◊ Our gatherings are not large or formal but a chance to come together and share our knowledge, resources, insight and seek solutions to garden problems. Our common ground is the locality in which we live which includes similarities in soil, climate and community. We are building links in our community and forming friendships. Whether it's finding a neighbour who may need help in the garden or a local primary school with a kitchen garden that would love some extra hands to help.

◊ Hi Jono, Good luck with your idea to share produce. We have been doing this really successfully... for the past year or so. It has really caught on... and we now have 100 members though only about 30 on average turn up for our monthly produce swap. Good luck - it is a really great thing to do and really builds a sense of community.

This correspondent, a more senior member than (newcomer) "Jono", encourages Jono but also tags the sharing of produce as normative, akin to the "rites of passage" or "milestones" identified in commercial brand communities (Schau et al. 2009).

The involvement of families and children as part of the community was evident, as shown in many photos, and captured in this quote:

◊ As one of the participants said while watching her young son wash the soil from the tubers with a hose, "it's good to have somewhere with activities you can bring children to."

This embodies the idea expressed by some commentators that, in an era where social capital has shrivelled away (Sacks 2011), and the neighbourhood is deemed no longer safe for kids to play outside, collaboration schemes are propelled by a need to feel re-connected. Modelling behaviour for children was also part of this mix, as shown in later blogs.

Politics

The politics of production and consumption was the next most common reason for joining, as expressed in the comments of one new member:

◊ I have just signed onto Landshare for the purpose of finding land - through legitimate channels - to extend my gardening practices, which I do not have enough space for, and which are political acts - or at least micropolitical... I subscribe to idea that “degrowth” of capitalist systems of production and consumption is necessary. Simply sharing and finding free resources, and avoiding money, from upcycling to bin-diving, are all small but insurrectionary. My friends and I agree that we need to at least interrupt capitalist practices.

While politics was the expressed motivation of this segment, it often manifested as a countervailing “us versus them” resistance, which again echoed a sense of community in clubbing together with other anti-capitalists. This ideological slant was also glimpsed in blogger names such as “Beawarrior”. For these bloggers, membership was a means of expressing their identity, of publicly displaying who they were and how they would like to be seen, through pronouncements of resistance to corporate co-optation (Moraes et al. 2010). They embodied the notion identified by Fournier (1998), that “we are what we reject”.

◊ There is something performative about engaging in things such as network community gardening. It is a much more conscious act than just being reactionary to state policy and calling for its reform. The buyer-seller relationship, although convenient, has been community-corrosive and value-invasive... Reversing this begins with withdrawing (over times, at least) from capitalist production/consumption, and re/engaging with the gift and disengaging with the commodity.

Expressing self-identity through what we reject carries a moral quality, or even self-actualisation (Atkinson 2014). It is the flipside, however, of Thorstein Veblen's "conspicuous consumption" and "an extension of our culture's other dominant marketing idea – conspicuous authenticity" (Pritchard 2014). Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012, 893, 890) also point to the "symbolic capital" of how sharing is used to establish one's "identity as a smart consumer" and has "emerged as a cool, trendy, hip, green, consumption alternative to ownership". Pritchard (2014) argues, however, that conspicuous rejection is a "a kind of fake authenticity that solves a cognitive dissonance problem for status-seeking consumers – their pseudo anti-consumerism hipster beliefs clash with their regular consumerist behaviours, so using (a sharing scheme) allows them to tell themselves a story about authentic living with a do-gooder spin".

There were two types of political bloggers, however: the "conspicuous rejecters", and others who were far less strident. These bloggers wrote with an almost intimate tone, and were more concerned about their own impact on the planet, and personal and private accountability, as typified by this quote:

◇ Day 1: ... So today I joined my family to this Landshare connection site. I don't know what to expect, at the very least I guess it is a place I can be a little more accountable for our little piece of the world.

This distinction between anti-consumers supports the private-individual versus collectivist differences identified by Kozinets et al. (2010), Cherrier (2009), and Podkalicka and Potts (2014, 8), "with the former oriented towards immediate family and friends and the latter towards society and wider public good".

Health

The theme of Health ranked third in prominence behind Community and Politics, although health benefits could be assumed a given or implied motivator for growing your own food. Certainly, there were many mentions of fresh, tastier, nutritional, and safe produce, including the comments about food security by Landshare Australia co-founder Phil Dudman. The references to physical health were, however, often incidental to other expressed motives, such as this post seeking to increase the buying power of their group:

◊ Helping others to eat healthy: Our fresh food buying group is keen to have more families join in. Then we can increase the market for our favourite ethical farmers, share this great nutritious food with more people in the community and increase the produce variety in our boxes.

More notably, health as a motivator was not restricted to physical wellbeing. The evidence that gardening lifts the mood and has positive outcomes on mental affect was plentiful, as expressed by this joyful writer:

◊ I'm so pretty and witty and wise ...: And so the song goes... I sometimes find the exuberance of this song is similar to growing vegetables. Just one more lettuce seedling, one more cucumber, oh and look all these little tomatoes that have popped up...

More deliberate efforts to realise the psychological health benefits of growing food are shown in the quotes below, the first one by a mother writing about its therapeutic potential for her special needs son:

◊ I am determined to involve my (son), an Aspergers sufferer with gross food neophobia, in as many food orientated activities in a process of desensitising, familiarising and building interest and hopefully expand his repertoire of

acceptable foods. We have had inroads into the newly allowed parsley - an event only the parent of a similar child will know the victory therein.

In the Sydney CBD suburb of Woolloomooloo, where around one third of the city's homeless live, another example of the healing benefits of gardening can be found in a garden space allocated specifically for mental health purposes, as advised in this announcement:

◊ A new community garden is to be established in the Bourke Street, Woolloomooloo, open space... Expressions of interest in using the facility by individuals and social agencies such as those engaged in horticultural therapy are invited.

The benefits of horticultural therapy, and its research-worthiness, have been addressed only in recent years (for example, Wakefield et al. 2007; Abraham et al. 2010). While government support is funnelled mainly to special needs groups, the demand for community gardens is strong from the general community, as this post makes clear:

◊ I live in a unit with a balcony that is enclosed and south facing so really not any good for growing anything! Both my partner and I would love to have a garden but there is no way that we could live where we want to live in Sydney and afford a house with a garden plot... Our local council has been very slow to embrace the concept of community gardens. I live in Homebush/Strathfield area. Apparently the local community garden, which is due to open next week, is hugely over-subscribed. 92 people expressed interest in working in the garden. This plot of land is smaller than the majority of private gardens in the area.

Adventure

Many newcomers to Landshare wrote about the lure of Adventure, and most of these new members were moving home from city apartments where gardening space was limited or non-existent, to sea-change or tree-change locations and lifestyles. The word Adventure has been used to aggregate this group, since it was the idea most often expressed by these writers (with blogger names such as “Eitchyfeet”). Like the “conspicuous rejecters” segment, personal identity was important to these adventure seekers, although it manifested as the urge for personal transformation and the formation of new identities, motivations identified also by Moraes et al. (2010).

◇ Here in Sydney we have been indulging as much as possible under renting restrictions, appalling soil conditions, rampant snail stampedes and variant weather, to grow our herbs, veg and strawberries, but this was never enough... Ahhh I do hate the yuppy term 'Sea Change' but I am so looking forward to our move out of the Sydney burbs, to a more relaxing, cleaner environment. The growing and producing of our own produce is going to be so motivating to our new life. ooooh I cannot wait :P.

For these newcomers, the drive to redefine their identity could be expected to ebb as they settled into their new lives, consistent with other research that found motivations change over time (Roberts et al. 2006). For more seasoned members, the goal of “transformation” was also apparent, though acknowledged to be a much longer-term proposition, and an unfolding “journey” directed towards transformation of a land plot:

◇ Just wanted to share my experiences about my journey sharing land. We were given the opportunity to do something with a block of land that could be considered "lifestyle acerage" on the Gold Coast... the country was

prone to being steep and being infested with lantana and the likes. I was introduced to my hosts by my father who did a lot of the slashing and cleaning up, he suggested that they speak to me, being a permaculture designer, for some ideas about what to do with country that 'gets away' on you... The meeting was fruitful, as my hosts were very open, smart and interested in new ideas and a consultation and implementation of a job was worked out - this turned out to be putting a food forest in... We ended up discussing at length many times, what the alternatives for using this type of land could be, and with an old mango orchid at the top of the block it proved too tempting and my suggestion of a landshare arrangement was received with enthusiastic nods!... Now we are nearly two years into the project, the food forest is plugging along slowly but surely...

This writer also points to the needs of land owners to renovate and improve their environment, and to swap access to their land in return for the resources of knowledge, patience, and labour of a voluntary workforce. This feeds into the final theme.

Financial

Finally and interestingly, the financial benefits of growing your own food, ranked last in prominence as a motivator for joining Landshare, which could imply that there are little or no savings to be made. One grower, writing about the arrangements used in local vegetable swaps, discussed how a system of honour governs the exchange of produce, and how monetary return had no importance:

◊ We work on a really simple basis - people just plonk down their produce with other like produce (eg pumpkins with other pumpkins) and then they are left to take whatever they think is a fair exchange. There is no direct bartering or policing of people and generally people seem to take less than they bring. Any leftover produce at the end of the morning is either "sold" by donation or given directly to the local food bank or Men's kitchen with any money raised.

Avoiding the mortgage debt incurred by buying land, however, was more pronounced, as captured in this post by a would-be grower:

◊ Debt-free farming for beginners: We want to figure out how to do mortgage-free regenerative farming, bit by bit, as our means allow. Can it be done? We hope so... We live in a culture that promotes debt and lines of credit, plus once you get into the serious side of industrial agriculture, unless you are wealthy you will be in debt in order to function. We dearly wanted to avoid getting into debt with a bank if we could possibly, possibly help it.

The motivations of land owners seemed largely utilitarian; they sought the benefits of access to “free” labour, know-how, and time. Owners appeared to fall into two demographic groups: busy young professionals, and a much larger segment of self-nominated grandparents, retirees, and others who had acquired physical limitations, such as the “ex-nurse with a back/disc problem so need to limit doing too much hoeing, mulching & bending tasks and would love some company & help”. A typical sample of offers follows:

◊ In my late 50's, the children have all moved on and am finding it difficult to physically manage my 12 acre property alone.

◊ I am a 66 year old recently widowed. My wife loved her vegie garden but I do not share that passion although I was happy to do the heavy work to maintain it. I would very much like someone who knows what they are doing to keep it going.

◊ I'm a young busy professional that does like to grow but lacks the skills & experience.

In the main, owners were described by growers as “generous”, which may lend support to the assertion that sharing our property “helps resolve some sort of cognitive dissonance around leisure and privilege” (Pritchard 2014). Certainly

one owner described himself as “a guilty landowner who has the most amazing plot of land to share”, and another professed “we are parents and grandparents and have always wanted to share this land in some way... We are blessed and feel the responsibility to share our good fortune”. Most land owners sought barter arrangements from growers, as shown in the quote below:

◊ Am looking for a workable agreement from your financial return from the produce but am more than flexible in bartering for other labour I may require.

◊ Who is Ready to GROW \$ from Land: Need no money, but must (be) willing to work off your slice of land.

In sum, land owners’ motives for participation in the Landshare scheme, while not directly nor entirely financial in nature, were mainly centred on rational benefits, in contrast with the social, political and health rationales of growers.

Discussion and Contributions

This paper expands the bounds of research on marketing exchange beyond its standard focus on the marketplace of B2C commercial dyads, to examine a community of C2C exchanges where no money changes hands. It extends the nascent field of sharing research, and examines the boundaries of ownership, and post-acquisition use behaviour. This study also contributes to the discourse on consumption research on food beyond its typical application to packaged goods (Prothero et al. 2011), in demonstrating that raw produce itself carries meaning, even before its conversion into meals. As shown in this paper, the means and processes of production of food grown on shared soil appear to provide more

satisfaction than the food itself. Ordinary raw crops are imbued with meanings of socialisation and connectivity, identity and authenticity, and hedonic pleasure.

In the case of Landshare, it appears that belonging to a community network, or a political decision to buck the capitalist system and avoid exchanges for money, are primary drivers for participating. The health and nutrition benefits from own-grown produce seems a less important, or merely unstated reason. Financial savings have little explicit appeal to growers, but a pecuniary return, if only in “free” labour, can be a motivator for landowners looking to defray the overheads of an expensive asset.

The themes identified in this study are important for all stakeholder groups affected by our attitudes and behaviour towards sharing, and the implications for exchanges without money. In relation to food production, the interesting concept of what wealth constitutes: food itself but also the absence of debt, and the desire to avoid the systemic traps of credit and mortgage enslavement. For user-generated entities such as Wikipedia, Twitter, open source software, planetary mapping, and for donor and volunteering schemes in general, this study finds that a sense of connection and community among members is vital, and resources should be directed at cultivating, nurturing, and celebrating those bonds. This finding extends the ideas of Schau et al. (2009) on commercial brand communities. The act of giving our resources, whether tangible assets, “free” labour, time, skill or knowledge, also carries payoff in the formation and display of personal identity, and this needs to be recognised and fostered by community brand managers, through explicit and implied values statements that embody

ideals, and “ideal selves”. The moral quality of sharing (and, for some, conspicuously rejecting consumption or acquisition), is a signal that can build cultural and social capital and, in the process, reinforce community network bonds.

The findings of this study also have relevance for public policy makers in assessing the impact of community collaborations. Traditional performance metrics such as ROI are insufficient for public policy, and an alternate set of measures is required (Hill and Martin 2014, 23), which might include, as shown here, community belonging, individual and aggregate wellbeing, and reduced consumption. By expanding traditional metrics, regulators can demonstrate how both policy and marketing have “advanced the quality of life of people with whom they exchange” (24). For Local Council planners too, there are lessons in the blogs by city-based writers who had limited access to growing space, and were unable to move because of work or other reasons. The yearning of would-be growers for access to soil was common and obvious.

The analysis of the blog data shows clear segments within this community, such as families wanting to model healthy behaviours for their children, city apartment dwellers craving garden space, and experienced horticulturalists wanting to help others. In other words, similar behaviours are driven by different needs and value sets (Ozanne and Ballantine 2010, 495), and effectively communicating the key benefits of collaborative involvement may require different strategies for different segments. Understanding these motivations can also guide the development of augmentations to existing schemes, or the creation

of entirely new sharing platforms, for example, as suggested by some bloggers, in aquaculture, hydroponics, and permaculture.

Ultimately, it appears that people need access to the soil for a variety of reasons, and while the themes identified in this research are specific to Landshare, four of these five motivators have been identified in research on other collaborative platforms, namely, community belonging (Rosen et al. 2011), politics and ethics (Albinsson and Perera 2012; Nelson et al. 2007), adventure and self development (Williams and Windebank 2005; Nov et al. 2010), and financial benefits (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012). The motivation of improved health is unique to Landshare, since other sharing schemes do not obviously offer physical and mental wellbeing. As such, motivations to join specific sites are context-specific, though there appears to be several common underlying drivers.

The findings from this research also support the study by Moraes et al. (2010) on sustainable communities in the UK, which found five motivators for participation: sense of community, personal development, spirituality, ethical processes, and more control. Their findings differ from those in this paper on the variables of spirituality, which was not evident here, and on the variable of health, which is unique to this Landshare study. Their other findings, however, are consistent with the themes found here.

On a broader level, we can aggregate and categorise these five themes using Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (2000), which holds that human behaviour is motivated by need satisfaction, and that there are three innate psychological needs, namely, competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Relatedness, or affiliation, refers to “the desire to feel connected to others – to love and care and to be loved and cared for” (231). As already discussed, a desire for a sense of connection and community was the primary motivation for belonging to Landshare.

Autonomy, or volition, “is the desire to self-organize experience and behavior and to have activity be concordant with one’s integrated sense of self” (Deci and Ryan 2000, 231). This motivation was clearly apparent in those bloggers who expressed political reasons for participation, and in those who were seeking adventure and escape from city-based living. Both of these motifs were connected with identity: formation, or re-formation.

Competence, or effectance, is “a propensity to have effect on the environment as well as to attain valued outcomes within it” (231). This drive was shown repeatedly in blogs displaying triumphs and growing self-sufficiency, as this blogger explained:

♦ Planting your own produce provides immense satisfaction and a sense of pride. Watching your seeds grow into healthy edible plants is like watching magic happening right in front of your eyes, with you being the magician.

Competence was also apparent in long-term members’ recounting of their journeys in transforming unruly turf, and proof of their effect in taming their environments. Applying the definitions of the three variables used by Deci and Ryan (2000), Table 1 shows the dominant motives in the Landshare data, categorised under the three variables of self-determination theory, as indicated by ticks.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Limitations

While the blogs provide rich content and description, the findings developed from the data need to be qualified. The research is limited to opinions that were published on the site, so unpublished opinions remained invisible. Those who blog may differ from those who remain silent, akin to the differences in segments identified by Ozanne and Ballantine (2010) in their study of toy library users. The data is also limited to text and pictures, and non-verbal cues that might help in interpretation of the communication are unavailable. The inexactness of the interpretation of evidence is the main limitation of this research, but it is believed that other researchers would not find significant disagreement with the findings presented in this study. Finally, the research is limited to one country, a nation where land is still relatively plentiful (per capita), and further research should be conducted in other geographic settings.

Future research

Other data sources could expand this research. The UK and Canada sites of Landshare also present scope for further research, and the UK arm has the endorsement of celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, whose television show, *River Cottage*, includes regular stories (and potential data) on Landshare community projects. There are also similar schemes in other countries, for example, *Sharing Backyards* (Canada, USA, New Zealand), and the yard-sharing platform *Hyperlocavore* (USA).

On a broader level, future research on sharing behaviour could take in the recommendations of Albinsson and Perera (2012), who suggest the need for studies on providing infrastructure to facilitate sharing, and Leismann et al. (2013) who point to the importance of research for policy makers in offering tax relief, insurance, and other mechanisms to encourage sharing schemes. As a case in point, the Landshare website offers a “Sample Agreement”² as a template contract between owners and growers, and the potential for public liability claims on the owner is intimidating. This presents a substantial hurdle for people wanting to offer land, and suggests a real need for government support of sharing schemes because of their combined social, economic, and environmental benefits, as illuminated in this paper. Indeed, Prothero et al. (2011, 33) argue for the need for proactive public policy, since “many of the barriers for sustainable consumption behavior are rooted in public policy or a lack thereof”.

On a more abstract level, Plouffe (2008) suggests that important areas to further our understanding of sharing behaviour include the broad concept of exchange through many-to-many mechanisms, social network theory, and diffusion of innovations. The final word on the need for further study of sharing should be given to Belk (2010, 730), who argues: “Consumer researchers’ neglect of sharing is a fundamental omission in seeking to understand consumption. Not only is sharing critical to the most recent of consumption phenomena like the Internet, it is also likely the oldest type of consumption... Issues of social justice, consumer welfare, environmentalism, materialism, commoditization, global food

security, sustainable environments, and much more, all stand to be vitally informed by work on sharing.”

This study contributes to the emerging field of research on sharing and collaborative consumption. It expands the tenet of exchange beyond commerce, and B2C dyads, to a community of C2C exchanges where no money changes hands. Removing profit as the driver, the predominant reasons why people share their resources concern social needs for belonging, and identity formation (or re-formation). In the case of sharing earth and soil, the benefits extend further to physical, mental, and utilitarian returns. For managers, whether in for-profit, non-profit, or government organisations, this study illuminates the importance of cultivating a sense of community and connection among constituents, and the need to demonstrate how their use and participation will carry payoff in identity formation, ideals, and ideal selves.

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¹ See for example, the website for collaborative consumption, accessed November 3, 2014.

<http://www.collaborativeconsumption.com/directory/>

² http://www.landshareaustralia.com.au/var//uploads/users/4/textdoc/sample_agreement.pdf

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