The matching of motivations to affordances among Maltese elected local government volunteers: Implications for sustaining civil society

Abstract

Purpose: This study attempts to both understand the motives for volunteering in local government (a strong/structured context) and determine how such motivation and other demographics interact with organisational contexts to influence volunteering outcomes.

Design/methodology/approach: The study adopts a functional approach to volunteerism. The Volunteer Functions Inventory is modified to better assess the motivations of elected local government volunteers. The responses of 152 Maltese local councillors were used to answer four research questions empirically.

Findings: Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses supported the introduction of a seventh VFI dimension, namely the political function. The study provides evidence that local councillors who received greater amounts of functionally relevant benefits reported more satisfaction and a stronger intention to continue volunteering in local government. The aggregated effect of multiple motives as well as other person-based determinants (marital status and education) produced a significant impact on volunteering outcomes in this strong/structured situational context of this public sector environment.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to a better understanding and assessment of the motivations of elected local government volunteers. It addresses practical

recommendations for sustaining civil society whilst acknowledging the potential and contribution of volunteers with various demographic characteristics.

Keywords: Local Government, Volunteering, Motivation, Satisfaction, Intention, Volunteer Functions Inventory, sustainability, civil society, Malta

Paper Type: Research paper

Introduction

The world would be a poorer place without volunteers. Their endeavour adds significant value to society by addressing a variety of human and environmental needs (Angermann & Sittermann, 2011). Yet, despite volunteering as a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon pervasive in a broad array of organisations and societies (Hustinx et al., 2010), the reasons why volunteers 'volunteer' is not wholly understood.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, the definitional debate has been arduous and protracted, especially over whether work that includes material rewards is truly volunteered and whether the free will in volunteering encompasses only intrinsic will or whether it should be extended to external persuasion (e.g., peer pressure, social/religious norms and affiliation expectations). Such noise has concealed a clear comprehension of the motivations for volunteering. Second, volunteering's complex nature has attracted multidisciplinary research across the social sciences. For example, Carlo at al., (2005) examined the interplay between personality traits and volunteer motives; Lai et al., (2013) explored the relationship between national identity and intention to volunteer; Govekar and Govekar (2003) examined volunteer behaviour by applying economic theory to examine volunteer supply. These multiple perspectives led Barron and Rihova (2011) to argue that the diversity of research findings suggests that

there is not one generic response to the issue of volunteer motivation and that the response differs depending on the nature of the volunteering activity, the context in which it is measured and the demographics of the target group. Third, the motives of volunteers have been the poor relation in a mainstream focus on the motivations of paid employees (Shye, 2010). But, capitalism's financial and economic turmoil of 2007-2008 and the consequent privileging of alternative models of organising, including sustainable social enterprise, has magnified both the paucity and importance of research on the motivation of unpaid volunteers. By providing fresh evidence from the public sector, using a modified Volunteer Functions Inventory [VFI] and adopting a functional approach, this research aims to both understand the motives for volunteering and determine how such motivation and other demographics interact with organisational contexts to influence volunteering outcomes.

This study adopts the definition provided by Wilson (2000) that volunteering is: "an activity that produces goods and services at below market rate" (p. 216), because this excludes behaviour conventionally described as 'caring'; includes both the motives behind volunteering and the notion that volunteers might benefit from their work and includes the social role of activists. Neatly, this definition complements the civic engagement concept of volunteering in the EU, which encompasses a voluntary component, not linked to material profit, an orientation towards the common good in both the private and public sectors and an inclusion of collective action (Angermann & Sittermann, 2011).

Volunteer motivations

The majority of studies commend the role of volunteerism even in a generally materialistic-driven world. For example, Claxton-Oldfield et al. (2013) reported that altruistic motives were the most common reasons for choosing to join hospice-related activities as volunteers, while personal gain motives were the least. In addition, their study provided evidence to show that altruism was a main predictor for volunteers' length of service. Similarly, Dwyer et al. (2013) found that personal motivations for joining voluntary organizations increase volunteer satisfaction through the mediating influence of work meaningfulness and better team relationships. Further, Snyder et al. (2000) emphasised the importance of contextual influences and that the motivations to start volunteering might differ from the motivations to remain a volunteer. Consequently, we consider volunteer motivation in terms of those needs or reasons for seeking out volunteering opportunities and for committing to, and sustaining, volunteering activities in a given context.

The current study

This study uses a functional approach in an attempt to extend the volunteer motivation literature by adapting a reliable instrument to assess the motivations of local government volunteers and investigates whether volunteering outcomes (satisfaction and intention to continue volunteering) vary as a function of the univariate match between the local councillors' motivational goals and the fulfilment of those goals. The functional approach is "a psychological perspective on the motivations for community involvement and service" (Stukas et al., 2009, p. 6) and "treats motives as an expression of pre-existing needs and dispositions, thus preceding the action instead of being constructed though (inter)action" (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 421). This approach is in

sharp contrast to the rational choice perspective, which treats volunteering as "a productive activity devoid of any symbolic meaning" (Hustinx et al., 2010, p. 422) and views persons purposefully using volunteering as a means to materially profit and enhance their human capital. It has been argued that the functional approach, which encompasses many elements contained within other major theories of volunteer motivation, may offer enhanced utility in dealing with the multifaceted nature of volunteer motivation (Phillips & Phillips, 2010). Additionally, the functional approach directs attention to the social and physical environments that provide contexts for the volunteer's behaviour (Stukas et al., 2009). Hence, the matching of motivations to environmental benefits (or affordances) should enable volunteering organisations to improve both volunteer recruitment and retention (Snyder et al., 2004).

In addition, this study examines whether the Total Motivation Index [TMI], as proposed by Stukas et al. (2009), together with various demographic variables, emerge as significant predictors of volunteering outcomes in a "strong situation" (i.e. a context that is structured and with strong norms, rules or pressures to act). The latter has theoretical and practical implications because, according to Snyder and Ickles (1985), motivations and other person-based determinants may be less predictive of behaviour in "strong situations" than in "weak situations" (i.e. contexts where persons are free to act on their own internal impulses in the absence of such norms). So, if the TMI predicts important outcomes successfully in local council environments, "then it may prove as a useful tool for coordinators who seek to optimize volunteers' experiences and outcomes" (Stukas et al., 2009, p. 11). Finally, the study provides recommendations for

marketing local government positions to optimise the fit between local government bodies and their key resources.

Review rationale

There are several rationales that provide justification for this study. First, since motives play an important role in public thinking about volunteerism, social psychologists have dedicated considerable effort in compiling inventories of volunteering motives (Wilson, 2000). For instance, Aguirre and Bolton (2013) uncovered six themes pertaining to volunteer (de)motivations, including internal motivation to make an external difference, volunteer existentialism, lived experience, internal/personal fulfilment, lack of direction and lack of support. However, the search for a structure underlying volunteer motivations is not a recent one. Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991) reported that previous research was mostly descriptive and neither systematic nor consistent. After identifying 28 motivations, they constructed the Motivation to Volunteer [MTV] scale and concluded that volunteers have a combination of altruistic and utilitarian motives. They argued that volunteers do not distinguish between these motives but act on a combination of motives. However, this uni-dimensional model has been criticized for lack of internal validity (Wang, 2004).

The most prevalent view is that the motivation to volunteer is multi-dimensional. Hence, the most widely used inventory is the VFI developed by Clary et al. (1998). This inventory assesses six theoretically- derived primary motivations: *values* (concern for the welfare of others and contributions to society); *understanding* (to learn, understand, practice any applied skills and abilities); *career* (to enhance one's job prospects and

career); *social* (to conform to normative/external pressures or to get along with their reference groups); *protective* (to reduce feelings of guilt for being more fortunate than others or to address one's personal problems) and *enhancement* (to enhance feelings of self-esteem/self-worth). Although the VFI has been validated in a variety of volunteering contexts, it does not take into account the individuality or subjectivity of the issue (Barron & Rihova, 2011).

Second, studies that adopted a functional perspective to volunteer motivations have shown that the matching of motivations to benefits results in a more positive experience for the volunteer since when the primary motives are fulfilled, volunteers are more satisfied and more likely to continue volunteering than others (Clary et al., 1998; Davis et al., 2003; Finkelstein, 2008; Stukas et al., 2009). Phillips and Phillips (2010) found that although volunteers did not seek out their current duties to earn a reward, they did recognise and appreciate various rewards. Also, other studies have shown that organisations that target primary motives are more effective in retaining volunteers (Clary et al., 1994; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Snyder et al., 2004).

Third, most of the studies that matched motivations to benefits examined the motives separately and used univariate match indices. More recently, Stukas et al. (2009) proposed the Total Match Index (TMI) as a summary of matches and mismatches across various motivational categories. Their study demonstrated that the TMI's predictive ability is superior to that of any motives or affordances alone or any univariate match score and that the magnitude of the total match effect is greater in weak situational contexts. They argued that motivations and other person-based factors are less

influential on outcomes in "strong" situational contexts since some organisations "may have practices that help them retain and satisfy volunteers quite apart from their ability to offer opportunities to satisfy important motives" (Stukas et al., 2009, p. 10).

Finally, it has been argued that through the exploration of demographic variables, organisations may be in a better position to understand what variables impact upon motivation and associated outcomes and hence inform them how to be more successful in influencing interventions (Furnham et al., 2009). It is generally acknowledged that these demographic variables affect social and/or human capital and it has been shown that an individual's social and human capital is associated with volunteering behaviour (Bryant et al., 2003). However, studies that adopt a functional approach to volunteerism tend not to consider demographic variables. One exception is the study by Nave and do Paço (2012) which investigated gender and age effects; significantly higher means were reported by (i) females in understanding and protection, (ii) younger respondents in understanding and career, and (iii) older respondents in enhancement and protection.

On the basis of the above, this empirical study investigates the following questions:

1.   Does a modified VFI better assess the primary motivations of elected local government volunteers?

2   Do elected local government volunteers who receive greater amounts of functionally relevant benefits report more satisfaction with, and a greater intention to continue, volunteering?

3.   Does the aggregated effect of multiple motives (TMI) vary as a function of demographic variables?

4: Can the aggregated effect of multiple motives (TMI) and demographic variables predict volunteer outcomes significantly in a strong situational context (i.e., the Maltese Local Council)?

Method

The Context

This study was conducted in Malta - a Mediterranean island state and a full member of the European Union. Malta's system of government resembles that of its previous British Crown Colony. Unlike other small states, it has strong political parties and a highly centralised system of government (Pirotta, 2001). The Maltese Constitution, which makes provision for a number of scrutinizing agencies, specifically affirms the classic Westminster/Whitehall model of a public service bound by the ethic of political neutrality and anonymity. The three core values of the Public Service Management Code – political anonymity, loyalty to the lawfully constituted government and non-partisan administration - were written into the Public Administration Act in 2009.

The Local Council Act (Chapter 363, Laws of Malta), which was modelled on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, was ratified by the Maltese government on June 30, 1993. It stipulates that "The Council shall be a statutory government authority having a distinct legal personality and capable of entering into contracts, of suing and being sued, and of doing all such things and entering into such transactions as are incidental or conducive to the exercise and performance of its functions as are allowed under the Act" (p. 3). Their establishment was part of a public service reform programme in an attempt to reduce political polarization, to promote decentralist values,

to deliver public services in a more effective and efficient manner and to give residents the opportunity to participate more closely in those decisions that affected them directly. However, with political parties still playing a central role in the affairs of local councils, "their establishment has done little to promote decentralist values, as was hoped when they were first established" (Pirotta, 2001, p. 245).

The Participants

The Department of Local Government in Malta acts as a focal point for all 68 local councils and ensures that they operate within the legal parameters (Local Councils Act, 1993). Each local council has 5-13 councillors, depending on the population. The responsibilities of local councils include a wide spectrum of services to residents, commercial entities and visitors, and the maintenance and up-keep of public properties. The primary role of local councillors is to act as decision makers within restricted financial resources. They are volunteers, elected by residents and contest the elections either on behalf of a political party or as independent candidates. Councillors fit our definition of volunteers (Wilson, 2000), as they produce services below the market rate (i.e., for free); includes the notion that some might benefit from their work (e.g., to satisfy political ambition), a social activist role, the EU concept of civic engagement and an orientation towards the common good. The case of mayors is slightly different.

Those councillors who obtain the highest number of votes from the political party with the absolute majority of councillors in the town council are elected as mayor. Mayors are obliged to ensure that all councillors observe the Code of Ethics established by the Local Council Association and that any breach should be reported to the Council and the Department of Local Government. Due to increased responsibilities, the *mayors are*

entitled to an honorarium, which does not exceed one-third the honorarium given from time-to-time to the Members of the House of Representatives. However, the Act specifies that this allowance shall not be deemed as earnings for the purposes of the Social Security Act and that all councillors should continue to be volunteers.

At the time of this study, there were 446 volunteers in Local Councils, of whom 68 were mayors. Executive Secretaries and other employees required for efficient discharge of the functions of the Council were excluded from the sampling frame because they receive a normal salary and hence did not qualify as volunteers.

The Sample

Follwing ethical clearance from the University of Malta and the Local Council Association [LCA] to conduct this study, the President of the LCA contacted all the local councillors by e-mail, inviting them to participate in our survey *via* a web-link. 152 completed the questionnaires, a response rate of 34%. Participants had a mean age of 47.15 years ($SD = 14.95$) and were elected an average of 2.67 times (SD = 1.59). 74 per cent were male, 62 per cent were married, 80 per cent were non-mayors and 39 per cent had tertiary-level education. Chi-squared tests of goodness of fit revealed that the sample did differ from the available population distributions - namely, gender [$\chi^2 (1)= 3.28$, $p = 0.07$), age ($\chi^2 (3) = 3.54$, $p = 0.32$], position held [$\chi^2 (1) = 2.35$, $p = 0.13$] and experience [$\chi^2 (2) = 0.46$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.80$]. This increased our confidence in making generalisations from the sample to the population.

The Measures

During a preliminary study, we asked 80 local councillors/mayors to list the main reasons why they volunteer in local government. Nearly all the responses to this open-

ended question could be categorised under the six primary motivations addressed by the VFI except for the politically related ones. This was not surprising given that the vast majority of local councillors in Malta contest elections on behalf of a political party rather than as independent candidates. Thus, to better assess and understand the motivations of elected local councillors in Malta, we constructed 21 Likert-type items (refer to Table 1) ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Wherever possible, the original wording of the statements provided by the local councillors was retained. To adhere to copyright regulations, we obtained written permission from Gil Clary and Mark Snyder to adapt their original VFI.

In line with the VFI questionnaire design, while a functional motive item read "I volunteer to improve the quality of life of the residents in my community", the corresponding functional benefit item read "In my local council position, I have been able to improve the quality of life of the residents in my community". This resulted in another 7 scales comprising 3 items each - political ($\alpha = 0.81$), values ($\alpha = 0.72$), understanding ($\alpha = 0.69$), enhancement ($\alpha = 0.71$), social ($\alpha = 0.78$), protective ($\alpha = 0.83$) and career ($\alpha = 0.80$). Satisfaction with local council work (e.g. "My experience as a local councillor has been satisfying/fulfilling/interesting"; $\alpha = 0.72$) and intention to continue volunteering (e.g., "I intend to contest the next local council elections"; $\alpha = 0.87$) were assessed via three five-point Likert-type items each. Finally, respondents were asked to specify their gender, position, marital status, age, highest level of education attained, and the number of times elected (experience).

Data analyses

To confirm the construct validity of the seven proposed scale, we used principle component analysis followed by principle-axis factor analysis with oblique rotation

(Direct Oblimin). Confirmatory Factor Analysis [CFA] was used to determine whether the hypothesised seven factor model provided a better fit than the VFI's six factor solution. Apart from relying solely on the statistical significance of the chi-squared difference ($\Delta\chi^2$) against the difference in degrees of freedom (Δdf) statistics, we also assessed the comparative fit index (*CFI*; above 0.9 is good) and the root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*; less than 0.06 is good).

In investigating outcomes, we examined the effects of the primary motivations separately as well as the aggregated effect of multiple motives. For the univariate matching, we used similar means of identifying matches as Clary et al. (1998). We first split the scores on each of the motivation scales and the affordances scales into two groups (coded as above or below the scale mean) in order to produce seven '2 × 2 between-subject factorial designs' and then used descriptive statistics and 'contrast analysis' to determine whether the 'high motive'/'high affordance' group reported significantly higher means for the outcomes (satisfaction, intention) than others who fell in the other three categories. For the aggregated effect of multiple motives, we used the TMI index as proposed by Stukas et al. (2009). Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the TMI and six demographic variables (gender, age, position, marital status education and experience) emerged as significant predictors of volunteering outcomes (satisfaction and intention) in the "strong" situational context of the Maltese local council environment.

Results

Construct Validity of the Modified VFI

Principal component analysis identified seven eigenvalues greater than one and these accounted for 73 per cent of total variance. Direct Oblimin revealed that all the items from each scale loaded on the intended factor (see Table 1).

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Table 1

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Each factor clearly reflected one of the seven functions addressed, thus confirming that each function was distinct and evident in the responses of the local councillors. The Cronbach alpha coefficients were all acceptable and no items produced an unstable factor structure. An additional attempt was made to determine whether a six factor model resulted in a better fit; here the enhancement and protective items loaded together. CFA revealed that the seven factor model [χ^2 (168) = 243.16, $p < 0.001$, *CFI* = 0.951, *RMSEA* = .054] provided a significant improvement in model fit [$\Delta\chi^2$ *(6)* = 117.30, p < 0.001] over the six-factor model [χ^2 (174) = 383.80, $p < 0.001$, *CFI* = 0.846, *RMSEA* = 0.089]. This finding offered support to the use of the seven proposed scales to assess the primary motivations of Maltese elected local government volunteers.

Functionally Related Benefits and Satisfaction

Table 2 shows that *values* and *understanding* emerged as the two most important motivations.

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Table 2

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These were followed by social, political, enhancement, career and protective motives respectively. With respect to the affordances, the respondents reported highest benefit from values and understanding, followed by enhancement, social, political, career and protective affordances. The two most important motivations (values and understanding) yielded the highest amount of related personal benefits. While the mean motivation scores for career, political, understanding and social were not significantly different from their corresponding mean affordance scores, values produced a significantly lower mean score for motivation. The latter suggests that although the local councillors are receiving relatively high benefits from *values*, the local council environment is limiting them from fulfilling their motivational goal to the extent they desire. Additionally, the affordances scores for protection and enhancement were significantly higher, on average, than the motivation scores.

Table 3 provides a summary of descriptive statistics and contrast analyses for the univariate matching of motivations to affordances.

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Table 3

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The means were all in the predicted direction except for *political*, where the 'high benefit/low motivation' group produced higher satisfaction and intention mean scores than the 'high benefit/high motivation' group. Otherwise, *social*, *values* and *enhancement* produced significant contrast effects on 'satisfaction' while *social*, *values*, *career* and *enhancement* produced a significant contrast effect on 'intention'.

This implied that when motives were fulfilled, a greater satisfaction and intention to keep volunteering prevailed.

The Effect of Demographic Variables on TMI

The TMI scale (composed by multiplying the motive scores with the corresponding affordance scores) ranged from 0 to 25, with higher scores indicative of a higher degree of match. The highest match occurred for values ($M = 19.09$, $SD = 4.00$), followed by understanding ($M = 16.63$, $SD = 3.55$), social ($M = 11.62$, $SD = 4.25$), enhancement ($M = 10.78$, $SD = 4.33$), political ($M = 10.47$, $SD = 4.82$), career ($M = 7.11$, $SD = 4.14$) and protective ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 2.40$). Then we summed the resulting motivation scores together to obtain the TMI index ($M = 79.93$, $SD = 18.01$). The TMI, satisfaction, and intention scores by demographic variables are presented in Table 4.

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Table 4

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Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) tests together with the Duncan post-hoc test revealed that TMI scores and the satisfaction scores did not differ by gender, position held, age, marital status, education and experience. However, those who were not married/cohabitating and those who had primary/secondary schooling reported significantly higher means for 'intention' than others within the same demographic category.

TMI and Demographic Variables on Volunteering Outcomes in a Strong Context

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the TMI and the demographic variables emerged as significant predictors of satisfaction. The model was useful in predicting satisfaction [$F(1, 135) = 12.04$, $p = 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.08$]. However, the only significant predictor of satisfaction was the TMI [$\beta = 0.29$, $t(135) = 3.47$, $p < 0.01$]. Hence, higher TMI scores were associated with greater satisfaction scores.

With respect to intention [$F(3, 133) = 7.62$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.15$], local councillors were more likely to continue volunteering in local government if they had higher TMI scores [$\beta = 0.21$, $t(134) = 2.65$, $p < 0.01$], a lower level of education [$\beta = -0.26$, $t(135) = -3.26$, $p < 0.01$] and if they were not married/cohabitating [$\beta = -0.18$, $t(133) = -2.26$, $p = 0.03$].

Thus, the TMI and other person-based determinants (marital status and education) are influential on volunteering outcomes even in the structured organisational context of Maltese local council environment.

Discussion

This study extends the VFI, by including the political function as a contributing factor to the motivations of elected local government volunteers. It revealed that the most salient motivations were values and understanding and this finding is in line with other studies that used the VFI with other volunteer populations (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstein, 2008; Stukas et al., 2009).

An unexpected result that emerged from the data was that in the case of protection and enhancement, the mean affordance scores were significantly higher than the corresponding mean motive scores. We believe that this finding has an important implication from a human resource perspective. It could be that the local councillors did not rate highly these motivations because they are not aware of such functionally relevant benefits that result from their volunteering in local government. If so, this has important consequences since such individuals tend not to appreciate that this knowledge can be valuable to others. In line with the model of organisational knowledge creation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), this tacit knowledge will not be shared easily unless organisations (or government bodies in our case) find ways of converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

The results also indicate that those local councillors who receive greater amounts of functionally relevant benefits reported relatively more satisfaction and a stronger intention to continue volunteering in local councils than others who did not perceive these functions as important or did not receive as much in way of relevant benefits. This finding lends weight to the functional approach perspective and is in line with the other studies that supported this perspective with other volunteer populations (Clary et al., 1998; Davis et al., 2003; Finkelstein, 2008; Stukas et al., 2005, 2009). In examining the aggregated effect of multiple motives on outcomes, we found that the TMI emerged as a

positive and significant predictor of volunteering outcomes (satisfaction and intention to continue volunteering) in the local council environment. Hence, although local councillors are supervised, are in constant contact with support staff and co-ordinators and have to abide to a code of ethics set by law, this relatively "strong" situational context does not limit their behavioural options and variability. Thus, the TMI emerges as a useful tool for the volunteers in publically funded institutions in overcoming earlier difficulties that organisations may have faced in integrating a blend of matches and mismatches across multiple volunteer motivation dimensions (Stukas et al., 2009). Given the importance that the fulfilment of motivations has on volunteer satisfaction and intentions, there is practical value in such motivational assessments. They could guide the governing bodies of volunteers in public funded institutions in investing in special programmes incorporating the motivations of local councillors; in developing more effective messages in marketing local council positions and in raising awareness among prospective volunteers as to the importance of personal motivations when deciding a suitability of fit to council work. It provides them with a tool to establish their own profile and to compare it with that of local councillors, and in supporting them in making responsible and more informed decisions.

Another important finding is that after the demographic variables were regressed on the intention to continue volunteering in local councils, together with the TMI, 'marital status' and 'education' accounted for a significant portion of variance. Contrary to expectations, a stronger intention to continue volunteering in local councils was associated with being single/widowed/separated/divorced. This could be because a) married people have a stronger sense of family obligation and hence are expected to volunteer less (*cf.* Taniguchi, 2006); b) married people share each other's social

networks while unmarried people may be more compelled to volunteer in order to build or rebuild social capital (*cf.* Bryant et al., 2003); or unmarried people or those who cohabit have a bit more time on their hands. A greater intention to continue volunteering in local councils was also associated with a lower level of education. Could it be that the local council environment provides those volunteers with a low level of education with the opportunity to fulfil motives or gain knowledge and skills beyond those gained from their full-time job? Although further research is necessary before any strong conclusions can be drawn, this finding has an important implication; that of unleashing the power of human resourcefulness, by turning adversity (such as lack of education) into opportunity. Local councillors who are not married or who have a low level of education contribute significantly to desired outcomes through their on-going voluntary activity. Thus, by exploring and discovering the resourcefulness and strengths of all volunteers benefits not only the volunteering agencies in marketing volunteering positions or the volunteers themselves in fulfilling their own personal goals, but also the community at large through the creation of social capital.

There are some limitations to the findings that must be noted. First, this study has examined relationships and hence we are in no position to make causal statements. Second, we acknowledge that there may be other important personal, social and cultural factors that have not been addressed in this study and which influence volunteer outcomes. Further examination of the role of environmental factors in shaping behaviours could help identify other factors that further affect the outcomes explored in this paper. Third, since the data used in this study were gathered from a single geographic location (Malta), we cannot rule out the influence of sociocultural biases. Cultures and societies vary in their beliefs, values, preferences, traditions, normative

behaviours and practices. Hence, the findings/implications of this study might not lend themselves to generalisation over other cultures and societies. Moreover, as described earlier, the study was conducted in a specific Maltese political context.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to a better understanding and assessment of the motivations of local government volunteers. It addresses practical recommendations for marketing local government volunteering and for optimising the fit between the local governmental organisations and volunteers. The findings of this study also have important social implications, particularly with respect to: a) the need to identify hidden benefits that volunteering provides to volunteers and in finding ways of making this tacit knowledge explicit, and b) the need to discover, recognise, and exploit the hidden potential that volunteers with various demographic characteristics bring to their organisation.

Following this study, interesting avenues for further research emerge. Researchers interested in examining the motivations of local government volunteers deeper might wish to combine an interpretative approach with a quantitative analysis like this one in order to tease out the intricacies of individual and group behaviours and motivations. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that there is a need for more research that examines the hidden potential of all volunteers, and certain volunteers should not be overlooked solely on the basis of demographic characteristics, personality traits, attitudes and other characteristics. The GHK (2010) Report to the EU Commission highlights a number of challenges to engage more organizations in volunteering. The Report states "the main difficulties seem to be related to the changes that are affecting the nature of voluntary engagement as well as the mismatch between the needs of voluntary organizations and the aspirations of the new generation of volunteers…" (p.

12). Morrow-Howell et al. (2003) argued that when organisations target persons for volunteering, volunteering opportunities are available to people with means, skills and status and being recruited depends on availability, eligibility and flexibility. This approach needs to be further investigated. In line with Stone (2010), we feel that many societies, including in the European Union, continue to underutilize the many talents and skills that diverse members bring to the workplace and hence there is a need for research that examines strategies for increasing the inclusion of these members in society to better inform theory and practice.

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Table 1
Questionnaire Items, Scales and Pattern Matrix Loadings

Questionnaire Scales and Items	Factors						
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Career							
I volunteer to gain more access to the labour market (Q4)	0.89						
I volunteer to improve my business or career prospects (Q9)	0.81						
I volunteer to strengthen my CV (Q16)	0.90						
Values							
I volunteer due to the commitment I have towards my locality (Q5)		0.78					
I volunteer to improve the quality of life of the residents in my locality (Q13)		0.67					
I volunteer to contribute to my community and to be of service to others (Q17)		0.85					
Political							
I volunteer to assist my political party (Q1)			-0.87				
I volunteer due to my political beliefs (Q7)			-0.82				
I volunteer because I am interested in politics (Q12)			-0.85				
Protective							
Volunteering helps me by keeping me occupied (Q6)				0.85			
Volunteer allows me to shift my attention from work-related or family problems (Q8)				0.75			
Volunteering helps me avoid bad habits (e.g. drinking, smoking, over-eating...) (Q20)				0.73			
Social							
I volunteer because members of my community want me to take up this position (Q3)					-0.86		
I volunteer due to the increased interest on community service in my locality (Q13)					-0.80		
I volunteer because friends and/or other members of my family volunteer (Q17)					-0.89		
Understanding							
I volunteer to practice and sharpen my management skills (Q11)						-0.84	
I volunteer to improve my decision making skills (Q18)						-0.60	
I volunteer to improve my communication and/or persuasion skills (Q21)						-0.79	
Enhancement							
Volunteering as a local councillor gives me an extra sense of pride (Q2)							-0.58
Volunteering as a local councillor makes me feel important (Q10)							-0.84
Volunteering as a local councillor makes me feel valued (Q15)							-0.42
Eigenvalues	5.06	2.85	2.17	1.57	1.42	1.30	1.02
Variance (%)	24.09	13.56	10.32	7.49	6.78	6.18	4.87
Cumulative Variance (%)	24.09	37.65	47.97	55.46	62.24	68.43	73.30
Cronbach Alpha Coefficient	0.88	0.74	0.87	0.81	0.82	0.71	0.74

Note: Only factor loadings greater than ± 0.30 are shown. n = 152.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Motivation and Affordance Scores and Paired t-Test Output

Function	Motivation		Affordance		95% CI of difference	Paired t-Test Output	
	M	SD	M	SD		df	t
Values	4.53	0.53	4.19	0.61	0.23, 0.27	151	6.32**
Understanding	4.07	0.56	4.06	0.52	-0.08, 0.11	151	0.27
Social	3.48	0.95	3.32	0.72	-0.01, 0.34	151	1.80
Political	3.23	1.05	3.11	0.84	-0.05, 0.27	151	1.37
Enhancement	3.04	0.87	3.46	0.78	-0.56, -0.27	151	-5.64**
Career	2.54	1.00	2.68	0.98	0.32, 0.05	151	-1.44
Protective	1.58	0.64	2.51	0.88	-1.10, -0.77	151	-11.42**

Note: n = 152, **$p < 0.01$

Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations and Contrast Effects

Scales and Outcomes	High Motivation				Low Motivation				Contrast Effects	
	High Benefit		Low Benefit		High Benefit		Low Benefit			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	t	df
Values										
Satisfaction	4.06	0.62	3.42	0.79	3.80	0.67	3.50	0.73	3.24**	148.00
Intention	3.66	1.23	2.75	1.71	3.27	1.08	2.50	1.07	2.95**	148.00
Enhancement										
Satisfaction[a]	4.13	0.49	3.78	0.74	3.97	0.47	3.70	0.87	3.11**	104.11
Intention[a]	3.75	1.06	2.80	1.47	3.78	0.91	3.09	1.32	2.56*	93.46
Understanding										
Satisfaction	4.11	0.55	3.81	0.80	4.08	0.76	3.84	0.60	1.45	148.00
Intention[a]	3.53	1.42	3.00	0.97	4.00	1.46	3.53	1.09	0.06	54.61
Protective										
Satisfaction	3.96	0.65	3.94	0.39	3.95	0.63	3.75	0.93	0.55	148.00
Intention	3.57	1.09	3.09	1.70	3.54	1.14	2.94	1.43	1.71	148.00
Social										
Satisfaction[a]	4.17	0.51	3.77	0.78	3.98	0.46	3.68	0.77	3.58**	123.22
Intention[a]	4.01	1.00	2.88	1.43	3.48	1.23	3.13	0.93	4.57**	114.27
Political										
Satisfaction	3.96	0.73	3.67	0.58	4.11	0.56	3.81	0.71	0.53	148.00
Intention[a]	3.29	1.72	2.71	0.95	3.84	1.01	3.27	1.18	0.04	19.23
Career										
Satisfaction	4.00	0.69	3.88	0.57	3.94	0.55	3.86	0.76	0.91	148.00
Intention	3.78	1.21	3.38	0.95	2.88	1.33	3.46	3.44	2.58*	148.00

Note: [a] equal variance not assumed. n= 152. *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics by Demographic Variables for TMI, Satisfaction and Intention

Attribute	N	TMI		Satisfaction		Intention	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Gender							
Males	112	79.85[a]	18.17	3.97[a]	0.64	3.50[a]	1.26
Females	40	80.14[a]	17.77	3.87[a]	0.63	3.37[a]	1.05
Position Held							
Mayor	30	82.51[a]	17.13	4.06[a]	0.69	3.55[a]	1.35
Local Councillor	122	79.22[a]	18.27	3.90[a]	0.62	3.43[a]	1.17
Marital Status							
Married/Cohabiting	96	80.16[a]	18.83	3.96[a]	0.63	3.33[a]	1.22
Other	56	79.33[a]	17.02	3.89[a]	0.66	3.80[b]	1.18
Age							
18-35	33	79.39[a]	18.88	3.92[a]	0.65	3.60[a]	1.11
36-49	47	81.64[a]	13.52	3.87[a]	0.63	3.31[a]	1.25
50-64	50	79.85[a]	18.17	3.97[a]	0.64	3.50[a]	1.26
65+	22	78.37[a]	19.72	4.00[a]	0.81	3.33[a]	1.35
Education							
Primary/Secondary	36	83.54[a]	14.43	3.94[a]	0.59	3.86[b]	1.04
Post-Secondary	56	76.63[a]	19.51	4.05[a]	0.56	3.46[ab]	1.16
Tertiary	60	80.85[a]	18.24	3.83[a]	0.73	3.22[a]	1.29
Experience							
Elected 1 time	46	79.37[a]	18.22	3.81[a]	0.81	3.14[a]	1.18
Elected 2-3 times	64	80.66[a]	15.52	3.91[a]	0.43	3.57[a]	1.16
Elected 4-6 times	42	81.34[a]	21.98	4.06[a]	0.67	3.56[a]	1.17
	152	79.93	18.01	3.94	0.64	3.46	1.20

Note: Age and Experience (ratio scales) were split into groups for illustration purposes. Different superscripts indicate significantly different means within categories at $p < 0.05$. n = 152.