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An ecologically and socially inclusive model of agritourism to support smallholder livelihoods in the South Pacific

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Abstract

The neglect and marginalisation of smallholders in economic and development policy contributes to increasing vulnerability of rural communities. Underinvestment in agriculture, climate change impacts and growing competition for land and water places further pressure on smallholders. In this context, this paper examines the current focus in the South Pacific on strengthening the linkages between tourism and agriculture through agritourism. The paper seeks to merge multiple discourses, by firstly reviewing the development model that is driving tourism and linkages to agriculture in the South Pacific. Secondly, agritourism as it is conceptualised in the tourism literature and thirdly sustainable tourism discourse, to identify economic activities within agritourism that contribute to enhancing smallholders' livelihoods in the South Pacific. An ecologically and socially inclusive model of agritourism is put forward based on principles of sustainable tourism and agroecology – referred to as agroecological tourism. Agroecological tourism strengthens the linkages between tourism and agriculture while fostering sustainability principles.

Statement of the research

This paper conducts conceptual research focusing on the theory that describes the phenomenon of agritourism. It is written from a critical analyst perspective which seeks

to further develop conceptual understanding of agritourism by building on the current literature. It offers a comprehensive framework that can be used to support future empirical research in the field of agritourism. Previous attempts to categorise agritourism have focused on three areas related to place, nature of activity and authenticity. This paper approaches the research from a critical theory paradigm and highlights the lack of considerations surrounding sustainability of the agritourism product.

Introduction

The desire to strengthen the linkages between tourism and agriculture in the South Pacific, and elsewhere, has focused attention on the concept of agritourism as a means of combining the economic activities of agriculture and tourism and benefitting both. Definitions of agritourism (sometimes also referred to as agrotourism) vary widely both in practice and in theory, with some recent typologies emerging in the academic tourism literature (Arroyo, Barbieri, & Rich, 2013; Flanigan, Blackstock, & Hunter, 2014; Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010). This paper engages directly with two key discourses on the concept of agritourism: (1) the agribusiness and industry-driven push for agritourism development in the South Pacific based on the Caribbean model promoted through EU-funded projects and agencies; and (2) the academic discourse on agritourism in the tourism literature surrounding its conceptualisation. A key contribution of this paper is that it merges and extends these dialogues with consideration of the (3) sustainable tourism development discourse, to ensure that economic activities from agritourism are viable, contextual and sustainable in order to enhance rural smallholders' livelihoods in the South Pacific.

Our focus on rural smallholders is important as they currently 'manage over 80% of the world's 500 million small farms' and contribute significantly to food security and poverty reduction as the main food providers in the developing world (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2013, p. 6). In the South Pacific, traditional gardening (smallholder farming) and cultural land management systems have long played a vital role in achieving food security, but have also fulfilled important economic, environmental and socio-cultural roles. Traditional gardening systems are 'vehicles for food security, housing, widespread employment, social security, biodiversity protection and ecological stability; they are also a store of natural medicines, as well

as a source of social cohesion, inclusion and cultural reproduction' (Anderson, 2011, p. 86). These systems enable rural smallholders to continue to operate within the 'traditional economy' (Regenvanu, 2010) (also known as the subsistence economy and custom economy), which encourages sustainable economic activity at the individual and household level while operating within reciprocal networks of exchange and obligation at the community level (Addinsall, Glencross, Scherrer, Weiler, & Nichols, 2015).

Notwithstanding their important contribution to global and local needs, smallholder farmers continue to make up the largest proportion of the world's disadvantaged (Rudel, DeFries, Asner, & Lawrence, 2009). Moreover, neglect and marginalisation of smallholders in economic and development policy are contributing to their increasing vulnerability, further exacerbated by climate change, underinvestment and growing competition for land and water (IFAD, 2013). Pacific Island countries are among the world's most vulnerable nations (World Bank, 2012). Climate change, through extreme weather events of increasing magnitude and frequency, further exacerbates their exposure and vulnerability. It is thus vital that economic activities contribute to reducing the causes of vulnerability, reducing disaster risk and facilitating improved livelihoods and resilience of communities and individuals. Thus, any attempts at strengthening linkages between smallholder farming and tourism need to focus on sustaining smallholder agriculture, both economically and ecologically, while finding ways to support a tourism 'product' that is also viable and sustainable. Tourism, like agriculture, is already a key economic driver for many South Pacific Islands. However, current models of tourism in the region provide limited benefits to rural smallholder farmers and their communities, particularly as foreign ownership and mass tourism focus facilitate geographic concentration in tourism enclaves and high economic leakage (Stefanova, 2008). An increasing number of rural communities are partaking or expressing interest in locally owned sustainable tourism development, yet in Vanuatu, for example, locally owned businesses receive less than 10% of the overall tourism expenditure (Stefanova, 2008). There is, nonetheless, potential for the development of policies and programmes that strengthen opportunities for diversified tourism offerings which adhere to sustainability principles and facilitate stronger integration of smallholder farmers and their communities into the tourism economy. While attempts have been made to prioritise the need for growth in rural areas, there

is little evidence of any substantive planning or implementation of policies or programmes to support this (Scheyvens & Russell, 2010, 2013).

The recent entry of organisations such as the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and the Caribbean Research and Development Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, IICA) into the South Pacific context brings with it the desire to strengthen the linkages between tourism and agriculture as well as assumptions and definitions surrounding the concept of agritourism (Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation [CTA], 2015). Organisations such as CTA and IICA have been advocating for agritourism as a key objective to address the high level of imported goods, improving the economic opportunities for smallholders in the Caribbean since 2005 (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture [IICA], 2015). The Caribbean and South Pacific regions share a multitude of issues that impact on people's livelihoods such as vulnerability to climate change, soaring food import bills and high levels of non-communicable diseases. Agritourism linkages were proposed as the most direct ways to address the disconnection between local farmers and the tourism industry in the Caribbean and South Pacific regions, and the many issues that arise as a consequence such as urban migration, poverty in rural areas, food security and influx of imported food (CTA, 2015). This has led to increased dialogue about agritourism in countries such as Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa with momentum resulting in the formation of agritourism stakeholder groups, MoUs between the government departments responsible for tourism and agriculture and the development of agritourism forums were planned for 2016 in the region. However, there are two key issues in this discourse that need highlighting. Firstly, while the CTA and IICA do not make clear the definition of agritourism that they are adopting, it appears their key objectives are supporting the supplying of produce to the tourism industry. Their use of the term agritourism in the development discourse thus clearly contrasts with its use in the tourism literature which is about facilitating visitor experiences on farms. Secondly, it is important to consider the transferability of agritourism models to the South Pacific region given the differences in agricultural practices, including the limited use of external inputs (synthetic pesticides and fertilisers), and the predominate influence of traditional farming practices in the South Pacific.

Indeed, the importance of context and scale is increasingly recognised in achieving appropriate and sustainable development that has positive long-term outcomes

(Christensen & Mertz, 2010; Gough, Bayliss-Smith, Connell, & Mertz, 2010). Studies on smallholder farmers in rural areas elsewhere highlight that agritourism with an environmental focus at the smallholder scale has the potential to contribute positively to food security, to further develop and diversify traditional crops, to support natural, historical and cultural resources, to strengthen communities and to reduce urban migration (Bwana, Olima, Andika, Agong, & Hayombe, 2015). How the concept of agritourism can best be applied in a developing country context such as the South Pacific with its distinctive socio-cultural, environmental, policy and land tenure context, however, remains as a critical gap in conceptual understanding as well as in policy and practice.

It is in this context that this paper seeks to critically examine current understanding of concepts and terms used in this policy context, as a basis for demonstrating the merits of reconceptualising agritourism in order to explicitly consider social, cultural and environmental outcomes in addition to the economic dimension.

Reconceptualising agritourism

The entry of sustainability in agriculture and tourism

Major shifts in agricultural practices during the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and more recently the expansion of genetically modified crops, have led to short-term gains in food production and expansion of large-scale and monoculture farming. There is increasing recognition, however, of long-term impacts associated with those practices, including dependence on costly synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, water depletion and soil degradation (Gliessman, 2015). In the case of the South Pacific, these impacts undermine ecological processes and compromise the resource base of agriculture, contributing to the marginalisation of smallholders. Agroecology provides a culturally sensitive, ethical and economically viable alternative contextual model appropriate to the smallholder scale. Agroecology supports agricultural sustainability by applying ecological concepts and principles for studying, designing and managing agroecosystems for production and natural resource conservation (Altieri, 1995). Over the last decade, agroecology has evolved from its foundations of ecology and agronomy to encompass a social movement with a focus on 'the ecological foundations of the traditional farming systems in developing countries' (Gliessman, 2015, p. 29). The Nyéléni Declaration (Anderson, Pimbert, & Kiss, 2015, p. 1) sees agroecology as 'a key form of resistance to an economic system that puts

profit before life,' in other words, an economic approach that recognises and values the non-commodity outputs of agriculture such as agrobiodiversity, ecosystem services, climate change resilience, traditional knowledge systems and biodiversity (Silici, 2014). To underpin this, it supports and nurtures local knowledge and culture, seeks to promote social justice and aims to strengthen the economic viability of rural areas sustainably (Anderson et al., 2015).

Similar to agriculture, tourism has undergone significant transformation over the last 60 years—shifting from an unquestioned enthusiasm for mass tourism development to increasing awareness of negative impacts leading to alternative concepts such as eco and sustainable tourism (Jafari, 1989). The 'adaptancy' platform of the 1980s, according to Jafari (1989), saw the rise of tourism conceived by cautionary platform supporters which was directly opposed to mass tourism. Weaver (2001) puts forward the concept of 'homestays' and 'farm tourism' as examples of the adaptancy platform which were described as alternative forms of tourism that were supposed to be small scale, locally controlled and provided linkages to other sectors of the local community, 'where mass tourism was considered to be inherently unsustainable, alternative tourism was thought to be inherently sustainable' (Weaver, 2001, p. 107). Notably, there is increasing awareness at the global scale for the need of embedding sustainability as an inherent measure and decision driver in both agricultural and tourism systems and not just subset niches thereof (e.g. IFAD, 2013; Weaver, 2007).

The concentration of tourism infrastructure in the capitals of South Pacific countries has resulted in non-inclusive development and increased economic inequalities and leakage, high reliance on imported foods, dispossession of land and a potential disruption to the social fabric of many Pacific Islands (Stefanova, 2008). Yet there are difficulties in estimating the extent of these issues due to a lack of reliable data on tourism impacts in many of these countries. Numerous studies in Pacific Island countries have raised alarm to the singular focus of tourism at the expense of other core sectors and have suggested that this approach to development can seriously jeopardise sustainable outcomes and equitable involvement in the economy (Johnston, Howson, & Swain, 2012; Scheyvens & Russell, 2013). Milne (2005) supports this claim and places caution with holding tourism at the centrepiece of economic development plans, suggesting that in many countries in the South Pacific where a large percentage of the population live in rural areas and have access to many resources,

tourism should be viewed as one component of a broader economic development strategy to counteract the vulnerability associated with tourism markets.



A model of agroecological tourism

Moreover, both agriculture and tourism exhibit strong reliance on favourable climatic variables and well-functioning ecosystems. Changes in weather patterns and increasing unpredictability and severity of extreme weather events due to anthropogenic climate change, as well as effects arising from loss of both biodiversity and stabilising vegetation cover, expose both industries to unprecedented vulnerabilities (IPCC, 2014). The contribution of current practices by both industries to these negative changes is increasingly recognised in global development and economic discourses particularly in relation to poverty reduction, leading to calls for an urgent transformation towards more sustainable industry models and practices that adopt a systems perspective which accounts for the total impact of practices in the systems in which they occur (Telfer & Wall, 1996, 2000; Torres, 2002, 2003; Torres & Momsen, 2004). The literature suggests that industry models are needed that consider ecological, social, cultural and economic systems holistically, with a focus on facilitating resilient and sustainable local communities and ecosystems (Torres & Momsen, 2011).

In the case of agriculture, the combination of traditional subsistence and modern farming practices at the smallholder scale offer contextual agricultural models such

as agroecology which foster ecologically, culturally and socially integrated practices and facilitate resilience through diversity. A recent report by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Environment Programme highlights the importance of rural smallholders to poverty reduction and food security and concludes that with targeted support from policy-makers and practitioners, 'smallholder farmers can transform the rural landscape and unleash a new and sustainable agricultural revolution' (IFAD, 2013, p. 6). The report further emphasises the importance of ecosystem health to smallholder productivity (IFAD, 2013, pp. 6, 7), thus highlighting both the importance of a focus on ecological integrity and smallholder benefits.

In the realm of tourism, sustainable tourism seeks to:

Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity;

Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance; and

Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contributing to poverty alleviation. (UNWTO, 2004, p. 7).

The above aspects of the agroecology and sustainable tourism approaches in their respective disciplines highlight their relevance to the Pacific Islands context. We thus propose the model outlined in Figure 5, where agritourism represents the overlap between agriculture and tourism. When overlaid with sustainability to reflect the direction of global discourse in both agriculture and tourism, and accordingly the emergence of agroecology and sustainable tourism, they come together as agroecological tourism (or agroeco-tourism) (Figure 5) – an approach that reflects the focus on sustainability, diversity and local fit so important in the South Pacific context.

The application of both agroecological principles and sustainable tourism principles to agritourism is important if agriculture and tourism are going to co-exist synergistically and generate economic, social, ecological and cultural benefits. Nonetheless, the fact that to this day 'one billion of the world's poor people live in rural areas where agriculture is their main source of livelihood' (IFAD, 2013, p. 6)

highlights the complexity of the issues and that much work remains to be done on facilitating sustainable economic practices that benefit those who need it most. The agritourism model and dimensions proposed in this paper through their focus deliberately privilege outcomes over product and seek to benefit rural livelihoods while valuing ecosystem services, biodiversity and considering the quality of the visitor experience. But before examining the dimensions, let us first turn to the current conceptualisations of agritourism in the tourism literature.

Current conceptualisations of agritourism

There is no universal definition of what constitutes agritourism (Schilling, Marxen, Heinrich, & Brooks, 2006). Arroyo et al. (2013) conducted a survey to identify preferred definitional elements and activities across residents and farmers in Missouri and North Carolina (U.S.). Their study concluded that the terms 'agricultural setting, entertainment, farm and education' should be included when defining agritourism, while respondents rejected activities on non-working farms. Definitions of agritourism in the literature have multiplied, particularly across differing cultural and geographical regions (Carpio, Wohlgenant, & Boonsaeng, 2008; Flanigan et al., 2014; Phillip et al., 2010; Tew & Barbieri, 2012; Veeck, Che, & Veeck, 2006). Inconsistencies in the use of the term have caused increased contention in the literature (Colton & Bissix, 2005; Guerrero Velasco, Campon Cerro, & Hernandez Mogollon, 2012; Lane, 1994).

Phillip et al. (2010) have suggested that agritourism is a nebulous concept, with little clarity of its key features. Viljoen and Tlabela (2006) place agritourism under the umbrella of rural tourism alongside community-based tourism and cultural tourism. Phillip et al. (2010) also consider agritourism to be a subset of rural tourism, which is based on utilising resources in rural areas (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Hall, Roberts, & Mitchell, 2003; Roberts & Hall, 2001), for enjoyment and educational purposes (Ray, 2003). Agritourism has also been defined as a 'strategic economic activity that could engage rural communities in a mix of activities that provide food-related products and leisure within the productive agricultural property' (Little, 2006, p. 10). Like Ray (2003), Arroyo et al. (2013, p. 46) include an educational component, defining agritourism as 'farming-related activities carried out on a working farm or other agricultural setting for entertainment or education purposes.'

It does appear to be unanimous that agritourism is viewed as a key strategy for rural development (European Commission [EC], 2007; Saxena, Clark, Oliver, & Ilbery, 2007; Slee, Farr, & Snowdon, 1997). Agritourism is not a new form of tourism, yet it has gained considerable attention from many governments looking to enhance opportunities for rural people. Indeed, Busby and Rendle (2000) suggest that agritourism is primarily used as a strategy to ensure economic viability of agricultural practices.

It appears that stakeholders' interpretations of agritourism have grown to include a vast array of activities. Hsu (2005, p. 20) suggests that agritourism activities consist of 'interaction between the agricultural producer, his/her products and services, and the tourists.' These products combine farm-based bed and breakfast, tours of the farm, culture, arts and crafts and natural heritage. Nilsson (2002) believes agritourism's linkage with homestays provides opportunities for tourists to experience education and recreation activities. Sznajder, Przeborska, and Scrimgeour (2009, p. 3) describe agritourism as 'human tourist activity whose aim is to familiarise oneself with farming activity and recreation in an agricultural environment,' suggesting that the farm is the basic entity that underlies agritourism by providing tourist services. They believe that agritourism is developing into what will be one of the largest sectors of tourism in many regions due to the unlimited possibility to create new and innovative products (Sznajder et al., 2009).

Authors such as Flanigan et al. (2014), Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter (2015) and Phillip et al. (2010) responded to the lack of consensus in the literature and developed an agritourism typology proposing five different types of agritourism based on multiple conceptualisations (see Figure 6). This typology moves from considering agritourism as a homogenous entity to viewing it as including many types of products (Phillip et al., 2010).

Flanigan et al. (2014, p. 394) suggest that by considering the products identified in the literature in this way, the agritourism typology 'enables authors to position their work in a meaningful way.' We suggest, nonetheless, that their binary approach falls short of reflecting the diversity of important dimensions and the continua along which a particular activity may lie. Neither does it sufficiently incorporate key elements of quality tourism experiences or environmental and socio-cultural sustainability. This ignores the aforementioned global discourses regarding the urgent focus on sustainability in both agriculture and tourism and reinforces the predominate focus

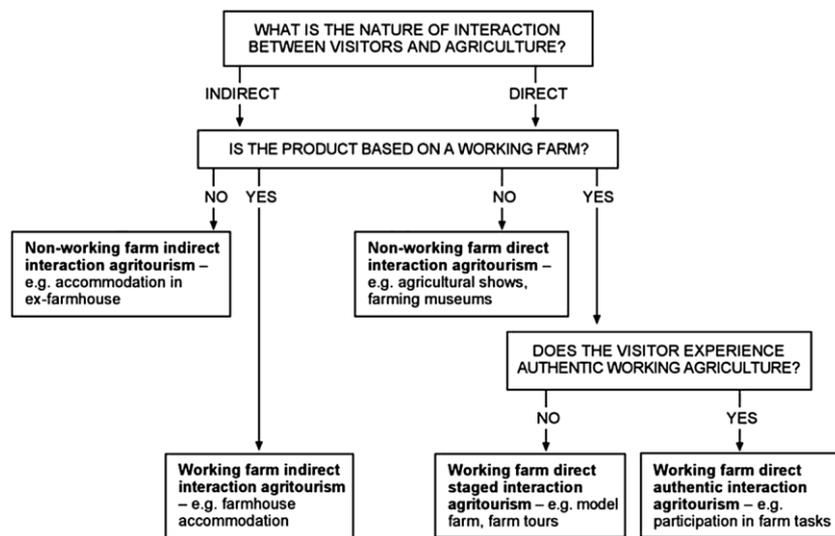
in the literature of agritourism as a catalyst for economic growth and income supplements (Das & Rainey, 2010).

We suggest that, to optimise the value of agritourism for all stakeholders, it is essential that conceptualisations of agritourism go beyond a purely economic perspective (Phillip et al., 2010), are context sensitive and outcomes focused. While there have been previous calls in the agritourism literature for sustainable development that ensures preservation of local culture and environment alongside economic growth (Scialabba & Williamson, 2004), sustainability is not inherently how agritourism is defined and conceptualised unlike other tourism niches such as ecotourism. Moreover, while Flanigan et al. (2014, 2015) have made an important contribution in producing a typology based on the literature, most studies on agritourism have taken place in the developed world (Arroyo et al., 2013). As a result, their typology falls short of capturing the broader considerations of sustainable tourism, particularly in a developing country context, as well as consideration of the tourism experience. In order to progress this discourse, we outline a framework of agritourism dimensions which allows for contextual approaches that privilege sustainability, smallholder benefits and facilitate quality visitor experiences.

Agritourism dimensions: a contextual model incorporating sustainability, smallholder benefits and visitor experience

In the South Pacific context, the continued conceptualisation issues regarding agritourism are problematic for a range of reasons. Wyporska and Mosiej (2010) suggest that agritourism activities should enable the multifunctionality of rural smallholders, while creating sustainable livelihoods both socially and economically. However, the literature surrounding agritourism has done little to ensure the links between tourism and agriculture regarding sustainability and conservation of resources. While Caribbean and South Pacific governments focus on agritourism as a way to link the tourism industry to rural smallholders, the absence of a clear and appropriate definition in this context has constrained the creation of effective policies that can strengthen the development of sustainable agriculture (Colton & Bissix, 2005). Furthermore, tourists' expectations of agritourism are poorly understood, and yet they need to align with the destination's product base to ensure the effectiveness of marketing strategies is not compromised (Veeck et al., 2006), as they can affect the ability of agritourism development to enhance livelihoods in rural areas.

By combining extensive literature analysis of the conceptualisation of agritourism and agroecology with comprehensive dialogue with various stakeholders from Vanuatu and Fiji, we were able to develop a conceptual framework (Figure 7) for identifying key characteristics of an agritourism experience. A series of workshops and consultations were conducted from 2014 to 2016 as part of ongoing agricultural research projects in Fiji and Vanuatu. These workshops and consultative conversations took place with government departments, NGOs, traditional landholders and other community members to open up discussion on the drive from governmental departments in these countries to provide enhanced opportunities for rural smallholders by strengthening links to the tourism industry. These discussions helped to develop the criteria that inform the agritourism dimensions framework (Figure 7).

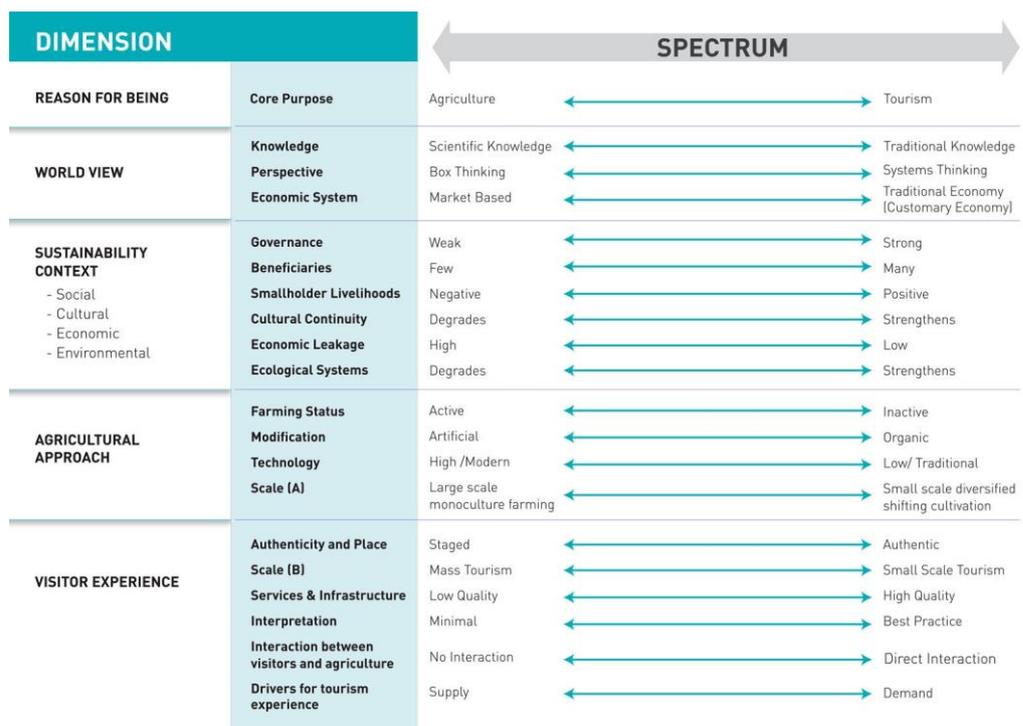


A revised typology for defining agritourism (Flanigan, Blackstock, & Hunter, 2015)

The agritourism dimensions framework facilitates a clear understanding of the context and drivers for the activity and its standing with regard to its fundamental purpose, sustainability, visitor experience and smallholder benefits. The framework recognises the importance of context and the reality of complexity by allowing practitioners and planners to determine the current and the desired position along individual spectra. Through this, the framework facilitates open and transparent discourse on the key dimensions of an agritourism experience. It could be used as a checklist to assess the current state of an existing activity, or in the planning and

development of a desired experience. It brings the currently missing sustainability focus into the agritourism discourse and allows for the recognition of agroecological tourism – agritourism that seeks to express high levels of sustainability and recognises alternative world views with the overall goal of cultural preservation through knowledge transfer between hosts and guests. This conceptual framework can assist stakeholders to frame agritourism activities within the literature and match their products with the demands of tourists.

The agritourism dimensions framework (Figure 7) explicitly addresses five dimension themes: reason for being; world view; sustainability contexts (social, cultural, economic and environmental); agricultural approach and visitor experience. Within these themes, individual dimensions facilitate stakeholder assessment along spectra which contrast knowledge systems, governance and smallholder livelihood impact, scale in regard to both farming and tourism, authenticity and quality of visitor experience, interpretation and interaction between host and visitor and the drivers for tourism. The agritourism dimensions framework encompasses a holistic approach to understanding agritourism that does not seek to categorise activities, instead recognising the grey areas that exist within the dimensions of agritourism. The situation in the South Pacific illustrates the need for the re-conceptualisation of agritourism proposed in this paper and will be drawn upon in the following elaborations of the five themes and subthemes of the dimensions framework.



Agritourism dimensions framework

World view and reason for being

Acknowledging alternative world views and knowledge systems is vital when considering development in a rural South Pacific context. Studies within this context have found positive correlations between resilience and feeling of well-being among rural communities that have full and partial customary land access and high social capital (VNSO, 2012). The traditional economy is described as an alternative to dominant economic theory that supports social capital by encouraging reciprocal networks of exchange and obligation at the community level, while also enabling sustainable economic activity at the individual and household level (Regenvanu, 2010). Yet many studies continue to discredit traditional knowledge systems and overlook the importance of subsistence and traditional activities (Anderson, 2011). Acknowledging alternative world views creates a space for reconceptualising agritourism in order to explicitly consider social, cultural and environmental outcomes in addition to the economic dimensions.

Traditional knowledge systems and practices are described as the primary bonds that sustain the resilient nature of traditional gardening systems (Ngidlo, 2011). Agroecology encompasses a social movement that recognises the importance of traditional knowledge to sustainable farming systems. It seeks to bridge the gap between scientific and traditional knowledge by enabling a space for both. Agroecological tourism is put forward to specifically support sustainable traditional diversified gardening systems as opposed to more large-scale and intensive forms of agricultural development. Such an approach, it is argued, can link rural smallholders to the wider tourism industry by offering symbiosis through the strengthening of the linkages between sectors and at the same time contribute to building regional resilience and reducing vulnerabilities.

The agritourism dimensions framework provides a spectrum for locating the implementation of both scientific and traditional knowledge systems within agriculture and economic considerations. Understanding differing world views can reveal how best cultural values, the cash economy and governance can support sustainable development and resilience.

Sustainability: cultural, social, economic and environmental

To further develop agroecological tourism on smallholder farms there must be a concerted effort from governments in the South Pacific to provide supportive frameworks and facilitate collaboration between governmental departments, communities, the larger tourism industry and NGOs. Such collaboration from governmental departments in the South Pacific has been occurring recently, working to strengthen the linkages between rural smallholders and the tourism industry, supported by regional and international partners such as the CTA and the IICA. While this collaboration can be seen as a positive step for refocusing policy objectives, to strengthen and advance key linkages between tourism and agriculture (IICA, 2015), it is not clear whether this policy will support rural smallholders to develop businesses based on sustainable traditional farming systems or promote changes in farming practices to unsustainable methods.

Case studies of locally owned tourism development in rural areas of the South Pacific found that strong policy commitment and legal frameworks that protect the rights of local people are crucial to the success of these businesses (Sofield, 2003). Yet governance and policy of agritourism varies geographically (Sznajder et al., 2009). Wang, Cheng, Min, and He (2012) describe the importance of governance when developing agritourism, while Griffin (2006) advocates for stakeholders to coordinate the agritourism development process effectively and efficiently. In many countries such as the U.S., there is a lack of legal frameworks and policies relating to the development and marketing of agritourism (Carpio et al., 2008). By comparison, in the EU, agritourism is clearly defined and legally bound for the purpose of applying incentives or subsidies to their providers (Arroyo et al., 2013). Many countries of the EU regard the multifunctional development of farms through the application of agritourism to be a crucial element of their rural social policy (Sznajder et al., 2009).

Enhancing sustainability in agritourism recognises the greater aesthetic value in diversified agricultural landscapes with semi-natural habitats over monoculture, degraded and polluted areas. Traditional agricultural systems often exhibit high levels of diversity, as communities rely on a broad range of integrated systems to provide them with food, water, fuel and medicine (Walter & Lebot, 2007). These systems are inspired by cultural practices and the interaction between people and their environments which have taken place over generations. FAO (2013) estimates that over 2 billion people are still reliant on the products and services derived from these

traditional gardening systems. The agritourism dimensions framework makes a space for the ecosystem services that can be provided in sustainable farming systems, encouraging smallholders to assess whether their activities are strengthening or degrading these services. This can also be linked to smallholder livelihoods, and the quality of place.

The major drivers of change impacting on these systems are predominately displacement by broadscale modern agriculture, loss of land and labour to other industries, such as tourism, urbanisation and climate change (Ngidlo, 2011). The combinations of market forces and the impacts of climate change reduce the resilience of smallholders and therefore to conserve their traditional farming systems. These drivers of change can be addressed within the sustainability contexts of the agritourism dimensions framework. By enabling smallholders to locate their business activities within the sustainability spectrum, activities that look to be within low to moderate sustainability can be modified to enable businesses to adapt to more sustainable methods. Developing smallholder focused agroecological tourism products and services may help to act as a remedial step in addressing the loss of resilience. Development programmes may also assist to inscribe suitable smallholder farms and traditional farming systems on the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems list under the World Heritage Organisation to conserve them.

Cultural continuity plays a significant role in the future of traditional gardening systems (Scialabba & Williamson, 2004). Urbanisation has seen an exodus of younger people from rural areas as Western influenced education influences the pursuit of more lucrative employment than farming. This leads to the questioning of traditional knowledge and practices leading young people to distance themselves from traditional ways of living (Scialabba & Williamson, 2004). One way to reinforce traditional knowledge is to develop strategies to transfer the knowledge to the younger generations by integrating it within the curricula of formal education. However, education programmes need to be supported by economic activities, such as agroecological tourism that demonstrate the livelihood benefits from interpreting this knowledge. Reinforcing traditional knowledge is addressed within the cultural dimension of the framework where stakeholders can assess along a spectrum whether the agritourism activity is degrading or strengthening cultural continuity.

Agricultural approach

Traditional garden systems defined as ‘sets of interconnected customary practices of producing crops and animals for food, socio-cultural uses and export which conserve resources, protect the environment and are passed down from generation to generation’ (Tofinga, 2001, p. 34), play a key role in achieving food security and sustainability. Traditional gardening systems in the South Pacific have predominately consisted of agroforestry gardens – maximising food production by intercropping multipurpose trees with short-term crops. The majority (75%) of the rural populations in the South Pacific partake in subsistence or semi-subsistence agriculture, however, the desire for disposable income is beginning to shift smallholders away from traditional systems, replacing them with mono-cropping cash crops such as kava, taro and cassava (McMahon, 2012). McMahon (2012) also highlights that large-scale withdrawal of land from traditional use to expatriate leaseholds is starting to occur. This agricultural intensification is resulting in unsustainable practices such as clearing of forests (encroaching further into catchment areas) resulting in increased soil degradation and erosion (Addinsall et al., 2015).

Meeting the current and future food needs of a rapidly growing population remains one of society’s greatest challenges (Godfray et al., 2010). Across a range of disciplines, researchers increasingly link negative social impacts and environmental degradation to the large-scale intensive agricultural industry. The dominant model of agricultural development has been largely based on ‘industrialisation, commercialisation, corporatisation and specialisation’ which ‘undermines food cultures, fails to alleviate hunger and malnutrition and is enabling the unprecedented consolidation of power in the hands of corporate agribusiness and transnational institutions’ (Anderson et al., 2015, p. 1). Gliessman (2015) describes the dominant model of industrial agriculture as containing a fundamental contradiction which makes it unsustainable. This is because it cannot continue to supply the levels of production for a growing global population while it continues to degrade the essential elements that agriculture relies on by favouring high yield in the present over long-term productivity (Altieri, Funes-Monzote, & Peterson, 2012; Gliessman, 2015). The agritourism dimensions framework specifically addresses these differing forms of agriculture and their association with the sustainable use of resources and supporting rural livelihoods. The dimensions within the agricultural approach section of the framework determine where the farm is placed on the spectrum of sustainability

approaches to agriculture. The framework expands on the agritourism literature by describing the agricultural methods of the farm, making distinctions between large-scale monoculture farming and small-scale shifting cultivation, the level of activity on the farm from an active farming business to inactive non-working farm, external inputs versus organic methods and the level of technology.

Visitor experience

Arroyo et al. (2013) suggest that both the supply and demand side be incorporated into conceptualising what is agritourism, in part to enhance the effectiveness of marketing agritourism. As such, it should be acknowledged that Flanigan et al.'s (2014, 2015) typology does include a demand component, but we suggest that their focus on authenticity versus staged experiences does not go far enough in capturing important elements of agritourism experiences. Thus, in addition to the application of sustainable tourism principles, a deeper engagement with the elements of a quality tourist experience needs to be incorporated into the conceptualisation of agritourism.

There is little evidence-based understanding of what tourists may be expecting or seeking in an agritourism experience. Current agritourism farms are said to be predominately low farming intensity or organic production (Sznajder et al., 2009) and diversified landscapes (Daugstad, Rønningen, & Skar, 2006), not because of regulatory mechanisms or clear mandates, but because agritourists' desire to experience farms that are perceived to support mental, physical and spiritual wellness, rather than intensified farms where high levels of fertilisers and pesticides are employed to maximise crop and animal yields (MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). Beyond these isolated studies, all of which are in developed countries (Arroyo et al., 2013), little is known about what agritourists want. This may be in part because agritourists are not a homogenous market segment.

The lack of clarity around tourist demand for agritourism is also in part because the tourist experience is a socially constructed phenomenon, with no two travellers expecting or experiencing any given tourism product the same (Nickerson, 2006). As a result, a quality tourist experience can be difficult to define, and what is perceived as quality by one tourist may not be for the next (Nickerson, 2006). To plan and deliver effective or 'quality' experiences, tourism providers need to know their visitor market and integrate four elements or layers to deliver an experience: (1) *place* and its key appeal and capacity for visitor connection, (2) quality and type of *infrastructure*

that visitors need, (3) quality, style and type of *services* and (4) value-adding through meaningful *interpretation* (Tourism Tasmania, 2016). In the case of agritourism in the South Pacific nations, the smallholder farm is clearly the place that is central to an authentic visitor experience. Additionally, we acknowledge the need for attention to be paid to infrastructure and customer service, but for our purposes here, we suggest that tourist engagement and activity, enhanced by interpretation, is key to marketing and delivering a quality agritourism experience (Nickerson, 2006). As reported in previous agritourism studies, these may include farming-related activities for leisure, entertainment or education; farm-based bed and breakfast and homestay experiences; tours of the farm; culture, arts and crafts, and natural heritage experiences; food-related products and experiences and interaction with the agricultural producer (Arroyo et al., 2013; Flanigan et al., 2014; Hsu, 2005; Little, 2006; Nilsson, 2002; Sznajder et al., 2009).

To assist in achieving quality in such a diverse range of experiences and activities, we turn to heritage and nature interpretation, that is, communication activities designed to present and explain aspects of the natural and cultural heritage of a tourist destination to visitors (Moscardo, 2014). Principles for delivering meaningful interpretation (as per element 4 above) may be particularly relevant to a quality agritourism experience in the context of smallholder farm products in a developing country context.

By focusing primarily on the interpretation of sustainable traditional agroecosystems which exhibit cultural and heritage significance we can also meet tourist demand. That is, in addition to offering an authentic tourist experience as suggested by one of Flanigan et al.'s (2014, 2015) agritourism types, it needs to integrate the various elements (place, infrastructure and services) required for delivering a quality experience as discussed earlier and it needs to value-add to the experience via the use of effective, meaningful interpretation.

A meta-analysis by Skibins, Powell, and Stern (2012) highlights five 'best practice' interpretive principles that were consistently associated with visitor attitude, awareness, behaviour, intention, knowledge and satisfaction. They found that 'actively engaging audiences,' 'multisensory interpretation,' 'resource- and place-based messaging,' 'theme development' and 'multiple delivery styles' were widely studied principles consistently linked to both visitor satisfaction and increased levels of visitor awareness as outcomes (Skibins et al., 2012).

The Minister of Agriculture, Matai Seremaiah recently put forward agritourism as an ‘excellent opportunity, not only for broadening our tourism base by diversifying the visitor experience, but also offering the potential for sustainable and healthy farm experiences and eating healthy food’ (Harvey, 2016, p. 1). Ena Harvey from the IICA sees the potential for linkages in agriculture and tourism to stimulate new markets and product development while also providing opportunities to develop visitor attractions and distinctive tourism destination brands (Harvey, 2016). Fansa Farm Foodie Tours in Vanuatu is one such example of an agroecological tourism product that actively engages tourists (FFFT, 2016). George Borugu the Director of Tourism in Vanuatu stated that while Fansa Farm Foodie Tour is a new business idea for Vanuatu, he believes there is a need for ‘many more local people to come into agritourism,’ suggesting agritourism ‘is the future of our tourism industry’ (FFFT, 2016).

Fansa Farm Foodie Tours is an interpretive tour based on visiting traditional gardening systems, as well as harvesting, preparing and eating the traditional crops. The tour integrates education and interpretation with signage along paths and a tour-guide educating tourists in how traditional systems work. It also provides multisensory experiences through culinary tourism by incorporating cooking lessons using traditional methods of food preparation, which is conducted in partnership with Lapita Café, a locally owned supplier of traditional foods. Multisensory experiences might be as simple as smelling and tasting produce, while resource- and place-based messaging requires greater understanding and engagement with the tourists’ background, for example, discussing what sort of gardens they have at home, where they source their food from, how they prepare their food and making connections with what they are seeing and experiencing on the farm.

Theme development can be a little more challenging, requiring the smallholder to think about what key message they wish their visitors to take home and then planning activities and communication to support this message. This could be about the value of a particular food product, the importance of smallholder farming to the South Pacific or even what the tourist can do to support sustainable agriculture in their home country. The use of on-site media in addition to face-to-face communication by farmers and others is also well worth considering, such as interpretive signs, to strengthen and reinforce the communication and enhance the overall experience; this could potentially include pre- and post-visit communication such as via websites and social media. The Fansa Farm Foodie Tours has successfully

implemented multisensory experiences and theme development to create an experience for tourists that supports the principles of agroecological tourism. Yet it is currently not operational due to damage caused from a category 5 cyclone in May 2016. While this has interrupted the operation of the tour, there are plans to reopen in the future as the owners have suggested that the tour had gained considerable interest from tourists in the short time of operation.

The agritourism dimensions framework engages with the visitor experience and prompts stakeholders to consider the place, services/infrastructure and interpretation within a spectrum of low quality to high quality, alongside the interaction between visitors and agriculture (no/direct interaction) who are the drivers for the tourism experience. For example businesses that deliver a high-quality visitor experience are more likely to drive demand for the product. The agritourism dimensions framework provides a supportive tool for smallholders looking to develop agroecological tourism by providing a guiding framework for business development. Outcomes of workshops and consultations found potential for agroecological tourism development in Vanuatu, where many smallholders are still implementing traditional farming practices. On islands such as Pentecost in the north of Vanuatu, irrigated water taro systems from ancient times are still being practiced (Walter & Lebot, 2007). There is now work being done by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre to recognise such traditional farming practices as GIHAS and World Heritage Listed (WHL) activities. Timothy and Boyd (2003) suggest that raising the profile of traditional farming systems through avenues such as GIHAS and WHL can encourage tourists to seek them out for their cultural significance.

Implementation of the agritourism dimensions framework

The agritourism model (Figure 5) and agritourism dimensions framework (Figure 7) proposed in this paper respond to the lack of sustainability discourse in the agritourism literature despite the global push towards sustainability in both agriculture and tourism. The framework addresses this gap by providing a space to consider differing world views and approaches to agriculture and tourism and how this can impact on the type of agritourism product that is developed. The framework is designed so that there is no categorisation of activities into yes or no, right or wrong answers, instead it acknowledges the need to allow stakeholders to assess current activities, identify their current and desired placement along each spectrum and plan

the development of future activities by offering flexibility to move along the spectrum as activities change.

The agritourism dimensions framework merges and extends dialogue considering the agribusiness and industry-driven push for agritourism development in the South Pacific and the academic discourse on agritourism surrounding its conceptualisation with consideration of the sustainable tourism development discourse, to ensure that economic activities from agritourism are viable, contextual and sustainable contributing to enhancing rural smallholders' livelihoods in the South Pacific. The framework also has the potential to guide rural smallholders to develop activities based on the principles of sustainability while meeting the expectations and interests of tourists seeking an agritourism experience. This will require capacity-building of smallholders to plan activities and engage with tourists using the agritourism dimensions framework as a guide alongside some or all of the interpretation principles. Strategies for agritourism based on the principles of agroecology will enable policy-makers and development bodies to address the economic systems that have long disadvantaged a vast majority of rural smallholders. Also invoking heritage interpretation principles will ensure that the tourist product not only supports the heritage values of smallholder gardening practices, but will be appealing and satisfying to tourists.

While this article has not tested the agritourism dimensions framework with real agritourism case studies in the South Pacific, it does provide a literature analysis and summary of the workshops that respond to the lack of sustainability discourse in the agritourism literature. The framework developed in this research enables future studies or development in agritourism to consider the many dimensions that come from linking agriculture and tourism and acknowledge the varying nature of these dimensions.

Conclusion

Agritourism is a key economic development strategy aimed at benefitting both agriculture and tourism and, at least in the case of developing countries, contributing to sustainable rural livelihoods. Fostering economic activities at local and regional scales that holistically consider environmental, societal and cultural health can help to build resilience and reduce communities' vulnerability (Anderson, 2011; Regenvanu, 2010). This paper has sought to explore the concept of agritourism and its possible

application in a Pacific Island context and challenged the notion that agritourism, as presently conceived in the literature, is likely to support social enterprises at the smallholder and community scale that generate beneficial socio-economic and environmental impacts while diversifying economic structures to build resilience.

As such, this paper has presented an argument for a contextually appropriate and ecologically and socially inclusive model of agritourism that explicitly recognises the importance of traditional gardening systems, values the rural smallholder and traditional economy and aspires to sustainable tourism principles. As the push for agritourism continues to build within the South Pacific from governments and NGOs who are seeking to strengthen the linkages between tourism and agriculture, it is vital to ensure that industry does not inadvertently promote unsustainable farming practices or unsustainable tourism development. While governments and multilateral donors continue to support agritourism as a rural development strategy to improve the livelihoods of smallholders, this paper argues that it is essential to avoid agricultural policies that result in land degradation, overproduction and low food prices which also drive the influx of imported foods into local communities.

We found that in Flanigan et al.'s (2014, 2015) agritourism typology, sustainability is not inherent in how agritourism is defined and conceptualised. This reinforces the bias towards agritourism as a catalyst for economic growth and income benefits without regard to potential costs. On the other hand, Flanigan et al. (2014, 2015) do capture the diversity of supply (product) and demand that can be considered agritourism. Our model of agritourism dimensions builds on Flanigan et al.'s (2014, 2015) typology by acknowledging this diversity, but drawing attention to the merits of framing of such practices with a sustainability lens in order to facilitate a paradigm shift towards agroecological tourism as the preferred model, at least in contexts such as the South Pacific. Grounded in these ecological foundations, agroecological tourism in the South Pacific region has the potential to offer rural landholders incentives for sustaining traditional gardening systems and providing diversified income-generating activities that are based on the principles of sustainability. To achieve this, attention needs to be paid to the development, marketing and delivery of experiences that align with tourist expectations and interests. This paper recommends that governments and donor agencies operating in the South Pacific region implement strategies for rural development based on the principles of agroecology, to enable smallholders to benefit from the economic systems that have long disadvantaged

them. Agroecological tourism value-adds to agritourism to empower smallholders to create the necessary changes to address inequality in rural areas of the South Pacific and ensure a triple bottom line approach to sustainable tourism that is of benefit to all.

While agritourism will continue to be encouraged by governments and multilateral donors as a rural development strategy to improve the livelihoods of smallholders, global trade policies that result in overproduction, low prices and unregulated markets continue to impact adversely on farmers, along with the influx of culturally inappropriate imported foods (McMichael, 2008). The negative impacts that agritourism seeks to address will continue to grow if rural inequality is not addressed holistically.

Disclosure statement

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