

TRIGGERING A GIFT ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

What would happen if, the systems we deal with everyday, and the situations we find ourselves in, could trigger us to give something to someone else?

This work started by exploring the theme of money systems and social structures and the ambition to find alternatives for our current economic system, which has failed in several ways. People all over the world are already coming up with alternatives that can supplement and stabilize our money-monoculture and that give new meaning to currency.

This research investigates a particular alternative economic system called the *gift economy*, which has great potential to build meaningful relations and re-establish a sense of community. Since the *gift economy* has been mainly researched by anthropologists and ethnographers in the last century, my focus is on implementing its principles in society today.

Through literature review, case studies and a series of design projects, this thesis articulates possible ways of triggering a *gift economy*. With a special coin, a concept for a bar and by linking the local bakery to Konstfack, we may start to understand what giving really means, how it can benefit us, in what way it can build more meaningful relationships and how it can offer an alternative way of thinking than what currently drives our economic system.

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INTRODUCTION

A BROKEN SYSTEM

In 2008 our financial system as we know it collapsed. Even now, in 2013, we are still coping with the results of the economic crisis that has had serious effect on people’s everyday lives. This economic system has proved to be unable to solve our current problems and fulfil all of our needs (such as taking care of an aging population, provide people with fulfilling jobs, keep a healthy planet, or creating meaningful connections between people). Besides our economy being unable to solve our current problems, it seems that it is this same system that can be to blame for the problems it created in the first place. With the increasing individualisation of society, we can see a growing gap between rich and poor, between people from different ages and cultural backgrounds. Neo-liberalist ideals and the commoditisation of life have helped causing this individualisation of society by making our connection to money stronger then the connection with our neighbours. With this rising inequality the desire for community and solidarity is growing stronger, and the search for alternatives to capitalism or classic economic thinking seems more important then ever before.

So what are the alternatives? As Fredric Jameson argued, “it is now easier for us to imagine the end of the world than an alternative to capitalism.” But just because it’s hard for us to imagine alternatives to the current financial system, doesn’t mean that there are none. Today, it is so embedded in our way of thinking that things only have value when we can measure, evaluate, prove on paper, and reduce things to their market value. How can we start to think otherwise? Bridge the gap between the measurable and an experienced reality?

I am not an economist, and I have always had a hard time understanding economics. But to rethink our social and economic relations, it seems the most important thing is “to try and think the impossible possibility of an alternative with the tools and materials we have at hand.”¹ And when it comes to imagining the impossible, I think that this is a task that perfectly fits my field, which is the field of Experience Design.

1. As mentioned by Timotheus Vermeulen in an article in Frieze Magazine. The article discusses the role of the artist in city economies. Fox, Dan. “Changing Places” Frieze Magazine, Issue 148, June-August 2012.

EXPERIENCE DESIGN

As a designer I focus on the experiences people have in their everyday lives and zoom out to look at the bigger systems that underlie these experiences. In this case I became interested in the economic system we live with, and how this dominates strongly how we think, act and relate to each other, without us being aware of it. This system doesn’t serve us in a lot of ways and has been impoverishing us when it comes to our experiences, as well as our emotional and existential needs. The design profession nowadays has proven its potential to create significant change and its power of solving ambiguous problems. The tools and methods of Experience Design², such as systems design, interdisciplinary thinking, future forecasting and experience prototyping, are very helpful and relevant when it comes to dealing with such big topics. I like to be a social change maker, focussing on people and their behaviour as individuals and the way they behave towards one another. Therefore the starting point for me is always the human being, with which I mean the multifaceted person, whose motivations are emotional, sensorial, rational as well as irrational. In this case when talking about human beings in relation to the economy, this is significantly different then the one-dimensional man of classical economic theory whose motivations are, to put it simplistically, greed and selfishness. This thesis claims that our economic system doesn’t fit our socio-biological nature and therefore I will search for alternatives that can also fulfil our emotional and social needs.

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIES

People around the world are questioning our monetary system and are coming up with alternatives, which give money new properties. These initiatives are mostly based on connecting people with each other outside of the “formal market”. The online world has had a massive impact on the possibilities for people to take their own initiatives for exchanging and trading.

Alternatives are important because they bring diversity to today’s monetary monoculture by stabilizing and supplementing it. To be viable in the long run, a system – whether its our money system, immune system or our food supply system - should find a balance between efficiency and resilience³, i.e. the ability to adapt to sudden change. Thus in the case of our financial system, the efficiency principle has been much more in the forefront, and we have paid a high price for that. As currency expert Bernard Lietaer argues, to optimise the prospects of sustainability, there needs to be a greater diversity of complementary money types.⁴

These alternative economies take, and have historically taken, many forms. Think of barter-like systems or platforms for swapping and trading online. Also today, local currencies are popping up in many places.

2. When I talk about Experience Design and its methods I refer to the methods used by the Experience Design Group, master department at Konstfack, Stockholm.

3. The term resilience is mostly used when talking about the ecological system. Think of a forest in which a wide diversity of animals or plants can feed from one another, making it better protected from outside danger such as shocks or pests.

4. As referred to in the article: Dawson, Jonathan. “How Do We Redesign a New Economic Theory Framed by Ecological Systems?”, The Guardian, February 7, 2013

(Appendix A, P. 63)

5.Ibid

6. Dominus, Susan. The New York Times, March 27, 2013

They can facilitate exchange when there is no money available but when there is the time and desire of people to do so. I will give a more in depth story of several examples in appendix A; Alternative Economies. To give a good example of the point I’m trying to make, I will go into one type of alternative system now, which is called Time Banking.

Time Banking is a very egalitarian concept of trading one hour of your time for one hour of my time. I earn one hour for visiting an old lonely lady who needs care and I can buy an hour of someone’s time to come and help me in the garden. In Japan the concept of ‘Care Hours’ has become a widespread solution to support elderly care, and similar initiatives are to find in other countries.

What I find interesting is that not only does this system serve a practical need, it also changes the way people look upon themselves and do their “hour tasks”. People become aware of what they can mean for someone else, whether it is making an old lady happy with a visit, reading to a child or give cooking advice. The motivation shifts from earning money towards contributing something to the community and participating in something bigger. The connections established by Time Banking are more likely to to be personal then when money is involved.

Overall, when looking at the examples of several alternative economies, it seems that changing the means of exchange is more than just a practical solution. It could help create a more personal contact, deliver a sense of well-being, establish community, solidarity, empathy, equality and uniqueness. It triggers us to feel more responsible, engaged and trustworthy towards one another. These alternative economies all to a certain extend re-establish that which I have already pointed out; a sense of community, which is missing from society today.

The quest for a new economic theory is popping up everywhere. A recent article in *The Guardian*⁵ stresses the need for a new economic theory grounded in contemporary understanding.

From anthropology we learn that economy and society are inseparable and that markets and money are relatively recent arrivals, a thin veneer layered onto a much older history of co-operation, gift and reciprocity. (Dawson 2013)

It are exactly these three last words that will be the focus of my thesis. It is the concept of giving that I see as an important aspect of our future economical and social systems, and being immensely important in the attempt to re-establish connection in society.

A perception shift is needed for us to see giving as equally important as our focus on receiving. This shift is already happening. The *New York Times* recently published an article with the title “Is Giving the Secret to Getting Ahead?”⁶ which described recent studies on the benefits of an attitude of extreme giving at work.

THE GIFT ECONOMY

“In the gift economy the more you give the richer you are”

- *Charles Eisenstein*

In this thesis I will focus on a particular type of alternative economy, which is called the Gift Economy. A Gift Economy is an economy in which goods and services are given to one another without specific agreements for immediate or future returns. Unlike transactions using currency, in which there are no future obligations, gifts imply future gifts and therefore can establish new and meaningful relations and a sense of community.

Fields that have been concerned with researching Gift Economies are anthropology, ethnography and later also medical sociology (studying human blood- and organ donation). The most classic work about gift exchange was written in 1925 by the French sociologist Marcel Mauss and was originally titled, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (An essay on the gift: the form and reason of exchange in archaic societies). Another important contribution in the field is *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* written by Lewis Hyde in 1983. I mainly used a recent edition of Hyde's book for my research.

I will also turn to the more contemporary literature of Charles Eisenstein, author of the book *Sacred Economics: Money, Gift, and Society in the Age of Transition* (2011) several times in this thesis. Eisenstein discusses various aspects of our economy and claims that a shift from greed to gift economy is necessary. The gift economy represents a shift from consumption to contribution, transaction to trust, scarcity to abundance and isolation to community. These terms are key when it comes to developing concepts around Gift Economies.

MY CONTRIBUTION

With my work I would like to make a contribution in several ways:

Adding more diversity to the existing alternative economies, to shine a new light on existing research around Gift Economies; and to broaden the field of Experience Design. I will do this by focussing on what motivates people to start giving. My research question will be:

Can Experience Design trigger a Gift Economy?

The task thus is to trigger people to start giving to one another. I will do this by proposing alternative ways of thinking, producing, consuming and exchanging by including the principles of gift exchange. I will try to reach my goal of relearning gift giving by operating on a system level, by designing a system that allows and invites people to give.

The question “if a Gift Economy can replace the market economy?” is not relevant here. I rather focus on how we can relearn gifting to help establish a sense of community. So how can we be encouraged to rely more on each other, to trust that when we give, we will receive back from others in the future? As well as triggering the act of gifting I hope to change peoples way of thinking and inform policy to move this concept forward.

APPROACH

This thesis is established by literature reviews related to the topic, as well as several design experiments I did starting December 2012 until May 2013. Through design led research, observations and interviews I will map out in what way giving can be triggered, and how it can be part of our future systems.

The next chapter about the money economy is included to create a better understanding of how our current system works – or rather what doesn't work- and draws lines between society, behaviour and economy. The second chapter gives an insight into the principles of gift exchange by looking at the classical research. Also I will give a more personal perspective on the subject by extracting principles I see as useful when initiating a Gift Economy. The third chapter deals with the topic of ‘triggering behaviour’, and here I will go deeper into a specific case study. In the last chapter I will be trying to answer the research question by describing several design experiments I did to trigger the Gift Economy and the results of those experiments.



1.1 Project at Konstfack degree exhibition, entrance piece to the room.

(Appendix B, P. 65)

MONEY AND SOCIETY

We’ve all been told, “Money makes the world go round.” But what is money actually? Why did we ‘invent’ money? And how do we use it nowadays? In what way does it shape our experience of the world around us on a daily basis? Because the story of money and society is a long one, I decided not to include all my research concerning this topic here, but you can read it as optional in the appendix.

In appendix B; A history of money and market, I will describe what money is and what kind of effect it has had on our society. I will explain why money turns everything into the measurable and how our system, based on interest, creates an ever-widening gap between the owners and lenders of money. The appendix contains also a short parable written by economic visionary Bernard Lietaer, which illustrates how the free market has made us more competitive and focussed on the individual instead of caring for the wider community. This point will be made also by looking into certain governments and the effect neo-liberalist ideas have had on society.

WHAT MONEY CAN’T BUY

Michael Sendell reflects in his book *What Money Can’t Buy – The Moral Limits of Markets* (2012) on the fact that over the past three decades, markets- and market values- have come to govern our lives as never before. “We live at a time when almost everything can be bought and sold” (Sendell 2012:5). This commoditisation of everything that once was for free has its implications. Sendell explains how we transformed from having a money economy into being a money society.

“A money economy is a tool, a valuable and effective tool for organizing productive activity. A market society is a way of life in which market values seep into every aspect of human endeavour. It’s a place where social relations

are made over in the image of the market“ (2012:10).

So it’s fair to ask here: How can we create community if we pay for all we need? If a guy in my neighbourhood fixes my bike I can pay him to do so and I won’t owe him anything anymore. If he would do it for free I could be afraid he will see it as a sign that he can come over for coffee and chat about his life, and, I need to think of what to give him in return. This means I would have to know more about him to find a suitable return gift. Commoditization makes us bad givers but also bad receivers of each other’s help. It’s the idea of freedom that we value very highly, and payment makes sure we buy ourselves free from relating to strangers. We like to live anonymously and choose the people we relate to carefully. For example, it’s totally normal these days, to live in an apartment block and to not know your neighbours.¹

Sendell stimulates debate around the connection between money and morals, which, he argues, got detached from one another. I’m especially interested in his ideas around how, when money gets involved, it changes the nature of the goods or the actions in question and also changes our motivations;

“Economists often assume that markets are inert, that they do not affect the goods they exchange. But this is untrue. Markets leave their mark. Sometimes, market values crowd out nonmarket values worth caring about” (2012:9).

Examples of this can be read in Appendix C; The Effects of Commoditisation.

(Appendix C, P. 69)

POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

While working on this thesis, I often got people asking me whether I am aiming at a communistic or socialistic society. I’m not. Probably some aspects of the gift economy come closest to anarchism, if anything, the gift being sometimes described as anarchist property. The debate between ‘capitalist’ and ‘communist’, or ‘individualist’ and ‘socialist’ is an old one. I think we need the coexistence of the two opposites because both have their particular benefits. As Lewis Hyde explains in his book *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (2012):

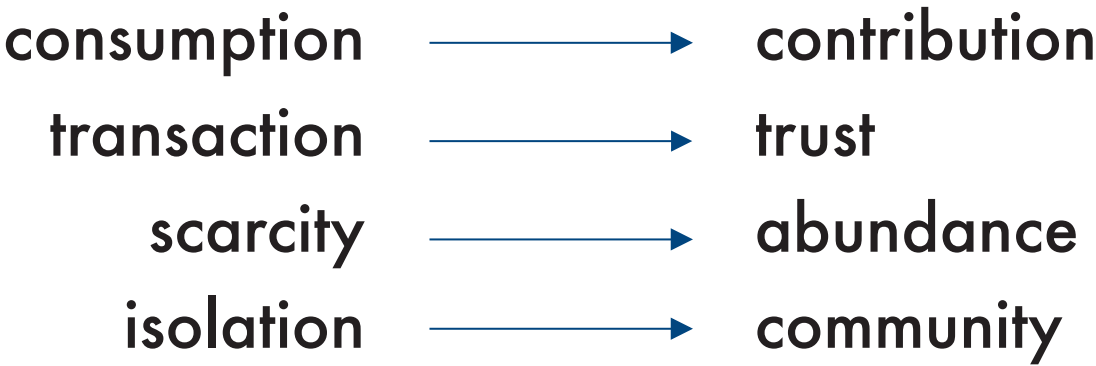
“Every age must find its balance between the two, and in every age the domination of either one will bring with it the call for its opposite...” (2012:39)

My standpoint in that, when making up the balance, the market has been leaving no space for gifting and I believe that this aspect is one that needs some attention now for the greater good.

“When I ask people what is missing most from their lives, the most common answer is “community.” But how can we build community when its building blocks-the things we do for each other-have all been converted into money? Community is woven from gifts. Unlike money or barter transactions, in which there are no obligations remaining after the transaction, gifts always imply future gifts. When we receive, we owe; gratitude is the knowledge of having received and the desire to give in turn. But what is there now to give? Not the necessities of life, not food, shelter, or clothing, not entertainment, not stories, not health care: everyone buys these. Hence the urge to get away from it all, to return to a more self-sufficient life where we build our own houses and grow our own food and make our own clothes, in community. Yet while there is value in this movement, I doubt that many people will start doing things the hard way again just in order to have community. There is another solution besides reversing the specialization of labor and the machine-based efficiency of the modern age, and it springs from the fact that money does not meet many of our needs at all. Very important needs go unmet today, and money, because of its impersonal nature, is incapable of meeting them. The community of the future will arise from the needs that money inherently cannot meet.” (Eisenstein 2011:78-79)

1. Of course this is culturally related and this won’t be the case in all countries. When I refer to society I’m talking about Sweden, the place in which my research took place, and other Western countries

THE GIFT ECONOMY

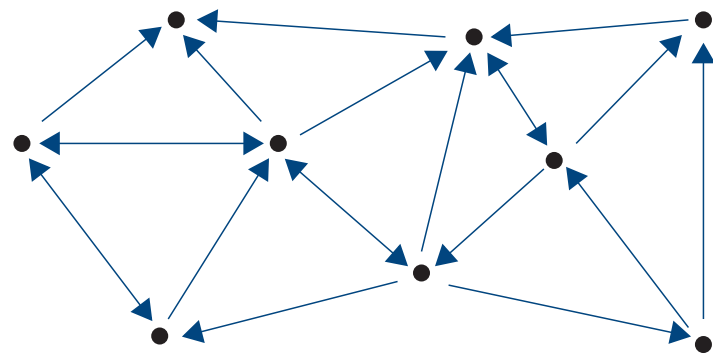


2.1 Shift towards a gift economy as formulated by Charles Eisenstein and others.

GIFT EXCHANGE

What is a gift? ‘A gift is a thing we do not get by our own efforts’ (Hyde 2012:xxii). One normally associates gift giving with ceremonies such as someone’s birthday. We tend to give gifts to people we are close to, friends and family mostly. When giving someone a true gift, you take some time and care to pick something for the person in question. Buying someone something they specifically asked for is less of a gift in its true sense. Gifts create bonds, as the receiver will feel gratitude and wouldn’t forget about your generosity. Unlike the sale of a commodity, the giving of a gift establishes social, spiritual and psychological bonds between giver and receiver. In principal, you don’t immediately expect a return gift, for that would make it more of a transaction. Culturally there are different ‘rules’ that accompany gift giving. In a lot of stories around tribes in which gift giving plays a remarkable role, a gift should be given further, and it often described as a property that perishes. Imagine some time and place in which someone’s status was determined by the amount of gifts given. Instead of the person who gets and has most, the person who gives most is higher in status.

Lewis Hyde’s book *The Gift* (2012) gives great insight what gift giving is, and makes a distinction between different forms of gift exchange. He explains that although we would commonly think of gifts being exchanged between two people, this is just the simplest form of gift exchange. It’s also called reciprocal giving, (‘reciprocity’ is the standard term used in the social sciences. The term for returning a gift, that has this sense of back and fro between people). Reciprocity requires a certain amount of trust, and has to follow a certain rhythm of exchange. You can think of two people exchanging knowledge, love, goods, time etc. When balanced, it has huge potential to create sustainable relationships.



2.2 Reciprocal giving between two persons .

2.3 An interconnected network of giving and receiving as we find it within a gift community.

“When gifts circulate within a group, their commerce leaves a series of interconnected relationships in its wake, and a kind of decentralized cohesiveness emerges.” (Hyde 2012:xxv)

At this moment we can talk about a gift economy or gift community. A gift economy is based on the idea that when I need something, and you want to give it to me, not only I feel grateful, but also the whole community will notice this gift you gave me. If you need help in the future, me or someone else in the group will make sure you receive help. It is social control, trust, responsibility and generosity that are key elements of a gift economy.

PRINCIPLES OF GIFT EXCHANGE

To understand the different principles of gift exchange I will now turn the stories of tribes, communities, and folktales. The examples are coming from the field of anthropology and ethnography, and give a good insight in what I see as important principles of gift exchange.

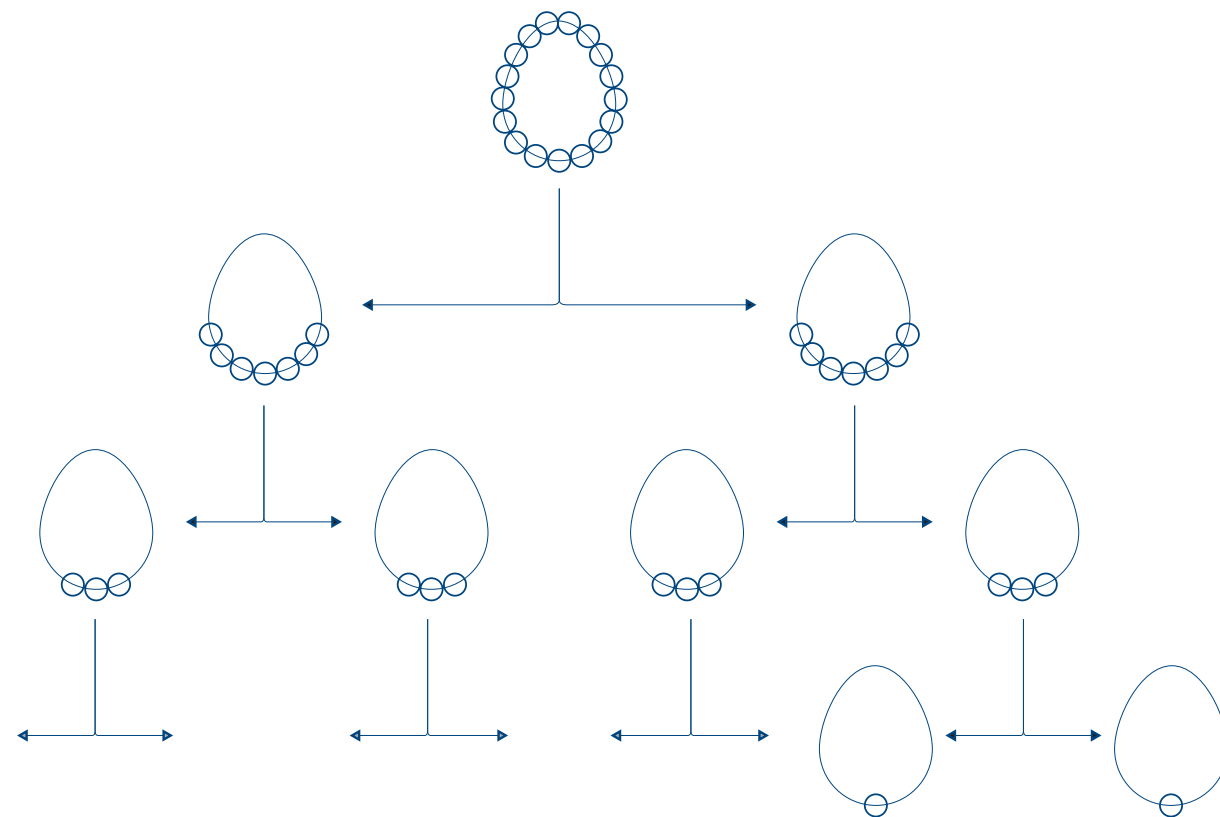
Gifts Must Always Move

The Indian giver understood that a gift was not supposed to be kept but was supposed to be given away again. Or, if it were kept, something of equal value should move on instead.

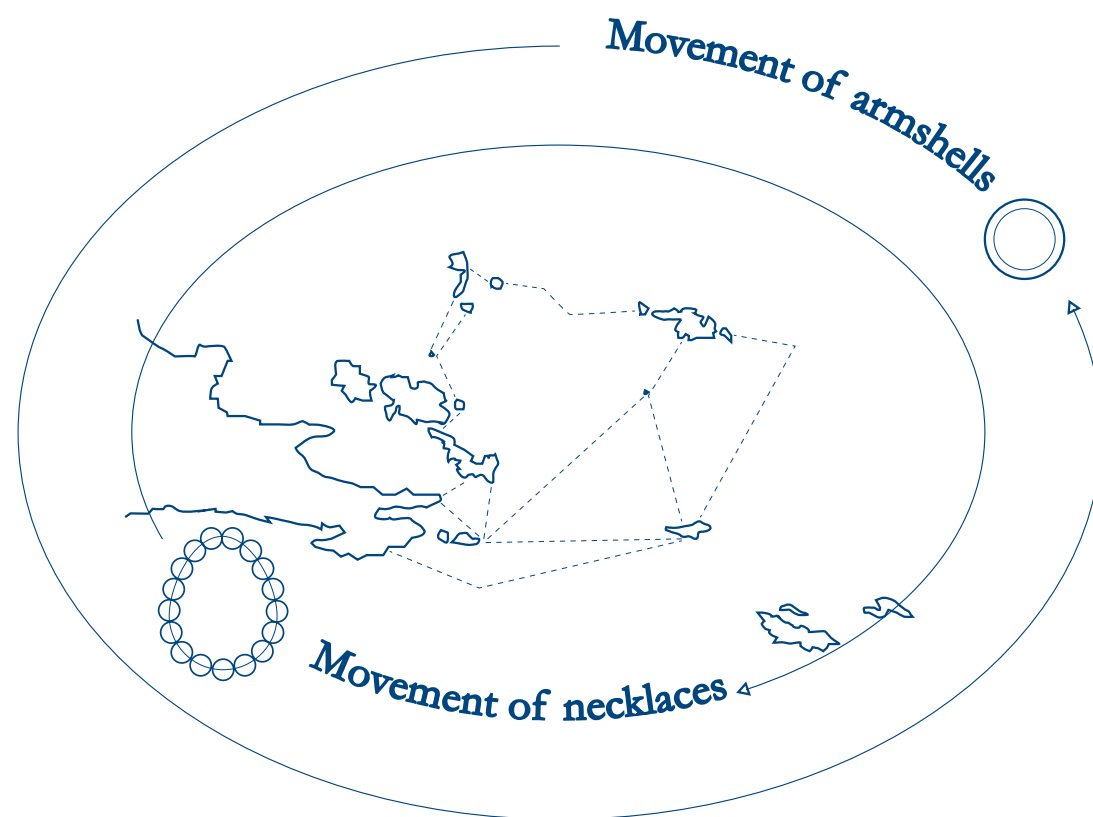
Another way to talk about motion of a gift is to say that a gift should always be consumed, used up, or eaten. In most stories the gifts given are, not surprisingly, food, since it is so obviously something we consume. Many of the most famous of gift systems we know about centre on food and treat durable goods as if they were food. The potlatch of the American Indians along the North Pacific coast was originally a ‘big feed.’

At its simplest a potlatch was a feast lasting several days given by a member of a tribe who wanted his rank in the group to be publicly recognized (...) Potlaches included durable goods, but the point of the festival was to have these perish as if they were food. Houses were burned; ceremonial objects were broken and thrown into the sea. On eof the potlatch Tribes, the Haida, called their feasting ‘killing wealth.’ (Hyde 2012:9)

This literal meaning of consuming as eating or destroying goods as in the potlatch example isn’t always necessary. We can also say that the gift perishes if the person gives the gift away to someone else. “In gift exchange the transaction itself consumes the object.” (Hyde 2012:9)



2.4 My interpretation and illustration of the distribution of the necklaces.



2.5 Illustration of the Kula exchange.

Another interesting example Hyde gives, is the story of a necklace. (figure 2.5) To summarize the story; after visiting a band of Bushman in South Africa in the 50's, an American couple gave necklaces with beads as a goodbye present to each woman. One year later, the couple returns to the same place and finds almost no necklaces left in the band. Instead "They appeared, not as whole necklaces, but in ones and twos in people's ornaments to the edges of the region" (Hyde 2012:76).

This shows not only how the gift has been moving forward, but also how the object itself has been divided/shared, and because of this sharing, we can say its symbolic value has increased.

Circular Exchange

Gifts often move in the figure of a circle. One of the finest examples of research on circular exchange comes from ethnographer Bronislaw Malinowski, who spend several years living on the Trobiand Islands researching the Kula ring, which is the ceremonial exchange of the Massim people who live on the South Sea Islands, near the eastern tip of New Guinea. Kula exchange exists of two types of ceremonial gifts, the Soulava (necklaces) and the Mwali (arm shells). (figure 2.6) Both necklaces and arm shells are given further in a circle, passing from household to household. They will travel hundreds of miles and, a full circle back, could take from 2 to 10 years. (So imagine standing in a circle, facing towards the middle; you will always receive arm shells from the person on your right but will never give them back, as you will instead be the one who gives them necklaces). When receiving a Kula gift you may keep the gift for a while, exhibit the article, talk about it with others and plan to whom you will give it to next. Of course you don't keep it for too long because that would make people talk about you as shamefully holding on to the gift. The reason Malinowski calls the Kula articles 'ceremonial gifts' is "because their social use far exceeds their practical use" (Hyde 2012:13). Because the gift has to move in a circle it makes sense that at least 3 people are needed. In most stories or fairies around gift exchange there are not surprisingly a minimum of 3 people. (for a more extended story of the Kula exchange see Hyde 2012:12-15)

Gift increase

Sometimes when we look at gift exchange it can look similar to barter exchange. I'll give a summary of a story from Hyde's book that explains the point. He writes about anthropologist Franx Boas, who stayed with the Kwakiatl in the 1890s, and who has given an account of the ceremonial exchange of a copper plaque that one tribe would give to another during a potlatch. When the second tribe accepts, they are obligated to look for a proper return gift. The exchange takes place the next day on the beach. In this particular example the second tribe lays down a thousand trade blankets (machine made and easy to manufacture) as a return gift.

A conversation between the two tribes starts, in which the giving tribe expresses that the return gift isn't adequate. They will tell stories of the coppers history, its previous passages, and how much has been given for it. The receiving tribe will add blankets a couple of times as the conversation will go on. When the whole history has been told the talking stops. Now is the time that the receiver will show his generosity and the real gift giving occurs. The receiver will add another 200 blankets and another 200 and say 'you must think poorly of me'. This is the moment that the copper increases in worth. The next time it is given away, people will tell the story about how it grew by 400 blankets in its last passage.

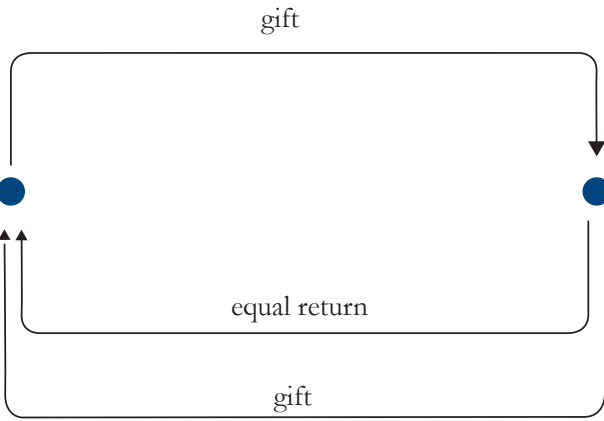
‘the increase is the core of the gif, the kernel. In this book I speak of both the object and its increase as the gift, but at times it seems more accurate to say that the increase alone is the gift and to treat the object involved more modestly as its vehicle or vessel. A Kwakiutl copper is a gift, but the feeling involved – the goodwill of each transaction – is more clearly embodied in the excess, the extra blankets thrown in at the end by each new recipient. ‘ (Hyde 2012:37)

The increase of gifts, when circulating, has the ability to create community out of individual expressions of goodwill. (figure 2.7)

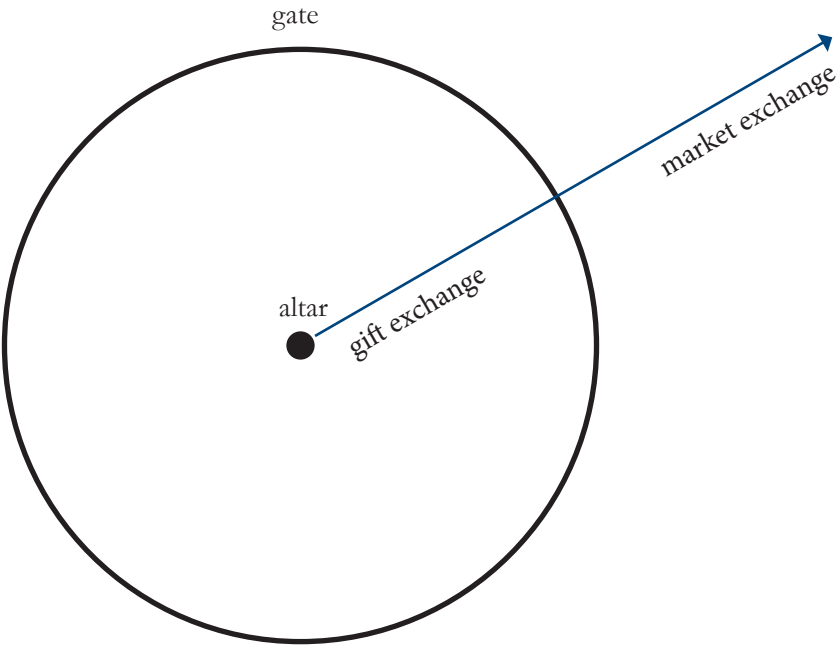
The difference between gift increase and profit is that gift increase follows the object since it will be moved onwards whereas with commodity exchange profit stays behind. (A further explanation by Marshall Sahlins on this can be found in Hyde 2012:27-38)

The Double Economy

Another principle we can see within gift economies is the ability of a group of people to follow several rules of exchange depending on whom they do business with. Ancient tribes made a difference between the law of altar and gate. Imagine a walled city where a person is treated differently, depending on if he or she is closer to the middle (the altar) or at the edge (the gate) of a city. (figure 2.8) This double law that we can see in many tribes, communities and societies, means that amongst the inner group there can be gift exchange following gift rules, but towards the edge other rules have to be applied when there is exchanges with strangers. A double economy expresses various degrees of relatedness and social distance. Also because there is a limit to the amount of people we can create emotional bonds with, it seems logical that gift exchange has a boundary. (For a more extended story check Lewis Hyde Chapter 7, 116-118)



2.6 Illustration of gift increase. The reiver gives more back to show his/her generosity.



2.7 Illustration of a walled city showing the law of altar and gate.

Symbolic Value

Gifts along with stories are the threads of relationship, of community.
- Charles Eisenstein

We saw in the story of the copper and the blankets how gifts were often accompanied by stories that helped the receiver appreciate their value. Philosopher Jean Baudrillard gives an account on symbolic exchange, which I think is relevant within this chapter.

“Baudrillard’s idea of symbolic exchange is loosely based on Marcel Mauss’s analysis of gifts in indigenous social life, though he takes it in a different direction from Mauss, using it to analyse what is missing in today’s capitalist societies.”¹

He makes the following object value system:

- Functional value: the instrumental purpose, how the object functions
- Exchange value: the economical value of an object
- Symbolic value: a value that a subject assigns to an object in relation to another subject. A watch might symbolize a pensioner’s gift, or a ring can stand for declared love.
- Sign value: its value within a system of objects. An object may suggest a particular taste or class.

It is the symbolic value, which I am also referring to in my project. It is within symbolic exchange (which gift exchange is) that objects become unique because of the relation they have to another subject.

1. Robinson, Andrew. ‘An A to Z of Theory | Jean Baudrillard: Symbolic Exchange’ Ceasefire Magazine. Accessed March 19, 2013.

1. The idea that there is a formula for triggering certain behavior may not sound very appealing because it implies that we as human beings are programmable like machines. (A part of me likes to see myself and all human beings as unique individuals whose behavior is unexpected and uncontrollable). I guess I find the designing of behavior exciting when it comes to using it for ‘good reasons’ but I notice I feel an aversion when the same methods are used for purely marketing purposes.

2. <http://www.bjfogg.com>

TRIGGERING BEHAVIOR

‘Trigger: an event or thing that causes something to happen’
(Oxford American Dictionaries)

DESIGNING BEHAVIOR

Keeping in mind the research question: Can Experience Design trigger a Gift Economy? It now brings me to the part of diving a bit deeper into the topic of triggering. Many people have been concerned with the topic of triggering behavior from varying fields for various reasons.¹ I looked into some theories from the fields of behavioral economics, psychology, marketing, philosophy and from the world of game design.

BJ Fogg, expert and teacher in creating systems to change human behavior, calls his work ‘Behavior Design.’ He was the first to articulate the concept of ‘Captology’, which is the power of computers to persuade people. In an online video² BJ. Fogg sketches out a formula for behavioral change. He says that for us to do any kind of behaviors, 3 elements are important, and all 3 of them should be present for a behavior to happen.

1. is the trigger, for example your phone rings
2. is the ability factor – Are you able to pick up your phone at this moment?
3. is the motivation factor – Do you want to talk to the person on the other side of the line at the moment?

In contrast to what I always thought, motivation comes last. Fogg says that behavioral design is like engineering, it is very systematic. You have to think; what behavior do I want, and how can I achieve it, what channels do I use to trigger, and how can I make it simple enough for people to be able to do it? Then the motivation comes in. A hot trigger is something you can do right here right now. Put hot triggers in the path of motivated people and behavior is likely to happen.

Another example comes from the field of psychology and marketing. The online video secrets from the *science of persuasion* by Robert B. Cialdini and Steve Martin, shows 6 important ways of how people can be persuaded to say yes. They say that there are 6 shortcuts to guide human decision-making:

1. Reciprocity: people tend to return a favor or gift. It matters not only what was given but mainly how it was given. The gift is best when personalized and unexpected.
2. Social proof: People want to be part of something. The most effective sign in hotel rooms for making people re-use their towel was: 75 % of the people in this room have re-used their towel.
3. Liking: People are easier persuaded by people they like.
4. Consistency and commitment: people who are asked to make small commitments are more likely to do something when it has already become a goal for them.
5. Authority: People tend to do what authority tells them. Authority can be visible in the form of uniforms or other signals.
6. Scarcity: People desire something more when there isn't much of it. Limited editions will make a piece more valuable.

RULES AND RITUALS

A more poetic and fun way of thinking about triggering a gift economy is to look into rules and game elements and how they can trigger behavior.

Beaudrillard - who I mentioned before when it came to his value system and his statement that symbolic value is missing in today's capitalist society – elaborates more on how symbolic exchange can be practiced. Baudrillard links intense human experiences with artificial systems, meaning rituals and ceremonies that have the power to establish human connections. These rituals don't need to have meaning.

“They introduce people into initiatory cycles of appearance and disappearance”, and “He claims that rules are necessary to symbolic exchange, but are something people simply invent, with ‘the intensity and simplicity of child's play’”. (Robinson, accessed March 19, 2013)

It is those very rules and game elements that I see as potentially useful to trigger certain behaviour. Games can be a platform of getting things done and getting people engaged. *In Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* (2011) game designer Jane McGonigal talks about how gaming has great potential to create change. With so many people dedicating so much time to online gaming platforms and virtual worlds, it seems worth looking into why these people prefer the virtual world to reality. McGonigal spells out how in virtual worlds people are happier, more engaged, how they are better at working together and how they are much more motivated because this virtual world fits

their potential better. Compared to games, she says, reality is broken. She advises everyone to look at gaming and how good games work, so we can use this knowledge to solve the big problems we are facing within the real world today.

When it comes to triggering behaviour I notice that there is a balance between rule, restriction and freedom for inspiring people to behave in a different way than normally. In a sense we are always free to, for example, give something to a stranger. Still, most of us wouldn't. It is when rules are incorporated it becomes ‘a game’ and it gives the security of the game in a sense your actions cannot be seen as weird or inappropriate, since you are simply following the rules. New experiences can come when following the instructions of others. It's in those moments we are not trying to be original, or ‘right’ but when we lose control and start to explore something new.

TRIGGERING A GIFT ECONOMY

PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING A GIFT SYSTEM

The aim with my project is to see in what ways I can trigger the act of giving. I approach this task by looking at this on a ‘systems level’. How can I implement triggers for gift giving in our existing systems of working, thinking, producing and consuming? How would it work in different situations and on different scales? To answer these questions, and to be able to understand the systems in all their complexity, I started to work with certain principles. These principles help, on one hand, with assessing existing systems, and are on the other hand, guidelines when designing new systems. I came up with a list of principles, using what I had read about ancient gift economies (discussed in the chapter “The Gift Economy”), and adding elements I simply thought were important.

PRINCIPLES

Movement – Direction - Connection: a gift is something that moves, in the simplest form from one person to another. The way the gift is distributed leaves a certain type of network behind.

Visibility: When we look at gift giving with the aim of creating relations or a sense of community, it is important that giver and receiver are visible to each other and to others. Although anonymous gift giving is, of course, still creating some kind of feeling of relatedness and solidarity with others; the effects will be much different when both parties become visible to one another. Also with anonymous gift giving we can say there is another motivation underlying the gift.

Scale: The amount of people in a gift network will make a difference in how someone in the network experiences the gift giving. When it comes to the ability to create a sense of community, smaller size groups are better. We basically can’t create emotional bonds with too many people.

Space: Does the gift giving happen in a physical or digital space? Is the space open or closed? How big is the space and what are its characteristics?

Time: The time between giving and receiving should be taken into account as well as the duration of the ‘total event’, or, ‘initiative’. I can imagine a gift giving experience created for a short moment, an evening, but also a system that runs for many years.

Motivation: Its good to question each time what motives people for being part of a gift network. The motivation for giving can be, for example, obligation, participation, affection or contribution.

Type of Goods We can make a distinction between different kinds of goods in a couple of ways. We can make a difference between the digital and the physical, reproducibility of the good and look at in what way the good can me “used” or “consumed”. Most of the time, a physical good is seemingly more worth then the digital. Also a physical or digital gift will be distributed in different ways, a physical gift will take more time to travel long distances and can carry traces of time and use, for example. There is a difference in reproducibility, which changes how we value things; making something that’s non-reproducible more worth that something we can endlessly copy. Then, we can make a distinction, between

goods that we totally consume (like food) or more durable goods, which we use, which will also have a certain life span. Finally, a good can be sharable or breakable.

Money and symbolic value: How do we value the gift? By means of money or other elements? Does the good have a symbolic value because it’s given away? It is good to pinpoint what the added value is with every gift. Also what was the role of money? Money can play a different role in every system. Money can play a different role in every system. Its role could be for example to cover costs, or to function as, how I like to call it; social capital (income which is used to serve a social purpose).

EXISTING EXAMPLES OF GIFT ECONOMIES TODAY

Pay-What-You-Will

Today there are a number of enterprises that have implemented gift economics in several ways. Often these business models are based on the principles that:

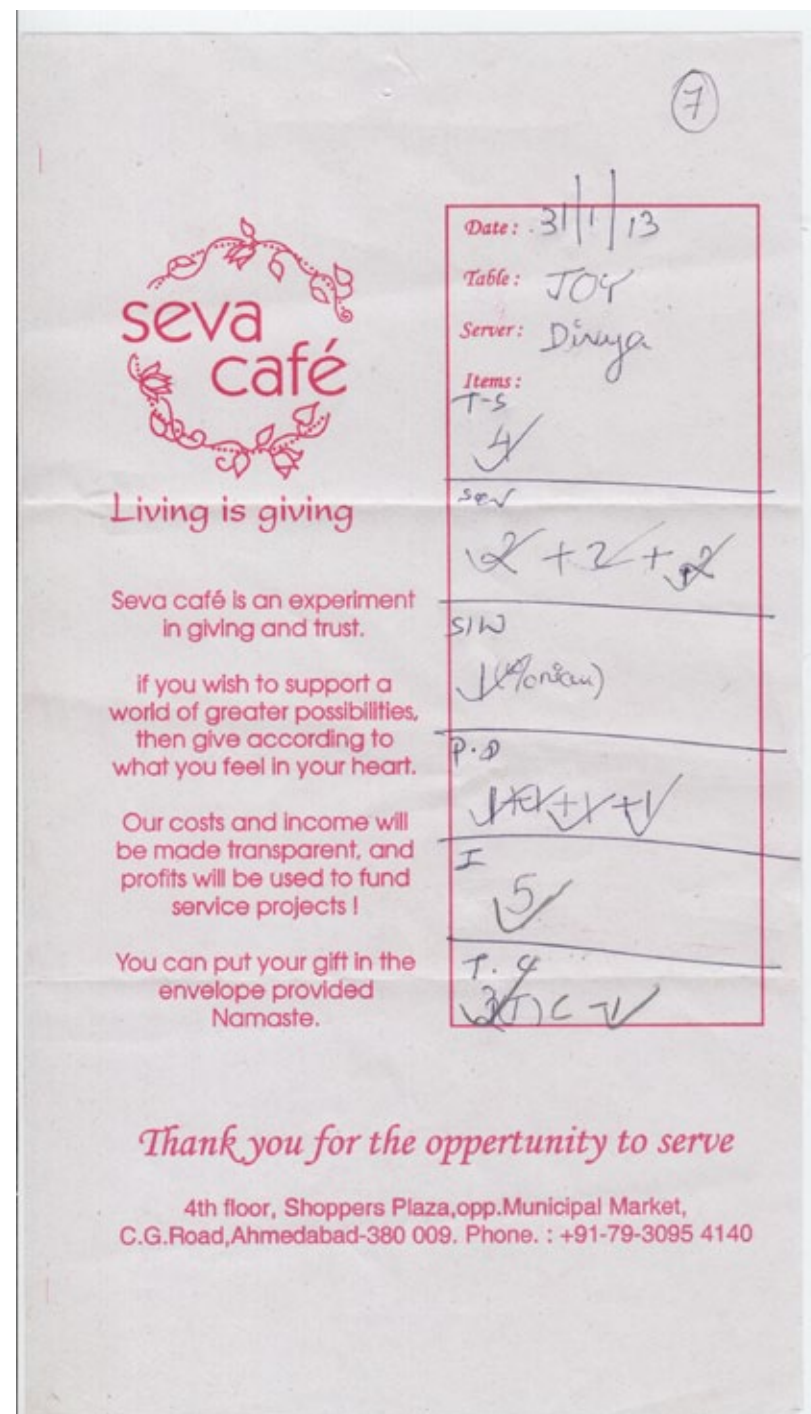
- 1. the receiver determines the price,.
- 2. the return gift is chosen after the good or service is received and not beforehand.

This concept has been applied to many restaurants. I personally experienced this at a restaurant Seva Cafe in Ahmadabad India. (figure 4.1) I must say that by choosing what to pay at the end of the night, I was more aware of what it had been worth to me and I became much more generous as I wanted to show my goodwill. In Sacred Economics, Charles Eisenstein gives more examples of this pay-what-you-will concept, referring to a Clinic (Karma Clinic, Berkely California), an album release (Raiohead, in Rainbows) and even a Law firm (Valorem Law Group, Chicago). (Eisenstein 2011,chapter 21). Additional to the 2 principles I just mentioned, sometimes an element of the model is to give information on what the costs were for lets say materials, transportation, how much man hours etc. You could say it’s the story that accompanies the gift or service, like with the blankets that were exchanged on the beach, (P. 24) which makes the recipient value the gift.

Suspended Coffee

Lately there has been a lot of media attention to the concept of suspended coffee. This concept, which originated in Italy, gives visitors of a bar the opportunity to buy a coffee for someone else who will be there after them. The motivation to do so comes from a feeling of solidarity with others who might not be able to afford a coffee them self. Although this system very much triggers gift giving, in my project I am aiming for something else; namely, the possibility of creating new connections through gift giving, and a gift giving which isn’t to be confused with altruism but which aims at giving to anyone around you.

Both these initiatives show an interesting and successful model. With my project I have been trying to develop further on some new thoughts and ideas around what a gift economy could be nowadays.



4.1 Receipt from Seva Café Ahmedabad, 31-1-2013

CASE STUDY: CARE OF EDITIONS

I choose to talk about this specific case study since it serves as a good example of the type of system I am aiming for with this project. Although others have probably not seen this example in the light of gift economies yet, I see this as a possible starting point for a new way of creating gift economies.

This example is a record label called Care Of Editions, who I became familiar with through an essay I found online, written by Gerhard Schultz,¹ and by looking at their website.²

Care Of Editions explores the relationship between physical and digital distribution by means of an experimental business model in which the availability of downloads is correlated to vinyl sales.

It works like this: They release an album on vinyl in a limited edition of 118 copies. It costs the company 1,700 dollars to produce and they sell the records for 23 dollars respectively. Also, they release the album as high quality download, in limited edition, which is available on their website. Customers who download the music will receive money in addition to the download, the amount of money being equal to the download number. The first person to download will receive 1 dollar whereas person number 45 will receive 45 dollars. In total the cost for the company when every customer of the download (the money being sent on a check from a Swiss bank and can be cashed in at any post office free of charge) collects their share will be 2,734 dollars, which means that all the income from the vinyl sales will be given away to the downloaders.

Care Of Editions uses a very attractive and clear graphical design strategy which makes the whole system and the balancing out of the vinyl sales and downloads visible on their website. (figure 4.3)

What motivates the project is, according to Schultz;

It's not the limitation of downloads or the loss of money that motivates the project, but an interest in finding difference where none exists. Numbers can index a difference that already separates limited objects, but downloads are virtually identical and virtually unlimited. There's no room for difference to be drawn between them. It would have to be faked with an artificial scheme of numbers. For these numbers to make sense, sense would have to be given to them, or they would only be getting in the way.

There are several aspects of this concept that got me thinking and made me excited. I will look at this case and discuss it through the list of principles given before.

1. Schultz, Gerhard. Negative Money: Care Of Editions Accessed March 18, 2013

2. <https://www.careof.co>

CARE OF EDITIONS - PRINCIPLES

Movement: - direction – connection: First of all I see this being the main importance of the system. The fact that when you buy something, indirectly you also give something (This buy one, give one principle I will use in my own experiments later). It is a one-way direction in this case. Also in this example, the first vinyl buyer makes it possible for a couple of first downloader’s to get the money. Downloader nr 45 on the contrast was dependent on a couple of people buying a record.

Visibility: the strength of this record label is that they make the whole system visible and as a customer you know exactly where you are in the system. You know you are part of something. It is not visible though, for the vinyl buyer to whom the ‘download gift’ is given and the other way around it isn’t visible for the receiver of the download+money who to thank for. I can imagine this same system having a more social potential, when making giver and receiver visible for each other.

Scale: I would say that the amount of people taking part in the whole record label experience is of middle size. In total 163 (118+45) people will be affected by the system.

Space: Half of the system plays in a physical space, the shop, and half in a digital space perceived through someone’s computer (probably from someone’s home). The physical space is most likely not in reach for everyone, whereas the digital space is.

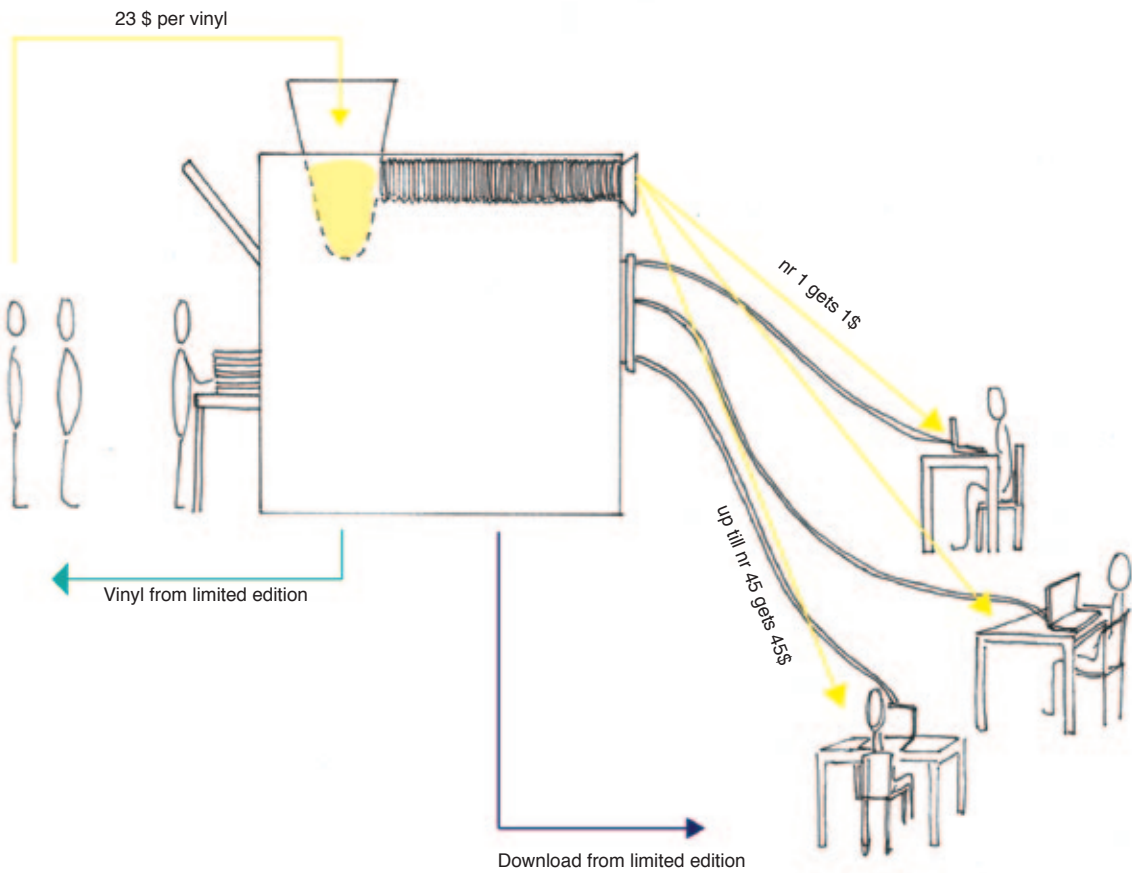
Time: I don’t know exactly how long it took for one edition to be sold, but it must have been taken at least some months I would guess. The giving and receiving is happening at the same time. The notion of time becomes quite visible because of the downloads being made available on the website. The moment that an action of either giving or receiving is practiced, is depending on the actions (mouse clicks, walking into a store) of costumers, and isn’t influenced by the record company (as far as I understood from the online article).

Motivation: The motivation for the record buyers could be just to want to have the record but probably the fact that the record is being sold within this system makes it more attractive because you can ‘be part of something’. For the downloader the motivation can be to receive a unique piece of music but of course it could also be just greed for money (which I somehow doubt). Personally, I think that by making the available downloads so limited and having money attached to them, I might think twice

if I should be the person who ‘deserves’ this download.

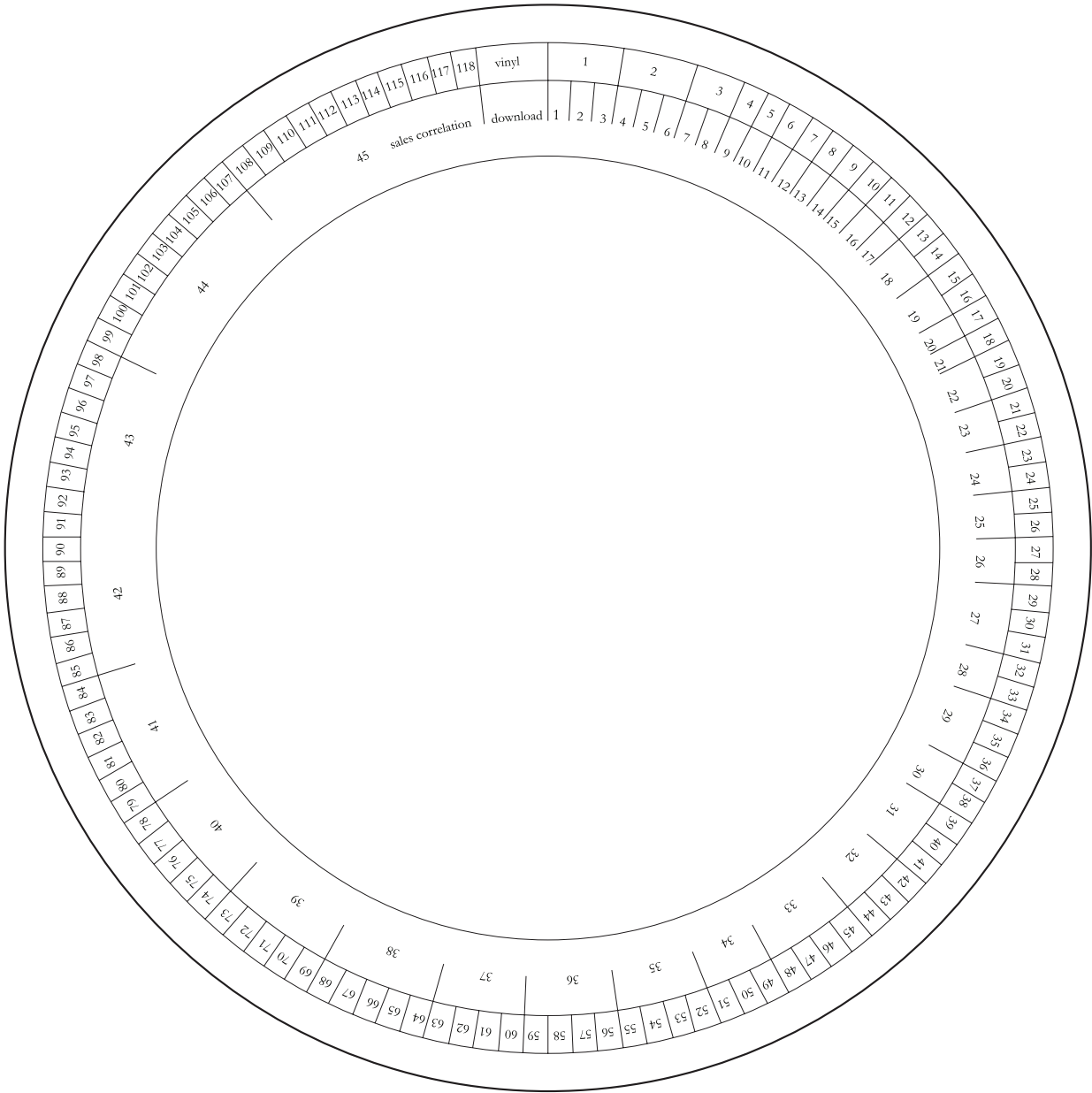
Type of good: In this case a clear connection is made between the physical and the digital.
The music is reproducible in a way that the experience can be reproduced; by playing the same record/digital file again and again. The vinyl is non-reproducible because it requires specific machines to make a copy of it. In one way the download also becomes non reproducible because of the added symbolic value it received. Of course the digital album itself could be reproduced and distributed online later on, but it won’t be the same feeling as having the ‘original’.

Money and symbolic value:
The album has a functional value (you want to listen to good music), an exchange value (it’s worth a lot because of its limited character), a symbolic value (he added value of the story of the system) and a sign value (it is cool to be part of something experimental like this). Money in this system makes each download significant, because it turns something we associate with being unlimited a limited thing. I would also say that currency here has been given a performative value because of the way the record label portrays their system and how money serves a mere symbolic purpose. Another take on this, concerns the check with the amount of dollars on it. You can argue the value of this check can become more worth in time, as some kind of art piece. I wouldn’t say that money serves as social capital in this setup but it could have served as social capital when giver and receiver would become visible for each other.



4.2 Systems drawing of Care of Editions.

DESIGN PROJECTS



4.3 Graphical visualisation used by C/O editions to show the correlation between vinyl sales and downloads.

This part will describe several experiments/interventions around alternative economies I worked on starting December 2012 until May 2013.

Time Coins

In December 2012 I developed a set of Time Coins, which I since then, have been using to trigger people to give their time in different contexts, attaching different rules and rituals to them. I got inspired by the concept of time banking (see p) and started thinking about time, money, and how changing the currency type could change the way we behave and value things, services and relations. What type of currency can carry our new values and changed attitudes within? What happens when I put a time value on a coin? If currency is an agreement, (appendix), what do we agree this time coins to be? How would the fact that the time value is still associated with a traditional coin, referring to our current money system, affect how we use this new currency?

‘A LITTLE GIFT OF TIME’

This first test I did using the Time Coins, was done in December 2012. I sold the coins under the title ‘a little gift of time’ at the Konstfack Christmas market. It existed of a set of coins and an accompanying package with the title ‘a little gift of time’ written on it.

A set included three different handmade coins, a brass coin representing “1 day” a copper coin with the value of “1 hour” and a tin coin representing “1 time”. The coins make it possible to give someone else a bit of your time to show that you care. It’s a reminder for a friend, family member or lover that they can ask you for your time, skills or attention. The coins come on a card where you can write down a personal message and what you are offering. Every combination of coins is possible,



5.1 Time coins presented at Konstfack degree exhibition.

First read as *Give to some one*, but when one comes closer and sees the O is being build up out of time coins, one may read it as *Give time to some one*.

meaning you can give for example three hours, two days or just one time.

The aim with this project was to make people re-learn gift giving in a sense that a gift becomes really unique and personal again. Nowadays we can buy gifts from so called 'gift shops' implying that a certain object works well as a gift. But what is a true gift? These coins are merely symbolic objects, functioning purely as vessel for the actual gift, which is someone's time, attention and care.

REACTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In our society in which time has become of great value, I have noticed people really appreciated to give and receive the gift of time. I realized during the process of working on this project and when having conversation with people, that to ask for someone else's time is something we are not that used to anymore. Personally, I also feel a barrier when asking for someone's time and help, although I notice I don't have a problem with offering help to others.

I gave away quite some packages of coins to friends and family. With all of the gifts, the process of coming up with the perfect time present, was a great experience because it made me really think of the person I was giving the coins to, what our relationship was and were I could really make this person happy with.

I realized that the follow up actions after giving the coins weren't maybe that clear enough. It can easily stay a promise, which is not acted upon. Still I felt that by sealing the promise with a coin it was more likely to happen. To find out in a better way what happened to the coins I send out a questionnaire to people who had bought the coins. Their answers are taken into account when going through the list of principles.

5.2 Packaging little gift of time.



5.3 The 3 different time coins: 1 time, 1 day, 1 hour.



TIME COINS - PRINCIPLES

Movement Direction Connection: The time coins are meant to be given as a gift from one person to another. Therefore we can speak about the simplest form of gift exchange, called reciprocal gift exchange, as I already described in the chapter on gift exchange. Of course it is theoretically possible to have this gift moving further from person to person. One lady I sold the coins to said this was the perfect present for her mother since her mother liked to receive presents she could give further again.

In a sense the direction of the coins are different from how normal currency is used. Normally, when these coins would be an alternative currency, you would receive a coin after having given an hour of your time. In this case, the coin object functions more as the carrier for a future promise. I didn't give instructions to people on what to do after the gift had taken place. Most people though understood that the coin could be kept as a reminder of the gift, while a few thought of the possibility of using it as a trading tool; "I was wondering if he should have given me the coin back when I had fulfilled my time task. Is it really a tool to trade time?" (answer from questionnaire)

Visibility: It is very visible from who the gift was, for who and what the coin stands for because there is a place on the package to write a personal message describing how the coins can be used. In terms of visibility of the concept for someone who was buying the coins from my stall, I tried to give different ideas as inspiration for people to understand what you could give for an hour, 1 time or one day.

Scale: I can talk about scale in terms of how many people bought the coins. I sold in total around 50 coins. I didn't keep track of where these coins all went to, but I assume from the conversations I had on the Christmas market that they travelled far. I have had feedback from people that gave the coins personally but also from people who posted the coins to faraway friends and family.

Time: Besides the fact that 'time' was the matter being sold, we can look at the time aspect in another way, as the time in between receiving the coins and the time the actual gift of time takes place. Personally, after having gifted a lot of these coins myself to friends and family, I felt that my promises should take place within a year time, depending a bit on what the promise was and to whom. Through my questionnaire I found out that some people thought it was nice to write down a time limit on the card

while others wanted to keep it open. One person said: "The gift of time is first of all a promise to yourself and an expression of your will to keep it to the other. Putting a limit to this makes it feel more like an obligation. And I feel that failing to keep a promise is better than following an obligation."

Motivation: Most of my coins were sold during Christmas period and most people were looking actively for gifts for friends and family. The motivation being a mixture of affection and maybe a bit of obligation, taking into account the time of year. Most people who bought the coins had an immediate idea who to give it to, the coins creating a smile on their face with the idea of giving something personal and special. I know of the coins being given away to each other by couples, making it a very intimate and romantic gift. Also there were people who saw great potential in giving their time in stead of buying another 'unnecessary product' and it was seen as the perfect present for someone who has everything already. To my question "why did you buy it?" people responded:

"I wanted to buy a present for my boyfriend with a meaningful thought behind it, we have enough stuff, but not so much time for each other."

"This gift was like the ultimate gift for busy people who need reminding to 'slow it down'"

"It's a gift that can adapt to any context, any kind of relationship. It is also by default a very personal gift."

Type of good: The coins are all handmade, unique and slightly different, in appealing materials, and therefore have a certain value. I didn't mention the amount of coins I made when selling them, but the fact that they were sold at a Konstfack Christmas market makes them perceived as more unique than something that can be bought in any other shop. The real gift, which is a promise of a bit of your time, is of course very unique. The actual thing that's sold here is an experience, not a product.

Money and symbolic value:

the coins were sold in package of 1 for 100 KR, or a set of 3 for 250 KR. The coins will be perceived through their market value but mainly by their symbolic value which is the time promise from a specific person. And as someone put it nicely: "Paying a certain amount for it also backs up your pledge." One could argue that you don't really need the coins to make a time promise. But for most people it was the handmade coins that kind of 'sealed the deal.'

"Actually the coin itself can work in a very interesting way.

The existence of the coin is what forces you to keep your promise. It's an contemporary 3D proof of what we call "scripta manent". But also for the one who holds the coin it could be funny I think to keep it in his wallet, mixed with the real money. And I guess you'll be the richer man on earth if your wallet is full of nothing but the time coins from your friends. Already as memories of things that were promised and happened or reminders of things that will happen." (Answer from questionnaire)

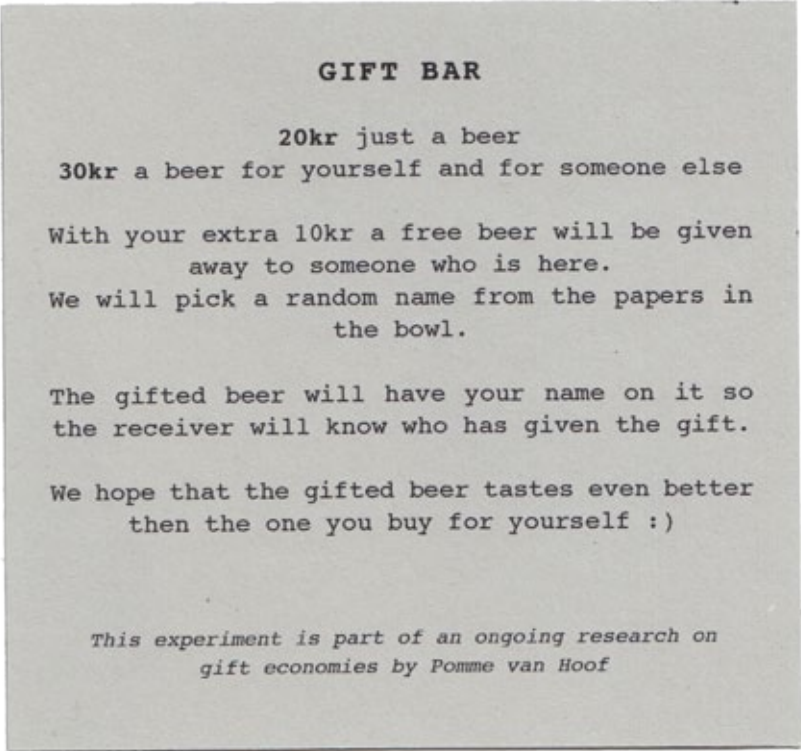


5.4 Materials to set up the gift bar.

GIFT BAR

In the evening of the 7th of April I setup a ‘gift bar’ in which the consumption of a beer is guided by a specific system I wanted to put to test. The principles of the system are the following: As a buyer of a beer, you also become a giver of a beer to someone else. The aim is first of all to see if this can create reciprocity between people at the bar, establish some sort of new and meaningful relation, a sense of community, and if its changes their perspective on gift giving in general. Hopefully the feeling of giving something away and seeing a smile on someone’s face gives the beer buyer a positive experience. I opened the gift bar and during the evening around 30 people participated. Over a course of two hours 40 beers were given away.

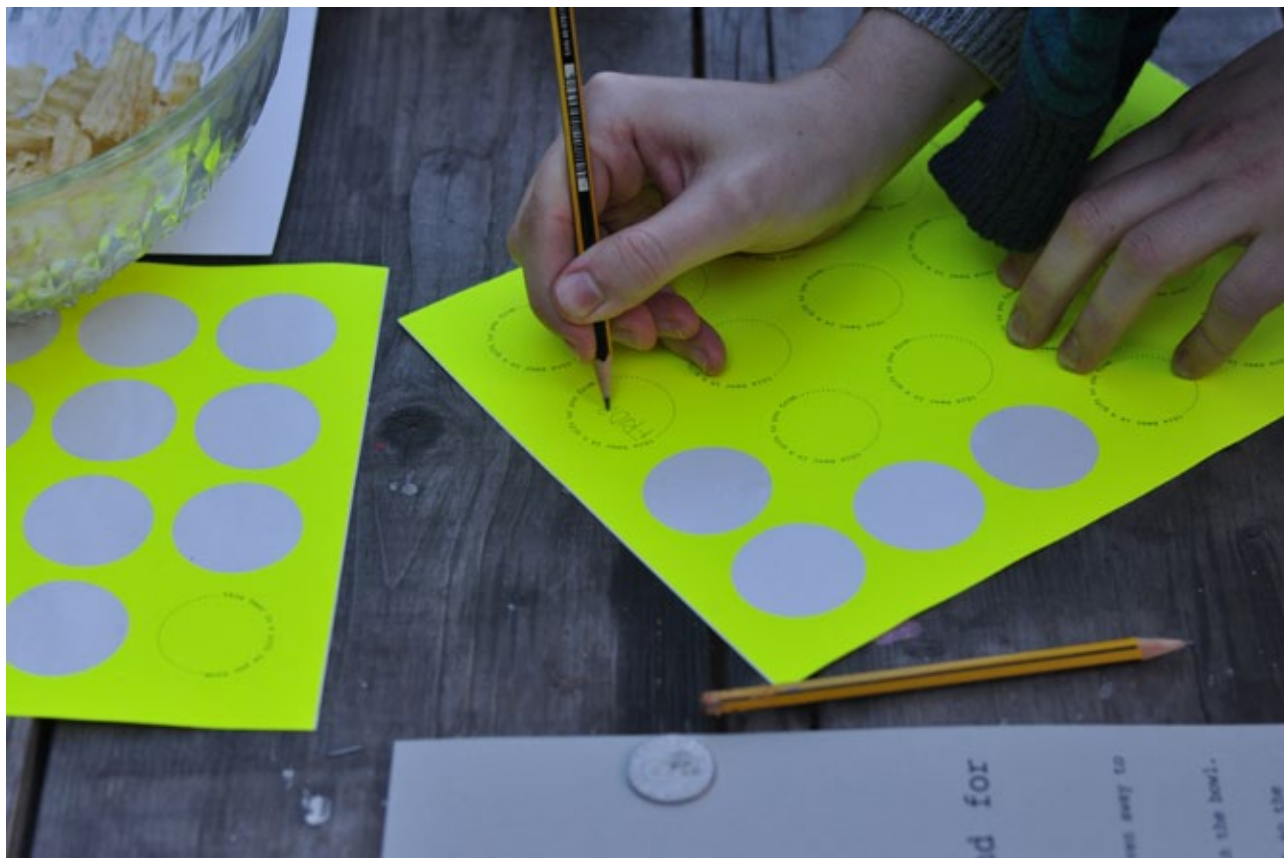
In the gift bar you could buy a beer for yourself for 20 kr, or buy a beer for yourself plus for another random person for 30 kr. With your extra 10kr (cost price) a free beer would be given away to someone who was at the same party. The bar (me) would pick a random name from the papers in the bowl (everyone had signed their name on a paper). Then I would announce the name of the person who received a gift beer by writing their name on a board behind the bar and by making a sound with the bell. Then the receiver could come and pick up the beer when they wished to do so. When you paid for a gift beer, you also wrote down your name on one of the yellow stickers. These stickers would become the labels on the gifted beers. This way, the receiver would know who had paid for his/her beer and could possibly start looking for that person to say thank you. It created a lot of interaction between people trying to search for the person who had given them a beer and an open atmosphere were people were comfortably talking with strangers overall.



5.5 Information paper from the gift bar.



5.6 Print for on the yellow tags. To be filled in with the name of the giver.



5.7 Photos from the gift bar.

ANSWERES FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

Afterwards I send out a questionnaire to the participants and received 10 back. Here are some of the questions I asked and the answers that describe best how most people responded.

How did you experience the gift bar?

I experienced the gift bar as a social bar where the act of buying a beer created a potential for participating in an experience, "winning" a beer, meeting new people.

Did you make any new connections with people through this beer concept?

I did make new connections and met new people. Although it wasn't specifically through a beer-gift, I believe the environment created by the project made people more comfortable and relaxed about interacting with each other.

Did it change your ideas around gift giving?

It made the act of giving more abstract. It wasn't a "I give you one and then you give me one", but rather the idea that if I give something out then there is a possibility that I will get something back...a beer, a "hi" or even just a smile.

Do you have any thoughts or suggestions for me?

It would be really nice to have a better way of connecting receiver and giver. I wonder what happen with gifts other than beer and with different scales .

GIFT BAR - PRINCIPLES

Movement – Direction - Connection: In this setup the bar functions as connector between givers and receivers. The bar is where the actual giving takes place. The givers (30 kr payers) are at the same time receivers because they have the chance to receive a beer from someone else who is taking part in the same system. It’s a closed loop. Receiving a gift beer doesn’t feel like a burden (which a gift can be sometimes, especially when someone wants to ‘buy you a drink’), because it is rather given by the ‘system’ then by someone who expects something back. In a way you do ‘owe something’, not to one person, but to the whole group. Also the fact that the buyer of the gift doesn’t physically hand over the beer to the receiver makes it less direct. At the gift bar gifts circulate within the group, and you can say it leaves an interconnected network behind. (see p.222)

Visibility: First of all the concept of what was happening was very visible and clearly communicated to the public so everyone knew what ‘system’ they were taking part in. All the items (bell, pot with names, yellow stickers, board with names) were clearly visible for everyone. The fact that you could see the list of names growing bigger strengthened the feeling of being part of a collective experience. There wasn’t any account on who had been given to whom at the end of the night, only a list of the receivers.

Scale: Around 35 people were at the bar. Small enough for people to easily interact with one another.

Space: The event all happened in one space at Hemliga Trädgården, which is around 60 m2. This made it very easy to communicate and look for one another and for the bar to be visible.

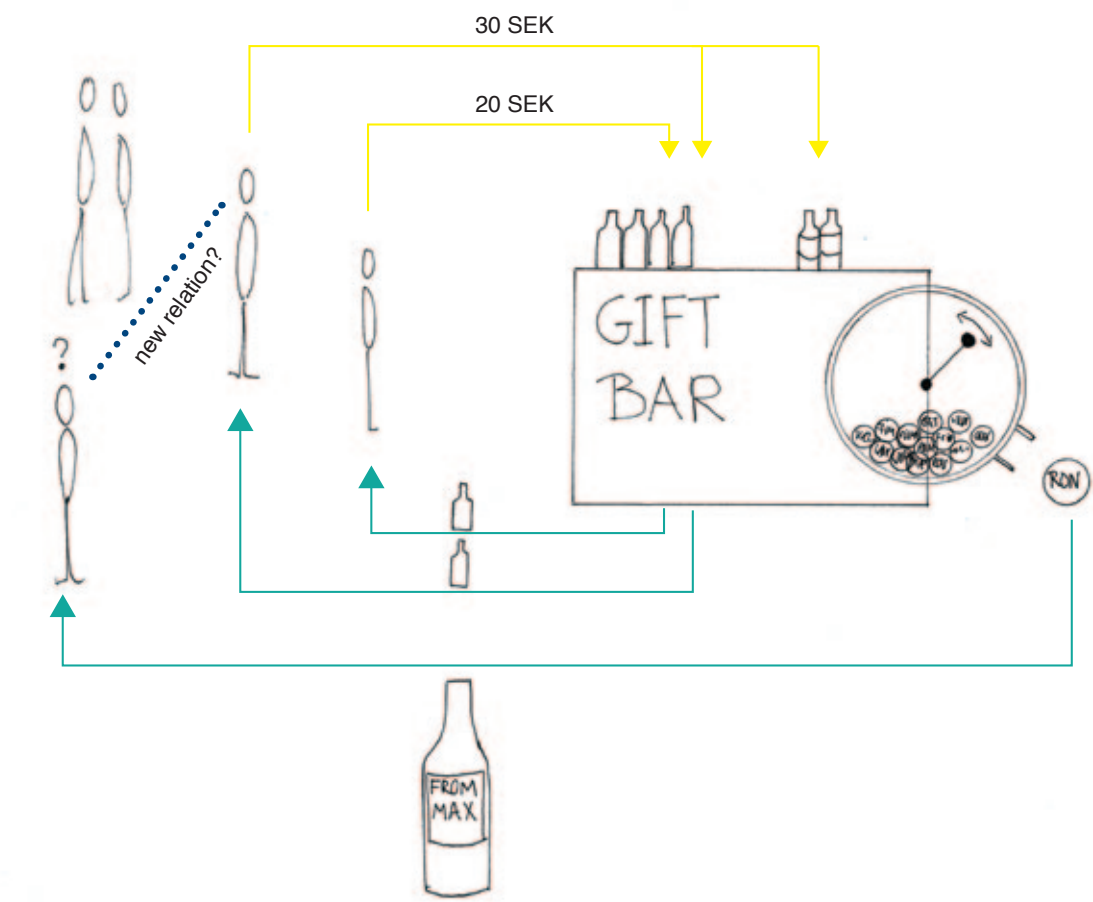
Time: The duration of the total event was 2 hours. The time between a person ‘giving away a beer’ by paying the extra 10 kronor and the moment a ‘gift beer’ was given away was around 5-10 minutes and was stipulated by me (the bar), depending on how the flow of the giving and receiving was going. Because everyone very enthusiastically took part, in general the time between giving a beer and receiving one from someone else was rather quick.

Motivation: The motivation I was aiming for was that people would be up for taking part in an interesting social experience, that they would be curious what would happen and that they simply would like to give something to

someone else. By placing the ‘gift trigger’ at the moment people are already buying something for themselves, and by making it affordable, I tried to make it as easy as possible to take part. Also I hoped they would feel that when they were generous themselves, the chances of receiving something back from another person increased. It’s about trusting the collective, that when you give you will probably receive something back.

Type of Goods
In this case the good was beer. We can also categorize it as something that has a social character, which is consumed immediately, which is not too often given away in Sweden, its something you like to have more then one of, and it can be associated with a ‘loaded gift’ since receiving a free drink in a bar isn’t ‘free’.

Money and symbolic value:
20 kronor for a beer and 10 for a gift beer is cheap. The step to buy a gift beer isn’t that hard to make. Also, the bar gives something away (free time and effort) since there is no profit on the gift beer. We can speak of social capital here, a word I used before to describe how income could be used for social benefits. In case of the beer, it has increased in symbolic value since it’s not just a beer anymore but a gift from a specific person.



5.8 System drawing of the gift bar.

KOHA COOKIES

Koha: a maori custom which can be translated as gift, present, offering, donation or contribution.

In the final project I will take the principles I tested with the bar one step further. The bar was something I set up by myself, now I will work on a system that can be integrated in an existing place for production, consumption and distribution. The bar was taking place in a rather small space, with a small group of people, over a period of only 2 hours, where giving and receiving of a beer followed up in a quick tempo and where the givers and receivers where highly visible for one another. The bar played the role of distributor by sending a message (writing on the board + bell) to receiver who picked it up at the bar. The consumable goods were to be consumed immediately.

So, what would happen when I use a bigger space, with a bigger amount of people, over a much longer period of time, where giving and receiving has a slower pace? I noticed that in the bar the system was maybe so quickly and smoothly operating that a beer didn't get perceived always as a gift. To strengthen the feeling of receiving a gift it would help to stretch the time between giving and receiving something back, and, it would help if not the bar but the person 'buying the gift' would also be the one handing over the gift. I decided to integrate the element of time/effort more into the gift, instead of the gift being purely something that's paid for by someone else.

As a place for strengthening a sense of community I choose to work with Konstfack. After spending two years at Konstfack myself, I realized how little people I know at this school. This is partly due to the architecture of the building, which is very much divided into separate spaces were you only have access when you are entitled to be in a certain space. Everything is departmentalized and there isn't often a reason to go to another department. Last year there was a moment when the fire alarm went off and suddenly everyone had to go outside. I remember thinking; wow do these people all go to Konstfack?

Therefore I came up with an initiative to create connections at konstfack trthough gift giving by working together with the local bakery. At this bakery, Söderbergs Bageri, the rule of 'buy one give one' would count for people from Konstfack that wish to be part of the gift community. People that wish to take part can put their name, department, email and phone number on a piece of paper which they put in the bowl. When someone from the network goes to the bakery and buys something, they get the opportunity to also give a bag of cookies to someone else from the network. They pick a name from the bowl, and that's the person who will receive their gift cookies. The giver goes back to Konstfack, tries to track down the student who they should give it to (knock on doors, use the phone

number etc) and hand it personally. Since the giver and receiver might not know each other on beforehand there is the possibility to meet someone you don't know yet. The cookies are a nice surprise and can sparks a new conversation between two people. The receiver might be triggered to give something back in the future to the person they received the cookies from or perhaps to go to the bakery to buy cookies for someone else.

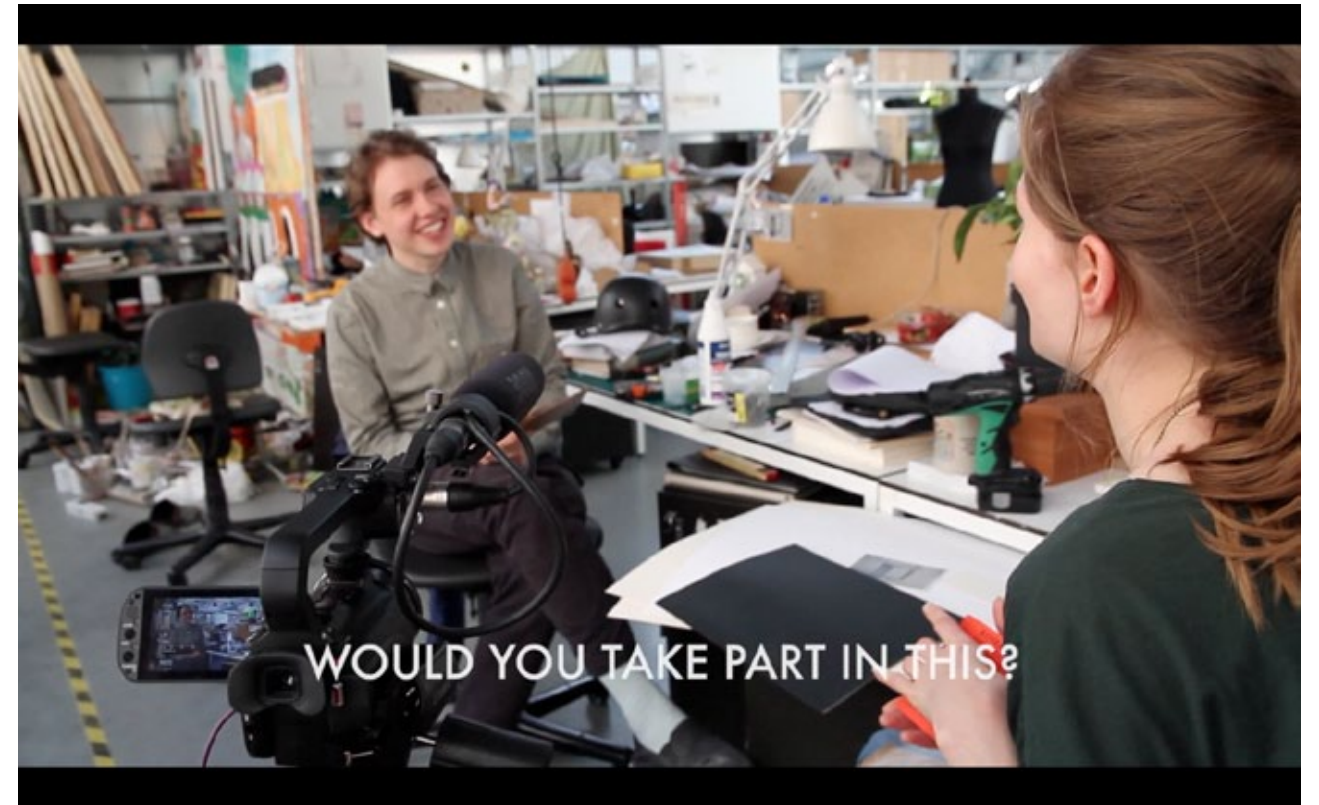
For the final exhibition I made a film, which shows why this project is relevant and how it works. I interviewed 3 students about their lives at Konstfack and asked them to respond to my initiative. The students speak about the amount of contact they have with students from other departments and why it might be difficult to meet new people. Then there is a part, which is recorded at the bakery, that shows an interview with the baker and images of him making the cookies. It becomes clear who this baker is and why he said yes to my initiative. This is followed up by the same 3 students responding to my concept of Koha Cookies and explaining why they would take part in my initiative. Finally the film shows a 'How to get koha cookies?' part, which explains in simple steps how to buy, give and receive this gift bag from the bakery.



5.9 Sign up papers for Koha Cookies.



5.10 Film still Grace Wilson.



5.11 Film still Christian Skovgaard, Pomme van Hoof.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Grace Wilson: GW, Deborah Kupfer: DK And Christian Skovgaard : CS

Do you know a lot of people from other departments?

GW: Most of the people I know are in my department I think, or kind of departments adjacent. And then....do I know anyone else in another department??

DK: Well I mainly am in my department but I always have dialogues with people from other departments.

Do you think its easy to get to know people at Konstfack?

GW: Maybe a little bit hard to get to know people from other department. But it depends on what kind of person you are I think . Im quite ok talking to people if I have a specific reason to be with them.

Do you often meet people unexpectedly?

GW: Meeting people unexpectedly, I would say..no it doesn't seem to happen that often I don't think.

Would you take part in this?

GW: Yes I think I would, definitely I would. I think it's a nice idea. I think surprises maybe don't happen so often here and I think this kind of unexpected and spontaneous way of sparking an interaction with someone new is really nice.

DK: For sure, for sure I'd love to. I mean I like cookies!

CS: Yes definitely (...) It can definitely create some very interesting encounters.



5.12 Film still Deborah Kupfer, Pomme van Hoof.



5.13 Film still Mattias Wallmark, Pomme van Hoof.

How would you react when someone would give you a bag of cookies?

GW: Oh I would be really excited. Like yeey! But I think also I would like to do something for them in return. Which means, they probably wouldn't want something then and there, but I would feel like, hey if I see you at the pub next time, I would buy them a beer, like I would want to return the favour I think. And I presume we would have more of a chat. And maybe we would be new friends.

DK: I think it would be some kind of push for me to go and do it as well, for someone else. That's how I would respond.

CS: I would be delighted. And maybe offer them some tea.. and we could share them perhaps.



5.14 Koha Cookies bags presented at Konstfack degree exhibition.

KOHA COOKIES

A gift made by Söderbergs Bageri

From

To

Phone

Dept.

This is an initiative to create connections within Konstfack through gift giving.

http://kohacookies.com

5.15 Label which is stamped on the Koha Cookies bag.

KOHA COOKIES - PRINCIPLES

Movement – Direction - Connection: The Bakery serves as the place where people become givers or receivers. The people that decide to give are most likely also signing up to become receivers (although theoretically you can also choose to only be one of the two). Since its only people that study or work at Konstfack who can decide if they like to be part of this network, we can say the participants are a group (people that sign up and take part) within a group (people that go to the same building everyday). Unlike in the gift bar, the person who pays for the gift also makes an effort to hand over the gift to the receiver. The gifts will leave an interconnected network behind.

Visibility: The main visibility happens in the bakery, where a price tag, the signup sheets + bowl, and the cookies are presented. The signup sheets and bags show a place to fill in: name, departments, phone number and a map of Konstfack. It should be easy for someone who buys the cookies to trace down and get in contact with the person they are buying a gift for (especially in a building where access to all spaces is very limited). There is also a website which explains the project (kohacookies.com), with the film I made, that informs people about this initiative. Something I wish to work further on is to make visible who has been actually given to whom? I think that could increase the interest from people to take part, since it's clear 'others are doing it too'. Initially I had an extra step in the 'How to get Koha Cookies' part of the film, which showed a sort of logbook in the bakery where you could write down from who, to whom a gift had just been bought. I took it out because I felt there were too many operations that had to be done. I would like to launch the initiative in September again and make it more visible. (also by using posters, social media)

Scale: Konstfack counts around 900 students and then there is a large group of employees on top of that. I don't expect all the students to immediately go and buy Koha Cookies but it would be interesting to see how many active participants the system could handle.

Space: The gift system is situated in The Bakery and Konstfack, which are maybe 200 meters from each other. The Bakery serves the product and presents the system, the actual connections are made in Konstfack.

Time: It can take some time between giving Koha Cookies to someone, and receiving a bag from someone else in return. I guess it can take weeks, depending on how

many people are in the system. In contrary to the bar, I think this gap of time is positive for really experiencing the gift as a gift. It makes it more an unexpected and happy surprise. When it comes to the 'timing' of the initiative, I now launched it 21st of May, which isn't the best time to start something like this. I hope to start it again in September when the new academic year starts.

Motivation: The motivation I am aiming for is that people like to meet new people at Konstfack and that they think this is a nice way of meeting someone new. I hope they will be curious to what will happen when they take part. Also a big motivation is probably that Söderbergs Bageri is a really good bakery where you go when you like to treat yourself. It's a place you would like to support and create a connection with. Again, by placing the 'gift trigger' at the moment people are already buying something for themselves, and by making it affordable, I tried to make it as easy as possible to take part. Also I hope people would feel that when they are generous themselves, the chances of receiving something back from another person increases. It's about trusting the collective, that when you give, you will probably receive something back.

Type of Goods: Cookies are an extra, a treat. The bag contains 4 cookies so they don't need to be all just for you. You might like to share them, move the gift further.

Money and symbolic value: 5 Kronor for a gift bag with 4 cookies is worth the try. The Baker usually sells these cookies for 3 kronor each, which means he is only charging cost price for these and thus giving his time and goodwill away for free. The giver of the Cookies also gives some time and effort as a gift, since he/she needs to search or contact the person and hand over the cookies. The cookies have a high symbolic value.



5.16 Konstfack degree exhibition, overview of presented project; *gift bar*, *koha cookies* and *time coins*.

CONCLUSION

With this thesis and its accompanying design projects I have described and explored the territory of gift economies. I hope that when people read this material, they find themselves affected by the projects, and that they might begin to imagine all kind of scenarios in which gift giving can start to happen. The shift in thinking described in this thesis can become reality if we see potential in each situation or business to implement the gift economy principles. The *time coins*, the *gift bar* and the *koha cookies* are 3 out of many possible ways in which the gift economy can manifest itself. These projects encourage conversation about something much bigger; a redefinition of wealth and a focus on the immaterial and immeasurable aspects of an economic system, like feelings of community and a sense of wellbeing.

The question: can experience design trigger a gift economy, can be answered with a yes. Maybe the follow-up question should be focusing on the scalability of the ideas and on the possible impact they can have on society. How can I trigger others to make the change towards a gift economy? How can the gift economy have a major impact on society? With these questions, we move towards a challenge of how to reach people, so we can speak of not only single design projects but of a system that provides more of these gift economies to happen. The step forward could be to develop the tools, a guideline or a platform that shows how people can implement the gift economy principles in their businesses and organisations. I think that the system I designed for *koha cookies* has great potential for scaling and variation. Take any school/workspace/institution in which there is a need for more connection and combine it with something people do naturally during their days. Whether it is going to a bakery, getting a coffee, reading an interesting article, taking the elevator, or going to the library, I see possibilities for gift giving everywhere after writing this thesis, and I think that when others start seeing this too, we could create very interesting encounters between people and bring back that sense of community that money cant buy.

4

1. <http://www.freecycle.org/>

2. <http://www.thuisafgehaald.nl/>

3. episode Gaten In de Markt. 28 January 2013

4. Worldwatch institute Local Currencies Grow During Economic Recession Accessed June 3, 2013 <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5978>

B. Barter systems, the old idea of ‘a chicken for a cheese’, is making a comeback today, helped by our online technologies. Websites like freecycle¹ are meant to make it easy for people to give and get stuff for free in their own towns. It becomes more and more easy for people to directly do business with one another. The Internet is an obvious platform to connect gifts and needs. Other initiatives are for example ‘Thuis Afgehaald’² which translates as ‘home take-away’. This Dutch concept is set up so people can offer food to others in their neighbourhood for a small price. Besides to the fact that we all need to eat, it has the added positive result that people will again start to meet each other and walk into each other’s living rooms. It also gives people with a lot of free time something inspiring to do, and has proven to improve health and well being. In the Dutch documentary/tv series ‘Tegenlicht’³, one lady tells about her experience with participating in the food concept, and how she could cut down on her anti depressive medication already after one week of cooking for others. Initiatives like this can re-establish connections between people and therefore show various positive side effects.

Today there are more then 4000 local currencies in existence, compared with fewer then 100 in 1990, according to Bernard Lietaer.⁴ The principle being that a local community agrees on non-national currency as an official means of exchange. This allows money to circulate in a specific region and therefore stimulate the local economy. These community currencies can be seen as social instruments. The idea of a local currency isn’t new. A successful example is when Silvio Gesell introduced a local currency “the Worgl” in 1932 to help kick start the economy in an Austrian town. Local currencies can facilitate exchange when there is no money available but when there is the time and desire of people to do so.

The value of “The Worgl” currency diminished 1 percent per month, which meant that the money would ‘go bad’ in time. The reason for this was to keep money circulating since no one could benefit from

‘sitting on their money’. This came from the idea that the simple desire to make an exchange should be enough, and it’s unfair to pay simply for the means of exchange.

An example from the world today, is the Greek TEM — the Greek shorthand for “Alternative Local Currency”, which was launched to help people trade goods and services in a country that’s been hit worst by the financial crisis.

Not all local currencies in history have been a success on the long term but often were meant to kick start the economy again. The cases in which the local currencies were the most successful were when they received governmental support, which has been not always the case. In 1933 Roosevelt banned all emergency currencies introducing the New Deal, because otherwise it would mean a loss of government power.⁵

All these initiatives have been made much easier by the development of network technologies. Social innovator, Rachel Botsman speaks about the power of collaboration and sharing through online networks, In her Ted talk ‘The currency of the new economy is trust’ she explains: “With every trade we make, comment we leave, person we flag, badge we earn, we leave a reputation trail.”⁶

5. cited in Eisenstein, 2011: 214. referring to Lietaer, The future of money, 156-160

6. http://www.ted.com/talks/rachel_botsman_the_currency_of_the_new_economy_is_trust.html
Filmed June 2012, posted September 2012 on TEDGlobal 2012.

APPENDIX B

A HISTORY OF MONEY AND MARKET

In Sacred Economics, Charles Eisenstein, traces back the history of money from ancient Gift Economies to modern capitalism. He discusses the negative aspects of money, how money can be to blame for fostering competition and the idea of scarcity, how it destroyed community and cheapened life with its focus on endless growth. His writings give economics spiritual and philosophical depth. I will turn to him for an understanding of a definition of money:

“At its core, money is a beautiful concept. Let me be very naive for a moment so as to reveal this core, this spiritual (if not historical) essence of money. I have something you need, and I wish to give it to you. So I do, and you feel grateful and desire to give something to me in return. But you don’t have anything I need right now. So instead you give me a token of your gratitude—a useless, pretty thing like a wampum necklace or a piece of silver. That token says, “I have met the needs of other people and earned their gratitude.” Later, when I receive a gift from someone else, I give them that token. Gifts can circulate across vast social distances, and I can receive from people to whom I have nothing to give while still fulfilling my desire to act from the gratitude those gifts inspire within me.” (Eisenstein, 2011:11-12)

Most non-monetary societies operated largely along the principles of gift economics. “Money becomes necessary when the range of our gifts must extend beyond the people we know personally. “(Eisenstein, 2011:12) So, eventually a lot of countries developed commodity money to make transaction possible when there was no immediate return gift or when they had to deal with strangers. Initially most coins had material value, but later most systems of commodity money were replaced by representative

money systems, meaning any type of money to which we attach greater value than its value as a material.

“Signs have no intrinsic power, but derive it from human interpretation. To the extent a society holds such interpretations in common, signs or symbols bear social power. The new kind of money that emerged in ancient Greece derived its value from a social agreement, of which the marks on coins were tokens.” (Eisenstein, 2011:35)

Money has been an agreement ever since the days of the ancient Greeks. The effect of the introduction of money has been that it brought everything into the quantifiable. Money being standard for comparison puts all matter into the measurable. As I just explained, we can see how the value of money got separated from its original connection to matter, becoming an abstract medium for exchange. A dollar is the same dollar no matter if I received it from my friend or enemy.

Money today seems even more of an abstraction, existing as bits in a computer, even growing with time thanks to interest. Many people, including me, often don’t understand the complicated abstract existence of money.

The concept of interest on money is a key factor in this. It creates first of all a greater gap between the owners of money and the lenders because it is agreed that the fact of being an owner of money makes you able to earn more money with it. Then, being the lender, it is possible to borrow new money to pay this sum of money plus interest rates back. This enables banks to create an endless cycle of dept. “This system based on eternal conversion of a finite commonwealth into money, is an unsustainable system. “ (Eisenstein, 2011:132)

THE FREE MARKET

More for you is less for me

An Economic Parable, created by the extraordinary economic visionary Bernard Lietaer entitled “The Eleventh Round,” from his book The Future of Money. (Eisenstein, 2011: 95-97)

Once upon a time, in a small village in the Outback, people used barter for all their transactions. On every market day, people walked around with chickens, eggs, hams, and breads, and engaged in prolonged negotiations among themselves to exchange what they needed. At key periods of the year, like harvests or whenever someone’s barn needed big repairs after a storm, people recalled the tradition of helping each other out that they had brought from the old country. They knew that if they had a problem someday, others would aid them in return.

One market day, a stranger with shiny black shoes and an elegant white hat came by and observed the whole process with a sardonic smile. When he saw one farmer running around to corral the six chickens he wanted to exchange for a big ham, he could not refrain from laughing. “Poor people,” he said, “so primitive.” The farmer’s wife overheard him and challenged the stranger, “Do you think you can do a better job handling chickens?” “Chickens, no,” responded the stranger, “But there is a much better way to eliminate all that hassle.” “Oh yes, how so?” asked the woman. “See that tree there?” the stranger replied. “Well, I will go wait there for one of you to bring me one large cowhide. Then have every family visit me. I’ll explain the better way.”

And so it happened. He took the cowhide, and cut perfect leather rounds in it, and put an elaborate and graceful little stamp on each round. Then he gave to each family 10 rounds, and explained that each represented the value of one chicken. “Now you can trade and bargain with the rounds instead of the unwieldy chickens,” he explained.

It made sense. Everybody was impressed with the man with the shiny shoes and inspiring hat.

“Oh, by the way,” he added after every family had received their 10 rounds, “in a year’s time, I will come back and sit under that same tree. I want you to each bring me back 11 rounds. That 11th round is a token of appreciation for the technological improvement I just made possible in your lives.” “But where will the 11th round come from?” asked the farmer with the six chickens. “You’ll see,” said the man with a reassuring smile.

Assuming that the population and its annual production remain exactly the same during that next year, what do you think had to happen? Remember, that 11th round was never created. Therefore, bottom line, one of each 11 families will have to lose all its rounds, even if everybody managed their affairs well, in order to provide the 11th round to 10 others.

So when a storm threatened the crop of one of the families, people became less generous with their time to help bring it in before disaster struck. While it was much more convenient to exchange the rounds instead of the chickens on market days, the new game also had the unintended side effect of actively discouraging the spontaneous cooperation that was traditional in the village. Instead, the new money game was generating a systemic undertow of competition among all the participants.....

This parable shows how our economic system is like s a game of musical chairs, where someone has to lose and it better not be you. The feeling of competition might not be an always-conscious one, but it is very embedded in our way of thinking. It’s the effect of neo-liberalism that found its way in, and gave priority to price mechanisms, the free enterprise and strong competition. Political figureheads like Margaret Thatcher and

1. As mentioned by Timotheus Vermeulen in an article in Frieze Magazine. The article discusses the role of the artist in city economies. Fox, Dan. “Changing Places” Frieze Magazine, Issue 148, June-August 2012.

Ronald Reagan have had a big impact on this. It was in 1979 that the Thatcher Government prioritized economy and the enterprise culture. Her dedication to the free-market resulted in the limitation of governmental regulation and a shift in faith towards the market. It must be of no surprise that this created, on one hand, a greater gap between rich and poor, and that it created a separated sense of self and community. Thatcher had a clear notion of the relationship between the individual and society:

“There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then to look after our neighbors. “ (M. Thatcher, Woman’s Own, October 31, 1987)

Also in the early nineties with the market friendly liberalism of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, we can see that the western world has been shifting more and more towards individualism and the loss of a sense of community.

APPENDIX C

COMMODITIZATION

These 3 examples show the effects of commoditisation of society, how it crowds out feelings like commitment and solidarity and how market mechanisms can change our motivations.

1. Sendell writes about of a day-care centre for children where parents came often too late to pick up their child. To change the behaviour of the parents a punishment fee for coming too late was introduced. Surprisingly the effect was that the parents came even later than before. It seemed that their initial feelings of guilt vanished with the idea of ‘paying for a babysitter’, therefore justifying their behaviour of coming too late. (Sendell, 2012:119)

2. Another example Sendell mentions in the same chapter is of Ronald Titmuss, an English social researcher who wrote *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy* in 1970 , a book about the relationship between money and blood donation. He compared the rate of blood donation in the UK and in the US, the difference being that in the UK blood donation is a voluntary action whereas in the US a fee is paid to the donors. Against the thinking of most economists, blood donation in the UK was more successful. Why? The motivation for giving blood as a voluntary action for the greater good, was washed away by turning something that came from the body into a marketable good. “At some point Titmuss worried:

‘market driven societies might become so inhospitable to altruism that they could be said to impair the freedom of persons to give. The commercialisation of blood and donor relationships represses the expression of altruism and erodes the sense of community’ (Sendell, 2012:124).

3. A last example, based on research of the relation between reward and result, shows how an economist’s way of thinking doesn’t always make sense. A video (RSA Animate - Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, 2010.) I watched of Daniel H. Pink, Writer of *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, describes a scientific research on human motivation. Most of us believe that the best way to motivate others and ourselves is with external rewards like money, but the opposite would appear to be true. When it concerns creative and more complex thinking, a higher reward often leads to weaker results. Instead of money as a motivator it becomes clear that finding a sense of purpose is the motivator for many. This explains why someone would spend 20/30 hours a week doing even more meaningful work then at their daytime jobs. Successful platforms like Wikipedia and Skype are just two examples out of innovative successes, out of many initiatives, which were created in the extra time of people.

APPENDIX D

IMAGES FROM THE DESIGN PROCESS

This appendix shows the process of Time Coins, Gift Bar and Koha Cookies in images, and is to complement what has allready been discussed,.

D.1 Making the Time coins.



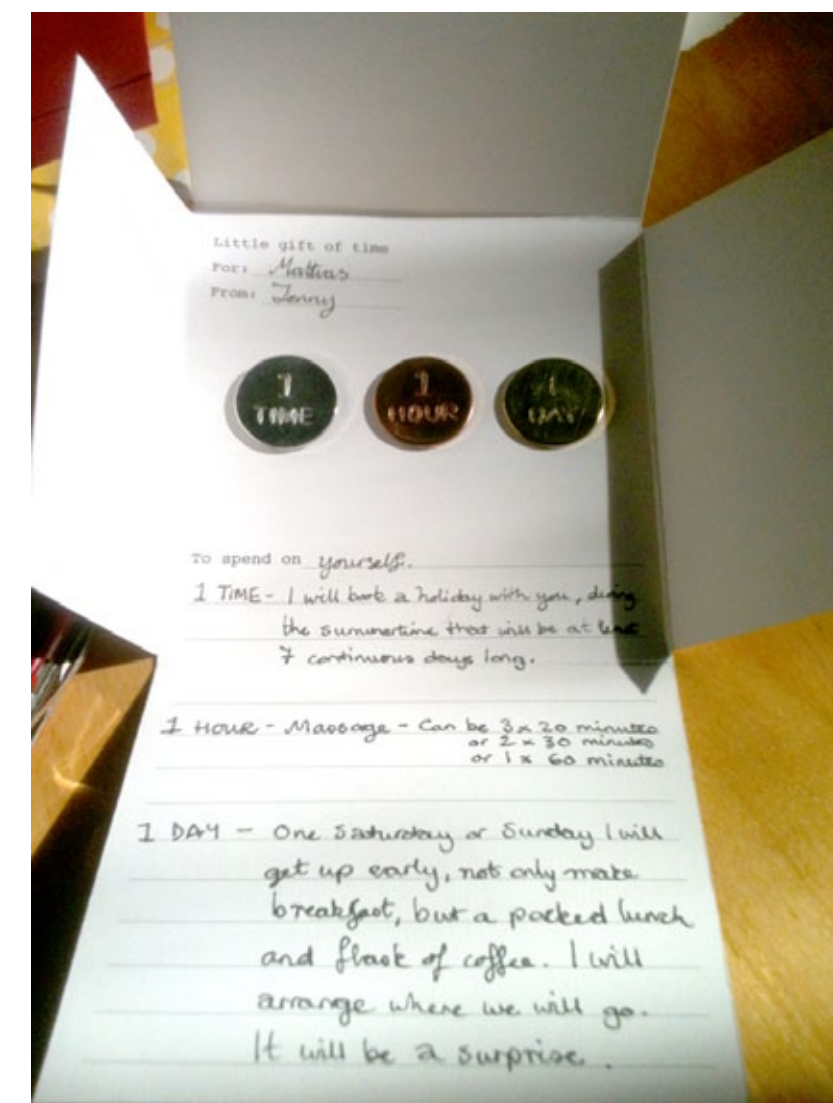
D.2 Pressing the imprint.

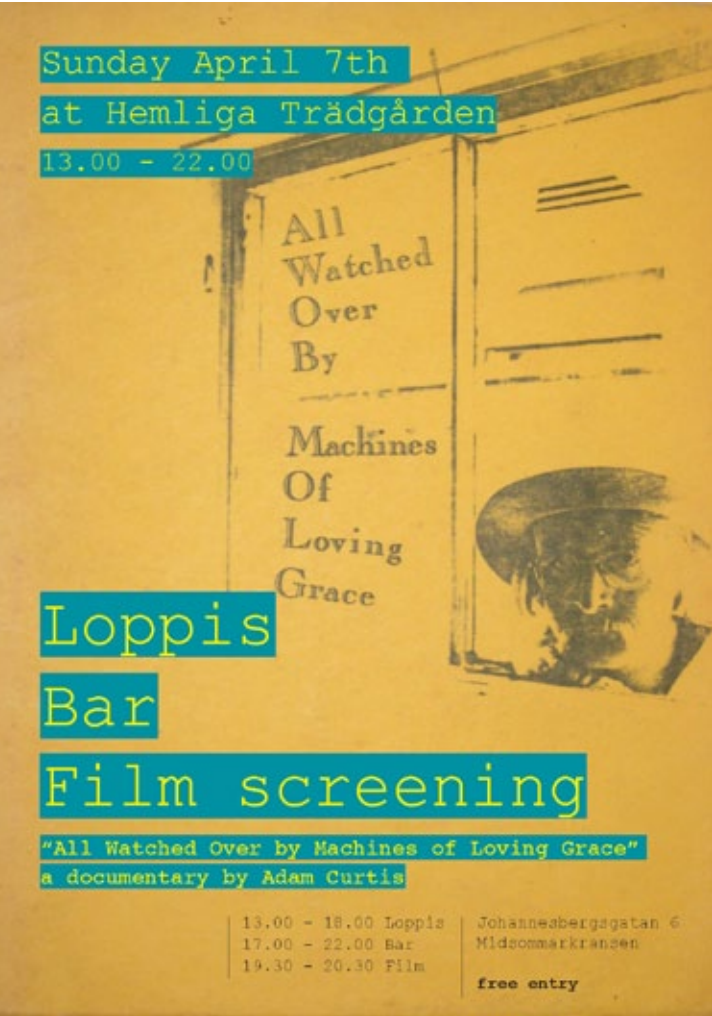




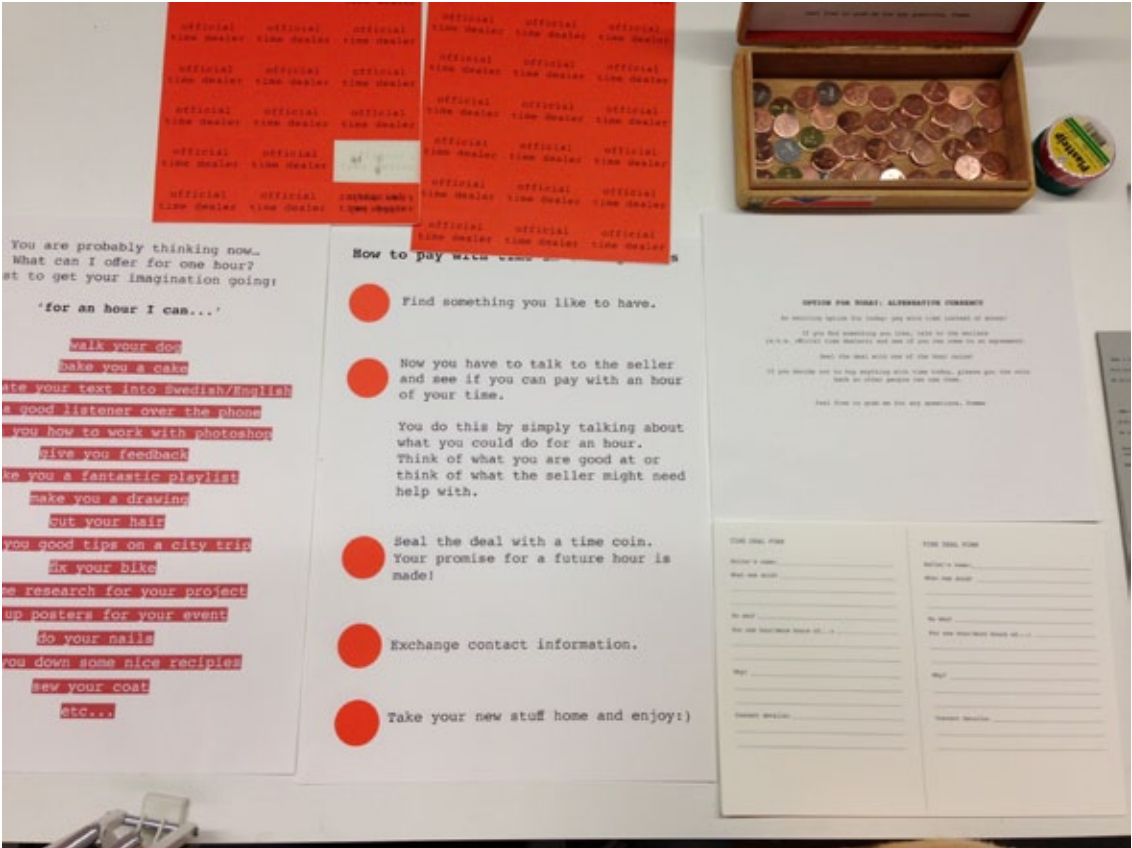
D.3 Selling A little gift of time at the christmas market.

D.4 Picture send to me by someone who bought the time coins.





D.5 Poster to announce the event.



I created an event on the 7th of April containing a fleemarket, a bar and a film screening. The event was made public on facebook and in total around 80 people came throughout that day.

During the daytime I tested my coins as being a means of exchange. I wanted to see if people would be into the idea of trading goods with an hour of their time instead of with money. The sellers who were taking part in the experiment had a sticker saying 'official time dealer' clearly visible on their clothing, and several posters explained examples of how paying with time could work.



D.6 Presentation material for paying with time currency and the gift bar.

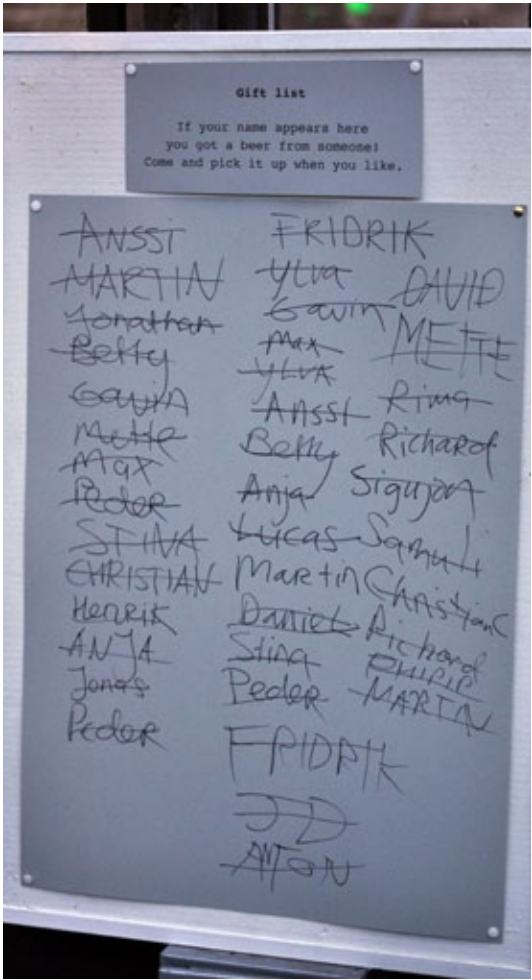


D.7 the space at Hemliga Trädgården where the event took place.

D.9 View on the bar with posters communicating the concept behind it.



D.10 Gift beer with a name tag. Some names were hard to read.

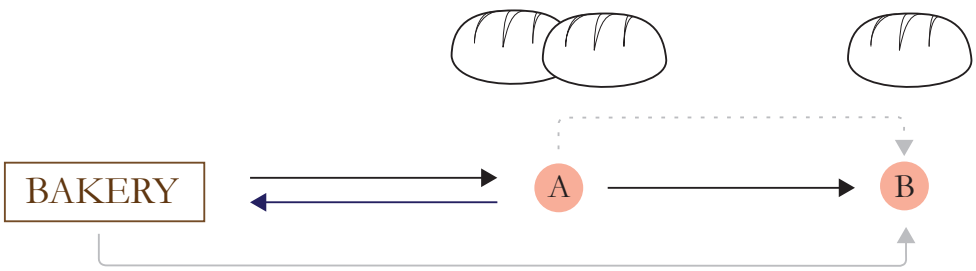


D.8 List of names of the people who received a gift beer.

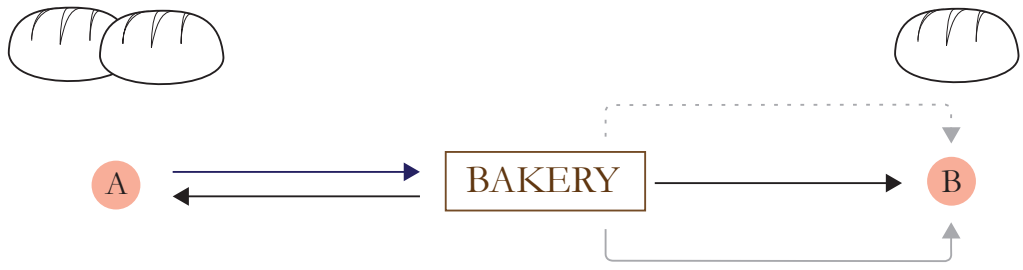
D.11 Easy going atmosphere created by the gift bar.



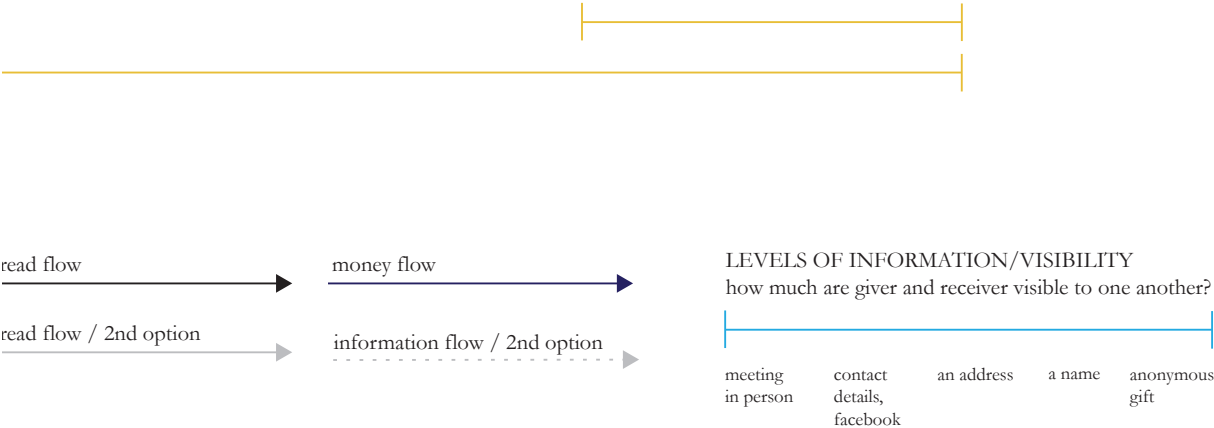
MODELS FOR GIFT BREAD



SCENARIO 1
Bakery sells gift bread, suggests who to give further to. The buyer is an "active giver".



SCENARIO 2
Bakery sells gift bread, and facilitates the further giving of the gift bread.



In scenario 1, person B=
Chosen by A / Chosen by 'rule'

Rules could be: to give to...
your neighbour
someone who lives in your block
a stranger who smiles at you today
someone in your neighbourhood
someone who makes great work
the first person you meet
someone who might be lonely
a person you might have something in common with
Name and address of person (from database)
.....

in scenario 2, person B=
Chosen by A/ Chosen by 'rule'

Rules could be: given to...
Next customer who buys...
random choice out of existing customers.
Random address from neighbourhood
For the next person who asks for it (suspended coffee principle)
Someone picked by person A..
Someone who lives at.... (block / street)
Another student at Konstfack

TIMEFRAME
Concept:
whole concept is realized for a specific period of 10 days/KF Spring show.
/ Whole concept is something to keep for longer.

Gift time:
time in between buying and giving a bread

NOTIFICATION
The receiver is informed about the gift by email/sms/phone, to pick up the gift bread.

ABOUT THE BREAD

Moment of consumption:
immediate
later

Size:
bun
bread

looks:
breakable shape
rope?
text

Ingredients:
plain
special

Amount of gift breads:
limited edition?

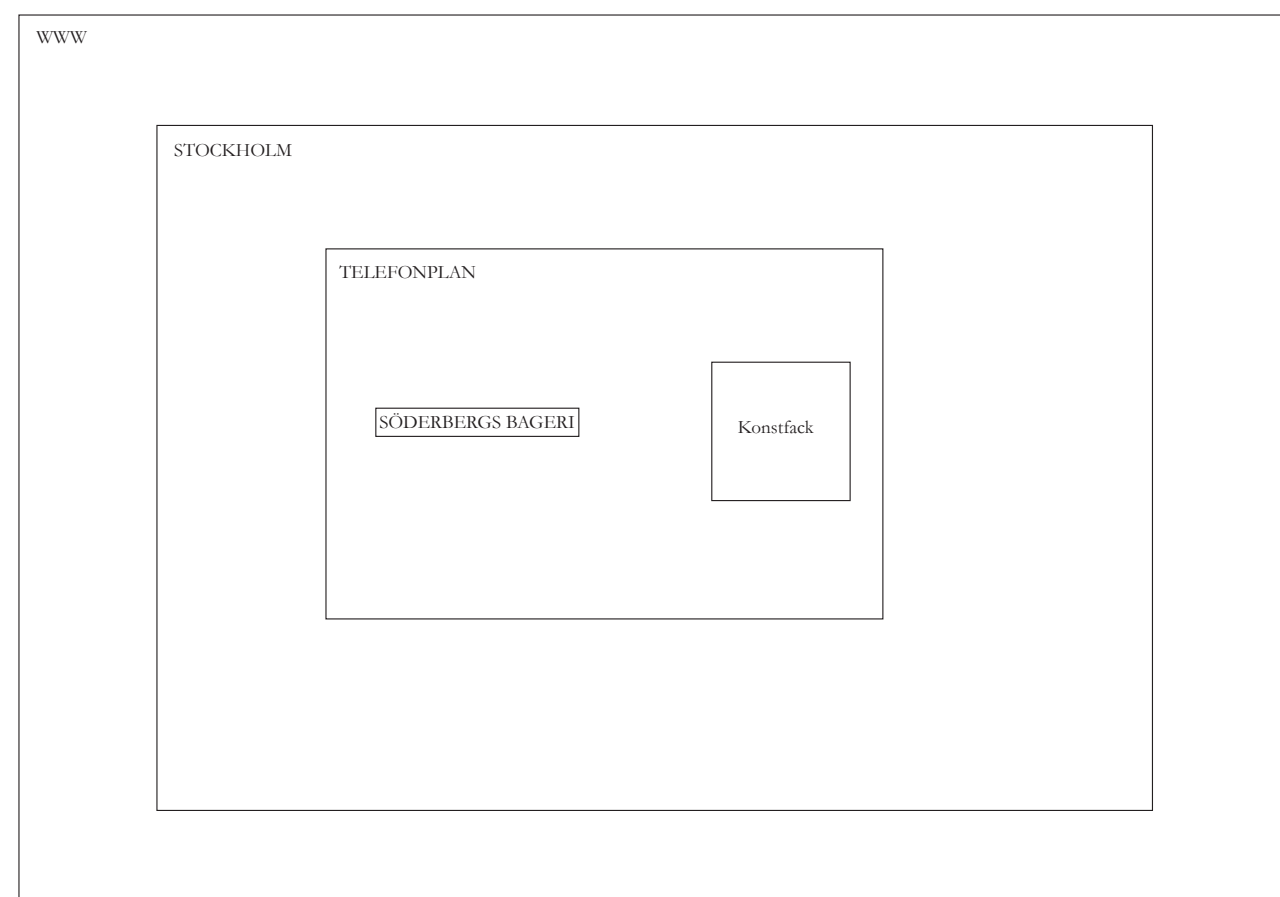
Sold as normal breads
when not sold out?

Over time:
every day the same
daily gift bread

input from customers?

Money / price
What should be the price of the gift bread? is giving cheaper then buying for yourself?
How is the price build up?
Can this be communicated somehow? (showing time, ingredients etc)

D.12 Thought process when designing a gift system for a bakery. The last step before coming up with the Koha Cookies concept.



D.13 Map of the area around Konstfack.



D.14 Stamp I had made for printing the packaging.

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