

EXPERIMENTS IN RECEIVING WHILE GIVING

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Early Experiments



Experiments with Gift Culture at Six Events

- We expressed the cost of the event, to share bills we would need to pay, and left it to everyone to contribute what was doable
- We set a minimum contribution request and offered scholarships
- We attempted a sliding scale payment scheme and offered scholarships
- We set a very bare minimum to cover event costs (venue only) and left everything else open and tried disbursal with a money pile

Early Experiments



Outcomes of Experiments

- Of these six events, there was **only one** where we covered costs and had a surplus.
- Three experiences where I was legally responsible for making the bill payments.
- Up to the last day, we had about 50% of what was required by the venue.

Flow

- Value/purpose driven Community
- Honesty, transparency, asking for support
- Dialogue and holding pain, confusion, shame, fear

Resistance

- External resistance. Strong feedback around a) “bad planning”, “bad management”, b) feeling unsafe, c) concern about future
- Internal resistance: Fear, and shame reactions.
- Systemic resistance: Practical and legal requirements

Key Learnings

Some thoughts

- Giftivism - as Genevieve Vaughan pointed out - needs a vocabulary of its own.
- The vocabulary helps with addressing the layers of pain and shame around money, and the equation of not having enough with not being enough.
- Letting go and handing over responsibility consciously to the community.

2020 - Riot Relief, Covid: Massive Spontaneous Citizen Response



- Volunteerism, "Charity", Giving as it lives within the System
- Emergency challenging the idea that the exchange economy is the route to survival.
- A crack in the exchange system that allowed for more natural forms of giving to surface and become visible.
- Examples of giving from police officials to so-called vulnerable beneficiaries.
- Gifts is what *led to* survival.

Unconscious assumptions at the heart of my resistance

- That I'm not good enough
- That I have no value and what I do does not matter beyond maybe 2-3 people
- That I am alone and I also can't do it alone

Shift in Conscious Assumptions

- I matter inherently.
- What I do has inherent value and will impact other beings regardless of how aware I am
- There is enough.
- I am never alone.
- Everyone is doing the best they know to do.

**Key Personal Shift:
My resistance to the gift economy is, in fact, my resistance to receiving,**

enCOMPASSion: Focus and Purpose

- COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT
- LIVING BRIDGES: NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION (NVC) AND SOCIAL CHANGE
- EMERGENCY RELIEF





Points of Tension between Flow and Resistance in Experience

- SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE
- FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY
- INNER AND OUTER WAYS OF BEING
- ALIGNMENT AND MISSION DRIFT

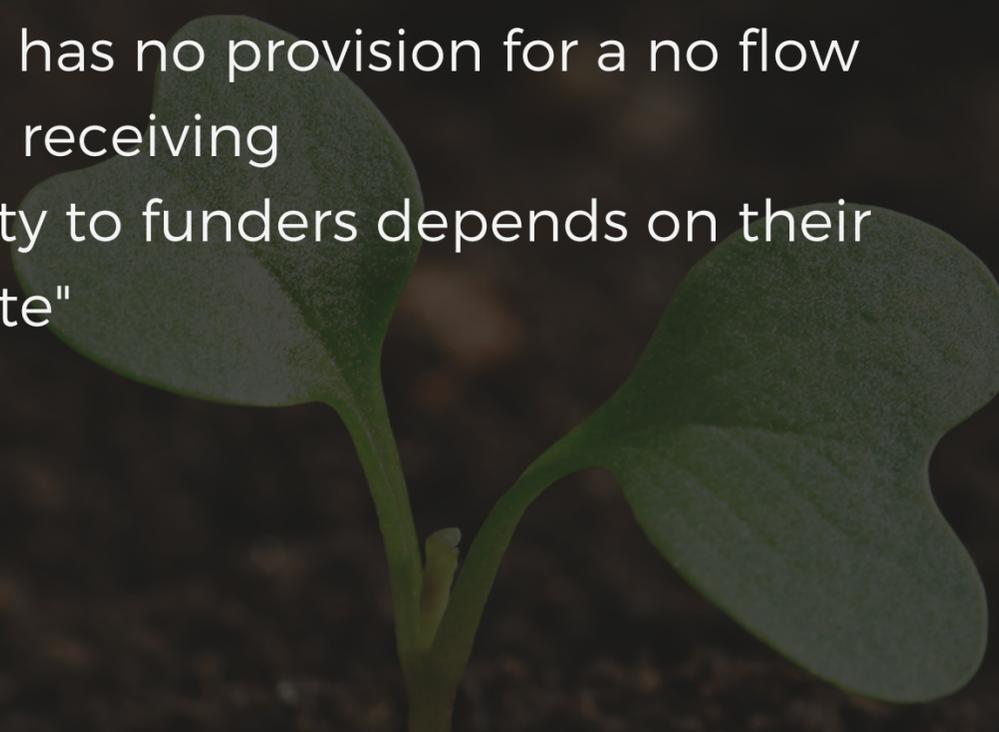
How Money Comes in

- Flexible receiving model: We receive money through workshops, trainings, and gifts
- While we have a "price" or "sliding scale", we have active ongoing conversations with people about sustainability - their own and ours.
- Internal conversations about fears, risks, and willingness

How we hold this

- Accountability and compliance within the system
- Willingly naming a 'cost' to meet people where they are with an invitation to dialogue
- Accepting risk, owning vulnerabilities and making conscious choices

Our Lived Challenges

- Naming the 'cost' also leads to challenges
 - Legal system has no provision for a no flow of giving and receiving
 - Accountability to funders depends on their own "mandate"
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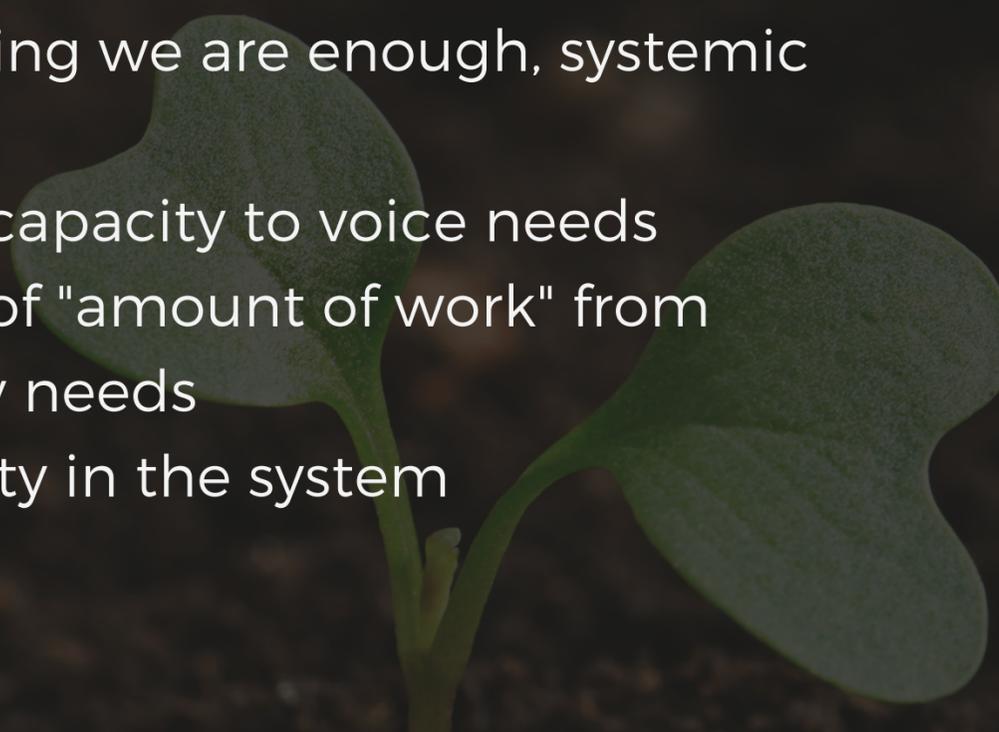
How We Distribute Money in the Organisation

- Distribution of money based largely on need
- Current distribution includes people who receive regular salaries, people who take money only when they need it,
- One person who receives coffee, and people who don't want any money at all.

How we hold this

- Conversations and connection
- Value driven structure, process, and direction
- Inclusion in process and decision making
- Accountability in leadership
- Accepting imperfections

Our Lived Challenges

- How do we care for each other without money, trusting we are enough, systemic challenges
 - Care for the capacity to voice needs
 - Uncoupling of "amount of work" from sustainability needs
 - Accountability in the system
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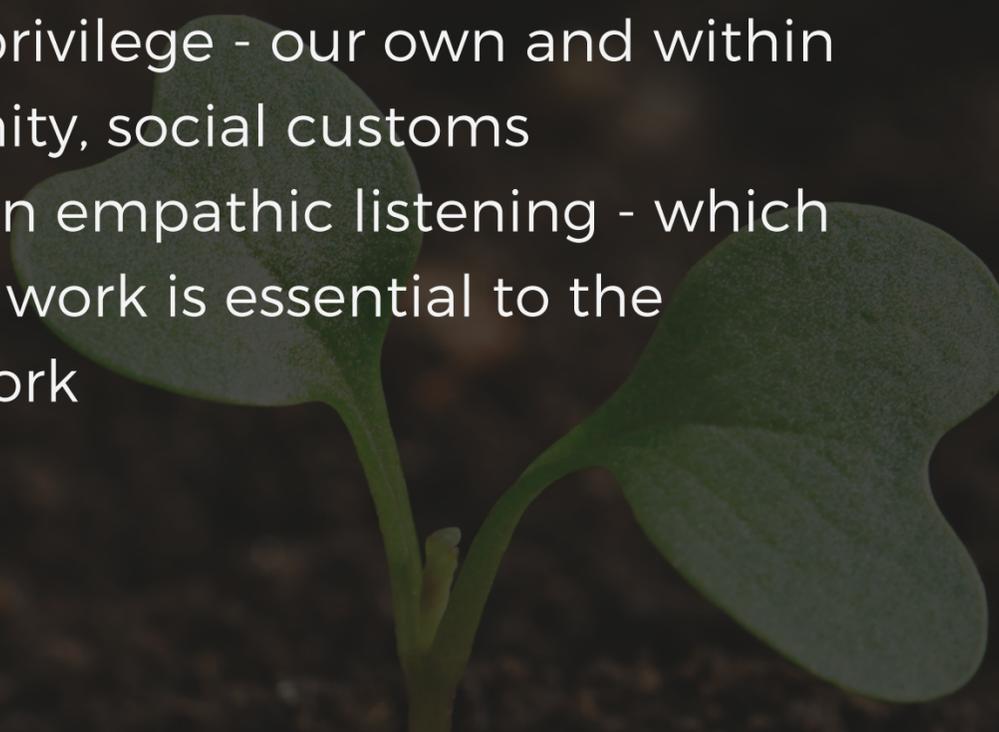
How Money is Given to Others

- Community chooses the trajectory of their development
- No questions asked around food requirements beyond baseline verification
- Collaborative/facilitative non-interventions
- Models of cash relief or informal microfinance
- Blueprint to build vocabulary .

How we hold this

- Internal training
- Dialogue and connection with receivers - time spent on caring for relations
- Lots of debriefs, layers of feedback and self reflectiveness
- Leadership only as conscious service
- Acceptance, trust, patience

Our Lived Challenges

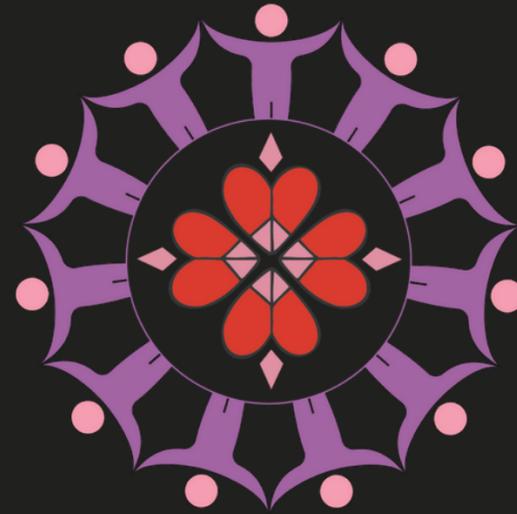
- Vocabulary
 - Addressing privilege - our own and within the community, social customs
 - Rootedness in empathic listening - which means inner work is essential to the grassroots work
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Points of focus that have supported us:



- Empathy and Self Empathy
- Focus on connection and connectedness
- Focus on Giving as Receiving
- Value Based Decision-making
- Embracing imperfection and messiness

Thank you!



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You can find out more about Manasi and her work at

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