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.
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: Practicel 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.
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.
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"
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
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
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!

You can find out more about Manasi and her work at www.enCOMPASSion.com

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