

An Economy for Giving Everything Away

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ABSTRACT

How might an independent thinker work on personal projects they share with others for free, while building relationships towards work for pay? We explore what the the command to “give everything away” can mean for an individual, a business, and an economy. We draw conclusions from six markets for open source software. We further illustrate the idea that wealth is relationships with anecdotal evidence from the Minciu Sodas laboratory. We conclude with a proposal for how a corporation might invest in business ecosystems to harness this wealth of relationships in high uncertainty.

Keywords

Business ethics, caste system, gift economy, human engineering, open source, sustainable living

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INTRODUCTION

The original purpose in 1998 of the first author, Andrius Kulikauskas, was to start a business based in Lithuania that was ethically sound and allowed him to provide for himself and have ample time for his

own projects. The business, Minciu Sodas, flowered into a worldwide network for independent thinkers to organize their projects around shared endeavors that foster caring about thinking. Minciu Sodas conducts its work openly, and struggles to organize around itself a supportive economy. This is a problem in human engineering: How can we organize a market that pays for work to be done openly? The evolution of Minciu Sodas makes tangible the challenges, and offers meaningful principles and promising solutions.

Underlying the evolution of Minciu Sodas is an ethical assumption that one should give away everything they have. We'll take this assumption as given, valid for all people, but impossible to enforce. Our goal is to structure a business that would subscribe to this principle, but also profit from it, and thereby unravel the normal economy, turning it inside out.

We'll start with the outlook of an individual: What can it mean for them to give everything away? We'll consider, taking their outlook: How might they make a living? This brings us to the problem: How can anybody pay for work if all are free to share the results? Six markets for open source software suggest that wealth is not objects, or knowledge, but relationships. Our account of Minciu Sodas agrees that wealth is relationships, and adds that we can generate wealth by integrating the poor. How can we unleash this wealth? Challenges are resources, and we discuss the investment potential of uplifting discouraged thinkers, such as David Ellison-Bey, the second author, in the psychologically and economically devastated neighborhood of Englewood in Chicago. We propose business ecosystems as a form of investment for harnessing wealth in high uncertainty.

DEVELOPING AN OUTLOOK

We document the position of the first author, Andrius Kulikauskas, the proprietor of Minciu Sodas, as an existential starting point. We present his outlook, in first person, to show that it unfolds through the modest practice of a radical principle.

"I accept the idea that I should give everything away."

"The challenge is to put this into practice. This is a design problem for personal life and social economy. We can venture attempts and draw experience from them."

"My intent is to clarify the problem and offer solutions, especially by documenting ideas that have proven helpful in giving everything away."

"Accepting that I should give everything away, I realize that it's not clear what this exactly means. What is mine to give away? At any moment, I have some cash on my person and in my accounts. I may own a car, laptop computer, desktop computer, software, bicycle, books, hiking equipment, chairs, clothes and shoes, eyeglasses, phone cards, kitchen utensils, paper and pen, toothbrush. I have a credit line that I can draw against at a particular rate of interest. I have family, friends, and even strangers on whom I can call for help. I am employable by virtue of my connections, work experience, education, enthusiasm and helpfulness. I have citizenship and civil rights. I have my time, my health, my organs, and my life expectancy. Moreover, I have gifts of creativity, invention, thoughtfulness, playfulness, friendship, concern, love. I have a mind for cultivating and applying these gifts. I have truths of life, and a moral sense. Finally, I have a capacity for good will, a free will by which I may defer to others."

"The variety of my riches makes me look for guidelines, and for reasons for those guidelines. Yet if I agree to give everything away, then I feel I must at least proceed by degrees, even in my ignorance. In

this way I may learn by experience."

"I can start simply by giving away what I have extra, clothes I no longer wear, books I will not read, equipment I don't make use of. Even these modest steps force me to consider: What am I using, and what will I use? I find out that I can't give anything away unless I risk the regret of doing so. In order to give things away, I need to accept greater insecurity."

"If I accept insecurity, then there isn't much reason to save any extra money I may have. If the money has no designated purpose, then there is nothing to keep me from giving it away. I may practice doing so, and make gifts to charitable organizations, and also to people I know, until my surplus has dwindled. Then I edge closer to vulnerability. I will be touched by waves of mistakes and misfortunes. Chances are good that I will find myself in debt."

"I will learn that I must call on others and accept their help. I become sensitive to the extent that I may impose on them. Asking for help may strengthen our friendship, but asking for too much may end it. And how may I reciprocate? I find that I must give up the ideal of an independent life. I depend on others for help. I start to notice the many ways in which each of us depends on others. I make available my resources to others, including my line of credit. This intertwines our lives, forces me to grow closer to others, exercise my judgment and examine our values. I also find it easy to accept what I am offered, the used clothes, books, equipment. As I give freely, so I take freely. This may work greatly in my favor. I find myself able to take large gifts, or accept business opportunities, that might have threatened my financial independence, when I felt I had that."

"I still have many things to give away: the last of my shoes, my eyeglasses, my toothbrush. I may continue, but I realize that I am already depending on others, and this can only make life harder for them. I find my obligation to care for myself, just as for others. Frankly, who needs my eyeglasses or my toothbrush? Who would put them to better use? I find myself at a dead end, unsure how to give more away. Therefore I take to heart a general principle, that I myself have nothing, it is all available to those who make best use of it. I may not say of anything: this is mine, to do what I please with. Rather, I must ever be mindful of when I'm not making best use of something."

"All of the meanwhile, I have also thought about the most important things I have. I have my life, and what shall I do with it? My gifts, my talents, my loving parents, my secure upbringing - all of this was given to me, I did not create this. All that I have must serve all, not myself."

"Who is to decide what to do with me? Certainly, my parents have their effect, as do others. But only I can apply my own free will. Therefore I do everything I can that I may be worthy to decide what to do with myself, how to apply myself. I discipline myself, educate myself, direct myself. I develop my dreams that focus my efforts."

"I work to devote all of myself to the most important parts of life. At any moment, I must play out the sweet kindnesses and small challenges by which we engage each other and this life we live. In the big picture, I must flesh out the largest visions that might inspire me to apply all of myself with that much more vigor. Certainly, this is a wonderful life to live."

"The more I give away, the more I understand how much work this is! I now think of wealth as a large burden of responsibility. What is the best use for it? I appreciate that some people are much better than others at making good use of wealth. They should certainly govern more, with the understanding that they have no right to do as they please, but must always use it as best for all."

"I also learn the anxiety of poverty, the energy I must spend to weight what I might ask of each friend, and calculate how I might salvage my situation. This does not help me apply myself, nor does it help others. How may I apply myself, as much possible, to what is important in life? I should reduce, as much as I can, the responsibility of irrelevant wealth, and also the anxiety of irrelevant poverty. As I find this middle way, I grow more sensitive in poverty, and more able in wealth."

Minimizing Anxiety rather than Maximizing Happiness

We have suggested that an individual can behave with the outlook that they are giving everything away. If they accept this, not as a special calling, but as a universal responsibility, then in practice, they will consider the extremes of both wealth and poverty as causing anxiety, and will naturally seek an equilibrium between them.

This equilibrium is in many ways compatible with the usual market forces, and in a behavioral sense, practically invisible. However, the motivation is entirely different. A consumer seeks to maximize happiness. But for a giver, happiness is exhausting, and interferes with their giving. A giver wants to be responsive, and their own happiness is an emotional noise that takes away their sensitivity to others. A giver wants to marshal their efforts on their life vision. Happiness and fun are helpful as indicators of what attracts us, but not necessary or even helpful when we are doing what we truly want to do.

One may always argue, in any particular case, that behavior is produced by self-interest. Certainly, altruistic behavior may be driven by any of our needs: a need for survival - clinging to what we have, for security - getting more than what we need, for acceptance - avoiding extremes, for self-esteem - choosing the good over the bad, for opportunity - preferring the better over the worse, for self-fulfillment - striving for the best. Yet, subjectively, we also know that we can neglect our own needs. We do this when we immerse ourselves in the needs of another, rather than our own. Externally, this is not observable, but internally, this is an option that we understand ourselves to have. Time Magazine recognized Tom White as America's greatest philanthropist. He gave away \$50,000,000 of the wealth he earned throughout his life, and aimed to keep only \$2,500,000 for himself. How can we truly know his motives? Neglect of self-interest is always just a theory, never demonstrable in any case, but one that can become convincing as the simplest and most useful explanation.

Minimizing anxiety leads to the same efficiencies as maximizing happiness whenever the giver lets the market decide what constitutes "best use". The differences become apparent in the smallest concerns and the largest concerns. In small matters, a consumer will apply all of their unused resources if that can increase their happiness by just the slightest amount. This is a destabilizing strategy, and magnifies the consequences of competition, where much energy can be spent to award one winner amongst many losers. A giver, who is looking for peace, seeks to avoid distractions. A giver prefers simplifying responses, and defers in every matter, so as to open up more resources for the larger questions that typically have no rational horizon. In these large matters, the giver does not let the market decide, and takes personal responsibility for what is "best use".

Certainly, there can be great conflicts as to what is "best use". However, the vast majority of matters are distributed so that only one person has any reason to care. The few matters that do affect more than one person can be quite complicated, and lead to all of the familiar concepts of property, asking for permission, contracts, and so forth. What is different for givers is the underlying outlook that ultimately nothing is ours to do with as we please, but everything is ours to put to best use. This means that wealth cannot always be reduced to a single currency, but is often multidimensional because it reflects different ideas, perhaps not entirely compatible, as to what is best use.

Responsibility rather than Accountability

We may now imagine that there already exists a huge economy based on such an outlook. It actually is much larger than the monetary economy that we normally think of. This economy of giving grows in wealth by circulating it ever more rapidly. The monetary economy is simply a way of tracking this wealth when it can be reduced to a single dimension. The rate of increase in turnover of wealth can be measured by the amount that can be diverted from it, which is a profit, a proportional return. Unfortunately, the expectation of a proportional return is enormously destructive, unsupportable in any material form. Whereas if wealth is understood as an opportunity, then the circulation of opportunity can overlap and increase in number, frequency and complexity without bound.

Apologists for the monetary economy have portrayed it as a natural outgrowth of a barter economy. However, sociologist Marcel Mauss pointed out that there is no historical or anthropological evidence that any barter economy has ever existed.[1] Instead, his study of tribes living without money reveals gift economies where the goal is to give the most away. Exchange is about creating friendships, working out rivalries, fulfilling obligations. The MAUSS movement in France builds further on these ideas. We may think of the relationship between the economy of giving and the economy of paying as that of responsibility and accountability, which are not the same. It is not enough to measure, one must rely on imagination to understand and take responsibility. Whereas fixation on much, and more, and most predates money as pride, and greed, and envy.

EARNING A LIVING

How can one make a living from an economy of giving?

We suppose that the giver is the one who can know best what they might do with their life as a whole. In other words, we do not consider children, monks, or others who are limited in the decisions they are to make for themselves. Not only must the giver meet their own basic needs, but they must also respond to those of others, especially their family around them. Every human should be able to devote their regular energies to their family and others they know. Furthermore, they should be able to apply their most creative energies, perhaps an hour or more per day, to their own personal direction, applying the gift of their life as a whole as only they can.

We assume that the giver must participate in the monetary economy in order to meet these basic human expectations. In fact, they must perform respectably.

A further challenge is that a giver is responsible not only for their personal direction, but for the energy they spend in making a living, and the effect that it produces. However, the monetary economy tracks accountability, not responsibility. An airplane pilot is accountable that passengers arrive safely, but not responsible whether they should have traveled at all, and does not question them. A surgeon is accountable for her patient's health, but not responsible for any bad deeds he may live to cause. Whereas a mother may have no control over her child, yet she still questions him, and is responsible to do so. And so, in fact, we are all obliged to care for each other. The market, however, absolves all responsibility. It does not inform the giver whether the fruits of his work will be a zero-sum game, where victory by one is defeat for another, or whether something more will be generated. Why should a giver play a zero-sum game? Why not just give by not playing?

In general, there is a trade-off between clarity and liquidity of effect. The market rewards liquidity, hence punishes clarity. This perhaps explains why, generally, the best paid work produces the most obscured effects, and the most clearly helpful work is underpaid: growing food, preparing food, caring

for children and elderly. (Although another reason is that public policy works against shortages in basic items, which deflates related wages and corrupts any market neutrality.) The market is often the most wonderful calculator for "best use". But how can it know what a person should do with their whole life if it doesn't even ask them? The market has slots to fill. If you want paths for genius, you must imagine them yourself.

If you are to give your whole life, then you are responsible to find your own path. What are your options?

One consideration is to save and then live from your saving. But this is mostly ruled out. For what giver can claim that the best use of money is to keep it for their own undeveloped purpose, while relief agencies are efficiently and urgently addressing the most basic needs? Personal projects need continuous work, long term devotion, they do not mature from all of our time in short periods, but rather from part of our time over long periods.

An example to consider is Jesus of Nazareth. He may be thought of as a mooch (someone who lives off the generosity of others). He was supported by money given by women, and kept by Judas in a purse. When Peter stated that Jesus paid the tax, then Jesus made this true by having him pull out of the river a fish, and take a gold coin from that fish. Jesus took heartily, and was accused of being a drinker and eater. But he also gave graciously, especially as a healer and defender, and as a teacher. It is plausible that we all would be provided for if we lived in such a spirit. Indeed, his apostles started off by sharing everything. However, one couple held back, but claimed to give everything, and then were stricken by death.[2] So we ask humbly, perhaps with Mohammed, how is this to work for an imperfect person with obligations in the monetary economy?

A very different thought is to make money from our own personal direction. This is dangerous, if the gift of our life is holy. It suggests that money can buy everything. Money can bring people together, but it can't get people to care. You can't pay for people to care because there's no way to measure the effects. Caring is an internal motivation, and money is an external motivation. Any money that you pay will cast in doubt whether the motivation is internal or external. You only measure caring by discouraging, that is by removing external motivation, and applying a slight discouragement.

This points to the value of givers. You can't pay for them! They are self-directed, self-motivated, self-positioning, self-managing, self-educating, in short, independently thinking because they give with their whole life. They are also responsive-to-others, socially-perceptive, economically-restrained because they give with every moment of their life. This makes them highly attractive workers.

Part-time work is a possibility, keeping the two separate, earning a living and pursuing a mission. St. Paul practiced this, supporting himself as a tentmaker, not taking money for preaching.[2] This is possible in a wealthy country for those with skills that can draw a high wage.

But what to do in a poorer economy? Consider Lithuania, where prices for food, fuel, manufactured goods are on par with the United States and Western Europe, but people earn \$100 to \$200 per month. There is no way to support oneself from part-time work.

SELLING OPENNESS

The solution that we explore is to start a business, one that makes a healthy profit. A business is all-consuming, especially starting one. There is not much time to separately pursue one's personal

mission. Therefore we shall look for ways to pursue both at the same time.

How can we satisfy our clients with our work, but also keep it for ourselves, and freely share with others? This is a problem addressed by open source software. The nature of software is that it can be freely reproduced and reused. However, current laws treat software as a creative work for which every user must get permission from the creator in order to make a copy. Many software vendors use these laws to restrict access to the workings of the software, which are considered secret. This legal environment discourages sharing even when the creator prefers to encourage it. Consequently, a spectacular movement has arisen to create software under licenses that promote copying, and encourage users to examine and even edit the underlying source code. [3]

How can one make money from works that may be freely shared? The affordability, quality, and proliferation of open source software has attracted commercial efforts. Makers of open source software have proven the viability of a variety of business models: organizing, packaging, distributing and branding software, offering training, consultations, extensions, and customizations, publishing books, magazines and organizing conferences. However, it seems that none of them directly profit from the openness of the software! In fact, many of them fall back on the copyright laws for the books, materials, and software that they actually sell. Or they profit from the fact that experience is in short supply. Apparently, everybody values the openness, but nobody directly pays for it!

Six markets for open source software

Is it possible to make money from openness? In other words, is it possible that clients pay extra to insist that a work be available for all to share?

If this is possible, then it must not be for any product that may be deliverable to the client. For if the client can purchase exclusive rights, then they can always choose to share with others at their own discretion. Why then would they pay extra? They would only pay extra if the work process itself generated value by being conducted openly.

The years 1998 and 1999 saw the creation of six very different markets for open source software. Let us examine the nature of each market, and consider in what sense did they profit from the openness of the software?

Free Software Bazaar

Math professor Axel Boldt established the Free Software Bazaar in 1998 because he believed that it was better to directly induce open source software creators rather than pay middlemen like Red Hat. His Bazaar worked on the bounty system, with offers made on the honor system, and payment given for the first solution. A few dozen projects were completed, mostly for about \$50, one for \$1,000. Developers found ideas for truly needed projects, and users gave back to their community. "The Software Bazaar kind of died - I lost my web access and was too lazy to organize something new." "It wasn't that much work: I maintained the site by hand and spent maybe a couple of hours per week on it." [Boldt, personal communication]

CoSource

Bernie Thompson and Norm Jacobowitz founded CoSource, "a collaborative reverse-auction site for funding open source development". They encouraged software users to pool contributions to sponsor the creation of drivers, for example. They received a lot of good publicity from the open source

community press. In the first six months there were 14 projects completed, with the largest for only \$1,300. They relied heavily on a developer in Russia. In December, 1999, Bernie Thompson was able to sell his company for an undisclosed amount to Applix, and Cosource drifted into its product support center SmartBeak, closing its doors around August, 2001. Bernie Thompson was put in charge of Applix's Linux division, which at that time had about \$1.5 million dollars in revenues. Within six months Applix had spun off that division, with Bernie Thompson in charge, into a separate company with \$6 million dollars in backing. And a year later that company was sold, and changed direction again, for many millions more.

Open Avenue

Open Avenue received a \$4.6 million investment in December, 1999. It had 60 small and medium sized projects that it was ready to find workers for. At first, Open Avenue intended to distinguish itself by embracing programmers using Microsoft's Visual Basic and Borland's Delphi: "We will bring more mainstream developers into open source by lowering the barrier of entry, allowing developers to work in projects with their tools and platforms of choice." But Open Avenue had trouble winning acceptance from fans of open source. A year later, it focused on making the open source model available as a development option for enterprises. It offered to organize "gated" communities that would respect the need of enterprises to protect information. Open Avenue sold web portal software for such collaborative communities. It closed in 2001, unable to raise a second round of funding.

SourceXchange

SourceXchange was the brainchild of Hewlett-Packard's corporate IT department, which wanted to shield contractors from the complexities of its contracting process. They wanted to outsource all projects that didn't need to be part of HP's intellectual property. They wanted access to great talent, and a time-to-market advantage, but they needed a predictable market. HP wanted their competitors to be able to participate as well. HP approached O'Reilly Associates, offering some funding as well as dozens of projects in the \$5,000 - \$40,000, six man week to four man month range. They recruited Brian Behlendorf to lead CollabNet as a subsidiary. CollabNet launched SourceXchange in the summer of 1999, but it closed in March, 2001 due to lack of volume, with only 11 completed projects. Perhaps SourceXchange was overshadowed by CollabNet's portal for collaboration. CollabNet's portal was itself open source, in contrast to that of its competitor SourceForge. A key reason might be that CollabNet's portal was cobbled together, whereas SourceForge's was cut from whole cloth. CollabNet hosts specialized developer communities sponsored by Motorola, Hewlett-Packard, Sun Microsystems, Oracle, etc.

Asynchrony

Steve Elfanbaum got the idea for Asynchrony from an October 1998 article on "e-lancing" in Harvard Business Review while flying home from Europe. He and his brothers Bob and Dave have backgrounds in finance. They founded Asynchrony in May, 1999 along with CTO Nate McKie. Concurrently, they founded Asynchrony Solutions, an enterprise service company. Asynchrony supports those who have ideas but need help implementing them. They are encouraged to build self-directed teams where people share an interest in making money. A project creator offers percentage shares of future earnings to those who help in any way, such as program, document or debug. Asynchrony sells the completed product as shareware, receiving 10% for noncertified projects, 25% for projects it certifies, and an additional 10% if participants desire marketing assistance. Nate McKie notes in a white paper in February, 2000 that participants may upon creation specify their projects as open source (such as GPL). In practice, there is

a high wall of confidentiality that requires, upon registering at the website, the waiver of all moral rights of authorship, and the transfer to Asynchrony of all code, ideas, trademarks, works of authorship (which they presumably are then free to place under the appropriate open source license, or keep them proprietary, as agreed). This is to document and mediate any member disputes. Asynchrony has 31,000 registered members, and 1,200 active projects. The first product was released in October 2000. 28 projects have been completed. Marketing efforts focus on NewzTop and PDA Defense. Asynchrony encouraged corporations to act as project creators for work they want to outsource. It has described itself as a developer training ground, having a job posting board, and presumably finding developers for its own needs at Asynchrony Solutions, where it has focused all but a few of its 30 workers. However, the success of PDA Defense helped it win its third round of funding in July, 2002, \$1.5 million, making for a total of \$5 million.

Software Carpentry

CodeSourcery organized contests in 2000-2001 on behalf of the Los Alamos National Laboratory's Advanced Computing Laboratory to design and build in Python new versions (SC Config, SC Build, SC Test, SC Track) of four classic open source software tools. \$860,000 was budgeted for this experiment in finding ways to work together with the open source community. In the design competition, 16 prizes of \$2,500 were awarded in the first round, and 12 prizes of \$2,500 and 4 prizes of \$7,500 in the second round. There were distinguished panels of judges. \$200,000 was set aside for implementation, not necessarily by the winners.

Strange Conclusions

The markets described above are wonderful in their variety. Yet a first conclusion is that the nature of each market seems almost determined by the monetary size of the software projects. It's amazing that software developers were willing to respond to offers of \$50 a project at The Free Software Bazaar. Certainly, there's no margin for profit in such a system, so it must be run by a volunteer under the simplest rules possible. CoSource projects probably averaged \$500 to \$1,000, and were small for businesses, but large for individuals. The idea was that individuals would pool their money together. SourceXchange had projects that were large enough to be useful for Hewlett-Packard, but small enough to not warrant the contracting process. This evolved into the organization by Collabnet of a community of developers around a corporation. Open Avenue attempted this as well, but too late. Asynchrony encouraged developers to aim for projects that would be hits with a wide market. These larger projects demanded work on speculation, a distribution of shares, and a more protective environment. Software Carpentry had the kind of generous budget that a government agency might allow itself, which needed to be parceled so that organizers could make sure the work got done, but there could also be an attractive contest with many participants and beneficiaries.

A second and even stranger observation is that every market completed roughly 20 projects. Open Avenue had lavish venture capital, The Free Software Bazaar was run by a volunteer, SourceXchange had secured dozens of projects from Hewlett-Packard, and CoSource was adored by the open source press. Asynchrony, the only surviving market, had only 28 completed projects, after 4 years with 31,000 registered members and 1,200 active projects. Even Software Carpentry's budget awarded 16 teams. Why did each market end up with roughly 20 completed projects? We hypothesize that this reflects a limit on the organizer. Each of these markets depends on devoted facilitation. Each organizer must be motivated by their work, presumably by the variety of possibility. After setting up 20 projects, the novelty has worn off. The market must sustain itself. It needs to have proven its point. Of course, if it's a failure, as in the case of Open Avenue, then venture capitalists know it's time to leave. But it

seems that SourceXchange proved victim not so much of failure, but of success. It simply led to the development of collaborative software that was more lucrative than the market itself. Apparently, the market needs an organizer, but also the organizer needs a personal interest in the market, so that they stay with it and don't pursue other opportunity. Perhaps this explains the success of Asynchrony in that its market is just a small but key part of its efforts, inspiring the products that it can market further, and providing a pool of developers.

A third and most important idea is that wealth is relationships. Asynchrony, the only market to survive, was the least open, but focused most on building and harvesting long term relationships. But the other markets were not necessarily economic failures. CoSource had less than 20 projects, and a total market volume of less than \$20,000. Bernie Thompson was able to sell his company to Applix, and get put in charge of a division that six months later he was leading as a new company with \$6 million dollars in backing! Certainly the wealth of the CoSource market was much greater than the software it generated! Consider also the value of the good press, the business connections, and the highly skilled workers. All of these point to the open process that might be sold.

INTEGRATING THE POOR

Wealth is relationships. In what sense is this true? If you have relationships, then you can get a loan, an education, a job, timely ideas, opportunities. Whereas knowledge is worthless out of context. Even money is worthless if there is nobody to take it, that is, if there is no web of relationships to back up the currency.

If you are poor, then you lack relationships, you must be "out of the loop". But if we can bring you "into the loop", help you form social connections, integrate you into the economy, then we are creating wealth. This suggests that a business might sustain itself, fight poverty and create wealth by integrating people into the economy. A businessman set on giving everything away might serve to link together rich and poor.

We consider the experience of Minciu Sodas as a bridge between rich and poor. Minciu Sodas is an open laboratory for serving and organizing independent thinkers. The first author, Andrius Kulikauskas, is the sole proprietor. There are currently thirty active members. They primarily interact by email, and have sent a total of 6,500 letters to 8 discussion groups with a total of 250 subscribers. About a third of the participants are in Lithuania, a third in the United States of America, and the rest scattered around the world. Andrius attempts to work from Lithuania, but is continuously forced to the United States to hunt for new work. He has personally gathered together many of the participants.

Members are encouraged to work publicly on their individual projects, and bring them together around shared endeavors. Andrius sets an example by pursuing his own philosophical projects, his personal quest to "know everything and apply that usefully". He discourages discussion, but instead encourages "thinking out loud", and "getting things done". The result is a subdued but thoughtful correspondence that holds together independent thinkers of a wide range of political, religious, social, and technological views, aptitudes, and interests. All activity is organized to foster a shared value of "caring about thinking".

As a business, Minciu Sodas functions as a networking club. Its first endeavor, in 1999, was to champion the creation of an import/export standard for software tools for organizing thoughts. In a sense, the laboratory acted as a trade association. TheBrain and Mindjet provided some funding which was used to pursue this cause through standards groups such as the Knowledge Management

Consortium International, the Infrared Data Association, and topicmaps.org Unfortunately, Andrius was unable to attract larger corporate support. However, he did succeed in bringing together a working group of 50 users and makers of software tools for thinking.

Minciu Sodas is open for all to join. The work is done openly for all to see, and the rules are that correspondence enters the public domain whenever it does not state otherwise. However, only members may participate in the working groups. If wealth is relationships, and organizational resources are limited, then it makes sense to focus investment on nurturing long term relationships. Typically, membership is awarded for contributing to the public domain thoughtful answers to a questionnaire, such as "Do you organize your thoughts?" by Raimundas Vaitkevicius. In this way, members can join for free, which is crucial for involving the poor. Also, this barrier to entry of "working for free" has proven especially successful at letting in constructive people, and keeping out destructive people. Consequently, members have good reason to invest in each other.

When funds ran out, Andrius made every effort to find work from laboratory members in the spirit of investing in long term relationships. He was fortunate to work as a Microsoft Access software developer for two small businessmen, Cass McNutt, CEO of Vantage Technology Group , and Shannon Clark, CEO of Jigsaw . It can be mentioned that from 1998 to 2002 he earned income of \$60,000 (\$38,000 as a software developer, \$10,000 from Agile Media, and \$9,000 from TheBrain), received a gift of \$20,000 from his parents, and accumulated loans of \$65,000 (\$40,000 credit card, \$25,000 private). Minciu Sodas has run at a loss which might yet be matched by increases in Andrius' earning potential.

Of special consequence for Minciu Sodas, and the integration of rich and poor, was his work for member Peter Kaminski , Interim CEO of Agile Media. Andrius had made contacts for Minciu Sodas by attending many conferences including Mobile Insights 99 where he met Jerry Michalski , a leader in high technology circles. Through Jerry he met Peter, an acclaimed Internet entrepreneur and software developer with a passion for tools for thinking and also engaging group minds. Peter joined the lab, organized a Silicon Valley road trip, and took to heart the quality of participants that Minciu Sodas was attracting. That summer he offered some web development work which quickly developed into an ambitious plan to organize a work force for his new start up.

Peter envisioned the need of dozens or hundred of website customizers. An interactive website is alive if its functionality can continuously adapt to the changing needs of its community. He liked the idea that he was better off paying people who were self-managing, self-educating, understanding-of-others to learn web programming, then to hire web programmers who needed expensive managers to tell them what to do. He hired the laboratory for consultations, and Andrius was able to focus on instigating activity in Lithuania. There was a lot to do, because despite two years of effort, he had failed to generate any momentum in the Lithuanian discussion group. The Lithuanians claimed that they were not used to open discussion.

George Christian Jeyarej played a key role in sparking activity. George is a Tamil from Sri Lanka. He asked for asylum in Lithuania, and spent five years in and out of detention camps. He met Andrius briefly in 1999 at the Folk Creativity Club Atzalynas, where Minciu Sodas has its headquarters. Andrius encouraged him to not lose hope, but to study computers. By the time they had met again a year later, George was still in the camps, but had purchased a computer with the help of his brother, and had learned web design . George was granted humanitarian status for one year, and he staffed the headquarters in Andrius' absence. Unfortunately, his status was not renewed, and the events of September 11th were hastening his expulsion. George's plight proved the major catalyst that sparked

discussion in our Lithuanian group when Andrius asked for help. Members bonded around him as a team, and they began to write freely on other topics as well. Andrius kept George sane and busy by appointing him their expert on installing Linux. George installed Linux every day for a month in Zen like fashion. He lost appeal after appeal in court, but ultimately, after more months in detention, was granted a one year visa. George's activity within the laboratory helped him maintain hope, make friends, and develop skills. His plight was critical in expanding members' understanding of how truly broad the laboratory's scope might be.

Saulius Sakalas similarly stimulated activity through his struggles. Andrius had met him and his wife Ruta as an ecotourist at their countryside cabin in the village of Marcinkonys, Lithuania. Saulius was originally from the city, but determined to make a living in the countryside, despite the great poverty and depression there. Suicide rates are among the highest in the world. Andrius encouraged him to join the lab. Saulius took him to heart, and called upon him in Vilnius. Andrius, having the work from Pete, was able to offer Saulius a stipend of \$125 per month to simply train himself in computers and web design. Two months' stipend was enough for Saulius to organize an old computer with the help of his brother-in-law, and pay \$375 for Internet access. He created a website for their countryside cabin , and got guests from Sweden and inquiries from Australia. He wrote beautiful letters about the changings of the seasons, and organized a meeting for Minciu Sodas with twenty five people. Saulius' efforts attracted the continuous help of Rytis Umbrasas, a network administrator from a nearby city. In this way, Rytis became quite active. Saulius, with fewer skills, was able to attract Rytis, with greater skills, who might serve Peter as a gifted manager. Amazingly, even though Peter had to pause funding, and Andrius had to leave for America, the group continued to build momentum, meeting every other month, chatting weekly with Andrius. They were now writing on much broader themes that reflected their range of passions and talents, and allowed them to appreciate what it means for a community to be alive, and how to support and encourage that.

Peter was able to make an investment that increased the value of his options, and may yet return to him again. This is the real value of working openly, the open investment to foster relationships. We also saw that givers may take on challenges as resources. The ethic of working for free allowed personal struggles to be exploited as tools for forging relationships. This open and mutual investment builds teams that are enormous assets for finding work.

UPLIFTING THE DISCOURAGED

We note that both Saulius Sakalas and George Christian Jeyarej were highly educated, and despite their troubles, were not destitute as many people in the world. However, it is worth considering that such independent thinkers are the key people by which the destitute may be reached and helped. Saulius and Ruta organize many educational and cultural activities for the village, and George regularly serves as a translator for detained Tamils.

We observed how Peter Kaminski was able to purchase flexibility for his plans by openly investing (through the laboratory) in members so they might position themselves accordingly. The laboratory could invest in members once they had demonstrated that they knew how to work for free on personal projects. Peter did not have to make any commitment to them because they were free to develop themselves as they saw best.

Special thought had to be given to consider how each member might contribute. Some of the younger members with the most relevant skill sets could not be enlisted because they did not appreciate the need to develop their own personal projects which would express their initiative and go beyond the mentality

of "just tell me what to do". Some of the elder members had the perfect attitude, but felt too old to invest in learning new programming languages. They were attached to their academic posts, no matter how little they earned, and were concerned about their job security. It became clear that they could nevertheless play crucial roles as mentors for the younger members to encourage them to think more broadly, and learn to express themselves by working for free on their own projects.

Independent thinkers, working for free on their own projects, may be key to integrating the world together. They can be found in every corner of the world. Even when they are not directly employable, they can serve as mentors to inspire those who will be. But what can be done when independent thinkers are so discouraged that they have no hope to give?

David Ellison-Bey, the second author, is a long time resident of Englewood, a perpetually depressed neighborhood of Chicago, in the United States of America. Englewood is one of the poorest and most segregated neighborhoods in the United States, roughly 99% Black American.[4] We consider in what way might the social despair and numbness become a resource, and what role independent thinkers might play in uplifting the neighborhood.

David is mostly self-educated, a Renaissance man and independent thinker. His collection of books reflects the variety of experiences in his life, the many things he has taught or studied, both formally and informally - computers (in the 1960s), tax accounting, leadership, mathematics, cooking, sewing, music, spirituality, Moorish culture, yoga, psychology, sociology. He is a member of the Moorish Science Temple of America, a faith established by Noble Drew Ali to emphasize that Blacks in America should not be treated as a race, the Asiatics, but as a nationality, the Moors.

The dynamics of race is so pervasive and oppressive in Englewood that it may be called a caste system. Residents are victim to a threefold hurt. First, they are bombarded through the media with a mainstream lifestyle that makes them desire something elusive that others have. Next, they suffer from competing on an unfair playing field to get what others have. Finally, they suffer in achieving what other have, yet always wondering why is this so empty, why does it not feel right?

The result is a disconnection amongst the people of the neighborhood. Independent thinkers like David feel isolated amongst their own people. They have lost many friends to drugs. They feel depressed, they withdraw, they lack the energy to reach out to the youth. In David's words:

"It's just a fact of life. It affects every area of your life. It leaves you without any real control. It damages the self, your sense of dignity. It makes people feel irrelevant. You're shut in, pushed down. It's degrading, demeaning, insidious. The human beings who practice it against other human beings are insensitive, they don't even realize the practice of what they are doing to another human being. They say one thing, but they practice another thing, so they make you feel less than human. You're a caste, some kind of animal, other kind of being, not a full human being."

"Every generation of European is educated into looking at darker people in this manner, and people who are looked at in this manner are caught up to look this way, too. So every generation gets caught up in this. But I don't say this about every human being. Some human beings are able to look at other human beings for who they are. Some are even sympathetic. When they wake up to it they become more sensitive to those who suffer under the caste system. But it takes a while to get around to the understanding because they have to be around enough to be sensitive to this. They have experimented on the European. They set up a system where people with brown eyes were treated different than blue eyes. And this gave them a sense of what it's like to be treated with different skin color. So those who

were discriminated against because of their eyes, they exhibited the same kind of reaction as the Asiatics feel."

"A lot of Europeans just accept the status quo. They don't think that they have an attitude, they don't care what blacks do. But on the whole it's not acceptable, there's this idea of him keeping his place. We're not going to break down this caste system because the European man is trying to protect the European woman from sexual excursions with other people. There's a limit to your interpersonal social interactions, relationships, like going to parties. They still have schools where proms are segregated. They don't want to have social integration. So we don't have that interracial social camaraderie between Asiatics and Europeans. So they don't have relationships with lawyers, doctors and such professors. So we find ourselves in more trouble and with less help. We have to pay more because people don't feel any relationship with you. We just have a client relationship. So they don't feel duty bound to help one of another group as themselves. They'll take advantage of you in many cases and they don't think it's wrong because you're not one of them. So, you see, Asiatics don't feel duty bound to Europeans, and Europeans don't feel duty bound to Asiatics because they're not friends. We're treated impersonally, our relationships are impersonal. That is why they can have high school parties that are segregated. They don't want them to socialize together. Social integration is the last part of this integration because it's not going to happen. He's going to fight it to the end."

Inasmuch as this caste system is created and supported from the outside, it needs help and understanding from the outside to be dismantled. Independent thinkers are able to reach out to each other because they naturally have shared values that come from caring about thinking. They are able to move freely from culture to culture and find others who accept and engage them. However, they can find themselves disconnected from their own community because of the poverty of relationships.

"I have issues with just about everyone I have associated with. For one thing, they don't want to repay the money they have borrowed and then they seem to want to repay the expenses they have caused me on their behalf. They don't seem to want to return or pay for things they borrow. This is the general pattern of most of my associates. They seem to get in a relationship with you just to use you, or their life style is such that they always seem to lean on others, but not in a mutual way, which makes them look like professional moochers. Next to that, they seem to be without principles of life, as if they haven't had any ideas of their own, or considered things moral. It's really distressing to me. Of course, I have met a few who seem to have some standards, but most think that to beg, borrow and steal is the way to go. Some have what is called a seared conscience. Some try to trap you, they start a conversation and before you know it they are asking you for something. Some don't even say Hello or Hi, they just ask you for something, and the women are just as bad, with them it's buy me this or that, always buy me, and that's suggestive of something else. I don't think any of them read what it says on the money, nor do they care. Is it any wonder we find ourselves in need? Some don't even know the difference between needs and luxuries. Yes, I have issues with these particular people that I know personally, but I have to move on beyond that, because it's very distressing talking about these issues, but I need to get it off my mind. And lastly, let me say, that this doesn't cover all people, but unfortunately I have spent a lot of time with the caste people, but not all. All people go through hard times, but the caste is weakened by their environment and lack of communications on the higher levels of things in life, by their concern being on personal, subjective things. Some have adopted this kind of thinking, they are concerned with the present and immediate gratification, wherever they can satisfy themselves. This doesn't make for long term relationships."

"Then there are those who try to play on, or get sympathy from Europeans because of their difference on the assumption of their being disadvantaged. Again, they assume that if a person is pale skinned,

then he or she should be obliged to sympathize or compensate them in some way. They don't seem to realize that the pale skinned people don't walk around with your problem on their mind. Be for real. I am made to feel awkward when someone makes this change when we come in contact with the European. It takes our meeting in a wrong direction. I feel cheated that a natural event has been turned into something other than its natural flow between two human beings. I have been invited to participate with independent thinkers which I have always been considered because my opinion wasn't of the run of the mill ideas. I sort of stood out among my early peers as someone to pay attention to. So I am passing these thoughts along for whatever use they may be. I will try to keep my subject matter consistent but I can't promise it. I would like to say that some of us think too much in terms of black and white, seeming to forget that we live in a multinational world. But when you see the separation of people that has gone on for so long its hard to see any other way, even more to think in any other way. Some of these things I never really discussed with myself before to form an opinion on for I shy away from forming judgment on people because of the Bible's teaching. But my opinion is something different. My opinion could be right or could be wrong. It's not carved in stone. I am entitled to have an opinion. This gives me a new outlook and makes me able to express myself without fear. I have written at least enough to make two books or more, but because of my misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the last verse of the Revelations I couldn't put anything in print. When I spent 18 months in a reformatory I filled up at least three full three-ringed notebooks of essays and poetry. Some I left behind, others I lost over the years, though my English grammar has never been good. I don't think I got any good teaching when I was coming up. You might say there wasn't much enlightenment going on. Things that would make you grasp meanings and have understandings. So it's difficult for me to form my ideas into grammatical form without intense study. This also discourages me from writing more for other's consumption but even at this late date in my life I might still say something."

Interaction with other independent thinkers, both through the Internet and in person, helps David feel that "It's not what I got, it's me that's worth something." This gives him the energy to overcome disappointment and reach out to people in his neighborhood. We were happy to witness how thoughtful people are attracted to him. He presents an alternative perspective simply by wearing his fez, walking erect, having things to do and thoughts to share. He is able to inspire his associates to think more deeply, free themselves from reflexive behavior that the media encourages, and raise questions about history and the future. He is able to serve as a mentor.

It takes a lot of time to understand somebody like David, and likewise for him to understand others. However, once this understanding is established, he is able to transfer the energy given to him. He attracts those people in his neighborhood who are looking for hope and change. He helps them find meaningful activity, and inspires them to "work for free" on what they care about. Long term relationships feed long term hope, which enables people to work for free, which is the psychological and material investment they need to make in order to be able to integrate themselves productively into the economic society.

We feel that mentors like David can bring together teams of people with the hope and energy to accomplish great works together. They will also be employable, both as individuals and groups, just as in Lithuania.

INTEGRATING AROUND TRUTH

We have illustrated in many ways how givers, working for free, can simultaneously pursue their personal callings but also build relationships that have economic value. The assets developed in human

potential appear enormous.

How might corporations be engaged in the development of such assets? How might they profit?

Currently, corporations are unable to exploit high uncertainty, where opportunistic start-ups thrive.[5] The problem is that corporations involve the separation of ownership and management. Consequently, investments need to be assessed in terms of their risks and potentials. Risk is encouraged, but uncertainty is discouraged. Corporations are structured to manage large projects, not the small and manifold opportunities that characterize high uncertainty.

However, a corporation might set up a business ecosystem for developing new markets. It could publicly declare its strategic vision, attract constructive outsiders, distribute resources across its company to be spent on working openly, focus on the projects that generate the most synergy, and evaluate its options when they have grown to the required size. In short, it could crystallize private ventures around its public vision.

A measure would be needed to gauge the value of relationships. A community might track responsiveness by allowing its members to post wishes, with additional wishes to those who respond or get response. These nonobligatory wishes would make evident which participants and projects are key for leveraging the community. A responsive community could even issue wishes to investors, much like an alternative currency.

A community would need to extend its reach to share work with many groups and individuals. Minciu Sodas is developing software architecture for creating idea feeds that Internet groups might subscribe and contribute to.

A market would be needed to practice working openly with money. Minciu Sodas already offers the services of five laboratory members who agree to work openly to author software, writings, etc. under licenses that contribute to the public wealth. Working openly, with long term relationships in mind, they are able to work in unusually small increments of \$480.

A corporation must dare to work transparently, inviting all to help it continuously clarify its vision. This seems inevitable, considering the importance of vision in holding a company together and moving it forward. Ultimately, every corporation might behave like Minciu Sodas, attracting workers around a shared value that they work for free to foster, and then harvesting the resulting relationships by organizing work for pay.

CONCLUSION

We conclude by returning to our theme of “giving everything away”. We started by showing that an individual might actually pursue this radical principle in a practical way, arriving at the outlook of a giver. This outlook is compatible with a monetary economy, but transcends and transforms it. We considered the challenges that a giver faces in making a living, and found a clash with their need to give their life work away. We reviewed six open source software markets to consider how clients might pay extra to insist that work be shared openly. We concluded that wealth is relationships, and found illustrations in the activity of the Minciu Sodas laboratory. We entered the thinking of an independent thinker in one of the most depressed and segregated neighborhoods in America and found that even here independent thinking opened channels for unleashing the resources of human potential. We ended with a proposal of how a corporation might invest in those human relationships and exploit

that human potential in high uncertainty.

We hope that we have encouraged individuals that their personal values may extend themselves through sustainable communities that ultimately remake the world. We may gradually reign in, and perhaps eliminate the economy for paying with an underlying economy for giving away. Even poverty may lose its sting when every challenge becomes a resource.

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