The act of giving – *Sur*. A service for sharing and co-producing gifts

Giulia Bencini*, Kuno Prey**, Alvise Mattozzi**
giuliabencini.92@gmail.com; kuno.prey@unibz.it; amattozzi@unibz.it
*Via Regione Torrazza 2/A, 12037 Saluzzo (CN), Italy;
**Faculty of Design and Art, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, p. Università 1, 39100 Bolzano, Italy

Abstract

Sur is the prototype of a relational service for gift production. *Sur* is aimed at articulating, nourishing and strengthening relationships between the giver and the receiver of the gift. The co-production of personalised gifts is supervised and guided by a designer and supported by a network of crafts(wo)men-makers.
Sur provides the opportunity not only to reflect upon the issue "sharing and collaborating", but also, more in general, upon the role of gifts within services and especially within relational services.

KEYWORDS: co-creation, eco-social design, gift, relational services

Introduction

"Why do we give?" This question sparked a design research project carried out as a master thesis called *The Act of Giving* at the Master in Eco-Social Design of the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano[1].
The research, which took one year in order to go through a literature review and a field research comprising observation and cultural probes, ended up in the design of a service for co-producing gifts, *Sur*.
Sur is a prototype for a service offering an alternative to the established market of gifts. It aims at creating artefacts that articulate, nourish and strengthen the relationship between the giver and the receiver, while weaving new relationships with various figures collaborating in the production of the gift.

---

[1] The present paper, derived from Giulia Bencini's master thesis carried out under the supervision of Kuno Prey and Alvise Mattozzi, is a totally collaborative effort by the three authors. If, however, for academic reasons individual responsibility is to be assigned, Mattozzi has written § "The gift", Prey § "The value of design"; Bencini and Mattozzi § "*Sur* as service design", Bencini all the remaining paragraphs, except for § "Introduction" and § "Conclusions", which have been written by the three authors together.

The present paper intends to introduce *Sur* and the research behind it, showing its relevance in relation to collaboration. Teamwork and cooperation are here seen both as a way of delivering services thanks to the participation of the beneficiary, and as a way to foster a participatory mind-set in society and raise awareness about issues of public interest, such as gifts and their social relevance.

As it will emerge in the end of the paper, the interest of the "the gift" issue goes much beyond the service here introduced and could affect the entire way we consider services.
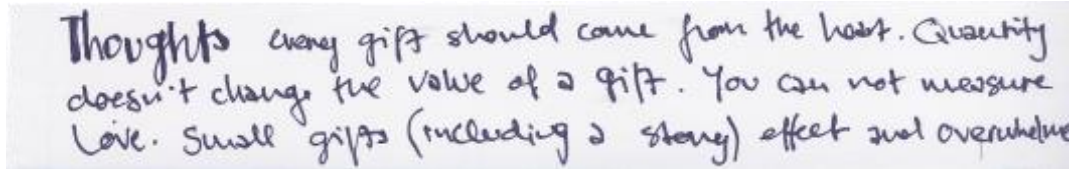

Figure 1 – Cultural probe, example of diary

The gift

In the last 30 years, there has been a renewal of interest towards the issue of the gift within social sciences. The project here introduced is an attempt to translate the social potential of the gift acknowledged and described by social sciences into the design of a service.

Rediscovering the gift

The gift, be it the centre of Kula ceremony in the Trobriand Island initially studied by Bronislaw Malinowski at the beginning of the 20th century, be it the bearer of *mana* addressed by Marcel Mauss in the '20s or be it the more ordinary and familiar – at least for Westerners brought up in a Christian tradition like we are – Christmas gift, is a mediator of collective and personal relationships. Regardless if the gift is aimed at gaining social status for the giver or at providing some relief for the receiver in the form of charity, the gift always mobilises and rearticulates social relationships.

The anthropologist Marco Aime (2016) has remarked that the gift is a relationship promoter and propagator, confirming what the sociologist Alain Caillé and his M.A.U.S.S (Anti-Utilitarian Movement within the Social Sciences) stated. The M.A.U.S.S has been indeed the source of the new wave of researches around the gift as device through which humans create and reshape their societies.

Anthropologist Maurice Godelier (1999) noticed that the strength of personal ties generated through, and thanks to, gifts lie in their capability to produce and reproduce the whole or an essential part of the social relationships, which constitutes the society basis. These relationships characterise society as a global whole, as well as they define the social identity of its individual members.

Therefore, as noted by sociologist Olli Pyyhtinen (2014), the gift cannot be grasped in itself without paying attention to the ties that accompany it.

Relativizing the gift

Within this renewal of interest for gift and gift giving, too often the latter has been opposed in absolute terms to market exchanges. However, these two forms of exchange are – especially in our capitalist societies – often intertwined and their distinction is more a matter of degrees than a sharp opposition.

As sociologists Bruno Latour and Michel Callon (1997) have shown, the main difference among forms or formats of exchange is related to the distribution between "what [what relations] actually enters the calculation and what" do not. Market exchanges tend to exclude specific relations and relationships – creating many externalities. However, this exclusion provides market exchanges with a freedom of movement that would be impossible for gift

giving. The latter, instead, tends to include in the exchange as many relations and relationships as possible, often creating rigidities and very complex forms of obligations. Therefore, the two "formatting systems" (Latour and Callon, 1997) are both necessary, and somehow complementary, on the one hand to avoid social fragmentation and impoverishment, on the other to grant a certain dynamism to social circulation.

Reconsidering the gift

Godelier (1999) noticed that the gift understood as the "total social fact", i.e. the gift considered by Mauss as a specific form of circulation of goods that produces and replicates relationships among the whole community and its members, does not exists anymore. However, this does not mean that gift and gift giving are not present as relevant phenomena also in our societies. Social scientists interested in the issue of gift have "to fight against a too much discarnate and spiritualised idea of the gift, trying to demonstrate its interests" (Salsano, 2008, p. 3). Indeed, those anti-utilitarian social scientists taking part to the M.A.U.S.S. are facing on "the one hand the sublimation of the gift, on the other its reintroduction (and reduction) into [utilitarian] economic [transactions]" (Salsano, 2008, p. 33). However, gifts keep their autonomy and specificity also in our society, where they seem to have disappeared. Somehow, as anthropologist Fabio Dei (2008, p. 17) underlined, "the apparently disappeared gift must actually be everywhere in the modern world."
Sociologist Jacques Godbout (1998, p. 96-97) singled out six features characterising modern gifts, among which a different kind of freedom in relation to gift giving, its spontaneous nature, restitution instead of reciprocity and the fact that nowadays we also give to strangers.

Revitalising the gift

The starting point from which the project was developed is the idea of gifts as devices able to propel and catalyse interpersonal relationships. Given that, even in our modern societies, they preserve their role as mediators and communicators, gifts can therefore enable specific conditions that give way to situations where personal relationships can grow. Thus, they can catalyse broader social relationships through the sharing of experiences and values inscribed in artefacts.
The project also aims at rising awareness on the topic "gift", while introducing a faceted view of these objects: given that the totally disinterested gift is pure utopia, "calculated" gifts are not despicable *per se*. In certain situations, the "profit", the personal gain, regardless if it is conscious or not, is part of an act aimed at behaving positively towards the relationship itself. What could result instead problematic is an excess of thoughtlessness and unconsciousness about the relevance of gifts and their role. Such disregard of gifts can hamper an actual nourishment of relationships, thus leading to atrophy or even to the breakdown of relations themselves. Indeed, gifts can be a valuable and precious device only when they are respected and acknowledged for their relevance and significance.
Gifts, as physical objects and operating actors in everyday life situations as well as specifically *chosen* commodities, have the potential to explicitly arrange actions and gestures in order to produce clear communication and thus support the growth of positive, interpersonal ties.
Gifts are indeed the evidence that good "social micropractices" (Dei, 2008, p. 21) do exist nowadays and, as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2013, p. 54) says, these practices are also able to encourage "informal and collaborative interactions characterised by flexible boundaries".
The project focused specifically on the so called "gift articles", substantially questioned by Clive Dilnot (1992) as physical, mass-produced items often characterised by non-functional applications. Taking into account the fact that "the gift article" possesses a strong and meaningful presence in the everyday life of the modern, western human beings, the project aims at providing its revaluation and resemantization, in order to fully employ the potential of the materiality by which it is defined and characterised. Therefore, differently from many social sciences' researches about gifts, here the gift is not considered just a token for collective of personal relationships, but it is addressed in itself as a specific object, as an actor

taking actively part in relationships, promoting them also thanks to its specific tangible features.

The project has taken the form of a service, yet centred around material artefacts and their production. Though working within the current economic system, it is an intervention belonging to the "poetry of interstices" (Dei, 2008, p. 20). Indeed, it allows actions, which take place in the always blurred, informal backroom of our everyday life and, thus, fosters "micropractices" (Dei, 2008, p. 21), which, local and run by a small groups, enable change by their progressive propagation.

Ultimately, the essence of the project can be summarised in Jacques Derrida's (1994, p. 30) words:

> *Know still what giving wants to say, know how to give, know what you want and want to say when you give, know what you intend to give, know how the gift annuls itself, commit yourself [engage-toi] even if commitment is the destruction of the gift by the gift, give economy its chance.*

From the analysis to the design output

The designed prototype service, *Sur*, is the result of a concerted action among different research activities: a review of the anthropological and sociological literature on "gift", a comparative analysis of various case studies, an investigation carried out in the field through observations and cultural probes. All these activities have lead to the design of the first draft of the possible service.

The controversial gift

Nowadays, gifts, especially in specific occasions like Christmas, are controversial and generate very contrasting reactions. In order to explore these different feelings, the Christmas period was used to develop various kinds of cultural probes in order to actually test the issue. The results of the probes (diaries, personal inventories, love and break up letters; Figure 1) show that sometimes people distrust gift giving's conventional circumstances such as Christmas. In these occasions, gifts and gift giving elicit negative feelings: embarrassment, refusal, disappointment, resignation, discomfort and even annoyance. As a result, gifts are seen more and more as a burden and a waste. On the other hand, there is who literally loves to "hunt" the potentially perfect gift. However, in both cases, it can happen that gifts are hastily chosen among the millions objects the market offers, according to few requirements, which however underestimate the role of the relationship and the potential of a gift in nourishing or, at least, in articulating it.

The project *Sur* found in this controversial relation with gifts, gift giving and their possible banalization (Dilnot, 1993) its *raison d'être*.

The gift diagram

All the data gathered during this first research phase have been assessed, screened and translated into an actual design output. In order for the translation to take place an intermediated step has been required: the elaboration of the so called "gift diagram" (Figure 2). As such, the "gift diagram" represents the very heart of the investigation. The diagram was elaborated by comparing various gift manifestations in order to highlight the relevant traits of the gift giving practice. Thus, the diagram considers, first of all, the main instances of the practice – giver, receiver, gift, relationship – and then outlines the various features of each instance.

The diagram has been employed as a tool in different situations: in order to compare the various case studies, in order to position the project among the various manifestations of gift giving and in order to categorise the very first experiments of gift making through the service *Sur*.
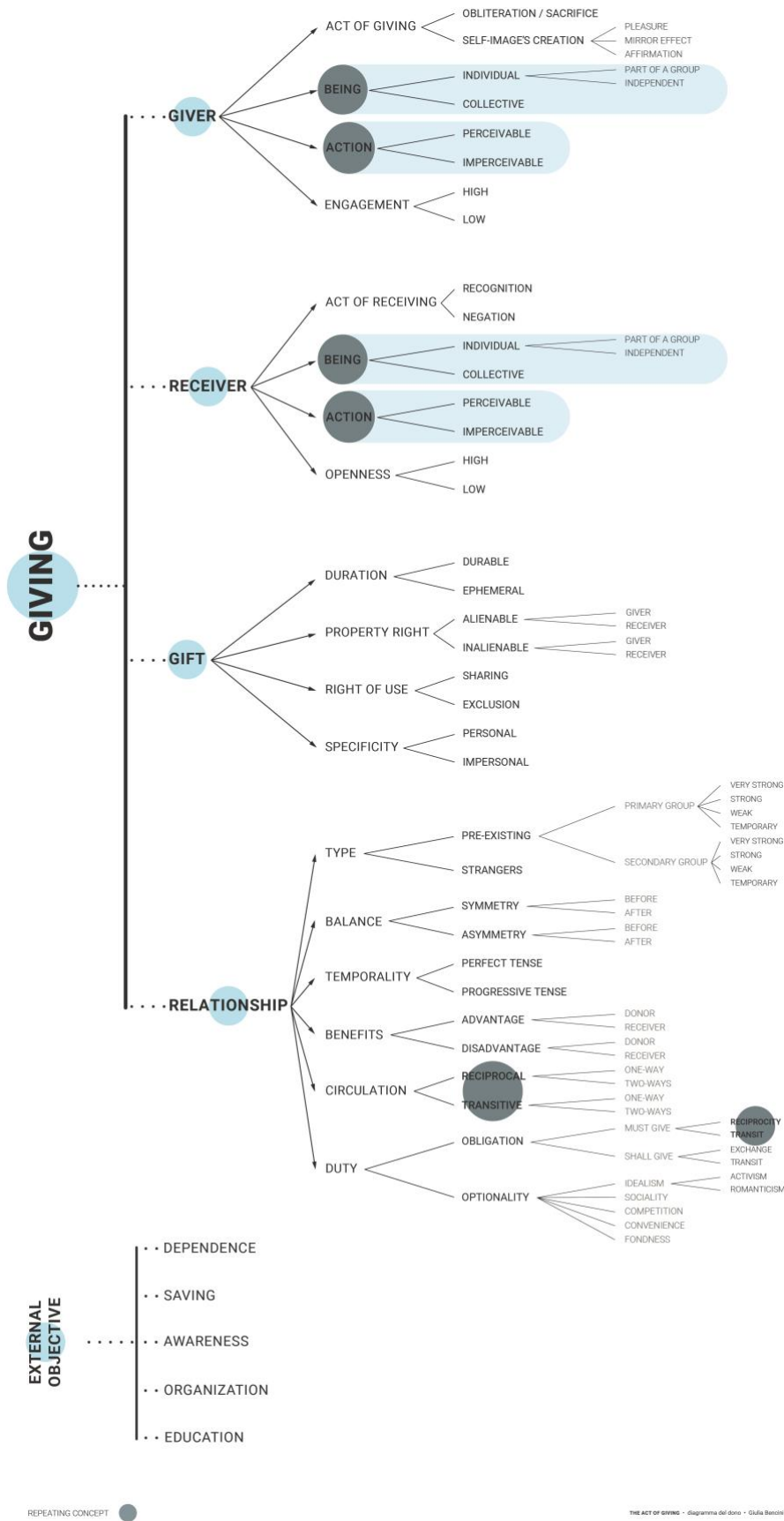
GIVING

GIVER
- ACT OF GIVING
  - OBLITERATION / SACRIFICE
  - SELF-IMAGE'S CREATION
    - PLEASURE
    - MIRROR EFFECT
    - AFFIRMATION
- BEING
  - INDIVIDUAL
    - PART OF A GROUP
    - INDEPENDENT
  - COLLECTIVE
- ACTION
  - PERCEIVABLE
  - IMPERCEIVABLE
- ENGAGEMENT
  - HIGH
  - LOW

RECEIVER
- ACT OF RECEIVING
  - RECOGNITION
  - NEGATION
- BEING
  - INDIVIDUAL
    - PART OF A GROUP
    - INDEPENDENT
  - COLLECTIVE
- ACTION
  - PERCEIVABLE
  - IMPERCEIVABLE
- OPENNESS
  - HIGH
  - LOW

GIFT
- DURATION
  - DURABLE
  - EPHEMERAL
- PROPERTY RIGHT
  - ALIENABLE
    - GIVER
    - RECEIVER
  - INALIENABLE
    - GIVER
    - RECEIVER
- RIGHT OF USE
  - SHARING
  - EXCLUSION
- SPECIFICITY
  - PERSONAL
  - IMPERSONAL

RELATIONSHIP
- TYPE
  - PRE-EXISTING
    - PRIMARY GROUP
      - VERY STRONG
      - STRONG
      - WEAK
      - TEMPORARY
    - SECONDARY GROUP
      - VERY STRONG
      - STRONG
      - WEAK
      - TEMPORARY
  - STRANGERS
- BALANCE
  - SYMMETRY
    - BEFORE
    - AFTER
  - ASYMMETRY
    - BEFORE
    - AFTER
- TEMPORALITY
  - PERFECT TENSE
  - PROGRESSIVE TENSE
- BENEFITS
  - ADVANTAGE
    - DONOR
    - RECEIVER
  - DISADVANTAGE
    - DONOR
    - RECEIVER
- CIRCULATION
  - RECIPROCAL
    - ONE-WAY
    - TWO-WAYS
  - TRANSITIVE
    - ONE-WAY
    - TWO-WAYS
- DUTY
  - OBLIGATION
    - MUST GIVE
      - RECIPROCITY TRANSIT
    - SHALL GIVE
      - EXCHANGE TRANSIT
  - OPTIONALITY
    - IDEALISM
      - ACTIVISM
      - ROMANTICISM
    - SOCIALITY
    - COMPETITION
    - CONVENIENCE
    - FONDNESS

EXTERNAL OBJECTIVE
- DEPENDENCE
- SAVING
- AWARENESS
- ORGANIZATION
- EDUCATION

REPEATING CONCEPT

THE ACT OF GIVING · diagramma del dono · Giulia Bencini

Figure 2 – The gift diagram

The first service draft

As a result of the first research phase, a first draft of the service has been devised. In order to test it, people external to the project have been involved.
These people have been found thanks to the way the project was indirectly advertised. Indeed, in order to thank the first persons who collaborated in the first research phase by taking part to the cultural probes activities, a series of gifts, among which handmade candles (Figure 3), have been created and given to them. These candles have been also a way of establishing a connection between already involved people, potentially interested people, and the project itself, somehow experimenting with gift giving within the development of the project itself.
In this way, it has also been possible to find the first testers of the service, who explicitly asked for a gift generated through *Sur*.
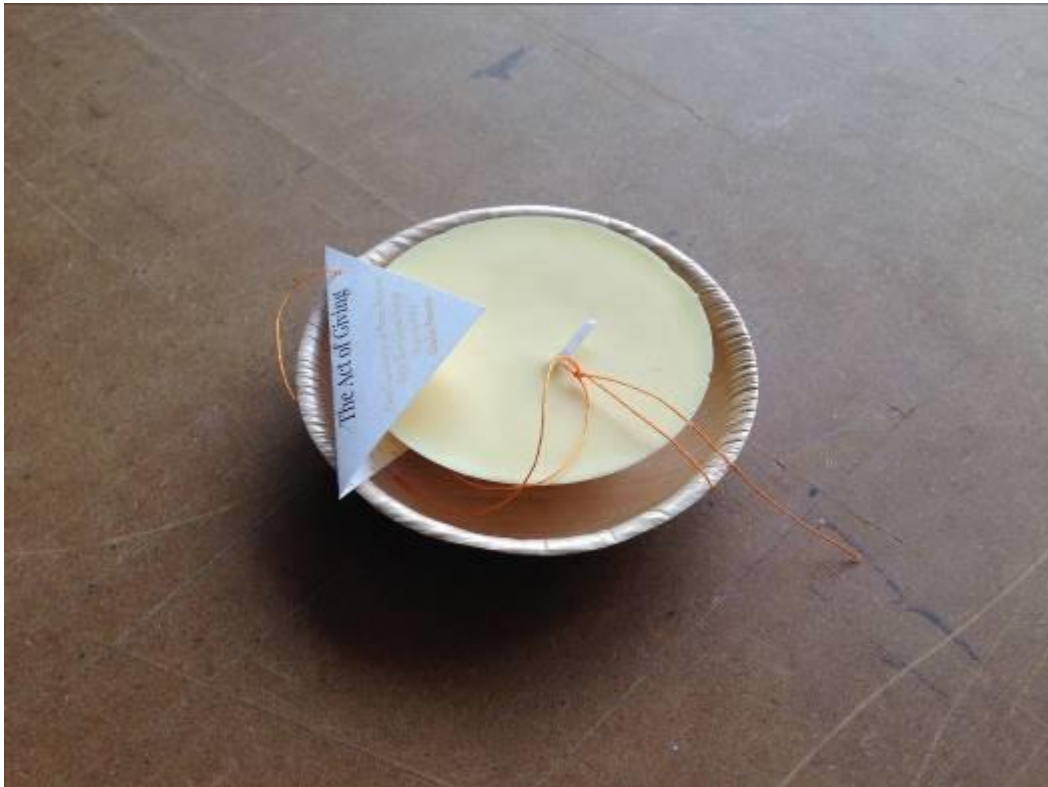

Figure 3 – Candle

The very first three tests of gift co-creation that were developed arose from real requests of three persons, who eventually gave the created objects as gifts.
These tests were:

- A necklace from Ivana to Federica. The two girls are best friends since childhood, but they currently live far away. The first phase of the service, the dialogue, elicited that Federica, the receiver, likes to wear eccentric necklaces. This was the starting point for the design of the gift, which eventually resulted in a necklace created with an old shirt belonging to Ivana (Figure 4).
- A rucksack from Giulia M. to Giulia G. Giulia and Giulia are colleagues but also very good friends. When the receiver's birthday was approaching, Giulia M., the giver, decided to create a rucksack that could be used both as a city bag as well a gym bag, to support Giulia G. in her decision to intraprendere a healthier lifestyle (Figure 5).
- A photo album from Su to Di. Su is a Chinese student living in Bolzano. When her mother came to visit her from China, they decided to spend time

together travelling around Italy. In order to collect and keep track of trip's memories, a travel diary was developed. It was used to note down feelings and emotions and, later, transformed into a photographic and written album of Su's and Di's experiences (Figure 6).

These tests have been managed in a very flexible way, in order to be able to grasp unexpected and potentially useful aspects of the becoming project. Therefore, a series of very rough tools have been developed, such as a first draft of a questionnaire to help the designer in getting to know the giver, the receiver and their wishes and an outline of a greeting card accompanying the gift and explaining the value of the object and the production process behind it.

The three experiments have been essential to understand:

- the timing necessary to develop the gift as outcome of a process of co-creation;
- the tools needed in order to deepen the dialogue between designer and giver;
- the desires of the giver, in terms of physical and visual material at disposal,
- the desires concerning the gift card and the information to be there included.

Figure 4 – Necklace, gift from Ivana for Federica, process of production of the gift

Figure 5 – Rucksack, gift from Giulia M. for Giulia G.

Figure 6 – Photo album, gift from Su to Di

The second draft and the final test

After having analysed the results of the first experiments with the starting service draft, the second and final draft (see below, § *Sur*) has been designed together with the needed tools. The whole system has been tested a second time into what can be considered an actual proof of concept, with the co-design and co-creation of four more gifts:

- *Ginkgo* – a gift from Francesca to Andrea. An earring which was thought for Francesca's stretched piercing. Andrea receives it whenever the couple has to split up. The gingko biloba leaf has a special meaning for the couple and symbolises their relationship (Figure 10).
- *Lemon* – a gift from Maria to Lena. Given Lena's delicate skin, *Lemon* is a set comprising a natural deodorant combined with the instructions and the ingredients to let the Receiver make the deodorant again at home (Figure 11).
- *Mate* – a gift from Matteo to Riccardo. Matteo's brother, Riccardo, needed a purse where to put his most important belongings. Thanks to the giver's ability in making bags, a belt bag with an old coat that both brothers wore when children was crafted (Figure 12).
- *Riflesso* – a gift from Stefania to her family. Given Stefania's passion and talent for taking pictures, a salt and pepper shakers which works also a frame for the giver's pictures was developed. It is a tool though to start positive conversations during meals (Figure 13).

Sur

The service aims at allowing people to conceive and produce gifts, which are able to articulate, nourish and strengthen relationships. The output of the service are then objects, which even by their sole material presence, are able to act and to make people act one in relation to the other.

The core of the concept is the creation of an alternative service for gifts, which can guide people through a journey of rediscovery of the receiver as well as of the relationship between the giver and the receiver. Thus, *Sur* is a service that focuses on objects that act as actual mediators of relationships.

In order to achieve this aim, the service mobilises a network of different actors, nourishing at the same time the relationships among them.

The final configuration oulines a service in which, under the guidance of a designer who assumes the role of "Personal Gifter", it is possible to co-create gifts, by weaving, multiplying and strengthening social relationships that can go much beyond the one between the giver (the client), the designer (the agent) and the receiver, by involving local makers and crafts(wo)men – following the example of *Superlocal* by Andrea De Chirico (Dardi, 2016) – as well as other designers and clients of the service.

The service

The final flowchart[2] of the service is the following (Figure 7):

---

[2] This service flowchart was drafted at the end of the design process of the present prototype. During the design process various schematizations have been tried, however not in a systematic way. Therefore, a service blueprint or a service storyboard as proposed in the Social Innovation Journey Toolbox (Corubolo and Meroni, 2015) have not been used, but could become useful for future adjustment or revisions of the service flow.
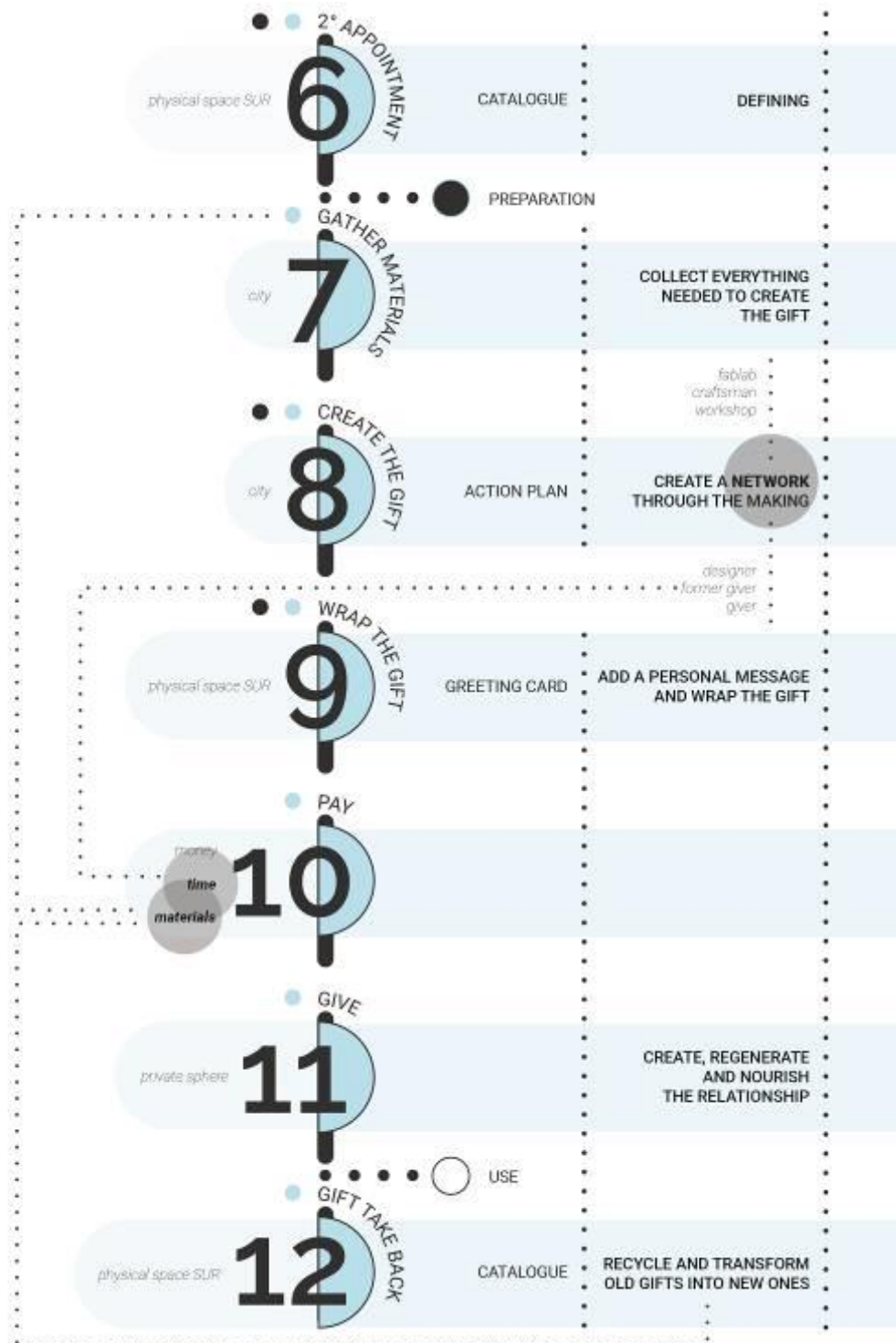
Sur

PLACES & MEANS | TOOL | OBJECTIVE

1 — GET TO KNOW SUR
word of mouth
online
guerrilla gifts

TOOL	OBJECTIVE
WEBSITE	PROMOTION OF SUR
GUERRILLA GIFTS	

2 — CONTACT SUR
physical space SUR
online

TOOL	OBJECTIVE
WEBSITE	START A PATH
EMAIL	

3 — FILL IN THE PORTRAIT
physical space SUR
online

TOOL	OBJECTIVE
PORTRAIT	LEARN MORE ABOUT GIVER AND RECEIVER

4 — HAND OVER THE PORTRAIT
physical space SUR
online

PORTRAIT'S ANALYSIS

5 — 1° APPOINTMENT
physical space SUR

TOOL	OBJECTIVE
MAP	EXAMINE DISTANCE
F&N CARDS	EXAMINE THE GIFT
UTOPIA CARDS	EXAMINE EXPECTATIONS

DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 7 – The service flow

As mentioned previously, a range of different roles is involved in the process generated by *Sur*.

- The Giver (the client) – anybody who wishes to make a gift.
- The Designer or Personal Gifter (the agent) – not only an expert in the field of designing artefacts, but also a mediator, a creator of networks and a facilitator. As a designer the Personal Gifter, needs to unfold all her/his competence as "broker of objects' language" (Verganti, 2003), therefore s/he is a person who is able to translate styles, tendencies, expectations and desires into specific objects' configurations and also into actual production networks.
- The maker(s) – anybody having the skills to realise the gift: local crafts(wo)men, local makers, local designers, the Personal Gifter her/himself, the Giver, other Givers-clients.

The service is articulated in three main phases:

- The dialogue phase – carried out by the Personal Gifter-Designer and the Giver; it aims to get to know the context and the pre-existing relation between giver and receiver.
- The collaborative design phase – performed by the Personal Gifter-Designer and the Giver; it is meant to conceive and devise the object which will be given.
- The production phase, which involves besides the Personal Gifter-Designer and the Giver, the Maker(s).

A set of six tools facilitates the process and helps different involved actors in relating emotionally (Figure 8 and 9). Moreover, the tools are especially helpful in order to investigate the initial situation between giver and receiver. They, therefore, allow the Personal Gifter-Designer to constructively guide the giver in developing the best gift according to the circumstances.

The process is distributed throughout a flexible timespan, dependent on the availability and the resources of the giver. According to the time at his/her disposal and the price s/he is willing to pay, the service can be adjusted to specific needs-wishes.

The cost of the produced gift can be covered in three different ways. First of all, the giver can decide to commonly pay with money. Additionally, it is possible to pay with spared materials in possession of the giver, which can be useful for the service itself and the creation of future gifts for future givers. Moreover, in case the giver has peculiar crafting abilities, s/he can put at disposal of the service his time, helping another giver.

Moreover, the service provides the receiver of the gift with a product take-back service, transforming objects at their end-of-life in possible different and new gifts.

The system's flexibility makes *Sur* a format, which can be applied and adapted to different spaces and contexts, since it is developed to take advantage of the local potential and resources of every place, which will host it.

Figure 8 – *Portrait*, example of one of the tools developed for the service flow

Figure 9 – *Feelings & needs cards*, example of one of the tools developed for the service flow

Figure 10 – *Ginkgo*, gift from Francesca to Andrea

Figure 11 – *Lemon*, gift from Maria for Lena

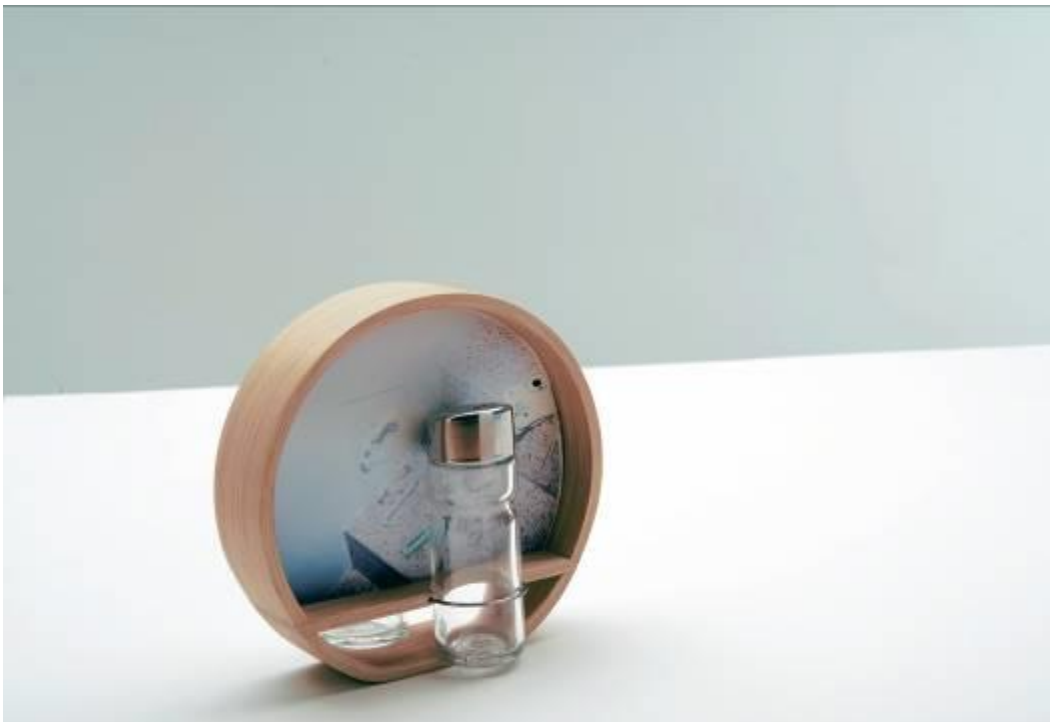Figure 12 – *Mate*, gift from Matteo for Riccardo

Figure 13 – *Riflesso*, gift from Stefania to her family

Issues still to be tackled and questions still to be answered

Sur is still a prototype and, undoubtedly, it elicits questions about its actual implementation and life beyond university walls, as well as about its economic sustainability, given that there are also some unaddressed issues – not really addressable within the framework of a Master thesis.

On overall, it is possible to take into consideration two challenging issues: the cost of the gifts produced with the system and the time required to design them from scratch.

As for the price, as we said, *Sur* offers a threefold option for payment: through money, through materials, through time and skills. However, this threefold system provides only a partial answer to the issue of price and costs: it creates a circular mechanism which supports and nourishes the service itself, however without clarifying the compensation for the Personal Gifter-Designer and for the involved crafts(wo)men, and hence the price of the gift. As for the time, the experiments carried out have shown the gift feasibility in reasonable time, which is anyway much longer than a purchase of a gift from the market. However, these were just experiments and to understand the timings of the overall service when regularly workings is another matter.

Both issues require further research. At the same time it is clear that the services offered by *Sur* are addressed to customer that give value and can appreciate the value of time and can invest it in making gifts.

The value

Sur is a service, which operates in the social sphere, aiming at creating, strengthening and nourishing relationships among people, thanks to the mediation of artefacts. Therefore, *Sur* is based on a series of principles, which create value for both the people involved in the process of production and exchange of gifts and the environment in which these objects are produced and circulate. Moreover, *Sur* delves into the value of design.

The value of *Sur*

Sur is strongly characterised by the context in which it occurs. Every gift is defined by a series of variables, which, together with the specific relationship between giver and receiver, make it unique from the very beginning. These variables are related to local materials and competences, as well as the added value of the giver's capabilities.

On the whole, *Sur* is a service which allows to co-create different kinds of value, basically implementing a service according to what proposed in Wetter-Edman et al. (2014). The values it implements are[3]:

- economic: at a local level, but with the possibility to be scaled; it works through different possible economic transactions;
- environmental: it aims to produce objects characterised by a long life-cycle, it employs techniques such as recycling and upcycling of old/unused materials and objects and it leans towards local, sustainable materials and production techniques.
- societal: apart from the work on relationships themselves, it consists in creating awareness about local manufactures and capabilities, investing in their potential. The value for the community lies in the creation of a network which connects designers, craft(wo)men, givers and receivers.
- individual: the giver has the chance to create him/herself a highly personal gift, the receiver will get a very personal gift which is unique; the Personal Gifter-Designer and the maker(s) can increase and spread their personal networks through the process.

The value of design

Design is a discipline, which (also) deals with artefacts. According to the anthropologist Daniel Miller, relationships with objects we own are often really deep and, usually, "the closer our relationship are with objects, the closer our relationships are with people" (Miller, 2014, p. 1). Therefore, the central role of the material culture for relationships: "People exist for us in and through [the] material presence [of objects]" (Miller, 2014, p. 286).

With reference to the issue, the anthropologist Annette Barbara Weiner (1988, p. 159) stated:

---

[3] The model of different values is inspired by Hirscher and Fuad-Luke (2013); see also Blomberg and Darrah (2015), for thinking value beyond the economic value.

We are intimately involved with things we love, long for, and give to others. We also mark relationships with things [...]. Through things we craft our self-image and cultivate and enhance relationships. Yet things also keep the past vital for us. [...] Things not only take us back in time but also may become the building blocks that link the past to the future.

Therefore, design, by directly or indirectly articulating artefacts and taking them into consideration, has a key relevance in the shaping of our social relations: as Dilnot (1993, p. 56) wrote, "making (and designing) are moments of making (and designing) ourselves". The service *Sur* intends to delve and multiply this form of the value of design, by drawing together and involving in the design process of gifts various actors, so that the very process of "doing" can encourage debate and exchange of ideas, allowing people to relate with each other in different and meaningful ways.

Sur as service design

Sur as service can fall into Carla Cipolla and Ezio Manzini's (2009) definition of "relational service": "an emerging new service model deeply and profoundly based on the quality of interpersonal relations between participants" (Cipolla and Manzini, 2009, p. 46). Relational services are, indeed, deeply collaborative systems in which boundaries between roles are blurred. As it happens in *Sur* they start "with what the participants know how to, can, and want to do." (Cipolla and Manzini, 2009, p. 50). However, *Sur* is based on artefacts and nourishes personal relationships through them, i.e. through mediators, and not in an "immediate" way as supposed by Cipolla and Manzini relying on Martin Buber's conceptualisation of the I-Thou relationship. Moreover, given the peculiar triadic relation presupposed by gift-giving (giver-gift-receiver), which is different from the dyadic one (agent-client) usually presupposed by services, the personal relationship nourished by *Sur* goes beyond the service encounter. We consider this feature of *Sur* the key to make it an actual social project able to address relations that go much beyond those actualised in the service encounter. We have, indeed, also to consider that it is very likely that other people like crafts(wo)men will be also involved in the development of a gift.
In this regard, *Sur* can be considered a service, which fosters value co-creation in relation to a context as considered by Service Logic (Wetter-Edman et al., 2014) which, however, can be not only quite broad but also emergent according to the specific network a gift requires. Therefore, its value, as Jeanette Blomberg and Chuck Darrah state, "is not intrinsic to the service, but must be understood in relation to broader societal concerns" (Blomberg and Darrah, 2015, p. 174) raised by each giver.
Given that according to anthropology "the gift" is the base for reciprocity and, then, for any exchange of services, and that, hence, "the gift" is key in defining the "human condition" addressed in Blomberg and Darrah (2015), the project "The Act of Giving" is an attempt to actually develop a practical "anthropology of services". Thus the relevance of the project can go much beyond the specific project *Sur*, by opening a reflection on the role of "the gift" in services more in general.

Conclusions

The paper has introduced the prototype service *Sur*, which is the result of a Master thesis project about gift and gift giving.
Provided the features of gifts and their foundational relevance for social relations, gift seems to be a very interesting entry point for the issue of sharing and collaborating. Indeed, the service *Sur* not only strengthen sharing practices between givers and the receivers, but it also allows the emergence of an articulated process of sharing and collaborating among designers, givers and possibly local crafts(wo)men.

The interest of the gift for service design goes, however, much beyond *Sur – Sur*, if anything, can play the role of an experimental proof of concept of gifts' relevance – and much beyond just sharing and collaborating.

Indeed, given the anthropological relevance of gifts for the emergence of societies through the establishment of social relationships, we deem that the gift provides a framework for thinking services in general and relational ones in particular. The gift leads us to think that personal and social relations can never be immediate as proposed by Cipolla and Manzini (2009) via Buber, but that they always happen through mediations. Not only thinking through mediations, rather than through immediateness, seems to us more in line with everyday practices and with the practices designers deal with, but also if "immediate" relations were actually possible, there would be no need for design. Luckily (or unfortunately), mediations are needed, especially in service design and, therefore, designers are thus needed too.

References

Aime, M. (2013). "Eppur si dona". In Aime et al., *Dono, dunque siamo: otto buone ragioni per credere in una società più solidale*. Novara: UTET, pp. 7-20.

Aime, M. (2016). "Introduzione". In M. Mauss *Saggio sul dono*, Torino: Einaudi, pp. I-XXVII.

Bauman, Z. (2013). "La solidarietà ha un futuro?". *Dono, dunque siamo: otto buone ragioni per credere in una società più solidale*. Novara: UTET, pp. 35-50.

Blomberg, J., Darrah, C., (2015). Towards an Anthropology of Services. *The Design Journal*, 18(2), pp. 171-192.

Cipolla, C., & Manzini E. (2009). Relational Services. *Knowledge and Policy*, 22, pp. 45-50.

Corubolo M. and Meroni A. (2015). "A Journey into Social Innovation Incubation. The TRANSITION Project". In Collina, L., Galluzzo, L., and Meroni, A. (eds), *Proceedings of Cumulus Spring Conference 2015 – The Virtuous Circle Design Culture and Experimentation*, Milano: McGraw-Hill Education, pp. 1394-1419.

Dardi D. (2016). Superlocal. *Domusweb*, 18th of May 2016 (https://www.domusweb.it/en/design/2016/05/18/superlocal_andrea_de_chirico.html, accessed on the 28th of April 2018).

Dei, F. (2008). "Tra le maglie della rete: il dono come pratica di cultura popolare". In F. Dei and M. Aria (eds.), *Culture del dono*. Roma: Meltemi, pp. 11-42.

Derrida, J. (1994). *Given time: I. Counterfeit money*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dilnot, C. (1993). The Gift. *Design Issues*, 9(2), pp. 51-53.

Godelier, M. (1999). *The Enigma of the Gift*. Oxford: Polity.

Godbout, J. (1998). *The World of the Gift*. Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press.

Hirscher, A-L. and Fuad-Luke, A. (2013). "Open participatory designing for an alternative fashion economy". In K. Niinimäki (ed.), *Sustainable Fashion: New Approaches*. Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, pp. 174-197.

Latour, B., and Callon M. (1997). "Tu ne calculera pas!" Ou comment symétriser le don et le capital. *La revue du MAUSS*, 9, pp. 45-70.

Miller, D. (2008). *The Comfort of Things*. Cambridge: Polity.

Pyyhtinen, O. (2014). *The Gift and its Paradoxes: Beyond Mauss*. London: Ashgate.

Salsano, A. (2008). *Il dono nel mondo dell'utile*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.

Verganti, R. (2003). Design as brokering of languages: Innovation strategies in Italian firms. *Design Management Journal*, 14(3), pp. 34-42.

Weiner, A. B. (1988). *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea. Case studies in cultural anthropology.* New York, NY: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Wetter-Edman, K., Sangiorgi, D., Edvardsson, B., Holmlid, S., Grönroos, C. & Mattelmäki, T. (2014). Design for Value Co-Creation: Exploring Synergies Between Design for Service and Service Logic. *Service Science*, 6(2), pp. 106-121.