

How to Create Value via Object Circulation in Gift-Systems

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Gift-systems build relationships and create various types of value for the individuals who participate in them. Organizations may also reap the benefits of gift-systems when they understand, support, and foster practices of object circulation within these systems. We adopt a theoretical framework based on anthropological approaches to value-in-action to explain value creation for individuals in contemporary gift systems. We mobilize ethnographic and netnographic data on the circulation of small wooden chapels containing a statue of the Virgin Mary among Catholic households to develop a conceptual framework that illuminates value creation in gift systems and demonstrates how practices of circulation (setting, protecting, registering, retrieving, keeping, passing on, monitoring, interacting, and storytelling) can be used to generate value for organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Businesses and organizations are constantly on the lookout for new and more effective ways to generate value for their stakeholders. One way of optimizing value creation is through designing and offering better products and services to customers and capturing additional value through market exchange. However, organizations also have opportunities for creating greater value if they discover how support gift-systems and their potential to create value for the individuals who participate in them.

The concept of gift-system has been initially formulated by Mauss and refers to systems of social solidarity based on a structured set of gift exchanges. Research has shown that in gift-systems, objects circulate being transferred from one participant to the next and, in doing so, generate value for these participants (Mauss 1954, Komter 2005). As other consumer collectives, gift-systems tend to emerge organically and coordination tasks are usually distributed among participants, who enjoy contributing their skills and time to the system. Hence, organizational intervention is frequently unwelcomed in gift-systems, especially if participants suspect that an organization has the ulterior goal of appropriating value for profit (Pongsakornrungrungsilp and Schroeder 2011; Scaraboto 2015).

Nevertheless, because object circulation generates value through a process that does not depend on capital investment and profit, its value generating capacity can be quite useful for organizations with limited resources and for those whose organizational goals are aligned with those of a gift-systems' participants. Moreover, different types of value created within gift-systems may translate into other types of value as they move in and out of the market, for instance realizing economic value for participants that aim at generating economic resources or making profit. Therefore, a better understanding of the process of value creation through object circulation in gift-systems can be invaluable for those participants

who sit at the intersection between community and business (Kjaersgaard and Smith, 2014; Scaraboto 2015), and for organizations that operate through hybrids of gift-giving and market exchange, as those that have emerged with the popularization of the sharing economy (Botsman and Rogers 2010).

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Gift-systems

Research on gift-systems has shown their importance to the unfolding of morality and solidarity among participants (Bajde 2009; Giesler 2006; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012), and for community expansion (Komter 2005) and stabilization (Berking 1999) among other outcomes (Leach and Leach 1983). In addition to fostering morality and solidarity, gift-systems have yet another outcome: they create and reproduce symbolic distinctions among participants (Godelier 1999). Symbolic distinctions among participants of a gift-system shape and are shaped by access to objects, moral obligations, and the roles associated with the circulation of gifts (Bourdieu 1998; Weiner 1992). Hence, symbolic distinctions, access to objects, and relationships are documented forms of value created by gift-systems (Radka and Margolis 2011, Dalal and Wall 2005). Our study examines whether other types of value can emerge from object circulation through the enactment of practices of circulation in gift-systems, and demonstrates how organizations that participate in these systems can facilitate or catalyze value creation.

A Value-In-Action Framework

The anthropological perspective of value-in-action explicitly focuses on the value creating potential of social actions, that is, of acts “falling under a particular and culturally standardized description—and iterated” (Lambek 2013, 145). To illuminate our understanding of gift-systems, we adopt three of the primary tenets of the value-in-action perspective:

Circulation: Munn (1986) explains that circulation is value-creating because it promotes spatiotemporal expansions and transformations. Similarly, Appadurai (1986) argues that by looking at circulation, we can understand how objects become valuable (i.e., how value is created) and are valued (i.e., how value outcomes are assessed). Graeber (2001) also notes that circulation has value-creating capacities; and Lambek (2013) considers the value creating capacity of ritual and performativity acts, including those involved in object-transferring. These understandings support our examination of circulation as central to the creation of value in consumer collectives.

Transvaluation: The value-in-action perspective also reasons that “there is a transvaluation from the activity to the object (Eiss and Pedersen 2002) and an objectification of value itself” (Lambek 2013, 142). That is, the value of actions is transferred and attached to objects, turning into objectified value. The process of transvaluation was discussed early by Marx (1909) and Malinowski (1922). Moreover, recent approaches note that “value is embodied in the commodities that are exchanged” (Appadurai 1986, 3) and that objects are not “fully or purely valuable in and of themselves,” but rather, store the value of actions and become signs of valuable actions (Lambek 2013, 155). This suggests that it is important to analyze

not only practices of circulation, but also circulating objects in order to understand value creation in gift-systems.

Co-constitution of Value and Value Systems: By focusing on the actions that create value, the value-in-action perspective recognizes the embeddedness of value creation in a micro-cultural value system (i.e. the group of social values that are important for a specific group) that influences value assessments within a collective and which is, in turn, shaped by value-creating actions (Heine 2012). This is consistent with the idea that value and values are interrelated and inseparable—they are essentially the same (Graeber 2001, 15), although expressed and conceptualized in different levels of abstraction. This tenet inspires us to examine the values of those participants involved in a gift-system, and to inquire into the influence of these values on value creation.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Small Chapels Movement

The circulation of small wooden chapels containing a statue of the Virgin Mary began in 1888, in Guayaquil, Ecuador (Kleina 2012). Canon José Maria Santistevan decided to foster the presence of Mary in households as a potential solution to difficulties faced by families, increased materialism among Catholics, and lack of faith among young people in Ecuador. The small chapel movement spread through Latin America, arriving in Brazil in 1914, during the First World War. Similar systems of “pilgrim” Virgin Mary statues that are regularly transferred among families within a neighborhood soon started to operate in Europe and the United States (Madlener 2012).

We investigated the circulation of small chapels in two different cities in Southern Brazil: Curitiba, a cultural, political, and economic urban center (1,760,500 habitants in 2010, density of 10,523 habitants/sq. mile), and Campos Novos, a small town of 32,800 habitants (44.4 habitants/sq. mile), whose economy is centered on agriculture and cattle and poultry farming. These two cities also differ regarding the circulation of the small chapels, and regarding the Church’s approach to value creation, allowing us to develop within-case comparisons. In Curitiba, a well-organized hierarchy of priests and lay volunteers coordinates the movement. The volunteers who supervise the circulation of each small chapel are known as “messengers,” and respond to a Director, who is subordinate to a designated priest. These volunteers assemble the chapels (combining a religious statue, a protective case, and decorative items at a cost of about US\$50), oversee their circulation, and also spread the Church’s message among Catholic households. As of December 2014, more than 10,000 small chapels were circulating in Curitiba. About 100 messengers convene in monthly meetings to discuss matters related to the movement and to define goals for the chapels. The Curitiba branch of the movement has a Facebook page and a blog, where messengers and other parochial members post and comment on news and updates about the movement. The small chapels are also an instrument for the Catholic Church to collect donations (inserted into the chapel cases through a slot or given during masses and other events promoted around the small chapel). In Curitiba, donations are used for sponsorship of new priests. As one of our informants explained during a member check meeting, custodians are able to estimate the amount of money collected by the small chapel during a month’s worth of transfers. With that information, they ensure that no money is being taken

from the chapel (i.e., stolen) during its circulation. Although precisely determining the amount collected through the circulation of small chapels is difficult, we estimate that at least US\$500,000 is donated annually to the Church in Curitiba alone via the chapels, indicating the potential of these gift systems to generate economic value.

In Campos Novos, lay volunteers in each neighborhood organize the circulation of chapels, following their understanding of the tradition yet respecting the mandates of the local priest, who oversees most of the groups of SCM operating in the town. There, the volunteers who organize the circulation of the chapels are known as “custodians” and play a role similar to, but less formalized than that played by messengers in Curitiba. No formal statistics are available regarding the movement in Campos Novos, but the custodians we interviewed affirm that the tradition has waned through the years, and that the lack of incentives for participation and the feeble support from the local clergy have made keeping the chapels in circulation a challenge. Meetings to discuss the circulation of the chapels are infrequent and poorly attended, and the Church provides no support to the custodians other than a small amount of money to acquire the statue and protective case needed to assemble a new chapel. Once a year, custodians are required to visit the families in their jurisdiction to collect donations of food and money for the Church’s party in honor of the parish’s patron saint. The little support-high demand approach adopted by the local Church has led to latent tension between custodians and the priest that coordinates the movement in the city. Independent groups have emerged that organize the circulation of small chapels to accomplish specific goals (e.g. to offer comfort and prayers to ailing neighbors).

In both cities, as in many others where the movement takes place, the small chapels circulate by being transferred from one neighbor to the other in an order predetermined by the custodian (or messenger) when the chapel is first released. Ideally, a small chapel will circulate among 30 households, remaining for 24 hours in each house before being transferred to the next one, but the numbers in each group vary as families join or leave the neighborhood. The transferring of the chapel usually happens at evening, when people are back home from work. Upon receiving it, a family follows a ritualized tradition to acknowledge the visit of the chapel to the household. As one of the authors recalls from her childhood experiences,

“Once a month, the neighbor from our right would bring the small chapel to our door. My mom used to place it on the dining table (which we rarely sat at), and lit a candle in front of it. We would all stand in front of the chapel to pray after dinner. We were to say a Holy Mary each, and to silently thank and ask for graces. Then my siblings and I would dispute the right to insert coins in the chapel slot. The chapel spent the next day there, quietly overseeing our home from over the tabletop. I remember spending some time checking its every detail, appreciating the white and blue vest of the image and the tiny fabric flowers of fading colors on its background. It looked so peaceful! I felt protected when the image was there. The next evening, mom would take the small chapel to the neighbor on our left. Sometimes, when she was too busy, mom would ask me to take the chapel to the neighbor. I remember the excitement of walking outside in the dark (streets were much safer at those times), but also the many feelings that went through my mind as I anticipated knocking at the neighbor’s door – they had a teenage boy and maybe he would be the one to answer the door.” (Introspection notes, DS)

Accordingly, the guidelines for organizing the circulation of the chapels in Curitiba read:

“Upon receiving the chapel, give it a place of honor. If possible, light a candle or a lamp and say the Prayer of Visitation. (...) During the night and the following day, the small chapel remains at the place of honor. There is no need to keep the light on all the time and, if needed, all family members can leave the house. There is a custom of leaving an offer to the small chapel. These offerings are destined to the formation of new priests and it befits that they are the result of small sacrifices (for instance, refraining from buying ice-cream, popcorn, soda, cigarettes, or others).” (Guidelines for the Small Chapels Movement, Curitiba).

In Campos Novos, rules for circulation are transmitted orally, as illustrated by the explanation offered by a custodian: “the correct timing to take [the chapel to the neighbor] is at 6pm, then it sleeps there and the next day you will take it at 6pm to the other family. And if everyone has time, you can all pray together when you take it to the other family.” (Deborah, Custodian, Campos Novos). Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the placement of a small chapel in a household, and the reinforcement of the rules for engaging with the chapel through notes affixed to the chapel itself.



Figure 1 – Small chapel placement at a household. Still shot from YouTube video “Capelinhas: Uma prova de amor e tradição” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjpEv_exvy0).



Figure 2 – Rules for receiving the small chapel affixed to the side of the object. Still shot from YouTube video “Capelinhas: Uma prova de amor e tradição” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BipEv_exvy0).

RESEARCH METHOD

“Following the thing” is one of the appropriate techniques for conducting multi-sited ethnographies under the mobilities paradigm (Marcus 1995; Sheller and Urry 2006). Following the thing can be pursued in two ways: researchers can move alongside the moving object or they can use observation, interviews, and other ethnographic methods to trace and capture the complex mobilities of objects (Larsen, Axhausen, and Urry 2006; Hui 2012, Taylor and Horst, 2013). We take the second path to collect and analyze a variety of qualitative data on the mobilities of the small chapels that circulate among Catholic households. By following the circulation of small chapels, we are able to identify the practices involved in circulation as well as the types of value created by them.

Both authors have direct experience with the circulation of small chapels as they grew up in places where the practice is embedded in local culture. Moreover, in July 2013 and April 2014 one of the authors conducted week-long, intensive fieldwork at each of the two cities where the movement was investigated. In addition, participant observation on the Facebook page and blog for the Curitiba branch of the SCM was conducted by both authors for two years, starting in June 2013. Our final dataset includes field notes from online and offline participant observation, online archival data, in-depth and informal interviews, photographs, videos, artifacts, and media reports collected in both contexts. We also conducted member checks with members of both SOC.

FINDINGS

Iterating between our ethnographic data and extant theories of value creation, we have identified various types of value and demonstrated how they are created in gift-systems as objects (i.e. the chapels) circulate among participants. We present each type of value created in the SCM, and discuss how these types of value are created below.

Types of value

We observed that the movement of the small chapels from neighbor to neighbor generates several types of value beyond the expected spiritual value: emotional, epistemic, linking and reputational value. In formal and informal interviews, participants of the movement also refer to these benefits and outcomes they derive from engaging in the circulation of small chapels. We discuss each type of value below.

Emotional value – A small chapel is routinely received and transferred by the same person once a month if the movement’s rules are properly followed. Given this recurrent transferring, an individual may perform the same practices, for the same chapel, multiple times, increasing his or her number of interactions with it. Recurrent interaction promotes continuous emotional engagement with a circulating object, resembling the type of engagement that unfolds in long-term relationships (Fournier 1998; Curasi et al. 2004). Several of our informants refer to the small chapel that visits their household employing terms that denote their emotional engagement with the object. For example, in Curitiba, participants manifested strong emotional reactions to the replacement of a broken image in one of the small chapels, as recounted by a messenger:

“The small chapel fell, the image wasn’t properly fixed to it, and it broke. I went to a store in the neighborhood and bought another image like that, not exactly like it, because that one was already 12-years old. Then I said: — listen, we will need to replace the image, there is no way of repairing this gesso image and putting it back there. So we replaced it (...) and send a note along: ‘unfortunately, due to someone’s carelessness, the image of the chapel broke and we had to replace it.’ We had more than 10 phone calls from people who wanted to know what had happened, who had kept the old image, because they wanted to keep it for themselves. (...) It is there in my oratory, because I was the first Messenger for this small chapel. (...) it has no feet, but it is there, patched together. And it represents something like love, not love for the image, for Our Lady, but it is something you cherish. (Rejane, Messenger, Curitiba).

Similarly, in Campos Novos, we heard many descriptions of situations where emotional value was clearly at stake. As demonstrated by Garfinkel (1991), it is when things go wrong that group norms and values become most apparent. For instance, custodian Deborah explains what she felt when “her” chapel went missing:

“There was a time, it’s been some four years ago, that my small chapel disappeared! [exasperated] Disappeared, disappeared, and it is also my duty to take care of it.” [She brings the topic back a few minutes later to add:] “So then it disappeared, it disappeared, that one I had, and no one knew where it was, and I looked for it everywhere and no one said that they had it. So I told the Priest and he said: ‘arrange another one’. [sounding desolate]” (Deborah, Custodian, Campos Novos)

Epistemic value — Circulating objects physically change as members of a gift-system customize them. For example, small chapels are often enhanced by participants, who modify the objects as they enact the practices of activating, setting, protecting, and praying. Circulating objects also change as they circulate, becoming dirty, broken, or simply worn. In addition to physical alterations, circulating objects change as they acquire different meanings and understandings for the group. As one of the custodians in Campos Novos explains:

“You know, something interesting, people lift the protective glass and place things inside [the small chapel]...and it comes with Our Lady of Aparecida’s ribbons, it comes with requests for prayers... from time to time I open it and clean it. It comes with requests...once there was even a request for Stella’s son, for him to do well on a car race. People put prayers, requests, candles, rosaries inside the small chapel. There are some ribbons that give me the impression that people measure something with [these ribbons] and place them like this...” (Olga, Custodian, Campos Novos).

As this excerpt suggests, as circulating objects travel and keep interacting with members of a collective, they are constantly subject to change and modification, accumulating cues that indicate their trajectory. This unfolding nature of circulating objects seem to increase their epistemic value — that is, their capacity to promote curiosity and bring novelty to participants of a gift-system (Sheth, Newman, and Gross 1991). Our dataset suggests that, as the small chapels circulate, they become more complex, with layers of stories registered in them which reflect their trajectory and turn them into interesting (fascinating for some) objects that participants relate to progressively. For instance, after listening to custodian Olga description of how she finds objects inside the small chapel, a neighbor affirms: “I did say that that red peace lily that was inside the chapel [received by her mother-in-law. See Figure 3] wasn’t part of the decoration. Someone put it in there.” (Denize, Neighbor, Campos Novos), suggesting that other participants may also develop a similar curiosity about the unfolding nature of the circulating objects.



Figure 3 – Objects inserted in the small chapel. Photograph taken by author during fieldwork.

Linking value – As the priest responsible for the SCM in Curitiba explains, “The small chapel always agglutinates; it ends up forming a community of people that get together to celebrate their faith, and this keeps growing, forming [...] parochies, and rendering fruits. Really, this is their job, to agglutinate [people] and celebrate faith.” (Regis). We refer to the capacity of circulating objects to help individuals perceive and/or experience tribal connection as the linking value of the object (Cova et al. 2007).

As unveiled in our fieldwork, the circulation of small chapels promotes linking value through three mechanisms:

(a) Contamination, whereby the immaterial qualities or the essence of a person can be transferred to an object through physical contact (Newmann, Diesendruck and Bloom 2011, 217). Small chapels that have circulated multiple times tend to be perceived as more valuable because of all the connections to the ones who have helped move and host it. We suggest that this happens because moving practices create instances of contamination since they expose the object to different participants and places. Contamination also happens in relation to other valued objects. For example, when small chapels are placed next to the altar during special monthly masses or yearly assemblies, they are often seen as more desirable, because of their proximity to other sacred objects and images. This increases the small chapels’ value for participants in the movement who wish to connect with the Church, its priests, saints, and God [Figure 4].

(b) Totemization, whereby through rituals and pilgrimage objects can become further singularized, often acquiring a sacred aura (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Kopytoff 1988) and becoming symbols of a group (Levi-Straus 1966). As affirmed by Regis in an earlier quote, these chapels often become a symbol of the whole group. In other words, the chapels are not only the objects that connect people in the group, but they become a representation of the group itself. We observed that many practices like storytelling or group meetings help the process of totemization of circulating objects by transforming individual experiences into collective ones and creating a symbolic role for the circulating object that is much more emblematic of the group than of any individual member. Hence, our data suggest that the circulating object acts as a vessel of meaning that stores and distributes the energy of the group, physically mediating relationships of belonging.



Figure 4 – Small chapels placed at the altar during mass celebration for the yearly assembly of the SCM in Curitiba. Photo by Tarcisio Cirino, Small Chapels Movement Curitiba.

(c) Fetishization, whereby possessions materialize members' magical thinking (Fernandez and Lastovicka 2011) and acquire a special aura connected to the object's magical powers. For example, custodians explained that there is a story that circulates among them about the glass of a small chapel breaking into pieces when the son of a SCM member came home after emerging from a coma. The custodians have attributed the glass incident to the magical powers of the chapels. This suggests that telling and sharing of this kind of extraordinary

stories make objects more powerful (and magic), and sharing this “secret” seems to bring participants closer together.

Reputational value — Reputational value reflects a group member’s social recognition, prestige, authority, respect, and legitimacy (Corneo and Jeanne 1997). We observed that when a neighbor competently performs practices in a gift-system (e.g., passing on the small chapel to the next person at the expected time), his/her reputation increases within the group. Recurrent interaction with circulating objects helps members to become more competent in their practices and reinforces the performance of other practices, hence generating reputational value for members of a gift-system. Public acknowledgement of performances can also be a powerful tool to create reputational value for a participant, especially for those who volunteer as messengers or custodians to the movement. The following messages posted to one of the online communication channels for the movement illustrate this: “Germano and Maria [volunteers working for the movement as communications director and Director of Messengers] made all the difference in our Small Chapels Movement in Curitiba this year, thank you very much...for everything...” (Rejane, November 25, 2013) and “The messengers made a great ‘acquisition’, this young man [Germano] organized one of the largest communication networks for us, combining missionary work and Church service” (Diego, November 30, 2013). Hence, social distinction through participation in a gift-system like SCM also makes the group more valuable to the individual, for it becomes a site for reputation acquisition and display.

THE PROCESS OF VALUE CREATION

To promote the circulation of small chapels within the gift-system, members of a gift system enact various interdependent practices aimed at continuously transferring objects among themselves. We organize practices of object circulation into three sets according to their purpose within a gift-system. (1) *Enabling practices* qualify an object for circulation among members of a group. They include *setting*, *protecting*, and *registering*. (2) *Moving practices* refer to the transfer of objects among members of a group. They include *retrieving*, *keeping*, and *passing on* a circulating object. (3) *Relational practices* enable sociality among group members involved in object circulation, and include *monitoring*, *interacting with object*, and *storytelling*. In addition to being linked by the material elements they share (Shove et al. 2012, 36), these practices are interconnected because the performance of one practice shapes the performance of other practices in the system (Schau et al. 2009). Because they are at the nexus of all practices in the system, these circulating objects (i.e. the small chapels) are the material elements that physically connect the different practices. Although some of these practices may exist independently of each other in other contexts, object circulation emerges only when enabling, moving, and relational practices operate together. Each one of these practices is capable of generating value to participants in the gift system.

For example, passing on the chapel to a neighbor (a practice referred to in quote that opens this section) creates an opportunity for interaction between participants, hence being capable of creating linking value. The enactment of passing on also allows the chapel to keep circulating; thereby promoting epistemic value; and the parting with the chapel may evidence certain emotions, potentially generating additional emotional value for the participant who is

passing it on, and to that who is receiving it. If passing on is properly enacted (that is, if the chapel is taken to the neighbor on time, with care), it may also generate reputational value.

Value Translations in Gift-Systems

In analyzing the creation of value in gift-systems, we observed how different types of value increase with object circulation. We found that, through performances of practices of object circulation, emotional, epistemic, linking, and reputational value are generated among participants. Moving beyond the understanding that certain collective practices create value (Schau et al. 2009; Arsel and Bean 2013), we specify the multiple forms of value created by practices of circulation within a gift-system.

Our findings also allows us to point to how emotional, epistemic, linking, and reputational value created within gift-systems may translate into a different regime of value (Arnould 2014; Appadurai 1986). Within our practice-based framework, value is a “contingent effect of interactions” (Arnould 2014, 2; Simmel 2004). Therefore, *value translation* occurs when value produced in one regime has the potential to be realized in another regime, for instance when exchange value produced by the market translates into social value produced by gift-systems and vice versa.

We have identified three instances of value translation stemming from circulation in gift-systems. First, value translations may be triggered by members of a gift-system for example, when members capitalize on their reputation to exert economic activities that yield profit, reputational value accumulated by these members may translate into exchange value. In the Curitiba branch of the SCM, for instance, one of the participants involved in the coordination of the movement took upon himself the manufacturing of new, standardized wood cases that were sold to the Church to be used in assembling new small chapels. Other participants cater to the events frequently promoted by the SCM, selling pastries and cakes to the organizing committee.

Second, value translations can be triggered by the activities of the system of practices themselves (and thus not by the object or members of a gift-system). For example, the, moving practices and the practices of praying and monitoring allow the Church to collect money from the donation drawers in the small chapels, translating emotional value into exchange value. When this donated money is used to pay for a priest’s education or to buy new chapels, it is once again translated into the system through market-based exchanges. In this case, the practices enacted in a gift-system increase the value of the system as a whole, facilitating the extraction of exchange value from it.

Third, translations may be triggered by the circulating object as it enters or leaves market exchange from a gift-system. When objects are acquired on the market and become circulating objects, they leave the realm of the commodity (Kopytoff 1988) to become a part of a system of practices where these objects’ emotional, epistemic, and linking value can potentially increase. The reverse process of translation occurs on the rare occasions when circulating objects are smuggled outside the gift-system and commercialized on the market. Due to the nature of our research context, and the taboo associated with the commercialization of religious or sacred objects, this translation was not evident in our fieldwork. However, research in other contexts of object circulation suggests that sometimes objects are removed from gift-systems and commercialized in the market. For instance, in the hobby of Geocaching (a global treasure hunting game), players promote the circulation

of trackable objects (called Travel Bugs in Geocaching lingo). Even though these objects are usually tokens of little value when they enter the gift-system (any object attached to a US\$ 5 tag makes for a Travel Bug), certain Travel Bugs that acquired emotional, social, and/or epistemic value through circulation went missing somewhere in between transfers. Later, these Travel Bugs were auctioned on eBay, selling for up to US\$80 each – a sale that promoted heated discussions among Geocaching players.

These three forms of translations help demonstrate how the emotional, epistemic, linking, and reputational value generated by a gift-system may yield exchange value, even though circulation in gift-systems and market-based exchange are commonly taken as different regimes of value (Myers 2001).

THE ROLES OF ORGANIZATIONS IN FOSTERING VALUE CREATION THROUGH GIFT SYSTEMS

After illuminating the types of value created in gift-systems, we will discuss how organizations can foster the process of value creation and benefit from collaborating with other participants in gift-systems. In the case we studied, the Catholic Church is the central organization involved in the system. Hence, table 1 describes the various roles of the Church in helping to create value in each stage of the identified value creation process. The within-case comparison makes it clear that the Church is much more pro-active and interested in supporting the value-creating process in Curitiba than in Campos Novos, which may explain why the circulation of chapels is much stronger in Curitiba than in Campos Novos. For example, the Church in Curitiba formally trains and mentors messengers about the best practices to help the circulation of chapels within groups [Figure 5]. Messengers then use this knowledge to make sure that neighbors enact circulation practices in a way that adds value to all participants. For example, messengers instruct neighbors on the multiple ways of dealing with the chapel (increasing the possibility of participants creating emotional value); disseminate information about efficient participants (increasing appreciation for reputation value), introduce neighbors to each other and register their participation in sheets of paper and books (increasing opportunities for the creation of linking value), and incentive neighbors to add personal items and stories to the Chapel (enhancing epistemic value).



Figure 5 – Training of New Messengers for the Small Chapels Movement in Curitiba.
Photo by Tarcisio Cirino, Small Chapels Movement Curitiba.

When we examine the activities of the church in Campos Novos, support and interference of the Church is much less expressive. The local Church gives some seed money and orientation to custodians upon request, and does recommends good practices. Yet, custodians are loosely coordinated and poorly instructed. They have good will and faith, but this is often not enough to create a structure that supports value creation.. To be clear, neighbors have an understanding of how their individual work with the chapel reinforce some of their shared values (e.g. receiving the chapel reinforces their religious beliefs and faith). However, it is more difficult for them to experience and understand how the circulation of objects and the SCM gift-system as a whole provides several types of value and reinforces the group. These informants have not directly reasoned, for instance, that the emotional and linking value of protecting and grooming the chapel are leveraged when these actions are collectively acknowledged and assessed, hence reinforcing participants' social values of solidarity and care.

Table 1. The role of the Church in fostering value creation in the small chapels movement

Role of the Church	
Curitiba	Campos Novos
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplying new small chapels • Publishing of a booklet with guidelines for the movement • Formally training/mentoring messengers • Hosting and attending celebration of birthdays and other special occasions • Promoting excursions to sacred places for Messengers • Placing stickers on the small chapels inviting participants to donate money • Posting online news, videos and photos about the circulation of small chapels and events associated with it • Adding decorative elements to the small chapels • Creating and sustaining a register of the people involved with the circulation of the Small Chapels. • Facilitating the sharing of stories and the reproduction of oral accounts when hosting meetings, celebrating birthdays and other special occasion • Commending good practices during masses and meetings • Publicly thanking volunteers and lay members who support the circulation of small chapels • Promoting regular meetings of messengers with an assigned priest • Publicizing to the wider audience and media the work of the church with SCM • Publishing of a booklet with guidelines for the movement • Training new messengers • Facilitating regular meetings with custodians to examine the work with small chapels, integrating new knowledge with their existing values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral guidance to custodians upon demand • Providing seed money to set a new small chapel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual expressions of appraisal made by the vicar or a priest to a custodian • Recommending good practices developed in one neighborhood to others

CONCLUSION

The paper provides important insights about how practices of object circulation support value creation in gift-system. First, we show that gift-systems can generate various types of value for its participants additional to those identified in prior research. Value creation within a gift-system can enhance the perceived benefit of being a member of this system, and this can be a desirable outcome for many organizations, especially those limited in resources, whose survival depends on engaged participation (Boo and Rogers 2010). The case of the Small Chapels Movement shows that, like the Church, by offering the structure for members to gain emotional, epistemic, linking and reputational value, organizations can increase the value participants perceive in the system, circulating objects, and other participants.

We show that the circulation of objects is a valid pathway to reinforcing the generation of various types of value for participants of gift-systems. In addition, acknowledging and inventorying the various types of value created in a specific gift system allows business, brands, and organizations to promote themselves as generators of these types of value. In the case of for-profit businesses, we speculate that this can be particularly effective with marketing communication and public relations campaigns. One recent commercial example is found in Coca-Cola's use of object circulation to strengthen their equity. In 2014, Coca-Cola partnered with FIFA to launch the FIFA World Cup™ Trophy Tour. During nine months in 2013, the trophy traveled over 92.000 km, circulating to over 90 countries (www.coca-cola.co.uk). The practices of object circulation have generated social, epistemic, and emotional value for this system. These types of value can then be capitalized and translated into exchange value (brand equity) by both Coca-Cola and FIFA. For these translations not to generate tension and conflict, they must be aligned with the values held by participants of the gift-system, and maintain certain elements and logics of gift-giving that characterize transactions as hybrids rather than purely commercial exchanges (Scaraboto 2015).

Second, we demonstrate that value creation happens through practices of circulation and that each practice has an important role in supporting value creation in a consumer collective. By understanding the function of each practice, business and organizations can create specific strategies to support the process of value creation within gift-systems. For example, an organization that supports carpooling or hitchhiking could create further ties between members by promoting the circulation of objects that could help to embody the spirit of the community. Further support could be given by making sure these objects' trajectories have been registered and shared among members through storytelling. One organization that effectively promotes circulation is Groundspeak.inc, a company who runs the Geocaching website. The website provides various options for players to register the traveling of objects and the actions of participants. It also provides a forum where assessment can be made and exchange, which further facilitates the generation of value in the gift system.

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