THE FUTURE PRESENT
Redefining Gifting

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On a more personal note, I would like to thank my family, and friends for all the many ways in which they have supported me and who kept me positive and confident. I would like to thank Bonita Bindra for opening her farm and home to me. Special thanks to Shalin, Silba and Desma for always being available for feedback and inspiration.
Since I was an architecture student in 2005, we were made aware of how we were depleting earth off her resources. As I moved into practice, I witnessed how difficult it was to convince clients or companies to make changes towards results they couldn’t measure or see immediately.

According to the UN Environment’s Emission Gap Report 2019 we need to close the ‘commitment’ gap between what we say we will do and what we need to do to prevent dangerous levels of climate change. 10 years ago, if countries had acted on the science, governments would need have needed to reduce emissions by 3.3% each year. Today we need to reduce emissions by 7.6% every year. Policy changes are necessary, but how do we change individual and group attitudes, habits and ritual to make them more synonymous with our emerging future?

Though there are many ways to answer and explore this question, I became particularly interested in re-imagining rites and rituals to make them more attuned to a future where the environmental crisis is a reality. Though modern rites and rituals are ubiquitous in our daily lives, they are not without consequences. Ecological anthropologist Roy Rappaport does not say that rites in fact exercise ecological functions, rather they should (Grimes, R. L., 2003). Rites
of passage (such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries) themselves are undergoing deep transformation in line with the modern-day needs. Yet the quasi-spontaneous object (gift) wrapped in paper with a ribbon, given on typical rites of passage mainly in the private circle of family and friends with an element of surprise might not have transformed much. Gifting is never treated as rites of passages themselves, as rituals with their very own sequences, and very own phases of margin and liminality (Silber, I. F., 2018). Yet According to research by ResearchandMarkets.com, the global gift retailing market is on track to make $77 billion by 2022.

These gifts involved in the transition, act as mediums of influence, emotion, memories and values. They become containers of deep emotions like hope, love, happiness and bonding. Objects thus become a tangible hook to intangible experiences. These gifting rituals add to the consumerist attitude thus making us contribute to our own future demise. Can these objects take a different form to be more attuned with the angst we feel about the persisting environmental catastrophe and guilt at our part in it? Changing individual behaviour to be more ecologically responsible is remarkably difficult. Yet such behaviour change is ultimately in our own interest.

Bearing this in mind my project will focus on how we might redesign rituals of intergenerational gifting to urban young adults to be more meaningful and conscious towards the environment. The Stage 2 project (European capital of sport) got me to reflect on the importance of the legacy we leave behind. Climate change, global warming and environmental degradation need not be the legacy we leave behind.
Design Process:

Co-creation: Online Workshop
Secondary Research: Gifting

Brainstorming & Idea Generation

Rituals & Circular Economy?

Step back & Reflecting

Research Question 01

Rituals

Research Question 02

Primary Research: Interviews
The Five Why
Initial How Might Wes
Repositioning

Verification:
Online Engagement
What if....

Redefining How Might Wes

Insights

Co-creation
Online Workshops
Secondary Research:
Gifting

Design through Research & Research through Design - A non-linear process
Co-creation

Online Workshop

Test:
- Persona
- Concepts Directions

Expert Interviews

Feedback:
- Participant comments and feedback.

Design Development:
- Persona
- User Journey
- Storyboards
- Touch-points

Deliver:
- Website / App

Pitch:
- Business Model Canvas

Future Work

Preferable Futures

Outcome

Conclusion

Brainstorming & Idea Generation

Ideate

Prototype

Design through Research & Research through Design - A non-linear process
Sustainable lifestyles are defined as: “… rethinking our ways of living, what we buy and how we organise our everyday lives. It is also about altering how we socialise, exchange, share, educate and build identities. It means transforming our societies and living in harmony with our environment” (Sustainable Lifestyles Taskforce, 2010: 9).

“We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children” - American Indian proverb
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I started my desk research by getting a basic understanding of rituals, their function and role (historically and presently) in our everyday lives. Moreover, it was important to distinguish them from ‘routines’ since the two are regularly used to mean one another. However, there is one importance different: one of them is done with an intent or purpose to make meaning, the other doesn’t. This meaning could be intangible, illogical, irrational, even arbitrary from a practical point of view, to an outsider observing the ritual in practice. For example, making a wish before cutting the cake. Paradoxically these rituals look completely normal from the inside. Rituals provide the performer with a glimmer or sense of meaning (figure 1).
The purpose of the rituals may vary. On an individual level it helps us to **transition from one juncture of life to another** (figure 2). It could bring a sense of belonging, strengthening social ties, oneness in a community, interest group or religion (figure 3). In a shared community through the planning of ceremonies it gives structure to time, creating experiences that can allow for social and or emotional transition. From that perspective, rituals surrounding weddings, birthdays, retirements etc. all help the individual and society move from one state of being to the next.

Figure 2. Purpose of rituals - Individual level
help in life crisis
structure to our lives
help deal with complicated emotions
nourish relationships
help in transition
focus intentions
afford a sense of belonging & interconnectedness of all life
Nature

Figure 3. Purpose of Rituals
Van Gennep (1960) describes rituals in terms of “rites of passage” where the rituals performance allows one to make the change from one social status to another through setting, performance, sequences, repetitive action and structures. Rites such as coming of age, marriage, retirement create spaces of “liminality” (Figure 4). One is removed from their current social status, placed into a state of flux, ambiguity or liminality, then eventually they are reincorporated with their new social identity. The lines between the status quo and change are not defined clearly. The changing and unchanging reside together. My starting point was to explore how one navigates the state of flux in through daily rituals and/or Rituals which help mark life milestones.
Insights:

Contemporary individuals encounter issues of “change” all through life and rituals in its core helps suspend the ordinary for a certain time and reconnects one with what is important and how life is meaningful. While doing so people identify with a story that’s told before or create their own story. It helps us carve special moments of our daily routines and brings in meaning and enchantment in what could be dull, repetitive everyday life (figure 5).

Expounding on the secondary research on rituals, I thought it might be interesting to understand how people experience and evaluate modern day rituals around a major milestone in their lives e.g. a wedding, an anniversary, a birthday etc. Have the rituals around these ceremonies become redundant? Do they still help people transition to a new state? And do these transitions account for an environmentally bleak future?

Figure 5. How rituals / Rituals help us. (www.ritualdesign.net)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNION</th>
<th>LOSS / HEALING</th>
<th>ENERGY</th>
<th>SEPARATION</th>
<th>CONGREGATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marriage, festivals, incorporation, mergers</td>
<td>death, divorce, break-ups, sickness</td>
<td>meditation, dancing, exercise, walk, coffee breaks</td>
<td>divorce, job loss, death</td>
<td>festivals, conferences, concerts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram:
- **UNION**: Arrow pointing to a box containing symbols for marriage, festivals, incorporation, mergers.
- **LOSS / HEALING**: Arrow pointing to a box containing symbols for death, divorce, break-ups, sickness.
- **ENERGY**: Arrow pointing to a box containing symbols for meditation, dancing, exercise, walk, coffee breaks.
- **SEPARATION**: Arrow pointing to a box containing symbols for divorce, job loss, death.
- **CONGREGATIONS**: Graphic representation of interconnected symbols for festivals, conferences, concerts.
Primary Research:

In ritual study artefacts, performances are easy to see (figure 6). But understanding the values, believes and mindset behind rituals is harder. I tried to use the framework of mode of transition (Ozenc, 2014) (figure 7). As a framework, it gave me a sensitizing yet pragmatic lens to pull out the nuances of transition in rites of passage, by separating ones experiential and functional needs.

Interviews:

Considering the lock down and its effects on people, I wanted to talk to people about memorable celebratory events in their life which brought happy memories and took them back in time. I used weddings ceremonies as the ritual performance to explore the theme, given its importance in people’s lives.

The five whys are way to uncover people’s motivation (figure11). Doing this while they narrate their story was a way to get a glimpse into values. Thus, I chose online, in-depth, semi structures interviews containing open ended questions (figure 9, 10) interviews as my tool to start the inquiry.

I also wanted to understand four facets of an individual’s life: individual, religions, collective and secular (figure 8). Plotting these four facets helped uncover a person’s actions and value themes.
WAYS OF MAKING
WAYS OF BEING
**Individual**
- Meditation
- Gardening
- Music
- Hackathon
- Pre Game Rituals
- Alcohol Anonymous

**Secular/Spiritual**
- Yoga/ Exercise
- Coffee/ Tea
- Sport events
- Performances
- Conferences

**Collective**
- Fasting
- Temple Visits
- Prayer
- Pilgrimage
- Baptism
- Festivals
- Fridays Prayers /Jummah

**Traditional/Religious**
- Sunday Mass
- Sunday Mass
- Baptism
- Weddings

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**Figure 7.** Modes of transition framework (Ozenc, 2014).

**Figure 8.** Four facets in an individuals life.
Participants:

Participants: Seven participants ranging from the age group of 29 years to 50 years. Five were ex-brides: 2 married (1 interfaith wedding, 1 destination wedding- couple interview), 1 divorced (traditional wedding) and 1 second wedding (interfaith wedding). 2 were brides to be - 1 was getting married for the first time and the other was getting married for the third time. (figure 12)

Reflection on the Interviews:

I asked the participants to send me a memento from their wedding, after the interview session. In retrospect, I could have asked that earlier as a starting point for the interview. A solo male participant would have been good to get a different perspective. People are not always happy to talk about their weddings for various reasons. I should be sensitive towards these assumptions in the future too. I should have planned better and delayed the interviews with the photographer, celebrant and bride whisperer till I had more insights, rather than speaking to them along with the participants. Since the interviews were online small cues from body language were missed. I might have not used the modes of transition as precisely as I wished to as the interviews were semi structured.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Summary of Interview Question</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Part1. A typical day. Daily / weekly rituals. (10mins) | About rituals:  
- What are the daily/ weekly/ monthly/ yearly rituals you look forward to?  
- Are there any rituals you find hard to stick to?  
- How do these rituals help you? |
| Part2. Story of their wedding and looking back. (25mins) | About Rituals:  
- What were the Rituals. Did they hold any meaning to you?  
- What traditions did you follow and why?  
- What were the expenses, efforts & hurdles?  
- What do you remember and cherish the most from that day?  
- What were the most wasteful things from the wedding?  
- In hindsight would you do anything differently? Anything you regret? |
| Part3. Probes. (5mins) | Memories:  
- Request to a significant picture/ video/ memento of the day and how you look back on it. |

Figure 9. Interview structure.
Figure 10. Interview analysis.
Insights:

- **Rituals and tradition are important to people** even if they don’t fully understand them. It is what they relate with, it is what they have seen growing up and what connects them to their past.

- People value memories above everything else. They consider them priceless.

- Value of things change as people go through life.

- Celebrations are an extension of the people - their values their beliefs.

- There is a thin line between what people consider tradition/ emotion/ memory and what is wasteful.

- There is a gap in what people want in the present and what they might value in the future (figure 11).

- In hindsight people wanted a no gift policy. They found gifts wasteful unless was gold or money. **Most of them couldn’t remember the gifts they received.**

“We have decided after the big wedding, now even when we have kids we will have small celebrations for them.”

“I hated every part of it because it was very traditional. But I will still want to have a traditional wedding because that is what I have seen growing up and it’s ingrained in me.”

“The clothes and the gifts were the most wasteful part of the wedding. The gifts didn’t fit our lifestyle.”

“We spent a lot of money on our wedding yes, could we have used the money better - yes... but the memories I got in return are priceless.”

“The clothes, bridesmaid dresses are not a waste - that is tradition, culture, memory. Two trees were cut for our wedding decoration - that was a waste.”
Figure 11. Interview - 5 Whys.

Figure 12. The momentos people sent were videos and pictures of their wedding, which they revisit.

Figure 13. Participants - zoom interviews.
Reflection:

The participants who felt they had overspent on their wedding regretted the decision as their values change over time. If they had to do things again, they want to be associated with the rituals even if they don’t understand them, it is something they “identify with, its ingrained in them”. Looking ahead they don’t want their children to make the same mistakes and they want to transfer evolved values and leave a better legacy for them.

However, it was interesting to note that most participants didn’t remember the gifts they received. The gifting process is an ongoing, ever moving, dynamic symbolic exchange designed to capture memories, feelings, and other relational goals. Gifts usually take the form of goods and objects. While facets of long-standing material gifting rituals are losing value, people still think of rituals as an important element in their lives. Can we then re-imagine the ritual of gifting to be more meaningful and to hold long term value (figure14)? What could the future of gifting look like?

I was very confused at this stage of the project. My starting point initially was wedding and circular economy, but my research revealed that people don’t consider tradition or rituals as wasteful. They attach values and meaning to it. Thus I decided to pivot my project towards the gap I saw in the ritual of gifting. Why was it that people didn’t remember the gifts they received or considered them wasteful?
Gifts in rites of passage or gifts as rites of passage:

- Can the ritual of gifting be redesigned to be more meaningful?
- Is there a gap between what people want as gifts and what they receive?
- Should gifts help people to build a better future?
- Can the ritual of gifting on special occasions be a vehicle to transmit, and amplify values worth passing on through generations?
- What are the values that they want to bring from the past? Values that matter now and Values that are not formed yet, but driven by future expectations?
Framing of How Might Wes:

**Insights from Secondary Research:**
Rituals in its core helps suspend the ordinary for a certain time and reconnects one with what is important and how life is meaningful.

**Insights from Primary Research (Interviews):**

Value of things change as people go through life. They don’t their children to make the same mistakes and they want to transfer evolved values and leave a better legacy for them.

Rituals and tradition are important to people even if they don’t fully understand them.

Most of them couldn’t remember the gifts they received because commodities holds less value for them, yet gifting remains an important ritual in peoples lives.

**HOW MIGHT WE** redesign the ritual of intergenerational gifting to pass on values, knowledge and giving back to the future generations?
Online Engagement Tool:

An important insight from the earlier interviews was around the lack of valuable and memorable gifts. I wanted to further explore how one could make gifts meaningful and memorable, especially in the intergenerational context (narrowed to parent – child for a more targeted group). I had to design a way of mapping expectations from a gift, the memory attached with it and the usefulness of the gift in the future. The best way to do this was to get the parents and their children together and have a conversation using an engagement tool in which both could participate and give their opinions.

Participant Selection:

I selected families as participants that have lived, or experienced different cultures from their native culture. The upper middle urban families that have the luxury of living a greener lifestyle. In families that had children above the ages as 18 years, the children and parents were involved in the engagement (4 families). The families that had kids under 18 years only the parents were involved (3 families). The participants spanned from ones living in Dubai (from India), Glasgow (from America), Ottawa (from Italy), Los Angeles (from India). I thought this would give a richer study as the parents and or children have transitioned or witnessed different cultures and backgrounds, forming a more global outlook yet maintaining a connection with the family history.

Figure 15. Poster for online engagement tool.
Design of the Engagement tool:

I started with floating a poster (figure 15) that explained the project intention. The participants had to think of a meaningful gift that they had received or given. This was the starting point of the conversation. Once the participants were selected, consent forms were sent out.

The long-standing tradition of commodities as gifts are now finding their way into online retailing. The younger generation are coming to value intangible digital objects like text messages, images, music, money, e-vouchers and subscription accounts (Kwon, H. et al, 2017). As this shift occurs how are they experiencing intangibility of the gift? I wanted to explore other themes like purposefulness, sentiments, emotions, uniqueness and process of sourcing that makes meaningful gift. Also, if there were different financial model of gift giving (sacrifice of comfort, effort to collect points) would that make the gift more meaningful.

I also thought of using the WHAT IF. scenario to explore how people may then re-image gifts in the future. The impacts and challenges that the physical and human environments face as a result of anthropogenic-forced global environmental change are, by now, familiar; constituting a real and immediate threat. (Axon, 2017). If we imagined this scenario then what could be the intergenerational gifts that people want to give or leave behind, how would they want to do this with interventions that could create not only meaningful gifts but also lifestyles, behavioural changes and maintain sustainable living which is passed on through generations. (figure 16,17.)
4. NEW FORM
Tangible Hooks

5. NEW FINANCIAL MODELS
Accountability
Sacrifice
Purpose

6. SHAPE
Service / Experience

7. CONTINUITY
Intergeneration
Community
Spirit
Format of the Engagement tool:

Part 1.
Let talk of a meaningful gift you have receive or given someone. (10 mins)

Part 2.

Part 3.

Cards added by the participants:
Analysis & Insights:

Insights:

Values that come from the past:

Most participants found it hard to recollect a meaningful gift they might have given or received. The most cherished gifts were objects that were linked to a memory, a thoughtful expression, story or their relationship with the gift giver. The gifts the participants spoke about were not only limited to an object but also experiences, an investment made for them, subscriptions and small notes of appreciation, gratitude and memories. Objects take them back in time. They act as tangible hooks to memories. (figure 18)

Figure 18. Example of meaningful gifts. a: a coffee table photo album made by a friend, b: coffee machine given by an aunt because of the story behind it, c: tree planted on the birth of their child, d: magnifying glass hand made by his uncle and dad which he keeps in a safe now, e: donation to pets gift, f: fixed deposit on wedding with a clause to be together for 5 years which became a joke.
Analysis:

- The gift she thoughtfully because circumstances what is to do.
- The Atlantic or the guardian – this will help in distributing the shares but I would like to teach teaching them doing it by themselves.
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“It takes me back to my childhood - when I was happier. I have it for 45 years now. It is the symbol of my youth in another county”

“When I moved to Canada my aunt gave me a fishing rod for my birthday. I fell in love with fishing. It was my connection to nature.”

“We went to Rome for her 50th birthday. She wanted to jog there for 50 minutes. We will always remember this - the smell of the day, the sun, the feeling.. everything.”

“I got a time share once, which I thought I wont like... But I ended up loving the gift.”

“Most gifts are still commodities because it is easy.”
Values that matter now in the present:

The insights were surprising and interesting. The younger generation had a very fresh take on what could be a “cool” gift. They were interested in stocks and bonds of a company which their parents trusted. This is something I expected more from the parents - the idea of investing in the child’s future. However, the parents thought an experience would be the best gift they could give their kids. This might be because experiences are the best way to ingrain memories, learn something, gain exposure and also build connections and bonds with each other. The younger generation is more conscious of the sourcing of the gift and they are teaching those ethics and values to their parents. One thing that both the generations had in common were they expected the gift to teach them something new or new ways of doing things.

Common to both

- Sense of Security.
- Maybe uncertainty about the future.
- Financial Responsibility.
- Value of saving.
- Learning through experience.
- New Memories.
- More aware of ethically sourced products.
- Educate the parents about it.
- Transformation.
- New ways of doing things.

Younger Generation

- Sense of Security.
- Maybe uncertainty about the future.
- Financial Responsibility.
- Value of saving.
- Learning through experience.
- New Memories.
- More aware of ethically sourced products.
- Educate the parents about it.
- Transformation.
- New ways of doing things.

Older Generation

- Sense of Security.
- Maybe uncertainty about the future.
- Financial Responsibility.
- Value of saving.
- Learning through experience.
- New Memories.
- More aware of ethically sourced products.
- Educate the parents about it.
- Transformation.
- New ways of doing things.

Figure 20.
Values that are not formed yet but driven by future expectations:

Both the generations are putting a lot of faith in renewable technology and sustainable farming. The parents believe it is going to be imperative for the children to learn to sustain themselves in the future. To help them do this learning from experience still holds strong. The idea of alternate financial models for gifting and sacrifice as a gift was investigated. For the former, participants were happy to explore it, if an alternative was presented to them and they had tangible ways of tracking it. To most gift receivers the idea of sacrificing comforts to get them a gift would hold immense value, however some suggested they would be burdened by it. Both the generations feel they could reduce their consumptions and some sort of motivation (rewards, points, social recognition) would help them make behaviour changes towards this goal. The idea of inter-generational carry forward was appealing to both the generations.

**Younger Generation**
- Learning through experience.
- They feel they can make a difference.
- Sacrifice could be a gift.
- Putting in money would be the easiest option because its there.
- Would do the effort if they knew the significance.
- Sacrifice / effort does not need to be a gift – but they would do it for tangible returns that can be shared.
- Want the leave a legacy and make an impact.

**Common to both**

**Older Generation**
- Learning through experience.
- They feel they can make a difference.
- Sacrifice could be a gift.
- Putting in money would be the easiest option because its there.
- Would do the effort if they knew the significance.
- Sacrifice / effort does not need to be a gift – but they would do it for tangible returns that can be shared.
- Want the leave a legacy and make an impact.

Figure 21.
During the engagement:

I had tried the engagement on 2 friends before trying it on the participants. Thus, I had iterated and included cards which I hadn’t considered. However, the participants took an active role and added new cards. The participants were very honest. The most interesting bits of information came up during the conversations among the participants while they were picking their cards. They were trying to understand each other’s rational, views and emotions behind them. It sparked conversations on the value of money, relationships, age and time.

Reflection on the Online Engagement Tool:

The engagement tool could have gathered more practical insights if it was used to co-create a gift for the young adults. I could have sent the cards beforehand and the engagement could have been just about creating the gift (I did this later as a workshop). However, some level of facilitation was needed in using the cards.

The What If… scenario showed a bleak future. If I had depicted a more optimistic future the insights could have been different. I might have missed the aspect of denial, future discounting, sense of powerlessness in the face of complex challenges like the environmental crisis. Some of the participants had their kids living separately, which created a bias on importance of connection with them.

The participants who have the option to be greener were selected. If it was a different selection the answers could be different. Using the context of gift, I might have reached to the emotional and social self and maybe less of the rational self. This could help in generating deep value and meaning. I gathered that the context of how the gift is presented as a value system, of not a burden or sacrifice, but rather of doing good for the environment and that being transferred as a gift is worth further exploration. There is also an intent / desire – action gap. People might want to move away from gifting commodities, but they still do so because it is easier.
Redefining the How Might Wes:

**Initial HOW MIGHT WE**
redesign the ritual of intergenerational gifting to pass on values, knowledge and giving back to the future generations?

**Insights from online engagement tool:**
Most gifts are still commodities because it is easy

Both the generations want to create:
- New memories
- Learn new ways of doing things
- Leave a legacy and make an impact
- Invest in sustaining themselves for a better future
- The younger generation in conscious and teaching the older generation about the importance of ethically/ sustainably/ locally sourced products.

**HOW MIGHT WE**
redesign the ritual of intergenerational gifting to urban young adults (18-25 years) that gives them a chance to invest / gift a greener future?
Online Co-creation Workshop:

Some of the insights from the engagement sounded good on paper, but could you make it more tangible for people. For example, would someone really appreciate the gift of stocks and bonds or a tree grown in a different country. How would they want to experience a gift which is not tangible, nor an experience, nor gives you instant gratification? The aim was to explore the human thinking process about what constitutes a good gift, the effort and thought put into it, the experience built around the gifting process (giver viewpoint) and use, reveal, experience and reciprocation (receiver viewpoint). Another thing worth exploring was whether a shared participation in the process of gift selection and creation enhanced the gifting ritual in some way. The best way to do this was probably a physical workshop. However due to lock-down this was not possible and I chose to do it as an online co-creation workshop.

Participant Selection:

While I waited for families to get back to me, I tried the workshop on three students (22-25 years) which was a good starting point to gain insights on how youngsters view digital or intangible gifts. My tutor pointed out I was missing the intergenerational element. Thus, I conducted a second workshop with a family (parents and their son - 25 years).
Workshop Framework:

I was looking for ways to co-create a gifting experience. I came across The Gift Giving Project from the Stanford d school (Translated Resources - Stanford d.school, 2020) and thought it was a good fit for what I was trying to achieve. I modified the framework to suit an online workshop and intergenerational gifting process. (figure 24, 25)

Insights:

The receiver of the gift put a high value on sharing an experience with the giver. Maybe this was their way of showing appreciation, gratitude and excitement over the gift – which ever form it took. The longevity or continuation of the sentiment and memory were valued, and people wanted to revisit that feeling or experience – either digitally or via a small object like a bracelet. (figure 26). The workshop confirmed the insight that people were happy to be part of a co-creating experience towards a greener tomorrow even with delayed gratification - like growing a tree or receiving funds for their future.

Reflection on the workshop:

It was difficult to get people to sketch or draw. Whenever this was a barrier, I asked them to use icons and images. The workshop with students worked better when I explained the whole process rather than doing it in parts. This helped me understand the role of a facilitator better for the second workshop. The workshop being online had its limitations to get the older generation involved. The workshop would be more useful if I had identified stakeholders, experience gifting companies, urban gardeners who could be involved in the co-creation of the gift with the customers.

Workshop 1:
IDEA GENERATION WORKSHOP (experience):

Mission: Redesign the gifting experience for your friend. Start by gaining empathy:

1. Interview (5mins)
   - Style - service learning about format
   - likeminded experience: wine, beer tasting
   - first edition book signed by author

2. Probe / Dig Deep (5mins)
   - time to explore his/ her favorite place
   - subscription to explore a trend every year - help in the form

Figure 24. Online co-creation workshop 01.

Workshop 2:
IDEA GENERATION WORKSHOP (experience):

Mission: Redesign the gifting experience for your child. Start by gaining empathy:

1. Interview (5mins)
   - Style - service learning about format
   - likeminded experience: wine, beer tasting
   - first edition book signed by author

2. Probe / Dig Deep (5mins)
   - time to explore his/ her favorite place
   - subscription to explore a trend every year - help in the form

Figure 25. Online co-creation workshop 02.
Reflect & Generate New Solutions:

5. Innovative / radical ways to meet here needs (Shalin)

6. Share your ideas and get feedback from the friend (Shalin)

Iterate based on feedback:

7. New Solutions (Shalin)

Small piece of land - where I can do something - grow what you want - use the space up - in the urban setting 
go to a farm - meet the farmer - help him for sometime 
relax - meet the farmers family - meet the community - share a meal

Surprisingly because // but...
because there is nothing close by and everything takes time and planning and doing something - making food or planning -

6 RADICAL WAYS TO MEET HIS NEEDS.

SHARE THE SOLUTION AND GET FEEDBACK

GIFTING AN EXPERIENCE WHICH ALLOWS YOU TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

HELP OUT WITH - APPLE PICKING, TEA PICKING, COFFEE PLANTATION
LOCAL FOOD - LOCAL EXPERIENCE SERVICE ABOUT LEARNING SOMETHING NEW - BREW BEER - URBAN FARMING - WORKSHOP COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE SIMILAR INTERESTS.

BUILD THE SOLUTION

- meal in a restaurant
- use it myself
- or give it away
- cafe with food from the food grown there
- experience with everyone involved
- continual experience
- give back
- pass it forward
Iterate based on feedback:

7. New Solutions (5 mins)

Figure 26. Online co-creation workshop 01 outcome.
Desk Research:

Inspirations:

Some of the existing projects where I could draw inspiration were:

“The Future Library project is a public artwork where a forest has been planted in Norway, which will supply paper for books to be printed in 100 years time.”

“Send Gifts, Letters and FREE E-letters to you by choosing your recipient and your delivery date. You Gift or Letter is going to be stored in a safe storage facility awaiting delivery according to your preferences.”

“Whatever the occasion, by asking for donations instead of gifts you can share your celebration with people who are living in extreme poverty.”

“Stockpile is the only brokerage where you can give an e-gift or physical gift card redeemable for stock. You don’t need an account to give a gift.”
Evolution - trends - future of gifting:

I tried to do a back-casting to see the trends / signals. There seems to be a trend of gifts going digital. An emphasis on health, well-being, self-monitoring and towards good causes.

Figure 27. Back-casting.
subscriptions as gifts
experience as gifts

What does the future environment feel like?

What are challenges & rules?

What is the state of technology?

What impact will design have on the planet/society?

How does it change our behaviour?

What will be the ripple effect?

possible future gifts?
Talk to Experts:

Hemant Julka  
( Co-founder & COO - VeggiTech )

VeggiTech is an Agro technology start up. The Hydroponics and Grow Lights assisted Hydroponics technologies in the farm are open for investors, students and consumers. I presented my initial concept to get a feedback on the feasibility of the idea. He said the idea of gift and sustainability is strong because of the emotions and values attached. “Micro investment model in sustainability will have a tenfold impact on the universe. I would like my kids to have this head start.”

Elise Van Middelem  
( Biodiversity Builder & Founder - SUGi )

SUGi is global community of rewilders, who grow ultra-dense, biodiverse mini forests of native species only, in urban areas. I spoke to her to understand the challenges in the tree gifting space and the emerging trend. “I started SUGi because I wanted to plant a tree on my birthday and invest in nature. That is why your project struck me. The biggest challenge for me is that people still want stuff.”
Eco matcher is a transparent and innovative ways to do tree planting. I spoke to them to understand how they work in the corporate space and their challenges. Their biggest problem was the gifting experience – the digital way to open a box and experience the surprise of a gift.

Rohinton Unani (Independent Financial Advisor)
I spoke to him to understand about impact and ESG investment. “It’s an extremely niche market and for vegans or environmentally conscious people.” He says there is a rise in people asking to invest in green and sustainable causes close to their values, but he rather have them play it safe.
Concept Directions:

The interviews, engagements and the expert advice gave me a wealth of information to work with. My initial opportunity statement was broad enough for project to still go in several directions. However, I was interested in imagining/building a service concept that I could maybe continue working on after the program if possible. To that end, armed with all the insights and inspirations, I made four rough persona’s and design options and concepts to gauge people’s preferences and reactions and get their feedback. The aim was to see the:

- **Preferred setting for the gift** (local urban farm, rejuvenation of green urban projects, tree planting or reforestation),
- **The preferred gifting model** (subscription, single tree, tress per square meter, groups of tress),
- **Extensions and benefits** (profit sharing, personal involvement, future visits and inheritance).

The concepts were sent in the form of visual concept cards (figure 29,30,31,32) with clearly outlined offerings, to give people a chance to clearly understand the concept and respond to it. At this stage, I wanted people to react to the bigger idea and not necessarily what form it took. I sent this digitally to all the participants to vote on the options and give their feedback on what they would like to alter.

It was clear that people preferred something **local, tangible and quantifiable**. In terms of concepts, people gravitated towards Option 1 the most.
THE FUTURE PRESENT - OPTION 02

1. Choose the produce and the number of trays
   Choose from micro-greens, herbs, mushrooms and green leaves.

2. Buy now
   Pay with any credit card and PayPal. Payment is secure via Future Present.

3. Personalize & Gift
   Write the recipient’s name, a dedication, note or letter on eco-friendly paper with the produce and choose how to deliver it: via collection point, home delivery.

THE FUTURE PRESENT - OPTION 02

RAM - THE GREEN URBANITE:

23 years
Human Rights Grad student
Glasgow

Ram loves his long walks along the river. This is also the fixed time he also catches up with his parents over the phone. He appreciates gifts that are pre-ordered items. If something new is given to her doesn’t use it because of the sentiment with the object and it eventually becomes unusable. He loves shopping.

“My most memorable gift was a yoga subscription that was gifted to me. It forced me to something new and I loved it.”

His ideal gift would be if someone adopted an animal for him, grew a tree or gave him a curated podcast or song list. These are things he feels will remain in his heart forever. However he would prefer a book over an e-book as a gift.

OPTION 02

GIFT:
Tend the watering and rejuvenation of green urban projects on the platform as per the city/project of your choice.

MODEL:
- Plant once - £ (you will receive a monthly report)
- Plant by square meter - ££ (you will receive a personalized GeoTag as well as a monthly report)
- Plant Monthly - ££££ (you will support regular maintenance of your urban forest - participation in workshops, volunteering and special excursions in your forest)

EXTENSIONS:
- If you spot a vacant lot, abandoned sites, landfills, parks. Parking lots that you think can be adapted to have more plants and trees you can reach out and request a forest. The local re-forester will get in touch and help you.

FUTURE BENEFITS:
Become a part of the community of re-foresters, volunteering, workshops and special excursions. Recognition on LinkedIn and Instagram.

MAINTENANCE:
By the local re-foresters

1. Choose the produce and the number of trays
   Choose from micro-greens, herbs, mushrooms and green leaves.

2. Buy now
   Pay with any credit card and PayPal. Payment is secure via Future Present

3. Personalize & Gift
   Write the recipient’s name, a dedication, note or letter and choose how to deliver it: via email, text, message or by printing an eco-friendly card.
Feedback & Iterate:

Option 1:

“We liked the **recurring component** and you can actually see the vegetables you have invested in.”

“It quantifiable and really simple.”

“I feel like I have grown my own produce and I am receiving something.”

“I like it because it is feasible, locally grown and sustainable.”

Option 2:

“I want to gift something that’s **closer, not something that is far away.**”

Option 3:

“I like the idea of dedicating tress to family and friends and they can be passed down – I would probably pick a mango tree.”

Option 4:

“I would do more good on a larger scale, and the benefits are so many – carbon points, grove of trees dedicated to family and pass it to the **next in kin!**”

---

**Figure 31. Option Concept 03.**
**THE FUTURE PRESENT - OPTION 04**

**LIZ - THE EXPERIENTIAL GARDENER:**

Liz, aged 34, is an Architecture Grad student. She enjoys traveling, cooking, and spending time with her family. In her free time, she likes to plant flowers and vegetables in her garden. Liz is a passionate environmentalist and has been actively involved in various community projects that promote sustainability. She believes in the power of nature to heal and rejuvenate.

**OPTION 04**

**GIFT:**

Trees: Helps reforest projects all over the world. Pick the location and they will grow a native tree needed in the area.

**MODEL:**

$250.00 - Depending on the number of trees you decide to plant and later gift them.

**EXTENSIONS:**

GeoTag of the tree location - forest.

Monthly updates of the growth from seed to sapling, plant, and mature tree.

Online registry and tracking of your trees.

Option to collect carbon credits after 10 years.

**FUTURE BENEFITS:**

Option to go visit the forest.

Option to create a grove of trees dedicated to friends and family.

Transfer of trees to next of kin.

Freeze seeds indigenous to your current location for you to plant in your new location.

**MAINTENANCE:**

By the foresters.

**3. Personalize & Gift**

Write the recipients name, a dedication, note or letter and choose how to deliver it: via email, text, message or by printing an eco-friendly card.

---

**1. Choose the tree / pair / cluster / grove of trees**

Choose from different species, countries, local uses and CO2 absorption.

**2. Buy now**

Pay with any credit card and PayPal or via your reduced consumption points. Payment is secure via Future Present.

---

Figure 32. Option Concept 04.
Design Development:

THE FUTURE PRESENT:

The initial feedback on the concept ideas, were very helpful in concept selection and tweaking. Coupled with my initial motivations I envision the project taking shape of an online web/App.-based platform/service which allows parents make micro investments on behalf or for their children towards sustainable projects and package it as a gift. The initial starting point for the service is to collaborate with urban farming projects (e.g. VeggieTech). As the platform develops, it can tie up with other sustainable initiatives as part of its service. Given the breadth of the service and number of touch-points, I wanted to focus on a few key scenarios for the purpose of this project.

The main touch points I then focused on were:

Gift Giver:

- **Introducing them to The Future Present** via a website (figure 35): explaining the service, investment options, the returns, minimum investment, the period, terms and conditions.

- **The carbon credits the giver receives** (figure 36a): how these can be used now and, in the future, (paying bills, buying vegetables, sell-able to companies, carbon offsetting during flights), transferable within family members and intergenerational transfer.

Gift receiver:

- **The experience of digitally opening a gift** (figure 36b): the digital element of surprise by swiping various screens to get the gift – with the **fund certificate and unique code**.

Based on talking to experts, my tutor feedback on the workshop, the element of **surprise is an important part of gifting**. It gives delight to the receiver and it is worth exploring as a touch point (Kwon, H. et al, 2017).

- **Shared experience of visiting the farm** – to physically see the part of the farm you have leased out.

Thought this is not mandatory but giving people a chance to share an experience is gives them a chance to spend time and build memories. They can cherish this in the form of a visit to the urban farm you are supporting.
• **Food transparency** – tracking of the harvest, the farm, the growth cycles, effort into the production, usage of crop supplements, crop protection added and the nutrients. (figure 36c, 36d).

Apart from transparently regarding their investment, this is a way to keep the users engaged in a service at regular intervals. Moreover, seeing their plants grow give people joy.

• **Social media recognition** (figure 36e) – green tree on Instagram for efforts towards environmentally conscious behaviour.

• **Using the seed locket and pay it forward** – the seed locket is collectable at the farm when you visit it. It is completely organic and biodegradable. You can wear at as jewellery till you decide to grow it. For the first couple of weeks the seed grows with you and you can wear it as a live – growing jewellery.

Instead of packaging and transporting the seed locket it is made and collected in the farm. It gives the user something tangible which can be grown, worn, nourished and eventually given away or passed forward to a loved one in a sustainable manner. The act of giving away brings a feeling of ecstasy along with it.
Gift Giver - Jay Jas (48 years)

Goals: “I know Adi would appreciate cash for her birthday. But that is so just so impersonal and she will just spend it.”

Expectation: Uncomplicated, trustworthy purchase of green investment which has guaranteed returns and is transparent.

**Journey Map:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGES</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Search / Exploration</th>
<th>Decision Making</th>
<th>Purchase + Benefits</th>
<th>Personalize &amp; Gift / Delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>Website / App.</td>
<td>Option 1: Yearly Subscription for weekly farm produce.</td>
<td>Payment with credit/debit card/bank transfer.</td>
<td>Write the recipients name, dedication, letter via email, text or message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digital promotion</td>
<td>What is the service</td>
<td>Option 2: Yearly investment with 6% return at end of term.</td>
<td>GeoTag &amp; tracking of farm plot. Option to visit the farm.</td>
<td>Option to add the bank account number for the payout at end of term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tie up with Plant Nursery, Environmental Cause, Impact Investors</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Option 3: Yearly investment with 3% return at end of term with farm to table restaurant experience.</td>
<td>Digital carbon card - individual carbon credits.</td>
<td>Gets notification when gift is received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directly at the Urban Farm</td>
<td>Online Chat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly updates on plant life cycle/harvest cycle.</td>
<td>Receives Digital carbon card with individual carbon credits - updated with every purchase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FAQs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly report on company updates/growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 33. User journey map.
Gift Receiver - Adi Jas (20 years)

Goals: “I cant wait to see what Dad gets me this year. He gives great gifts and takes care to pick them out.”

Expectation: Straight forward way to claim the gift, enjoy and show it to her friends.

Receiving the Gift
- Receives the personalized gift.
- Digital fund certificate with unique code via postal service.(2,3)
- GeoTag & tracking of farm plot.
- Farm produce by home delivery. (1)
- Pass it forward Zero Waste Seed Locket collected at Urban Farm.

Exploration of the Gift
- Visits the website/downloads the App.
- Enters her unique code to discover the gift further.
- Virtually visits her farm plot.
- Invitation to physically visit the farm / meet the urban farmers.
- Weekly updates on plant life cycle/harvest cycle.
- Carbon absorption by her crops.

Using the Gift
- Any time access via unique code.
- Notification on harvest cycles/harvest delivery.
- Food transparency - Caloric value. - Crop protection. - Effort into the production. - Updates from the urban farmer.
- End of year options to: - Renew subscription. - Renew the investment. - Meal at the farm to table restaurant.

Reflection / Reciprocating / Pass it forward
- Personalized thank you note to the giver via email, text or message.
- Pass it forward Zero Waste Seed Locket to family for friend or use it to grow your own plant.
- Recognition on social media.
- Option to share carbon credits with receiver.

Trouble Shooting / Customer Service
- Customer Service.
- Chat Bot.
- FAQs.
- Green Investors/Urban Farming Community.
- Online complaint.

Personalize & Gift / Delivery
- Write the recipients name, dedication, letter via email, text or message.
- Option to add the bank account number for the payout at end of term.
- Gets notification when gift is received.
- Receives Digital carbon card with individual carbon credits - updated with every purchase.
- Monthly report on company updates/ growth.
Storyboard:

To give the audience a better sense of how the service works, I designed a storyboard that explains how a gift giver and receiver would go about using the service, what touch-points would they need to interact with, and how they could keep being engaged in the service.

The scenarios covered include:

- Exploring the service through its online touch-point.
- Opening a digital gift.
- Visiting the farm to be able to see your investment/gift.
- Feeling vested in the service by tracking various aspects of plant growth and its benefits.
- Using carbon credits.
- The magic of the seed locket
ON THE DAY OF ADI’S BIRTHDAY

(1) WHAT DO YOU GET KIDS THESE DAYS? THEY PRACTICALLY HAVE EVERYTHING THEY NEED...

Let me see what is there online.

JAY GOOGLES “MEANINGFUL GIFTS” AND DISCOVERS THE FUTURE PRESENT....

HE THINKS IT MIGHT MAKE A INTERESTING GIFT. HE DECIDES TO MAKE AN INVESTMENT FOR ADI...

(2) AN EMAIL NOTIFICATION

OPENING THE GIFTING.....

Figure 34. Storyboard.
I hope you enjoyed your visit. Do collect the you seed locket.

I am glad. Sure. Saturday?

SATURDAY

Let me check on my harvest.

Adi's Harvest
Spinach - A7-0925, Sep 2025

Tomato - A7-0925, Oct 2025

Effort put into the production during the season

Usual usage of crop supplements

Welcome to FarmTech. This is your leased space & I look after your part of the smart farm. You can track you plant growth and harvest. Our harvest cycle are 3X. Every 25 days you will get a harvest notification. 95% reduced water usage and fertilizers. You can track that too. In 100sqm we can produce ads much as 1acre farm, thus maximum ROI. Lets see rest of the farm.

An outdoor area too? Yes, lets go.

FEW WEEKS LATER

Hey, Dad. I loved the gift!!! Should we visit the farm together?

I am glad. Sure. Saturday?

SOON

Welcome to FarmTech. This is your leased space & I look after your part of the smart farm. You can track you plant growth and harvest. Our harvest cycle are 3X. Every 25 days you will get a harvest notification. 95% reduced water usage and fertilizers. You can track that too. In 100sqm we can produce ads much as 1 acre farm, thus maximum ROI. Lets see rest of the farm.

An outdoor area too? Yes, lets go.

Figure 34. Storyboard.
MEANWHILE....

Let me use my carbon credits to pay the electricity bill and get some vegetables.

Jay's Carbon Credits

A7-0925

$150

Tuesday 15th Jan

Home

Payments

Help

AND THE GIFTING CONTINUES....

FEW MONTHS LATER.....

ADI USES THE SEED LOCKET TO GROW A PLANT AND EVENTUALLY GIFTS IT TO HER LITTLE SISTER....

ZERO WASTE SEED LOCKET INSTRUCTIONS:
The seed locket is made of minerals with seed embedded in it. When you decide to grow the plant, just add 2 drops of water each day for 2 week till it starts to germinate. Wear it as a live jewellery till then. After that pant it in a pot with soil and gift the plant to a loved one.

WEEK 1 - TRANSFER INTO A POT - GIFT IT TO A LOVED ONE....

AND THE GIFTING CONTINUES.....
Figure 35. Stakeholder map.
Touch-points:

- Website

Figure 35a. Website - Landing page.

Figure 35b. Website - How it works.

Figure 35. Touch point - Website.
Figure 35b. Website - How it works.

Figure 35c. Website - Why they will love it.
Figure 36a. App - Gift Giver - using the carbon credits.

Figure 36b. App - Gift Receiver - Digital experience of opening the gift (surprise).

Figure 36. Touch point - App.
Figure 36c. App - Gift Receiver - Food Transparency.

Figure 36d. App - Gift Receiver - Geo Tag.

Figure 36e. App - Gift Receiver - Social Recognition.
Future Work:

A project of this scope involves several phases and stakeholders. As the stakeholder map (figure 35) suggests, true realization of the project would involve talking to and interfacing with multiple stakeholders, including urban farms, payment gateways, financial advisors etc. An immediate next step would be to prototype a few touch-points and get initial reactions on the features and the design of the touch points, especially the digital gift opening (unboxing), the seed lockets and the tracking interface. This will help in validating and iterating touch points that make this service unique.

I shared my project with people who were not initial participants. The question on the return of investment came up and how it was guaranteed. For now, these figures are speculative and further work will be needed to project realistic figures. This would involve speaking to specific stakeholders and develop a business canvas / value proposition that works for all the stakeholders involved. A final mile goal would be to develop a service blueprint considering the customer facing touch points as well as the back-end activities.

When I discussed the idea with Hemant Jhulka from VeggiTech (urban farming) he saw potential in the idea. A possible next step could be to collaborate with them to make this a viable gifting option. They have opened their farm to investors on lease with fixed returns and the next step could be opening it up to individuals.

Feedback:

“It would be a good gifting option as there are benefits for the gift giver and receiver, while having environmental benefits.”

“I think I would have contributed to the growth of the produce while tracking it the whole time.”

“If the returns are more than what I my investments give me now, I will sign up.”

“I like idea of intergeneration gifting and something in there for the gift giver.”
Words like “happiness”, “joy”, “ecstasy”, “love”, “experience”, “enchantment”, “connection”, “memory”, “taken me back”, constantly came up throughout design process. These are words people associate with rituals / Rituals in life. These intangible feelings are made tangible in rituals through gestures, repetition, artefacts and the sequestered places where they are performed. Which got me to thinking that service design uses human centric design method to make the intangible into the tangible through sequenced actions, touch-points, objects and prompts. What if services like rituals could create the extraordinary out of the ordinary, add value to people lives, create meaningful experiences and serve an extended purpose though out a customer’s life. This is partly what motivate me towards building a gifting service platform for the future.

Working on a project without knowing the outcome is challenging. Through this year we have be taught to be comfortable with the unknown and ambiguity. I looked as the whole process as getting lost and asking for directions. Doing this sometimes leads you to problem areas which are not obvious or not problems yet. However, my biggest learning was - to wait and expect for certainty before acting, is a bigger risk than to discover by acting.

Overall Reflection:
References:


INNOVATION
SCHOOL
THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ART