



ecology of practices in profession:

principles and methods of friendship projects

Marc Schuran, Master Thesis

di:'angewandte
registration nr.: 11721815

ART
SCIENCE
S 066776

Supervisor:
Univ.Prof. Virgil Widrich
Thanks to Bernd Kräftner

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1. The motivation behind this work

My name is Marc Schuran. I completed my apprenticeship in automotive technology and electrical engineering before starting my studies in design. I was able to gather a wide variety of experience in the field of practices. By self-inducing problems, I often had to undertake excursions into the most diverse areas of practice and was able to acquire a broad knowledge about them over the years. My superficial knowledge in these fields is of no particular importance here. Moreover, the contacts and the network in which I found myself provided interesting insights into personal aspects, such as dealing with friendship projects, or generally, personal opinions about one's own work and its placement in an economic context. The term friendship project will be described more closely in chapter "two ". It was very important to me to present my experience of the people themselves as well as their own descriptions, in this partly very personal work.

This work leaves the familiar environment of so-called practices and illuminates the complex social structures that influence the execution and the resulting acting program. In this case, an action program describes all the processes involved, from the idea through to the actual implementation. This will be described more accurately later in this work. It doesn't matter whether the actor is confronted with an idea, or wants to solve a certain problem on his own. In this work, the idea itself is not paid attention to. It is more important to analyze the project with the hidden patterns that arise through the idea. The creator plays a crucial role in this analysis since his skills, knowledge and experience serve as a vehicle for launching such a project. It doesn't matter which practice is used. The only prerequisite for this work is that the actor's practice is his profession and that it plays an essential role in his life.

1.1 Definition of practices

As Margarete Vöhringer describes, the interest in the so-called "practices" goes on for three decades and is reflected in diverse disciplines. Since the practical turn in science research in the early 1980s, science is no longer understood as a theory, but above all as a practice consisting of numerous practices—such as observing, asking, noting, writing, designing, repeating, archiving, measuring, modeling, Collecting, rejecting, voting, adjusting, etc. The practices were understood as events underlying both human thoughts and knowledge creation. Practices have become cognitive tools: they are no longer merely interpreted, but function as tools that make epistemic, cultural or anthropological associations of meaning discernible in the first place. The study of techniques or cultural techniques is therefore not about analyzing practices as tools for knowledge generation. Rather, it is about forms of knowledge that become possible and determinable through practices as well as realities that are primarily to be understood in the form of practices. (see Vöhringer 2013, 45–49)

However, we won't examine how these practices are actually applied, but rather find the passion for a certain dynamic relation between the ecological and economic norms of the profession. Which outbreaks do the participating actors allow themselves out of these regulated patterns and which effects do these excursions have? I try to present the different interviewee approaches to a so-called friendship project. Such a project invalidates the usual processes, especially at the financial level. An expert is visited by friends, acquaintances or family members who need support for the realization of a project idea. In this context, which self-imposed protocols do the actors follow, or does the friendship project provide a special field, for a deeper engagement with passion, precisely because of the weakening of such patterns?

1.2 The methods used

This study examined nine actors who perform a wide variety of practices as a profession. At the beginning of this project, I tried to interview people who had no personal connection to me, to generate a more neutral view of the topic. However, I quickly realized the distance I was met with and decided that I would not find what I was looking for by going in this direction. Only through a personal relationship was I able to dig deeper into more interesting levels. Later, I found out there was enough trust when I contacted them via a personal recommendation.

All participants were asked the same questions. I soon realized that it was relatively pointless to face such a not clearly defined subject with a static questionnaire. This is why I tried to engage with people with a certain dynamic freedom. An important method, apart from conducting an interview, was observing. I visited the people specifically in their workplaces, and often tried to arrive early to appointments, so that I could catch them in the active creative process. Again, a certain amount of trust was necessary, so that I could participate in these processes as a spectator. Visiting the workplace also allowed me to study current projects or already finished projects. The combination of interview and observation made broader networks visible, which I subsequently wrote down and summarized to this work as a guideline through the ecology of practices.

The practices the interviewees are committed to are listed below. They have many more practices than these and have gained considerable experience in a number of areas. Nevertheless, only their main job/profession is presented here, in order to emphasize the diversity of the project.

tile production
metalworking
speaker manufacturing
restauration
design
illustration
mold making
prototype construction
woodworking

“I definitely have to be able to stand behind my objects. I want the objects to contain more information than just form and function. It should be things that create dialogues.”

woodworking

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2. The attempt to define an unknown term

The Friendship Project is a term created by the prototype designer, which describes the circumstances of such projects best, in my opinion. Each one of my interview partners understood this term, although it is not common. It could also be called acquaintance project, family project, sympathy project or similar. The term friendship project is derived from the so-called “friendship-price”. A friendship-price usually goes hand in hand with a price reduction or other financial support from the person who wants to claim it. However, here again economical standpoints are taken, which means that the friendship-price in this concept is not discussed here.

The Friendship Project is a special form of service, a sort of a gift, or present and it has its own unique social rules to deal with. These rules are blurred and soaked with special cases that it seems almost impossible to work out a clear pattern. In this work I try to illuminate this usually invisible system.

2.1 Economics of the friendship project

The greatest difficulty is dealing with the term friendship project. To avoid discussions with this terminology, I would like to clarify immediately that this term applies only to the special case that is described here. The name can lead to misunderstandings, as it could create non-friendly results as well. Let's agree, that therefore, the friendship project is free from classical economic thinking in the form of money. This alone eliminates the term Friendship-price. It does not matter, whether they are friends, acquaintances, family, or simply people who bring up the nature of a friendship project.

The point in which all interview partners agree is the determination of the price. The clear statement in this regard is that one does not carry out friendship projects for money. This does not mean that there won't be material goods traded in exchange. There are other constructs with special values for exchange available. These are discussed in more detail in chapter "eight". Which trading transaction is used depends a lot on the relationship between the two project partners.

Every time I had a bad feeling with a project, there were usually problems. I think it's worth risking things, I try to reject everything that does not make me feel good."

prototype construction

2.2 Categorization of the emotions

Generally, it may be helpful, to keep three different categories in mind while thinking of friendship projects. They were developed by the illustrator and coincide with the opinions of other participants. The progress of a friendship project is represented with an emotional level.

The ideal level:

A successful and sustainable cooperation is created. Both sides benefit from the project in a relatively balanced way. These are projects that sometimes generate partners, friends or customers for a lifelong relationship.

The benefit Level:

A benefit is achieved, even if each of the project members tries to generate it just for themselves. The project does not necessarily have to take a negative course, but contradiction or correction are perceived as being disharmonious, rather than being a way in which to find a common solution.

The negative Level:

The moment when both sides realize that this project exceeds a normal friendly favor. A miscalculation by both or just one side. Then most parts of the project can only be completed with great sacrifice on the part of one of the two parties. Positive aspects are limited to a minimum. Under certain circumstances it can lead to a termination of the project. In addition, a negative impact on the social field can be expected.

However, before moving on to a more detailed analysis of these phenomena, let's first devote ourselves to the passion for the practice, in chapter "three".

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3. The space for the creative passion in the profession

Richard Sennett establishes the importance of the physical practices, since there is a different transportation of sense, then only through the eye. Through the coordination during performing a craft, the hand and the eye are able to develop a heightened form of sensitivity. Together they build an “extended rhythm”, which helps the craftsman to develop special skills. To reach this state, a practice has to be performed over and over. For Sennett, these repetitive works are not boring for the expert, rather the craftsman is aware of this “extended rhythm”. (see Sennett 2008, 152 – 177)

All my interviewees finance their existence through their chosen practice. I do not want to go deeper into the passions and motivations for their decision, but rather to uncover how much space is left to live out these practices. The romantic idea of being independent often looks very different in reality. Creative processes can be strangled in bureaucratic systems, difficult customers and monotony. Which solutions have the actors found in order to generate enough time for economic “nonsense”? The significance of the term “nonsense” is described in chapter “five”. Some of them were able to design their careers in such a way that unconditional, and therefore free practice is part of their everyday work. Others, meanwhile, were struggling to “lose themselves” in the practices. This means that any sense of time is lost. One forgets to eat or go to bed—the hand that practices is led by itself. This “losing oneself in the processes” is of tremendous importance for many of my interviewees.

During my research it gradually emerged that the practice, one makes one’s living with, does not necessarily have to be a carrier medium for “losing oneself in the processes”. It might even pull in a completely opposite direction if, for example, one is more interested in how things function. The Metal Worker sees an object that has an interesting shape or a refined solution to a certain detail. He then tries to formulate in theory how this problem was solved and he feels the need to create this result himself. In this case the practice is seen solely as a purpose to achieve the desired result. Sometimes the Metal Worker even leaves the material which he normally works with. Once the result has been achieved, he loses interest in performing this practice quite fast. Here, the main focus is clearly on learning and understanding this practice and not on applying it. The Metal Worker who has this point of view, clearly acts against the portrayals of Sennett. He might not feel a lot of motivation to do repetitive work, but at least he enjoys working with metal.

3.1 Conscious and unconscious process optimization

One aspect gets lost in the way of processing things like the metal worker does: the so-called process optimization. There are two different approaches to this area. Each generates a different fulfillment of the need; both considerations are concerned with the carrying out of an already familiar and well-known practice, but pursue completely different approaches. The first one is also the more deliberate act and is described as a common method by the designer and the prototype constructor.

One looks at a work process from a distance and tries to figure out how to make it more efficient, by using the tools one already has. This can be done by simply repositioning the toolbox, creating a template for a workpiece, or optimizing the code for a CNC machine. These are interventions that support and accelerate the practice to be carried out, with the result that in further projects a better price can be achieved through a simpler production process.

The second approach is more difficult to achieve. The work is repeated so often until “one loses oneself in the processes” of the practice. One’s own insistence on quality in the work is the main drive here. The learned practice is repeated until one intellectually leaves the routine and as described above, one’s hand is led by itself. Suddenly, a subconscious grasp, another handling, or something similar happens, unexpectedly opening a new, more efficient way of working. This repetitive performing of things, until the process has become so optimized that it can be performed with a precision and speed that seems incomparable, is described by experts of a craft. This is a process that is mostly used by the interviewees that are specialized in working with a particular material.

3.2 The experts of superficial knowledge

What, apart from the creating aspect, changes in life when understanding this practice? First of all, one's own view becomes conscious. One develops a feeling for functioning. However, it is not mandatory to be an expert in each of these areas. One can also achieve the same fulfillment with superficial knowledge, even if this seems less efficient at first. The "experts of their craft" also confirm another level of satisfaction when they achieve something outside of their familiar territory. Friendship projects can have enormous potential for evolution, when the profession does not allow enough "alternative" practice. It may even be considered an enrichment not to commit to a particular field of activity. Nevertheless, one should have collected certain empirical values, because the approach to the unknown changes here through the already trained eye and feeling. One loses the fear of starting things. It can be a stimulating experience not to know everything, but to start from zero with alternative thoughts. Of course, in this way it will be very difficult to achieve a particular depth or perfection. But often it's not about welding, it's about thinking which things you weld together.

"Losing oneself in a practice is a tedious process. If I manage to do that, I am an artist and not a service provider. This process generates something individual. This individual is something sacred. Only myself is capable of creating it."

illustrator

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4. The gap between non-professional and professional

Now that we have examined the passion for the practice more closely, we will concentrate on the realization of a project. The main reason is mostly the practitioner's professional experience in a particular area. This area is often considered the main motivation for the non-professional to approach the expert with a certain problem. This principle can be applied to customers in the classical sense, but also to family, acquaintances or friends. This interaction is already the first milestone on the way to a possible implementation of a project, but it is also the most difficult part for both sides.

On the one hand, the non-professional's clueless demeanor can lead to immediate disinterest on the part of the expert, making further collaboration highly unlikely. In this case, it is an advantage if the person already knows the professional, as it is much more likely that they will be listened to. On the other hand, it can provoke the complete opposite effect, and become a kind of saving act, in that the expert recognizes the seeking person's need. Certain relations can be found in the difficult initial act of giving, or the gift. It already starts with the "listening to the project", that already is a time expenditure which the non-professional party claims. This will be explained more precisely in chapter "eight".

We don't need a negative view of the imbalance between the non-professional and the creator. Friends don't always just seek the expert for a cheaper price for a service. Above all, they are looking for a basis for trust. When someone explains his idea to a friend, the conversation is already at a different level of trust than it is with someone unknown. This can be seen as a positive appreciation of the expert. This appreciation is an essential motivation for all practicing persons and will be described more closely in chapter "six".

Occasionally the expert's own drive is not sufficient to start a project and only if an outsider creates an incentive may it come to be realized. He may be encouraged to engage in new techniques, moving into the unknown. As already described, the stimulus of the new techniques can also play an essential role.

"Actually, I would just like to lose myself in practice and eliminate all economic aspects."

metalworker

4.1 Search for individual solutions

A non-professional partner can be useful on a completely different level: his amateur views sometimes allow far more complex projects to emerge than if the expert had seen the implementation problem right from the beginning. The non-professional sees only the final idea in front of him and outsources the technical implementation to the desired experts. This is essential for some experts as they lack the possibility to leave the feasible norm because of their own technical and analytical thinking (as the tile producer, the metalworker and the prototype constructor agree). "Thinking outside the box" is made possible by non-professional's seemingly insolvable problem.

This search for solutions is described by the interviewees as being the main driving force behind such projects. It is all about solving individual problems. The creative aspect of "losing oneself in the processes" might be sometimes only part of the journey to find solutions. It doesn't matter which practice will be used. If your own area of expertise is not sufficient, improvisation will take place. All possibilities are considered, all known aids are used. It does not matter if it is by software, machine or physical implementation—achieving the solution is the driving force.

All interview partners confirm that the search for solutions can take place everywhere. At work, in everyday life, at home or on the road. It is about creating special and individual solutions for specific areas. For the practitioner, "leaving the norm" is the fulfilling part. However, he can achieve this "leaving the norm" with or without his familiar practices. Here friends or customers can be very enriching for the actor. By expressing an individual wish, they can satisfy the problem-solving urge of the expert. They also have a happier relationship to the final output, which leads to a more satisfying feeling for the creator when he works on the project. The post-production link will be discussed later in chapter "nine".

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5. Project blindness of a single individuum

A special case of solving someone's problem could be by providing workspace. Many experts own a workshop with special equipment, so they often become a focal point for subtenants. With the result that these spaces become localities of very specific overlapping practices. This collective working is treated by the experts as a community exchange. Everyone learns from each other and is confronted with foreign problems. Through the collective exchange, it is easier to find solutions for someone else's problems. The "project blindness" that a single individual might have is more likely to be solved by outsiders. In such collective workspaces, it is likely to find uncommon solutions. Experts often wander through the workshops, looking at the work of the other members and try to involve themselves in different processes in order to satisfy their own thirst for finding individual solutions.

This attitude can lead to common rituals, which can help such workshops to create new independent identities. Working together is a value in itself, which gives each individual the feeling of commonality. These meetings are often described as being sacred. During such connective events, the group often achieves a feeling of synergy, or being greater than the sum of its parts, thus creating a convergence as a unit. This sacred state is the basis for the described friendship projects. Such events frequently lead to much more than just a project: it is a start for building a common existence. Eight of my interview partners work in a collective and have a company together and two use collective workspaces. Only the Illustrator works alone at home in front of the screen. She emphasized the personal importance of friendship projects, as these are the only collaborative projects for her.

The two authors Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Dorrance Kelly write about the “sacred” today. They describe a sacred moment, when someone feels blown away by the intensity of an event. The description is used for a sports event, but can be applied for every phenomenon where something marvelous or otherworldly happens. It does not matter if is the person achieving this special moment, or if it is the crowd that participates. This “sacred” moment carries the people along like a powerful wave and all people simultaneously feel that something extraordinary has happened. All of them are affected by this situation. A moment that cannot be regenerated, it just happens and then fades away. (see Dreyfus 2011, 10)

5.1 Running a business together involves rules for a common existence

The difference between a friendship project and the building of a common existence lies in thinking through to the end. There is little room for uncertainty here. Often, these cooperation's are condensed versions of the philosophical approaches of both the creative cooperation partners. It is about „pioneering your own destiny” in conjunction with the common values shared by those involved.

„Pioneering your own destiny” can lead to various forms of friendly work, sometimes to the extent that the actual practice moves far into the background. It could be, that a completely foreign practice is suddenly considered worth performing, if the counterpart is the main reason why one would want to do it. One often hears that seemingly emotionless work receives an enormously high status solely through the presence of a valued partner.

It can even go so far as that one reaches the desired goal only through solidarity. However, thinking like this presupposes an enormous awareness of one's own work, as well as the realization that neither the self-created, nor the creativity of the partner achieves the same quality and significance, as in the collective. The connectivity of practices, the passion of techniques, or other aspects, can merge into a symbiosis that fits for both parties. A condition that is difficult to achieve on its own. By creating things only for yourself, you don't have the enrichment of sharing these creative processes with the world.

It seems that a clear definition of boundaries for each party's field of activity is a basic rule for a functional collective work. Both parties deal with different areas and both try to lead together through the company's existence. Decisions are made alternately. You are

living in the friendship project, in the business, in the common existence. From the beginning, everyone should define their own fields of activity. It is advisable to write this down right from the beginning. Of course, such limits are sometimes exceeded, but it is essential that you return to its prescribed range. Even if you think you can do something better or different, it will be easier for both parties to learn to turn things over to their partner. Even if they do not intend to live in the friendship project, depending on the size of the project, the importance of staking the area increases. Especially when it involves financial matters.

5.2 Take your time for a little bit of playful chaos

Richard Sennett writes about his “work and play” thoughts. For him there are two types of play. In the first type, the rules are clearly set at the beginning, and the second type with an open space for playing. He describes the second play, like a child playing around with a material object. Testing its strength and limits, experimenting with its senses. For Sennett both types of play are important, but only the second type offers enough freedom for individual solutions. He compares the craft to the child playing around with an object and claims that craftwork is essentially the ability to do good work, and with that something we are all capable of. (see Sennett 2008, 269 – 277)

Such collective scenarios affect professional life at least as much as private life. Once again, the friendship project can play a special role, if one's own profession does not allow sufficient independent work. If there is not enough space for the need for the individual search for a solution, the more important breaking out through a friendship project might be.

The more similarities the work has to the hobby, the less important the friendship project will be. If the designer manages to fulfill all his needs while working, he would never actively search for a friendship project. But what happens when one's own practice takes a back seat as previously described? The work then suddenly shifts from practicing to a purely conceptual level—a problem which was described by the tile manufacturer and the woodworker.

If you live in a friendship project, with clearly defined boundaries and assigned areas of activity, how much room is left for “non-sense”? In other words, how much order does it take to create

some time for “playful chaos”? In this case “playful chaos” or “nonsense” is meant to be a practice with an open result. Where the “inconclusive” requires its own definition since it is not an inconclusive work at all. One just does not know which result might be achieved in the end.

This lack of results has a lot to do with the passion behind the practices, but will be presented now in a different context. It’s about breaking out of the known boundaries and defined systems. It’s about taking the time to create “nonsense”. It might seem that there is not enough time for this, but one should definitely learn to take time for “playful chaos”.

“Special upcoming events” similar to the friendship project can give the impulse to take time for “nonsense”. A popular example is the homemade birthday present or Christmas gift. An element, being so simple can cause the creator to “lose himself in a process” which is common, or completely foreign to him. The factor of time plays a very crucial role as it can create pressure that might have an incredible effect on the practitioner. At the same time the pressure of the financial commitment to a gift is eliminated.

In general, but especially in friendship projects, it is advisable to set certain dates and or time windows since in most cases the archaic law of “who shouts the loudest, is heard the most” is used. All interviewees agreed on this fact. There is nothing wrong with this since such projects usually have a more organic approach to the subject of time. Time pressure can sometimes even be considered desirable. This has two reasons. On one hand, without time pressure one can potentially lose oneself in the creative processes, which leads to no result. This is closely related to the “honest” projects, described later in chapter “six”. On the other hand, it may be that the “louder” projects are preferred until the “quiet” project has completely dissolved.

“The job is a gray area, it’s all one. Working on Sundays or whenever, it cannot be packaged into a particular pattern. There are a lot of problems before there are only more solutions at the end. Do not improve the world, but improve your own life”

speaker manufacturer

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6. The paying customer: Freedom within imposed limits

One sees how many considerations and problems such a friendship project can bring. What do the creators expect from it? Which rules and expectations are applied? When a paying customer comes into play, the personal preferences of all interview partners are adjusted.

The emotional charge of the object depends very much on the attitude of the customer to it. If, for example, the customer has a very strict idea about a certain result, then this “limits” the creator’s work, for sure. You can think of it as the first play from Richard Sennett’s description in chapter “five”.

This “limit” does not necessarily have to be interpreted negatively. Initially there is no scope for disappointment on either side as the result is already planned to a certain extent. Thus the “unplanned” cannot really spread. The “unplanned” is very much linked with the already described “losing oneself in the processes”, and usually finds little room to move in the professional field. This “limit” can also become a welcome act between actor and customer. The fact is that restriction is equivalent to a guided direction from a labyrinth of possibilities. Of course, it requires a special attitude of the creator in this approach.

6.1 “Losing in the strawberry”

Excerpt of a description of the illustrator:

The customer wants to make a label for his strawberry yogurt. The very clear specification is understandable: strawberries should be found on the packaging of the yogurt. The actor has different possibilities to approach this work: she can refuse it, because she does not care about the job for whatever reason, or she can try to go in the proposed direction. The actor will thus put her energy into the strawberry and present it as best as she can, or in the form she estimates as appropriate. She can hide all other circumstances and try to get lost in the practice of fruiting and thus find her personal fulfillment within the limits set. However, it may also be that the expert knows exactly how the customer works emotionally and uses that knowledge to make the strawberry look the way the expert thinks it might please the customer. It's about filtering preferences, which of course is easier to do with family and friends. However, this interaction requires personal contact with customers.

Martin Heidegger describes the temporality of understanding. For him “understanding” means the possibility of being is revealed to you, which means you know what you are capable of. Once you have gained an “authentic understanding” it is the enthusiasm of a researcher or discoverer, while “inauthentic understanding” is just wondering or curiosity. He describes a moment of vision as something that you acquire through “authentic understanding”. (see Heidegger 1962, 383–394)

6.2 There is little room for unexpected in the profession

Customer contact offers advantages and disadvantages. Alienating from customers can be a relief to the practitioner, as it equates to emotional liberation. One has no more problems with the non-appreciation of the service provided, since without personal contact one is forced to communicate all concerns through a middleman. This can be done through an office, an agency or through your own partner.

Why is it emotionally stressful to work with clients? We have already analyzed the difference between non-professionals and experts: the expert with knowledge in certain practices and the non-professional who seeks help on a trust basis to give his idea a physical form. I have mainly described it from the non-professional point of view. If we look at it from the side of the expert, it is the mental “presence” of the customer, friend, or family member, both in the work and in spare time, that sometimes bothers him. There is no difference between a customer project or a friendship project. All of the interviewees had to learn to find peace with themselves. For example, they want to take a weekend off, but they could actually be working on the project. Can they really sit in front of the TV at home, or should they rather work for a while? Although this way of thinking seems to decrease with increasing experience. Nevertheless, according to my interviewees, almost nobody succeeds in completely blanking out this way of thinking. As described earlier, everything happens within an organic window of time, especially if there are projects that cannot be implemented in regular working hours.

“For me, it was clear from the beginning that I needed defined structures for myself in order to be able to start a project at all. For me, however, the form of things is far beyond their content.”
designer

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7. Analogies between practices in profession and art

When ultimately a final result has been created, an object, a product or something similar, how does the creator view this? Does this thing, which was formed out of all these constructs, ever come to an end? Or does it influence further actions of all participants after its completion? Here I will discuss different views of the people I have interviewed. First of all, let us take a look at how the creator puts parts of himself into an object when it arises from a classical economic context. It can be assumed that, as described earlier, once a paying customer is involved, the creator's own personal point of view of this project shifts, depending on how much the customer allows.

7.1 The object is allowed to show its faults openly

As described earlier, the “limits” applied by the customer might as well reduce the attachment of the expert for the project. The prototype constructor and the speaker manufacturer have a very simple and honest, though probably most difficult, approach for this.

They try to keep a certain distance from the object, a circumstance that almost none of the other participants were able to achieve. You can have a rough idea of how it should be, but it is rather rational. It thus leads to the creator’s self-protecting focus that might be even liberating.

This detachment from what has been created makes it possible for the object to openly display its faults. Faults, of course, do not mean mistakes in style or implementation, which of course is undeniably flawless with all the practitioners. Rather it permits some peculiarities of the object. These peculiarities can be based on the customer side.

For example, a perfectly crafted table whose solid wood surfaces have been treated beautifully so that one can see how masterfully crafted it is. The customer would like to have this painted in bright orange. A desire that many carpenters will probably receive in despair, but in this case, it is considered indifferently by the creator. The peculiarities can also be based on the technical side. For example, a certain part of the object is manufactured in a certain way despite a certain disharmony, because it might be cheaper. Perhaps a visibly coarse handle for a cover instead of a hidden pressure mechanism.

These were just rough paraphrases, of course, the orange can fit perfectly to this table, or the handles may be wanted in that way. In any case, it would be of minor importance for the creator. Simply formulated, in this consideration, the emotional-disagreement of an aesthetic desire is not expressed at all.

7.2 The alienation from the customer

The more complicated consideration is when the expert wants to influence the customer’s decision, or if he takes it personally. One has to be careful here, as it is important to distinguish whether the customer wants to explain the craft to the expert, or whether the customer has a purely aesthetic desire. In the first case, it can be dealt with very quickly, as it will always lead to disharmony. After all, the non-professional is looking for guidance. Since their own abilities are not sufficient to accomplish something, it seems rather inadequate for them to explain to the expert how he or she should work.

Looking at a purely aesthetic desire, one has to deal with different emotional charges, which increase according to the number of participants. It may be that the client understands the creator’s convictions and he decides to follow them, or he understands them and argues why he will not change his mind. It is sometimes difficult to express one’s opinion and a respectful approach should always be maintained. If this does not happen, there is an imbalance between the parties, which has far-reaching consequences. The negative consequences can be reflected on the customer side, with a higher price, or an execution that is below the standards of the creator. But it can also lead to negative effects on the part of the creator—he feels offended and might even lose the enjoyment of the practice. This inevitably leads to alienation from the customer. In general, it is unlikely that such experiences will lead to further cooperation.

This may not sound like a professional approach on the creator’s side, but one has to keep in mind that this practice-as-profession is not synonymous with assembly line work. It is something far more extraordinary. As already described, it is about achieving a certain condition that cannot be put into words. At this point, it may be

more helpful not to regard the service provider as such, but rather to perceive him/her as an artist.

Artists usually have far greater freedom to practice their craft than people with a more regular profession. There should be made no difference if it is a customer project or friendship project. Even if it concerns designers, craftsmen, illustrators or similar occupations in which the work has gained so much importance that it has been made the central role of their existence. Perhaps the analogy with art helps to create a professional breeding ground for further projects. And if it is not art that you can relate to, then it should be trust. With trust, the creator is given the opportunity, to apply way more than just his craft to a project.

Richard Sennett states that an ancient ideal of craftsmanship is to work in a collective. Workshops provided collective workspaces, with social structures for enhancing a craft. He describes it as authority in the flesh against the knowledge written down on paper. There is a codex for quality and ethical behavior that unites experts and apprentices. It ensures that the work develops through partnership and allows creative development. Richard Sennett writes that the medieval workshop came to an end, through the separation from arts and crafts. (see Sennett 2008, 51–61)

7.3 To create society, you have to gather and impress an audience

David Graeber sets the opinion, to create society, you have to gather and impress an audience. He means that this is the goal of most significant social actions. Gifts and the associated rituals are accordingly the medium and the ultimate realization of those actions. (see Graeber 2012, 319).

One gets far more from the creator than just the desired object once trust is given. Even the classic customer service-provider project, can lead to a friendship project, with sufficient confidence. Trust always has something to do with appreciation, and that's what every interviewee has named as the most important asset in a project. Appreciation can even be the main reason why a project even starts. Appreciation leads to recognition and recognition is the driving force behind all practitioners. Who sees what you „created“ if it is only exhibited for yourself at home?

“The result is very important to me, but I do not need to be surrounded by my objects. They are allowed to move on after completion.”
mold making

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8. Competition of giving

Waldenfels describes the essence of a gift as the function of a free obligation. It is in this way a path between social compulsoriness and freedom of choice, or one might say it is a competitive way of giving. For him, the gift itself generates an agonal form of recognition. With this in mind giving is not a selfless behavior, but a challenge to others to give a gift in return. Even if the gift is given without the goal to receive a counter-gift, it will still deliver the message that one has to give something in return. He describes that it is impossible to leave the economic structure and give a “pure” gift. (See Waldenfels 2015, 125–140)

Once one has broken through the initially complex structures, one can, in friendship projects, devote oneself to the “competition of giving”. As soon as one starts this, everything is about the status of recognition, which is constantly renegotiated with oneself, as well as with the other. Giving in the form of “giving as gift” does not become a selfless behavior, but a challenge for the other person to give something in return. In other words, how do you pay for a project, if not with money?

The creator’s “gift” of implementing or creating can neither be returned by the non-professional nor answered on the same level, but can only be reciprocated by “giving a restitution gift”. This is defined by the value of a relationship and is neither economically comprehensible, nor firmly rooted in society. That depends on a number of different factors. If it is indeed a project with a good friend or family member, it may be that the common practice is already considered as payment. Since the time factor is probably the most crucial component in all friendship projects, it is impossible to quantify this achievement with financial value. Here the project is seen as an enrichment, sharing this experience with someone. The importance of this gift is the personal relationship aspect of it.

8.1 Remuneration of friendship projects

What all creatives strive for is a good reputation. If enough appreciation is there, it can sometimes even happen that the creator gives away not only his services, but his entire work for free. Many interviewees prefer to give away their products for free, before giving it to someone who does not appreciate it. Some would even prefer to throw away what they created, rather than having it in the hands of one who does not appreciate it.

This urge for prestige can be more than personal exhibitionism. Often there is a desire to achieve a broader public awareness of a particular discipline, or a particular form of practice, for example mold making or restoration. It can sometimes happen that the financial aspect of a job is consciously set low. For example, to win a specific bidding or the like. Here, the public reputation comes into the center of attention of the creator, which of course results in an unequal weight of payment and time.

The fairest compensation is probably an exchange of goods for goods. This happens pretty often in the arts. The creator produces a certain part of an artistic work and receives in return a work by the artist as a gift. This can actually be considered as a fair exchange of value or a future investment. The condition is of course, that the creator likes the art. But it can also be an exchange of goods for food, accommodation or travel costs. For example, if the customer lives in another country, the expert spends a few days after the assembly at client’s expense in this region. This is a common exchange for the metalworker, the prototype constructor and the mold maker.

Marcel Mauss believes that the best way to break out of the classic financial economic thinking is not to try to fulfill individual desires, but to develop prosperity through social thinking. We should return to the elementary principles, as the joy of public giving, the pleasure of aesthetic luxury and the pleasure of festive gathering. For Mauss the mere pursuit of individual purposes threatens the piece, the work and our friends, and will ultimately threaten the individual himself. (See Mauss 1990, 174)

8.2 A silent exchange between expert and nonprofessional

It may also happen that the project makes sense, is visually appealing, or the practice behind it arouses the interest of the expert. If a project makes sense to him, there is a chance that the creator is satisfied with a credit. The object thereby becomes the carrier for marketing purposes, and could be a deciding factor for future action programs. Such mentions are often generated with students or freelance creatives. This generates a word of mouth marketing that is welcome, since many of the practitioners I interviewed, tend to have just a website and mostly avoid social media. A photo can be placed in the same area. The final work will be documented and presented on the website. This shows a high appreciation for the project idea on the creator side, since he advertises it on his own.

However, it often remains a silent exchange between expert and non-professional. It seems there is a kind of implicit knowledge required on both sides. A form of behavioral rule, in which the effort of the creator should be appreciated. This physical form of the gift, on the non-professional side, is most of the time purposefully paired with a social component. For example, he invites the expert for a coffee or dinner together. Sometimes he brings a bottle of vodka or a palette of beer and they consume it during or after the friendship project. These are material goods which, of course, can never approach the value of the hours spent on the project, in a pure price calculation. Nevertheless, with the extra social interaction, it is seen by all interviewees as settling the debt.

8.3 The time factor cannot be remunerated materially

In most cases, a special agreement will apply to any friendship projects. The fact, that the expert has spent his time for the non-professional, stands dormant between both parties and can most of the time only be activated by the giver, who is in this case, the creator. Even if the “gift calculation” is considered to be settled in the unequal enumeration of the values, there is still an unequal relationship of time. The creator can rely at any time on the non-professional, if he is in need of a favor. These are events in which the non-professional is almost forced to support the creator. Carrying boxes for a move, painting a living room, excavating the pool or picking someone up from the airport, to name just a few suggestions.

However, the non-professional person may have already trained his eye while practicing together, and in this case, he might be seen by the expert as being a helping hand. The passing on of techniques, can be regarded by the creator as being a resource, which can be retrieved if necessary. This retrieval of workers plays a crucial role in community workshops and supports the already described collective consciousness. It plays a very specific role for the mold maker, since he often has contracts that require a high quantity of simple manufactured things. He uses the network he created through friendship projects, to recruit the necessary workforce.

8.4 Fully autonomously functioning social constructs

Bruno Latour understands things as well as humans as equal acting elements in his actor network theory. He calls them actors and they influence each other in a larger expandable network. An actor always has a so-called “action program” inscribed in them, which means they follow a typical repetitive action. Those actions combine each other to longer sequences, build association chains and should contribute to the solution of a specific problem. (See Latour 1996, 37–51)

There is a special circumstance when one actually “demonstrates” one’s real skill through the work. This “demonstration” can be attributed to an insignificant colloquial saying. Nevertheless, it is clearly understandable in which direction this points.

At work it is impossible to hide one’s skills, it is about the carrying out of the activity. Whether one does this particularly well, creatively efficient or otherwise, it always leaves an impression on those involved. This impression can act as a kind of mediational function. For example, when the creator calls on an acquaintance, because he has mastered a certain practice and is now supposed to be active as an actor in the expert’s network. It is a kind of hierarchy of competences at an exchange level that is accessed here. This can even go beyond regions and can generally be seen as a guarantee for a job placement.

All these are examples of the already described network of actors and objects, which are based on action programs that are not clearly regulated and yet are fully autonomously functional socio-technical constructs. “Fully autonomously” means that there is no need for a written contract or something similar, it happens as a silent exchange between the parties and does not need further

explanation. One can intuitively expose oneself to these social forces and try to create friendship projects through gut-feeling and trust alone. Or, one tries to define the field of activity in advance by defining contractual agreements.

Looking more closely at the nature of a gift, one might think that a gift in itself is unable to create new relationships. According to Marcel Mauss, gifts can only define or change relationships. The relationship is determined by the recognition of the other, in connection with a deeper engagement. The friendship project, which is crisscrossed with incredibly versatile and unpredictable action programs, seems again to be a special case in this definition—the gift of the practice is able to create new relationships. The next chapter illustrates this consideration.

“I could not burn the pictures, I once made only for burning them. It seems I have made it for somebody else, but at this time, I just did not know who this person was.”

tile production

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9. The project in an endless network

Looking at the previously described processes, it becomes very clear, which role the different circumstances in projects play. Let's try to look at the way of things beyond their creative process. We try to understand the action programs from a distanced perspective and to illuminate their influence on the actor's, as well as the partner's existence, and on the participating project. For this we must ascribe to the friendship project the same importance as the actors themselves.

The project becomes an element of equal rank in an essentially expandable network. All elements of this network have certain action programs written in them—whether they are things, objects or people. An action program is a recurring series of actions that combine to form chains of association, thus contributing to solving a problem.

A crucial aspect of these observations is an attribution of certain storylines to the objects themselves. As a result, a particular behavior gets imposed on a user. These objects have an extension of their usual potential action program. One could say they have a higher power over us.

For Bruno Latour technical artifacts guarantee repeatability and give associations permanence. This is the background for his understanding of technology as a stabilizer for society. In doing so, Latour assumes that the social band needs those objects in order to achieve any stability at all. He thinks that technology represents the moment when “social constellations get stability through the grouping of actors and observers. When Latour argues that technical objects stabilize and sustain social life, it is important to understand that it is not a preexistent social situation that inscribes into technical artifacts, but that technical artifacts themselves are actors with a certain life and a certain momentum of their own. (See Latour 2008, 89 – 141).

9.1 Relationship between active and passive action program

As an example, I want to show the blacksmith with his hammer and the anvil.

When you give a hammer to an inexperienced person and you want him to do a work step, you might realize that this person treats the hammer like an object. This means the execution of the movement and the feeling for the work, comes solely from a non-professional. The movements are choppy and show their feelings of insecurity. If the master, in this case the more skilled one, takes the hammer in his hand, then one has the feeling he serves the hammer and plays with it. His movements adapt to the weight of the hammer, its behavior as it hits the target and the momentum of execution. There is no stiff clasp, it's a familiar handle.

If you look at the whole scenario, you might get the feeling, that the actors are manipulating the hammer, but it shows the relationship between them. If you follow this thought, you will see that the hammer is actively involved in these processes. This consideration makes it possible to differentiate between the anvil, which serves as a substratum to form the metal, thus assuming a passive role, and the hammer, which takes an active role and accomplishes much more than just being part of the process. The hammer changes the story. What must be assumed in all these considerations, is the attribution of other storylines that affect each actor. The anvil could also play an active role in another action program, but it will not be discussed here in detail. We try to focus on the collective whole. (See Serres 1995, 47)

If these considerations are placed in the context of the objects of friendship, then the process of forging can also be considered as active. The interesting part about this consideration, however, is the fact that the project itself might play an active role. It behaves differently than a normal work contract, in which norms are written down. It launches an action program, which is controlled by different motivations. The actors adapt in different degrees to the existence of this project. It takes on an even greater active role, by launching far-reaching chains of association or configuring new action programs.

“The special thing is, that I want to understand the previous practices. These should be preserved and not renewed. The Signs of age, they show you the history of the object.”
restoration

9.2 Independent influence of things

Martin Heidegger describes objects, or things, as self-supporting. He observes a chalice and wants to examine the term thingness. For him, thingness is not the physical matter of an object, or the process of building it, which means it is not possible to analyze or observe it scientifically. According to him, thingness is a sort of a gift that every object with a deeper engagement has to offer, or as he describes: Gathering constitutes things' thingness by bringing humans nearer and uniting them to the sky, earth, other mortals and divinities. (see Heidegger 2004, 157–175)

In summary, relations are redistributed between people and things. The thing, in this case the “friendship project”, is attributed an equally important action potential, as the actors themselves. It may well be possible to understand “project” and “actors” in a larger context. The continuing effects that arise from such an inter-action can be revealed and in this way, provide new insights.

With this in mind, it becomes clear that even if a project is completed, the created things still continuously influence all the actors who have participated in creating it. It sticks to one, one builds on it and one observes it, even if this does not necessarily have to happen in an active way. At the time it was a successful solution to a problem.

Seen from a different angle, perhaps the final step has already been taken by both actors, but at the same time a first step has been taken in a completely different direction. It places itself in an invisible structure and thus generates something completely independent.

**FIN
AL.**

final

This work should not serve as an analysis or scientific work in the common sense. It is a work based on artistic research. Many of the considerations that have been made here pick up on theories of the literature listed below. The mixture of these sometimes very different works is at the same time a symbol for the complex structures that come together.

This work should help one understand the processes on the part of the creator as well as on the part of the person seeking help. It certainly does not cover all the possibilities of the complexities, but it provides an overview and orientation that may certainly be useful in some situations.

It should be understood as an encouragement to look for friendship projects, or to get involved in them. As described here, where one leaves the standardized and familiar conditions and loses himself in the unknown, something special might happen.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my interviewees, who are not mentioned here by name, but certainly find themselves in one form or another. As well as my professors Bernd and Virgil, who supported and encouraged me to write this work.

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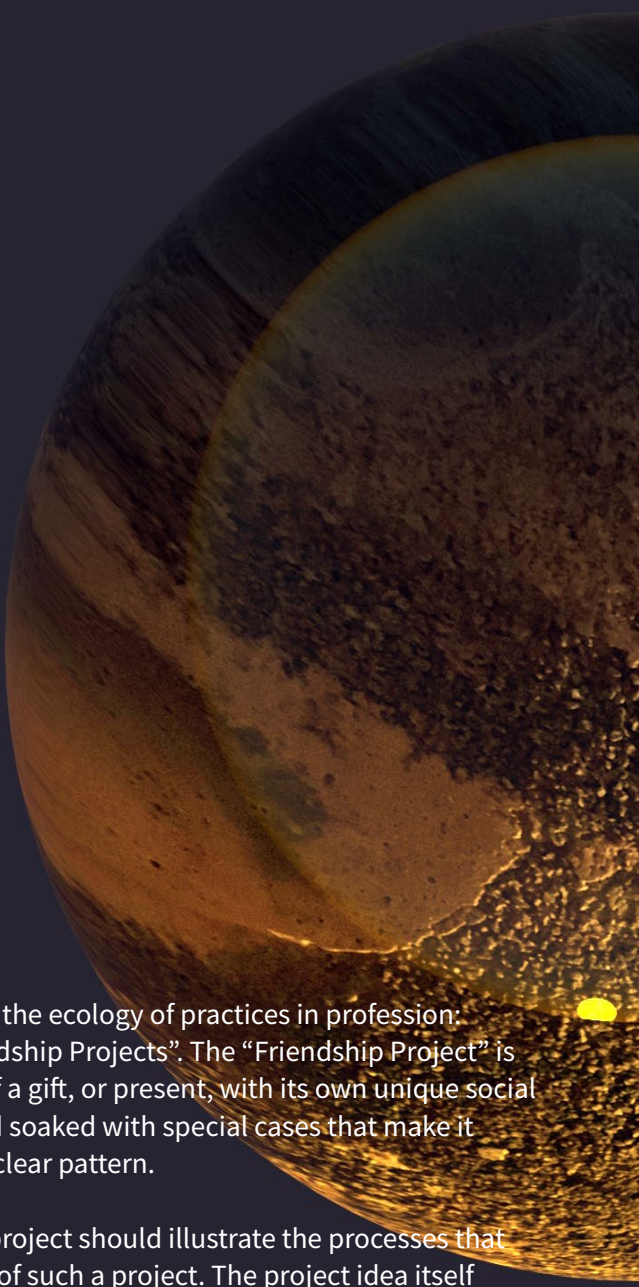
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The picture in the background shows:

nucleus processing

An illustration of the reflection of the ecology of practices in profession: principles and methods of “Friendship Projects”. The “Friendship Project” is a special form of service, a sort of a gift, or present, with its own unique social rules. These rules are blurred and soaked with special cases that make it almost impossible to work out a clear pattern.

The installation for the diploma project should illustrate the processes that arise during the implementation of such a project. The project idea itself behaves like the nucleus of an atom—forces are absorbed and released around the core, until the project finally finds a final form under enormous energy transformations.