



*Image. Part 3:  
Distributing The Free Paper Gratis  
in the city centre of Utrecht*

## STORY SPACE ON GIFT ECONOMIES

A [Swop Project](#) / Andrea Creutz and Lise Skou.

A project in 4 parts: Part 1: Video compilation. Part 2: A online wiki site and open editorial space. Part 3: The Free Paper Gratis. Part 4: Free Food Event

Commisioned by:

CASCO - Office for Art, Design and Theory  
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During spring 2006 we met with a number of Utrecht based groups working with gift economies and alternative models of exchange and free distribution.

The study had the form of a relay. We interviewed representatives of the groups one by one, with one group leading us to the next. We started by interviewing Wendie from The Give Away Shop and asked her to suggest whom we should interview next. We also asked her to suggest a question for the following interviewee. The next interview started with showing the previous one, which had been videotaped, and continued with posing the relayed and other questions. All in all, seven such relay interviews were conducted.

The interview material, plus a program of workshops and discussions with the concerned groups, was subsequently used in the collaborative production of a wiki site ([www.swopnetwork.dk/digitalstoryspace](http://www.swopnetwork.dk/digitalstoryspace)).

Moreover, these ideas and issues were published and disseminated to a wider audience in the free newspaper Gratis. With great help from volunteers, Gratis was distributed in the streets of Utrecht together with an invitation to join the launch party the same day. In collaboration with the local Food Not Bombs group we conducted a gleaning tour in which we collected groceries that otherwise would have gone to waste. The groceries were made into a dinner for the public launch party that took place in front of Casco.

The newspaper was given away for free and was based on the model of other free newspapers, such as Metro and Spits, but did not contain any ads. It was produced as an attempt to highlight gift economies as alternatives to the dominant economy. While Metro and Spits and other such newspapers are also given away for free, there is an obvious difference in motivation when brought into relation with the activities of some of the groups involved in this project. One could argue that these free papers could be viewed as commercializing the distribution of information, and watering-down political standpoints and public debate, which is the direct opposite of the projects and initiatives represented in Gratis.

Gratis looked at how alternative systems of distributing material goods, information and services are structured, what constitutes them, and what they represent. For example, by giving everything away, the Give Away Shop positions itself outside of the dominant profit-based system and, as such, presents an alternative. Food Not Bombs is based upon volunteer work, collecting leftover food, 'recycling' it into fine meals that are handed out for free. These kinds of activities are meeting points where participation itself is a primary good. We are interested in how these alternative models are able to alter existing relations, and in the effects or goals of the recycling and reusing of resources.



Image. Above: Part 1 - Video compilation



Image. Above: Part 2 - Online wiki site and open editorial space at Casco.

Below: Part 3 - Distribution The Free Paper Gratis.



Part 4 - Free Food Event. Collecting food and collective cooking at Casco. Handing out food to the public.

