Building a new type of thing.

Problem and Solution (Social Object Content Paradigm - SOCP)

The way people conceptualize is through objects. The framework of any community is built around that community's social object. If you want to build a community around say knitting you first must identify what social objects exist in knitting and create features that share and socialize those objects. For example knitting patterns or technique demonstrations.

I think mistakenly we identified the game as our social object and have attempted to conceptualize communities based on the game object to build community around. And where this can succeed in creating a community around the activity of playing a game it falls short in the areas of scalability, extensibility, targetability and commoditization. It has really failed to answer the question of how we make money with social.

The problem is the meatball sundae (in reference to Seth Godin's product marketing book "Meatball Sundae"). We're trying to build a new concept onto an old product when we should be building a product to meet the new concept. It's very straightforward.
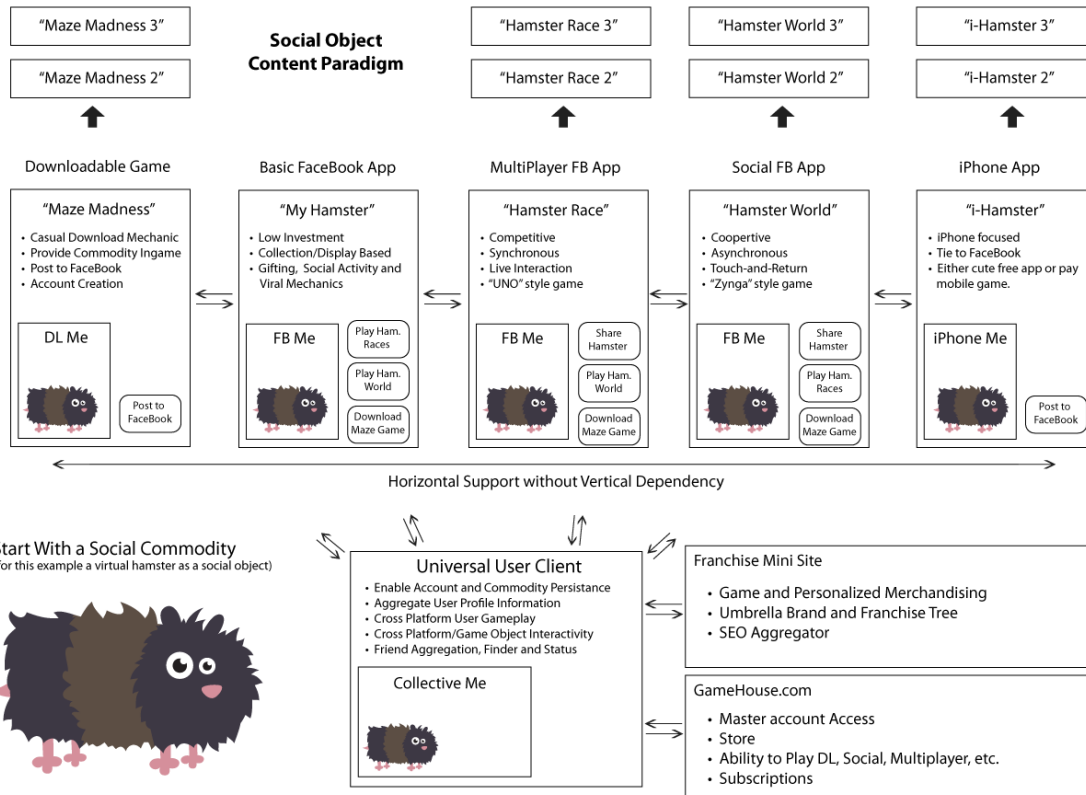
And it's easy to conclude that if what we're doing is creating a product to exist within the socialscape then that product (the game itself) and product strategy should be built around a social object that can in turn be commoditized, shared and socialized.

So there we go, start with a personal and social commodity first. Identify an object that has social potential and generate a framework that can be properly franchised and commoditized. The object isn't "baseball" the object is the ball. Baseball is the social activity.

Let's do an example to make this concrete.

Let's start with a personal/social object or commodity. Let's go with a pet mechanic and something cute, a virtual hamster. A virtual pet is tangible. Conceptually anyway. A user can relate to a hamster. You bond psychologically with it immediately. And it has predefined needs. It needs love, food and an environment. It needs protection. And it offers in return cuteness, entertainment and accomplishment. You can collect them, show them off and there's potential for interactivity. Friends can own them and you can share. There are lots of ways to construct products around a virtual pet, not the virtual pet as a product, that's not what I mean, but some way to incorporate the object into already successful models of products. You have a base for micropayment, for social apps, for games, for merchandising, franchising and portability. This is a good solid object in my opinion. But there are many objects, all just as suitable.

You can enter into the product equation from any point so the start is arbitrary. You want to create complete synergy between each node in your product scheme so it doesn't matter where you start, you will eventually be connected to every other node. But let's start at a downloadable game.

Social Object Content Paradigm

"Maze Madness 3"		"Hamster Race 3"	"Hamster World 3"	"i-Hamster 3"
"Maze Madness 2"		"Hamster Race 2"	"Hamster World 2"	"i-Hamster 2"

Downloadable Game	Basic FaceBook App	MultiPlayer FB App	Social FB App	iPhone App
"Maze Madness" • Casual Download Mechanic • Provide Commodity Ingame • Post to FaceBook • Account Creation	**"My Hamster"** • Low Investment • Collection/Display Based • Gifting, Social Activity and Viral Mechanics	**"Hamster Race"** • Competitive • Synchronous • Live Interaction • "UNO" style game	**"Hamster World"** • Coopertive • Asynchronous • Touch-and-Return • "Zynga" style game	**"i-Hamster"** • iPhone focused • Tie to FaceBook • Either cute free app or pay mobile game.
DL Me / Post to FaceBook	FB Me / Play Ham. Races / Play Ham. World / Download Maze Game	FB Me / Share Hamster / Play Ham. World / Download Maze Game	FB Me / Share Hamster / Play Ham. Races / Download Maze Game	iPhone Me / Post to FaceBook

Horizontal Support without Vertical Dependency

Start With a Social Commodity
(for this example a virtual hamster as a social object)

Universal User Client
• Enable Account and Commodity Persistance
• Aggregate User Profile Information
• Cross Platform User Gameplay
• Cross Platform/Game Object Interactivity
• Friend Aggregation, Finder and Status

Collective Me

Franchise Mini Site
• Game and Personalized Merchandising
• Umbrella Brand and Franchise Tree
• SEO Aggregator

GameHouse.com
• Master account Access
• Store
• Ability to Play DL, Social, Multiplayer, etc.
• Subscriptions

The Downloadable Game

You create a downloadable game, it doesn't really matter what it's about but as a part of that game you do two things. 1) Create a way for a user to create an account to identify them. 2) You provide to them your social object as a matter of the game.

The game doesn't have to be made around hamsters. You could have a game like Maze Madness and as a reward/achievement or built in as a hint mechanism you provide the player a pet hamster. This can function quite apart from the game mechanic.

You could then unlock a minigame that features your hamster specifically or could just let you care for your hamster by buying food for it by cashing in points earned in the game.

This mechanic is good because it's insular, it provides value to the game, encourages the player to keep playing, etc.

The player's user account is managed by a master client that understands Person X is unique, she has played Maze Madness, and she has obtained an object, in this case a pet.

Then in the game you provide a button to post or share your hamster to facebook. The share option ads a simple FaceBook app to your profile.

FaceBook Apps. Generally

When I say facebook apps it could really be any social app, but since FB is the most popular I will use this as the example. Generally assume these ideas are extensible to any social platform. Social apps are useful for three main reasons (in my opinion), to strengthen brand and create a free viral adoption mechanism, to create tie-ins to pay content and merchandising, and three (in zynga model) to create platforms for micropayment strategies in regards to gaming.

There are three general types of facebook apps and we need to account for all three of them.

1) The original basic FB app which is based on gifting, social activity and viral mechanics. This was the genesis of more complicated apps but they require a low level of investment and tend to grow faster but with less return and shorter interest.
2) The multiplayer game. This is solely what garret's team is working on. Characterized by competition, synchronous gameplay, live user-to-user interaction and traditional game mechanics. This app is important and serves a class of user, but not all users. These games are not in competition with zynga games.
3) The social app. These games are characterized by a cooperative social mechanic (even if it's adversarial), an asynchronous gameplay and a touch-and-return interactivity that mirrors the habits of social site users. This is a zynga style game and fairly consistent across the board.

You can create a harmonious presence across all three major app types that cater to individual user habits that all cross link to the global product strategy and create entry points to viral growth in a variety of ways simultaneously.

Remember the point here isn't the World War with a single front it's a thousand tiny fronts all happening at the same time, like say Vietnam or Afghanistan. The big guy with a single idea gets beaten up.

So let's go back to the hamster idea and tackle each app.

The Basic FaceBook App

So you achieve this pet and on it's page there's an option to post it to facebook. The user clicks the button, logs into facebook and we install a simple app on their profile. This app displays the hamster to people looking at their profile in an achievement/trophy sort of way but its more about the connection the user has to it instead of just a X number points kind of thing. You can share a hamster with people who have never played Maze Madness and it's still meaningful, as a hamster. Which is where leaderboard mechanics fail. They're only relevant to other players of that specific game and posting about them is spammy.

This basic app serves a few functions. One, it shows off the cute hamster to friends, user value. It also links those observers to the download game, developer value. You could also build in basic features to allow users to earn points through basic social mechanisms like gifting and sharing that can be cashed in to buy things for the hamster. This is the basis of a micropayment strategy. Stuff.

BUT the trick here is to provide value to that stuff and make people want to pay money for it. The immediate value is cuteness, the hamster wears the stuff, but then the hamster back in your downloadable game should also wear the stuff. The client knows you bought stuff for this unique hamster and it persists across the two platforms.

You take this one step further and give the downloadable player an advantage in the game by buying things for the hamster in the facebook app and you've Really provided value. Like say, you can only pass a secret (non-essential) level in the downloadable game if you buy your

hamster a lighted miner's helmet in the FB app. That's something someone would pay money for. Especially if it unlocked additional content.

That's fun but let's not stop there, let's take it another step. In the app there's also a link to port your hamster over to a few other FB games that already know who you are and who your hamster is. You just click a button and your hamster appears in a new app. You choose Hamster Races, a head to head multiplayer FB game app.

The Multiplayer Game

Multipayer games are immediate and exciting and provide real social interactivity with friends or with strangers. The latter I think is most important here because the synchronous nature of the gameplay make it difficult to coordinate with friends.

You click the button and now you're racing your hamster wearing all of its stuff you bought against other hamsters. Interestingly now that miner's helmet slows you down. You don't want it, you now want a new sleek racing helmet. You can play the game just fine without items but it becomes clear that people who've invested in game items have an edge. Another great opportunity for micropayments. But the trick is to make them voluntary. Especially with MP games because these are focused on the action and not so much on accumulation. But there's no reason to overlook it.

Build this game on the same friend matching system garret's developed for UNO. Fast and easy.

Remember, you don't need to experience this serially. A friend could send you a link to this game first. You get a new hamster. You race. You're provided with a button to share your hamster, you get the basic app. You're provided with an upsell to Maze Madness ("Solve Mazes with your hamster!") and all of the commodity and profile is managed by the client for complete portability.

BUT there's also a link to the FB app Hamster World. A social hamster world where you build whacky hamster environments and connect to friends through hamster tubes.

The Social Game

Hamster World. Asynchronous, you can spend two minutes setting things up and then come back and check the progress. You earn points and spend points as the main mode of gameplay. You accumulate things. You reach levels that unlock more things to accumulate to then unlock more things. Friends can share and help you but it's not a direct interaction. It's at will and whenever. So the mechanics are not directly related to friend action as much as they're related to viral expansiveness.

These games are like Mafia Wars, Vampires, all the popular Zynga games. But what Zynga doesn't have that we do have is a vast empire of content and resources. We use all the good parts of zynga but now thanks to our trusty client we can create levels only accessible to people who've played the downloadable game. Or who've won so many races in the Hamster Races game or who've bought some item in the basic app. All games should run fine independently of one another but should cross over as well.

When you get bored with Hamster World, which people inevitably do, it's a huge cycle from game to game, instead of losing that customer to the next great game we simply channel them to a new game with the same accumulation of commodity. You don't have to start over, you simply move your hamster over to Hamster Races and play with him in an entirely new way. No one wants to move from Mobsters 1 to Mobsters 2 because they lose all the value they've spent hundreds of hours amassing. But if you could transfer your character over then why the hell not.

You can make Hamster World 2, 3, 4, forever and never touch any of the other mechanisms or have to support a failing franchise in download because the old Maze Madness works just fine with Hamster World 4. Or you could go horizontally and experience all mechanisms. It doesn't matter.

But it does give us a chance to convert social gamers to downloaders without decreasing or devaluing the micropayment strategy of the social game.

Mid Idea Recap

Ok, so now we have a downloadable game, a basic app, a multiplayer app, a social app, all connecting one to the other. We market the download game virally for free, we provide immense user value, we create three solid channels for micropayment and we cross pollinate each channel by creating advantages in each of the others through a separate vertical. You create foundations for franchises on top of any of the four pillars by the use of sequels without the need to update or invest in the other verticals if they are not successful or profitable. You've also created an emotional investment in your entire product strategy through a social object that retains value even after it's genesis becomes invaluable.

But let's not stop there. There are other revenue potentials for our cute little hamster and we haven't even talked about GameHouse.

Micro Sites

Merchandising. We don't have to only sell games. People will pay money for lots of stuff. Not really a Hamster Races tshirt but if you could make a tshirt of your specific hamster then I bet people would. And that's easy to market. Just add a link to any of the games or apps and say "Get your hamster on a tshirt!". Done.

Now that you're on our microsite you realize you can get your hamster on just about anything. You can also see all of the previous Maze Madness games (don't forget, it's still all about the pay version). You can get a making of art-book that's publish on demand to avoid any upfront cost. All profit.

There's also links to every node of the product strategy as an umbrella portal and the SEO key holder for all of the crosslinking we've done for all of the other nodes.

Your login works here because regardless of where you came from you have an account managed by our uber client and your commodities persist.

We also strongly cross promote all of the other enormous product node trees that we've developed and all of the upcoming games.

Not to mention GameHouse.com, the premiere gaming location.

GameHouse.com

Not surprisingly this all leads down to GameHouse.com.

Each game, app and site are branded with gamehouse. GameHouse represents the family umbrella to all of this content. All logos link to GameHouse.com and we channel all of this viral

visibility to our game portal site. More eyes mean more downloads mean more money. And it's basically free. There's no reason to exclude your profitable download portal just because you're creating social content. It should be a key strategy in monetizing that social investment and attention. This is where we sell stuff. This is our store.

But now, fortunately, since we've built all of this other technology on a master client aggregator, when you get to GameHouse.com, you can log into it with your familiar credentials. You also have full access to any commodity you've accumulated from any app or game we've managed to catch you on. We've aggregated all of your personal data from all of those apps and games so we can target ads and customize the experience to you and make your online game play profitable to us. When you bought virtual currency on Hamster World, we've saved all of your billing and shipping data so that when you decided to buy a trial download game you can go straight to the confirmation page.

Also, all of those apps and games are also available on the site. You can launch Hamster World directly from GameHouse and you interact with all of your friends on FaceBook, MySpace, other site users, and even people who bought the download version from Bigfish. When you play Hamster Races you can choose to play with anyone who is currently interacting with the client regardless of where you are playing.

We can aggregate all of the players from all of the environments into one collaborative engine. And you don't need to leave the site to get the benefits.

Summary

I think we can successfully capture the emerging social gaming market while not abandoning our download business. Social doesn't replace download, it augments user experience into a multifront world of possible experience-node verticals each helping the other without dependency. Community isn't the thing we dress games up with nor is it the thing that will make us money. Community isn't the object we want; we should be focused on the thing which will facilitate pre-existing community involvement. Things people can share, trade and help each other with. Once we identify those things we should create products that facilitate that involvement. And in that we use social networking as the medium instead of injecting social networking into our non social product ideology. We build a new type of thing.

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After seeding my Social Object Content Paradigm (SOCP) idea around a bit I realized there are several points of clarity needed and permutations to discuss. I will do a quick positive clarification of a few ideas followed by a critique of a few major responses.

Though not intrinsic to the social object idea, my proposal included several strategic ideas that I feel are important. These include clear targeting, simplified transition from vertical to vertical, the ability to address different demographics separately and the ability to use variable game mechanics depending on the need and monetization method.

Clarifying Commodity and Social Objects

You can't make a game that makes everyone happy. No one single game (or mechanic) will win across the board. Not even within our casual demo. You have to pick a concept and pick a mechanic that hopefully will reach a broad set of consumers. But you never start a game concept by saying, "Well, not everyone likes farms, maybe we should take the farm part out." You pick a concept that sounds fun and has a hook and has the potential to support a fun game mechanic.

All I'm saying is you create a game with the idea of social commodity in mind. But that commodity should relate specifically to the game concept. Or rather you build game concepts around the idea of targeted social objects.

For a farm you would identify the social qualities of farm life. These include the county fair, fair contests and the economic and social benefits of those ribbons. It also includes helping out neighbors, sharing tools and strategic consumption of goods (you buy feed from your friend Bob who in turn buys milk from your cows). You help each other. But there's a benefit.

The actual commodity doesn't have to be the social object. For example you can't buy a blue ribbon for best pie. But you can sell the winning pie recipe. And you can buy quality apples. And you can get a better oven. Or whatever. There is a motherload of commodity there. You just have to keep it in mind.

And it doesn't make any sense to say "Apples don't scale, I don't like apples." Because that's not the point. It's relative to this game and this concept just like any game item to any game.

Clarifying Limited Scope and Object-Game Arrays

I'm afraid that my SOCP is being misapplied as a broad strategy for which it is not intended. The idea simply replaces the generation of a single game idea with a game-array idea. Game-arrays have the same rules as any marketable game.

It is important to limit the scope of your game concept. We don't make download games that are both farm click management games and salon sim management games. It's bad marketing and impossible to target. It's important that a user understand what the game is and what to expect and it's important to not include too many mechanics and ideas because you encounter a diminishing return on your investment. It's better to make two separate games, marketed independently. It's the same work and potentially could double your ROI. (with the exception of course of the mini-game style games that break up hidden object mechanics with basic puzzles for variety, etc).

You have to have a clear and marketable concept around your game and it's the same for your social objects. It doesn't have to be generic and targeted at everyone. It shouldn't. Because generic ideas are less interesting.

This is product design 101. And I wouldn't bring it but for some reason when people conceptualize social objects they imagine a broad currency of interchangeable pieces that fit into unrelated games. This diffuses the concept.

SOCP starts with a game idea, let's say the farm game idea. We identify social objects around this concept. Then we create a game-array based on the theme that could share those social objects. Each node addresses a different channel.

Each vertical is then conceptualized and designed on it's own, building from those social objects, but the games themselves can be vastly different (though not required).

When you limit the game-array as a slice of a game concept you can create clear and meaningful ties between the game verticals. It makes sense to move from one to the other. It is also possible to clearly target known user types and channel them to appropriate monetization methods. The objects are rational and limited. And your investment is limited. So when a concept tanks it's not sink or swim for your entire catalog. And even better, not even for the game-array. It's possible to succeed in one vertical and not the others so investment can be channeled to the most viable vertical. (You can hedge your bets for a bigger return).

It is also important to limit and make clear these connections and motions between different gaming verticals (game types). If you have a single download game related to a single facebook multiplayer game, it's much easier to provide a single point of transition. It's easy to message, easy to market, and much more likely to be relevant to the user. As apposed to five links to five games that may or may not be relevant.

You lose the entire effect if the games in your game-array are not targeted precisely to one another. It falls apart and become a generic object currency. Which is a black hole in my opinion. High investment, low return, complex, completely dependant.

Target Multiple Demographics and Monetization Methods Simultaneously

The second main advantage of this method is the ability to target vastly different demographics and monetization methods while creating a system to transition and cross promote. The best of all possible worlds without the drawbacks.

It is difficult and unwise to limit yourself to creating a single game that can satisfy the needs of broad and possibly apposed user segments. Especially if the mechanics needed to support the game's profitability are not the same.

Why try to make a downloadable version of the popular FaceBook game Mobsters? It is designed around the concept of free social gameplay, facebook friends and competitive micropayment. It's designed for FB. It's not a downloadable game. And yet highly profitable.

Likewise, why make a FB version of Scrabble that is built on the same mechanic of the download version? There's no way to monetize it. It was designed to make money by an upfront payment. The monetization method should lead and inform the mechanic to create a profitable game.

It's doubly bad to create a game that is simultaneously a download and FB game because it will be equally unsuited for either. Features would need to be limited or crippled for each experience or the mechanics will need to be half baked to support multiple user/monetization types. You build a giant bad thing. It's better to build both versions independently and tie those two well suited and profitable versions together to create synergy without limitation.

It is also difficult to cut the ties to poorly performing verticals. For example, it's doing well as a download but bad as a facebook app. You still have to support the FB side of the game to iterate effectively without diminishing your user base.

Secondly, it is imperative to admit that the FB demographic is inherently different than the casual demographic. There is potential for cross over but any game designed to work equally for both demos is lopping off a huge piece in either direction. And really there's no need.

Create your download game for your casual consumer. Maximize that channel. Then promote the conversion to that game from a FB app that is entirely focused on the FB demo and FB monetization. Any bleed over from between the two will be a profit previously un-mined. Likewise conversion from between the already purchased download game to the free FB version will not hurt your DL profit and will serve as a great viral communication for the DL version. You really can't lose.

But let's be honest. Many of the top rated games on facebook are not viable in the casual demo. Violence, mature (offensive) themes, often male focused concepts. There's no reason to miss out on this market just because we're afraid to unsettle our casual demo either.

Recap

A successful SOCP game-array should have a coherent marketable theme. It should have clear and relevant ties between each node/vertical via simple and persistent social commodities.

Successful game-array design revolves around three points.

1) The social commodity should inform each node's commonality via theme.
2) The monetization method should inform the differences in mechanic.
3) Each node's demographic should dictate content.

Game-arrays should support clear and focused transition between nodes/verticals without hindering or limiting the success or design of each node/vertical.

Specific Responses and Permutations

I think it's important to address three specific responses to the SOCP concept. I've addressed these above but I want to be clear.

1) Create a single game that exists across different channels (or nodes/verticals).

There is a small space that I think this is viable for and that's the casual demographic on Facebook. It is possible to expose casual or casual-to-be gamers to content by creating a FB version and then transition them to a download game. Much like our online games can do. You create a hindered version, etc. There is an untapped market there. But this FB game is not a stand alone successful game. It's a lead.

Similarly creating a download game that makes money from say micropayments and uses a free release is also misguided. Because the cost of creating a competitive download game is too high. FB app mechanics are cheap to assemble and easy to provide free and to iterate into different game themes. That mechanic is best consumed on the web.

There are a variety of problems with creating a single game to exist across multiple channels.

- Each channel has a different way to make money and hence a different mechanic.
- Each channel may have a different demographic.
- Creating a game to work on both limits and hinders the game for either.
- Each channel (and it's features) are tied together and dependant.
- A game of this nature is always targeted at the overlap between casual and social and limits its audience and appeal.
- Putting everything together doesn't always make something better. It sounds appealing. Hey you pay for the download AND I get micropayments? Hey I double my revenue, right? But in reality you create negatives on both sides.   And you lose the ability to really capitalize on what makes that channel special.
- You lose the subtlety between different types of social game types and the demographics each of them serve.

2) Create a set of generic objects to share between an entire catalog of games.

People seem to make a jump that if an object can tie a FB game and a download game together, why not tie all of our games together with a shared currency of objects? This would serve as a way to introduce users to a suite of games, much like a game sequel can introduce consumers to a new product. But the negatives greatly outweigh the positives.

- You can't target the social objects to any theme. You're left with generic objects with less obvious value.
- You strain game themes to include these generic objects
- There is no clear relation between each game and the movement between verticals.
- Your point of transition becomes muddy and diffused.
- Each game in the suite becomes dependant on the other in the attempt to create cross game value as the basis for commodity and micropayment systems.
- The marketing strategy must focus on the objects themselves as a benefit instead of the hook of the game concept and the appeal of the individual game.
- The approach is complex and hard to manage. Interdependencies become difficult to discover.
- Either the game suite must target the same demo and mechanic or the games are too unrelated to be relevant to all users.

I can imagine a system of easter eggs that could tie download to download content but the value of this is much less and less obvious to the user. And it doesn't really serve specifically to create a viral channel for closed content, a pay content for free online games and a clear transition between them.

3) Instead of a game specific object, create a generic currency system to mediate value between unrelated games.

This seems reasonable at first. Generic currency can be easily and seamlessly shared across any game type. It can transmit value from one game to the next. And it rewards users in a way that can be consumed in multiple places. I've heard it described as "scaling" well but I think the real concept is interchangeability or portability.

You can visualize this concept by using the FaceBook game Mafia Wars. In Mafia Wars there is a micropayment currency called Godfather Reward Points. Most micropayment systems use a currency. You can exchange this currency for a variety of advantages in the game.

If you mistake the social element of the game as the currency you could make the currency a global currency shared by all of the Zynga games like "Zynga Points". Accumulating Zynga Points can be consumed in any Zynga game then. You now make a downloadable game that you can consume Zynga Points in.

Is the new downloadable game now social? Or does the inclusion of a game currency create a framework to make the game social?

Mafia Wars is a Role Playing game of sorts where you assume the role of a mobster. The mobsters have and exchange social objects and value while mediating conflicts and power struggles between users. In such the purchasable social objects are not direct. The real social objects then are the mobster characters that create interactions between real people and create socialization often external to the game.

You could make the argument that a currency system makes people social by the act of consumption across multiple channels. But in reality there is nothing intrinsic to the currency to promote or create social interaction aside from the accumulation of wealth. Without the application of wealth as power or conversion to a social object, it is worthless socially.

Currency is a way to increase retention because the value is localized to a specific area. It is a way to port reward value between different channels. And it does give a bullet point to download a game. But there's nothing really social about it.

I think this approach stems from a basic misunderstanding of social theory and social object theory in regards to online communities. Object centered sociality has been a topic of discussion since the 60's and 70's long before the world wide web and facebook. It is a well explored precept and foundation for most modern social products.

Jyri Engestrom, Google's social product owner perhaps the most vocal contributor, Chris Messina, Hugh Macleod, John Breslin, all the major writers on the subject. (specifically at ego vs. object based socialization). You can see the application of these ideas in the once failing Linked In site that rebuilt their product on SOT and has rebounded. In products like Flickr, YouTube, etc.

In the book "Sociality with Objects: Social Relations in Postsocial Knowledge Societies" by Karin Knorr Cetina, Professor of the Theory of Sociology at the Universität Konstanz and guest professor at the University of Chicago. Knorr clearly lays out the foundations of SOT in regards to modern social construction. This theory is still at the heart of industry evangelists like Jyri and others.

At first, the two concepts are unrelated. User socialization and commodity generation. But the known element is user socialization. We know users socialize around objects and we know sites that are built on object socialization tend to succeed and ones that do not tend to fail. If we start at the accepted sound foundation and our goal is to promote social interaction and to create products for services based on SO theory then why not start at SOT as a foundation for those products? This isn't new. Social games are built on social objects. But our question, THE question, is how do you make money from social games? And I think people are starting to crack that nut. Like Zynga. But there's a larger question: how do we make money in social AND use our business's advantages to become the industry leader, to create better social games, to make more money in our current channels and create products that are superior to the competitor's (Big Fish, iWin, PopCap, Zynga, etc).

Social objects are by nature commodities. But there's a fine balance between identifying commodities and understanding the motivations consumer's have for wanting them. The value of a social object is a social value. Its application is in dialogue. And its worth is much more in flux than gold. The value is one to one times many or many to one or one to many. You can't just use a heavy hand to assign value like any old currency system. It's very abstract and can be

multi-edged. The meaning of any social object can change depending on the context of the dialogue it is shared/encountered in. Social objects can be tokens of self expression or expressions of guilt or aspirational or manifestations of aggression. This lack of definition is not a problem or a bad thing. It's a blessing. Because an intelligent crafter can create beautiful transmutations. Systems that function on many many levels simultaneously. If they understand the nature of the commodity and the nature of the consumer.

When we tap into the nature of social objects we tap into the nature of humanity's most dualistic and dialectic foundations. And we have to let go of our black and white concepts of value and exchange.