

RSF quarterly

WWW.RSFSOCIALFINANCE.ORG

1002 O'Reilly Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94129
415.561.3900



December 2013 Pricing Meeting at Summerfield Waldorf School & Farm
Photo courtesy: Miguel Salmeron



Celebrating transformation

► IN THIS ISSUE

2 LETTER FROM DON

3 The Poetry of Transformation

30 YEARS LATER, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF RUDOLF STEINER?

4 A History of RSF Social Finance

A LOOK AT OUR GROWTH OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS

6 Gift Finance in the Ecological Age

CHARLES EISENSTEIN RETHINKS THE FLOW OF CAPITAL FOR THE BENEFIT OF SOCIETY & THE PLANET

8 Personal Stories of Change

HOW MEMBERS OF THE RSF COMMUNITY ARE TRANSFORMING THE WAY THEY WORK WITH MONEY

INVESTING, LENDING, AND GIVING | INSPIRED BY THE WORK OF RUDOLF STEINER

 FOOD & AGRICULTURE

 EDUCATION & THE ARTS

 ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP



LETTER FROM DON

Healing Through Financial Transactions

Dear Friends,

We're so happy to be celebrating RSF's 30th anniversary this spring. It is an honor and a privilege for me to be leading this amazing organization, having been here for just 22% of that time (since 2007).

My co-worker Jillian McCoy has asked some good, tough questions of me for this introduction, such as: What do you see as RSF's most notable achievement? Where do we want to be in the next 5, 10, 15, 30 years?

I could start with some telling numbers: Since 1984, we have made nearly \$300 million in loans to social enterprises. We have a 100% repayment rate (principal + interest) to our investors, and a 2% cumulative loss rate on our loan portfolio (which is extraordinarily low by any objective measure). We now have over 1,500 investors and \$100 million in our flagship Social Investment Fund.

Additionally, we have facilitated over \$100 million in grants, with the pace increasing to between \$10-15 million per year recently. We currently have a staff of 38 with a \$6 million annual operating budget.

We are proud of our growth, but more important is our focus on potency, not scale. We have worked extraordinarily hard to create a culture in which each relationship is sacred. We want to shift the conventionally antagonistic power dynamic between provider-of-capital and receiver-of-capital. This takes time and considerable effort.

I recently visited one of our borrowers in central Florida, called Uncle Matt's. As a 4th generation citrus grower, "Uncle Matt" McLean and his family make organic orange juice. It's super tasty, and it comes with a twist.

Today, there are over 600,000 acres of citrus groves in Florida—only 3,000 acres are certified organic. Uncle Matt's oversees the majority of this organic acreage. About 15 years ago, they were told by scientists from the University of Florida that their groves would likely be in serious jeopardy due to what's known as "citrus greening"—a bacteria that is steadily wiping out citrus fruit worldwide. It turns out that the organic groves are much more resistant to the bacteria than

conventional groves. The scientists were wrong—they thought the genetically-modified, pesticide/herbicide regimes of the conventional growers would be more successful, and had told the McLean's they were crazy. Now these same scientists are visiting the McLean's farms on a weekly basis in order to study exactly how their organic methods are working. Currently, we are working to help the McLean family to purchase a 170-acre grove that is being threatened by housing development from nearby Orlando. It's possible the solution to the global "citrus greening" epidemic lies in the organic methods from this tiny plot of land, and could ultimately save millions of trees worldwide.

This is an example of our focus on potency. We have been to the McLean groves twice in the short time we've had this loan—their previous bankers from Orlando had never visited the farms, only wanting to see the processing facilities. We are trying to find investors for the land purchase, introducing them to biodynamic growers around the country, and connecting them to other organic food entrepreneurs in the RSF borrower community.

We believe we're helping to create an energetic field where healing-through-financial-transactions is possible. Our plan is to steadily expand our trust network over the next 30 years, one relationship at a time. We look forward to engaging all of you in that process. ☺

Warmly,

Don Shaffer,
President & CEO



The Poetry of Transformation

By John Bloom, Senior Director, Organizational Culture

One beautiful aspect of transformation is the evolutionary element of continuity. Nature is alive with these mysterious metamorphic processes, from seed to leaf, from DNA to a human being. If one can accept that even in a world full of intentionally disruptive activities there is an underlying connective thread, then our task is not to react to “revolutionary” events as isolated, but rather to understand them instead as symptoms of this deeper process. In the grand scheme, one could call this the evolution of

human consciousness, and there is poetry to its path—though not always an easy one. For example, what if we took the performance of the stock market as a barometric measure of the human spirit? What would that really say about

us as individuals, our relationships, and the culture in which this investment marketplace is embedded? Even if I have no shares or investments, am I really separate from the stock market? And, how could I hold that thought if I really believe (and I do) that we are fully interdependent and interconnected?

It is not an accident that I chose the example of Wall Street. At RSF we often cite it as the antithesis of what we are trying to accomplish through our purpose of transforming the way the world works with money. What we call our theory of change—to make every transaction direct, transparent, personal, and based on long-term relationships—is actually our theory of transformation. We know that, no matter how active and thoughtful we are, we are not going to flip the human-institutional-behavior-money-transaction switch over night. We understand that each individual has to take him or herself through a process and practice. And we

know there are more people who have come to this realization, and many more working to get there. From this perspective, our clients join us as a community of practice and as transformational activists/participants.

Given the challenge of gathering a thirty year perspective on the evolution of RSF Social Finance (and I have been honored to be part of RSF half that time), the question that arose for me was: How does an organization committed to transformation lead by

For an organization founded to further the work of those directly connected to Rudolf Steiner's work, it could feel to some that we have not only changed, but also left anthroposophy behind. This is not at all the case.

example? This question, of course, brings one back to origin stories and historical data. This information is important, and RSF's emergence in 1984 through the loan to the fire-destroyed Pine Hill Waldorf School is well storied. Many more stories have transpired over the last thirty years as a browse through our *RSF Quarterly* and

Annual Report archives would show. Both inwardly and outwardly much has changed. We are now nearly forty staff, our loan portfolio is approximately 50/50 non-profit and for-profit and the character and quality of those loans have grown more complex. Where once Waldorf schools were our anchor borrowers they are now less than half. For an organization founded to further the work of those directly connected to Rudolf Steiner's work, it could feel to some that we have not only changed, but also left anthroposophy behind. This is not at all the case. Many of our early clients assumed Waldorf schools defined that relationship, but we have now stepped far more fully into supporting the evolution of an associative economy—as Steiner imagined economic life should unfold—through such efforts as our quarterly pricing meetings.

> Continued on page 10



A History of RSF Social Finance

1936

The Rudolf Steiner Foundation (RSF) is incorporated as treasury for the Anthroposophical Society in America. RSF remains small for nearly 50 years.

1983

Siegfried Finser (a trustee of RSF) begins meeting with colleague, John Alexandra, to look for ways to work with money that are more consistent with the spiritual and social insights of Rudolf Steiner.

1984

Mark Finser, Ann Stahl, and Philip Mees join S. Finser and Alexandra in the startup. Soon after, RSF receives a request for a loan from the Pine Hill Waldorf School in New Hampshire, which was destroyed by fire the previous year. When the request is made, the Foundation only has \$6,000 cash in assets. The founding group reaches out to the community to fundraise, and the Rudolf Steiner Foundation makes its first loan commitment in the amount of \$500,000.

RSF's first offices are located in John Alexandra's garage in Spring Valley, New York and the Carriage House in Ghent, New York.

Total Assets: \$356,000
Loan Portfolio: \$88,000
Investor Funds: \$315,000
Client Accounts: 17

1985

RSF begins making grants through its first Donor Advised Fund, made possible by the generosity of Mary T. Richards.

1989

RSF reaches financial stability, operating income matches operating expenses for the first time.

Total Assets: \$5,067,000
Loan Portfolio: \$2,893,000
Investor Funds: \$3,563,000
Client Accounts: 264

1991

Mark Finser is elected RSF's first executive president and CEO.

1994

RSF moves to its first entirely owned property in Harlemlville, New York, with a small office still in Spring Valley.

Total Assets: \$9,022,000
Loan Portfolio: \$4,458,000
Investor Funds: \$5,060,000
Client Accounts: 445

1998

RSF moves to the Presidio in San Francisco. This move is symbolic

of a major change for the organization. At this point, RSF begins to expand its activities beyond anthroposophical initiatives and becomes more active in the world by standing for change in the way money and resources are viewed and utilized by humanity.

1999

Total Assets: \$30,608,000
Loan Portfolio: \$14,253,000
Investor Funds: \$12,569,000
Client Accounts: 535

2002

RSF launches its first pilot for for-profit lending called the Fair Economy Fund. Early borrowers include Organic Bouquet and Bent Oak Farms.

2004

Total Assets: \$80,691,000
Loan Portfolio: \$34,081,000
Investor Funds: \$39,162,000
Client Accounts: 1010

2005

RSF rebrands as RSF Social Finance to be clearer about its position and work in the world of finance. RSF adopts "inspired

by the work of Rudolf Steiner” to keep the connection transparent.

RSF is among the first in the industry to launch mission-aligned Donor Advised Funds (DAF). With this new format, assets held in DAFs are invested for social and environmental benefit.

2007

Don Shaffer joins as President & CEO; Mark Finser becomes Chairman of the Board. At that time, RSF's assets have grown to \$120,000,000.

2008

The RSF Mezzanine Fund is launched. This is the first fund to provide mission-aligned financing (from accredited investors) for early-stage social enterprises.

2009

RSF breaks from LIBOR as a benchmark for setting interest rates, and launches RSF Prime, a community-based model for determining interest rates. The first Quarterly Pricing Meeting — a community discussion to recommend rates — is held in September at RSF's offices.

Total Assets: \$123,005,000
Loan Portfolio: \$69,149,000
Investor Funds: \$64,785,000
Client Accounts: 1228



2010

In response to the indirect, opaque, impersonal and volatile nature of the stock market, RSF divests from all public equities and redirects capital to investments more closely aligned with its values.

The RSF Program Related Investing Fund (PRI) is launched. This fund serves the increasing number of private foundations interested in using program related investment to support charitable projects. The Fund focuses on the Food & Agriculture sector.

2011

The first RSF Shared Gifting meeting is held. Shared Gifting is a new model of grantmaking that gives grantees the power to decide how a pool of funds is allocated

among participants. This model encourages collaboration instead of competition and is based on RSF's Mid-States Shared Gifting Group.

In partnership with Leslie Christian of Portfolio 21 Investments, RSF publishes “A New Foundation for Portfolio Management,” a white paper that challenges the traditional notions of portfolio theory and investment management. It is grounded in the understanding that economic growth cannot be infinite on a planet with finite natural resources.

2014

Q1 2014 estimates

Total Assets: \$162,998,000
Loan Portfolio: \$74,769,000
Investor Funds: \$99,704,000
Client Accounts: 1836



 GUEST ESSAY

Gift Finance in the Ecological Age

By Charles Eisenstein

Ever since the statistic we call GDP was invented in the 1930s, economists and politicians have used it as a proxy for the public good. It seems reasonable: the more goods and services being bought, the more everyone has—more cars, bigger houses, more music, and more conveniences. As GDP rises, life gets richer and richer.

In this context, ethical investing is more or less congruent with conventional investing. A high return means that your capital has successfully contributed to the expansion of the economy. You have contributed to the production of more salable goods and services. Fundamentally, this is the logic underlying neo-liberal economic policies: governments should do what they can to further the efficient functioning of markets, so that capital is free to flow toward the highest return. It is also the reasoning behind Gordon Gecko's famous maxim, "Greed is good."

Today this ideology is crumbling. Of course, some profitable investments also benefit society and the planet. But in general, the growth of GDP—and the source of profits—is coming from the depletion of the biosphere, the commoditization of "developing" societies, fracking, stripmining, deforestation, and more subtly, the conversion of the gift relationships that form communities into monetary transactional relationships.

Moreover, as even these sources of profit dry up, the highest returns are to be found not in creating new wealth, but in stripping it from the productive economy through financialization. The last six years have seen huge profits in transferring wealth from the middle class, homeowners, nations, and manufacturers through debt-pressure and the financialization of assets.

In the past, socially responsible investors could have it both ways: they could avoid the most obviously harmful

investments, and still earn a decent rate of return. That is becoming impossible, for two reasons. First, as the prevailing rate of return on capital stagnates or falls, the economic system as a whole comes under increasing pressure to exploit whatever profit opportunities remain, even if they come at grievous human and environmental cost. So for example, as supplies of safely obtainable oil and gas dwindle, we are pushed toward fracking and off-shore drilling.

Another example can be found in the downward pressure on wages and environmental standards.

Secondly, socially responsible investors themselves are awakening to the interconnection of all things. They now see the delusion of cordoning off some subset of investments and pretending that they don't contribute to an overall economic

system that is inherently destructive. For example, maybe you vow not to invest in fossil-fuel energy companies, or in any company that is clearcutting and stripmining in South America. OK then, how about the banks that finance these activities? How about the manufacturers that use the stripmined minerals? That would include the entire tech sector. You might stay away from companies that employ sweatshop labor abroad or minimum-wage labor at home—but what about companies that contract with these companies? Ultimately, it is nearly impossible to make profits without participating in a system of social injustice and ecocide.

But that doesn't mean you should withdraw from the system and bury your money under the apple tree. That won't help anyone. The point is not to avoid the taint of complicity, but rather to align money with values. What we need is a shift in how "investment" is conceived.

What is an investment? For a long time, we have considered it to be a way to grow one's money. That was the goal, and the socially conscious investor sought, within that parameter, to do as little harm or as much good as possible.

On some level we know life is a gift,
and so is everything we have and
everything we earn. Investing
in the spirit of the gift is therefore
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gratitude at being alive.

Fundamentally though, he was taking a share of the growing economic pie.

Now that we are realizing that that parameter, in itself, encodes harm, and that the pie can grow no longer, we need to reconceive what an investment is. That isn't to say we eschew a positive return; it means we

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don't precondition the investment on the likelihood of a positive return. We don't base the investment on what it will bring back to ourselves. We make it, in other words, a gift.

This gift can take several forms. One would be outright philanthropy—the gift of money. Another would be a zero-interest loan, the gift of the use of money. To a lesser extent, even a loan at below-market rates is a gift. The same goes for an equity investment in an enterprise that has lower profit potential or higher risk than the numbers would justify.

What unifies all of these is that pecuniary calculations are secondary. What directs the flow of capital is the investor's desire to contribute to something meaningful, something beautiful, something that benefits the planet and society. Money becomes a creative tool and the investor becomes an artist. We all know that a painter who paints to please the critics or the art markets has sold out, and in an important sense isn't a true artist at all – something else has come first. The same is true for the investor. You might end up profiting after all, but that is not the goal. The goal is to use money in the most beautiful way you dare.

Investment in the spirit of the gift is quite natural when we recognize that our money has come to us as a gift. That's obviously true in the case of inherited money, but what if you earned it by dint of hard work and creative genius? Well then, did you earn your creativity? Did you earn the capacity to work hard? Did you earn this planet, the earth, the water, the sun? Did you earn being born? Did you earn your mother? On some level we know life is a gift, and so is everything we have and everything we earn. Investing in the spirit of the gift is therefore a simple expression of our basic gratitude at being alive.

Spiritual teachings such as the doctrine of karma tell us that anything we give out comes back to us in some form. We cannot escape the consequences, good or ill, of what we do. That was obvious in traditional communities, in which one's contribution was visible and would generate gratitude or disapproval from everyone

> Continued on page 11

GRATITUDE FOR OUR PARTNERS

One of the many qualities that sets RSF apart from other financial service organizations is the importance we place on relationships. We believe we can cultivate meaningful relationships through financial transactions and each day we consider how to build and nurture those trusting relationships; this work is core to transforming the way the world works with money. Our commitment to relationships stretches beyond our investors, donors, borrowers and grantees. We exist within a vast ecosystem of social finance partners—pioneering individuals and organizations changing business, banking, and economic life for the better. Some of these partners we support through sponsorships, others we have a funding relationship with, others are research and thought partners—all of them are integral to the ecosystem and for driving the systemic change needed to create a truly healthy economy. Over the past 30 years, this ecosystem of partners has grown considerably and we have fostered and relied on these interdependent relationships. We would not have been as successful without them. There are too many individuals and organizations to list but we would like to express our deepest gratitude for them and their steadfast commitment and partnership. Here's to the next 30 years!



CLIENTS IN CONVERSATION

Personal Stories of Change

by Jillian McCoy, Communications Manager

RSF's theory of change is based on facilitating transformation at the individual level. We decided to reach out to learn exactly how members of our community have transformed the way they work with money.

Neil Blomquist, Trustee

How I work with and think about money has not changed a whole lot since mid-1970's when I found the organic community and embraced it as my life, but the transformation has come with my own maturity and the deeper understanding that Rudolf Steiner and RSF Social Finance have provided. It has deepened my conviction for change and confirmed that this is the path toward a more positive future for humanity and the planet.

Dorothy Hinkle-Uhlig, Investor

Many years ago I was led to meditate on a beautiful watercolor by Liane Collot d'Herbois titled "Money", and subsequently I experienced a spiritual awakening about the nature of money and my responsibility toward this important gift of the spirit. Many important conversations with others and within followed as I tried to articulate what money is, and how am I to work with money. Money became alive as I, in my small way, sent it into the stream of life and saw it transform whatever it touched and then beyond as it flowed into society.

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The work with money begins in the very personal realm of a personal decision and then continues on touching, transforming and realizing. Am I awake to the importance

of each transaction with money? Does it support transformation and healing? Does it hinder the good? I strive to understand the answers to these questions within each deed with money. When I buy my food and my sweater and my computer, I send money into the social flow; when I invest my extra money and borrow for that big need, I send money into the social flow; when I gift to an emerging initiative and to the needy, I send money into the social flow. I have learned that my personal transformation continues to happen one moment at a time when I am awake to this flow in the moment. May the flow continue to enable the good. It is sacred work. It is community work.

Mark Censits, Trustee

I am working on an initiative that I believe will transform the way money flows in my town of Princeton, NJ. While this is not simply a personal behavioral change with respect to money, my efforts in initiating this new venture are indeed very much driven by my personal relationship to money, specifically with regard to building local economies. When I was looking for a loan for the expansion of my Princeton CoolVines store, I was very disappointed in the lack of connection that I felt from the local "community" bank. The experience was anything but personal, transparent and direct — and it drove me to imagine other ways that local businesses like CoolVines could tap into the resources of the local community for capital support. That combined with the changes afoot with the JOBS Act and web technology spurred an idea that we call the Community Investment Exchange. It is still in the concept stages but we hope to launch it sometime this Spring.

David Lapedis, Investor

I have transformed the way I work with money by seeing it as a part of me and all living things. Each time I make

a purchase, I remind myself of that with an affirmation. I actually pause every time I use my credit card and focus on that. Money is just the energy of this universe coming back and circulating through me. I find that I am more grateful for my experiences and the material things in life when I am in touch with that.

A particular experience that changed the way I deal with money was taking a class with Katherine Revoir called Money, Metaphysics, and the Meaning of Life. That changed the way I look at anything that shows up in my life. She taught me to see money as me and related to all of the energy here on this planet.

I have transformed the way I work with money by seeing it as a part of me and all living things.

Another experience that shifted how I look at money was when I realized that I was making a good interest rate on an online savings account (approximately 3%), but I didn't know where that money was being invested. I realized that it is very important for me to know what my energy (money) is being used to create. I moved my money out of that account and into one that actively creates the world I want to live in, investing in renewable energy. I felt so much better knowing my money was going towards that even though the interest rate was significantly lower.

Taryn Goodman, Staff

I seek complete transparency in all of my investments — it enables relationships and allows me to be more comfortable with the investment because I can fully understand the risks involved.

Coleman Lyles Executive Director, Camphill Communities of California, Borrower

I have been in association with RSF for over 30 years in a kind of organizational alliance, one anthroposophical organization to another. What I have experienced about money is that through anthroposophical insights and principles, money becomes incidental to what is accomplished outwardly and more connected to what is happening spiritually.

A metaphor for this can be taken from art and the way one could relate to a production of Rudolf Steiner's Mystery Drama. An audience appreciates what is happening on the stage not necessarily because it is a polished

performance, but rather because it senses that the spiritual world is interested in what is happening on the stage. This is a new way of relating to drama and art as such. What matters as much as the finished product is the spiritual striving and the intention behind it.

Like deep appreciation in art, money begins to flow towards that which the spiritual world is taking an interest in. Often it is something that is quiet, unassuming and of a seed nature, rather than a fully formed, hot house fruit that is the next big thing to hit the market.

Birju Pandya, Investor & Partner

I am transforming the way I work with money by walking towards fear in small ways, practicing two phrases: 'resist nothing' and 'appreciate the chain'. The first phrase applies to instances when I am being paid for work. I try not to come from a transaction space but from a space of offering and gift for my efforts. The second phrase applies to purchase transactions. Whenever I engage with money to receive something, I try to recognize and appreciate the entire value chain involved in it.

Kelley Buhles, Staff

Because of working at RSF, I better understand what my money makes possible in the world. Since I began working here I have moved 60% of my personal money into socially responsible investments. I pay more attention to what impact different types of money have on me, for example, loan vs. gift or socially responsible investments vs. not-socially responsible investments. Also, I recently challenged myself to start giving more. I selected two organizations to make monthly donations to. Despite tight budgets, I end up prioritizing these two donations over almost everything else!

Nicole Dawes CEO, Late July Snacks, Borrower

Watching and participating in the way RSF works, particularly in the pricing meetings, has opened my eyes to the importance and impact of transparency in all financial transactions. Understanding how others are impacted by your decisions helps ground your actions. I realize that all negotiations can't take place in the confines of the RSF pricing meeting format, but in almost all cases you can at least bring some of the elements of open discussion around goals and impact. I have made a conscience effort to bring this open dialogue to my discussions with retailers and vendors and found we both end up happier with the result. 🌀

> “The Poetry of Transformation”

continued from page 3

Despite the allure of talking about all that we have accomplished, I find myself drawn to trace what I would consider the more character-based aspects of the organization—not so much what it has done, but rather who it is and what it stands for as an expression of its being. If one follows this thread of core values and practices, the steady evolution of a spiritually inspired financial organization, and specifically the inspiration of Rudolf Steiner’s work, becomes visible in a way that speaks of continuity—a kind of poetry of transformation.

There is a bit of the then and now in how I will approach this exploration. And, there will be some language that seems a bit esoteric as RSF was first and foremost a financial arm of the Anthroposophical Society in America, founded to further Rudolf Steiner’s work. In addition to this founding commitment there was a vision for working in a new way in finance and with money. Here is a selection from “The Foundation’s Ideals” from the 1985 brochure:

To serve as an objective third party in transactions between donors, lenders [*investors in current parlance*], and receivers of financial resources. Interest in the intentions of others is its primary focus.

To foster:

- A threefolding of social life that reflects the three-fold organism of the human being
- Increased understanding of the fundamental social law and its working in society
- A spirit of determined cooperation in the financing of the work of the anthroposophical movement

[Steiner’s fundamental social law is, in abridged form: the degree to which we work to meet the needs of others, our needs will be met. Steiner was asking us to recognize the primacy of interest in the other over self-interest]

Fast forward to the present. Here are the first two of RSF’s current operating principles all of which were developed collaboratively by current staff, none of whom would likely have seen the original brochure. All twelve principles can be found on our website along with our purpose and values.

- Transformation: We are committed to working with those who seek to transform their relationship to money and with those who seek to redefine the core assumptions of our economic and financial systems. We strive to lead by example.
- Service: We co-create RSF Social Finance with our stakeholders - staff, board, investors, donors, borrowers, grantees, asset managers, partners, and friends.

Through listening, we try to discern what is being called for next in a spirit of service. Long-term relationships are of primary importance. We place high value on intention.

I could do a detailed analysis between the earlier brochure statements and our current operating principles, but am hoping that the focus on intention, interest in our clients and the world, determined cooperation/co-creation, and a view of working with money as a tool for cultural change stand out immediately.

In researching this material, I found myself taken aback at how much significant outward change, growth and visibility could happen, and at the same time, how slowly and steadily RSF’s core being has evolved to becoming reflective of founding ideals, yet more linguistically true to those currently doing the work. It has also become accessible to an increasingly broad audience.

So how has RSF, an organization committed to transformation, continually transformed itself in a way that garners trust and engagement for public benefit? Such an organization listens thoughtfully and learns deeply through its interest in others. It holds that wisdom is held in the wider community rather than only by the organization itself. At the same time it reflects on what the world is asking, the opportunities it presents, and, in the spirit of inquiry, asks how its core principles can be practiced and developed through service. As an organization, RSF works at knowing itself while deepening its connections to its spiritual well-spring as a way to best prepare to be of service to the world.

Money and financial transactions are RSF’s tools. So we continue, thirty years later, to benefit from Rudolf Steiner’s insights, from the insights of RSF’s founders, and from the gifts of wisdom and resources from staff and clients, so that personal and organizational change invite and lead the cultural and financial system transformation needed for a regenerative future. ☺

> "Gift Finance in the Ecological Age"
continued from page 7

else, and in which anyone who had more than he or she needed would share it. In that society, your good fortune was my good fortune, because you would have more to share. Spiritual teaching and economic life were aligned.

In today's anonymous market economy, it would seem otherwise. A gift seems like an act of self-sacrifice. Yet those who enter into the territory of the gift find the opposite is true, and that indeed one's gifts do return in some form. In truth, we are not really separate from other people or the world. Our civilization is now learning that as well in ecological terms, as we find that we cannot escape the consequences of what we do to nature.

As humanity relearns that truth, our economic systems are bound to change to come into coherency with it. The economy of the future will reinforce, and not contradict, the aspirations that motivate the social financier. Someday, the best business decision will also be the best ecological decision, and the wealth of each will be the wealth of all. The ideology of selfishness bears a kernel of truth after all, when we understand that "self-interest" is really the full expression of one's gifts, and not the maximization of control over others. Already we can see glimpses of a system on the horizon that unifies economics with spiritual and ecological principles: ideas like green taxes, reclamation of the commons, interest-free financial systems, universal basic income, gift economies for digital goods, the sharing economy, and reskilling. They show us the world that is coming—if it doesn't come, indeed there will not be a world.

That means that the social financier is preparing for the future, and her investments might turn out to be economically remunerative after all. Even if you are investing in something with no foreseeable return – wetlands restoration, for example, or community self-sufficiency in India – who knows how the knowledge base and relationships you cultivate will develop? Who knows, through the uncertain times ahead of us, how what you give will come back to you?

Have no fear. The problem as you take your natural next step into the gift is not that your giving will leave you depleted and unable to give. The "problem" will be that your giving will bring yet more wealth into your life (financial wealth or otherwise), possibly via mysterious pathways. You will then need to develop further as an artist, as a giver. When we give, we widen the channel through us and the throughput grows along with its associated challenges.

What is the next step? It might involve changes in your mix of gifts, investments, and so on. It might involve using money to contribute to systems change; it might

operate on a more personal level. Unexpected opportunities will arise—just at the edge of your courage but not beyond it—when you embrace the knowledge stirring within: that social finance is an art form; that money is its creative tool; and that the world is calling all of us to devote our gifts toward the profound and beautiful transition that is before humanity today. 

CHARLES EISENSTEIN

is a speaker and writer focusing on themes of human culture and identity. He is the author of several books, most recently *Sacred Economics* and *The More Beautiful World our Hearts Know is Possible*.

His background includes a degree in mathematics and philosophy from Yale, a decade in Taiwan as a translator, and stints as a college instructor, a yoga teacher, and a construction worker. He currently writes and speaks full-time.

He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and four children.

Join Us at These Events

For the latest on RSF's participation in conferences and events, check out our "Events" page at rfsocialfinance.org/connect/events

SEA SUMMIT

4/13/14-4/16/14
Nashville, TN
www.summit14.org

MISSION INVESTORS EXCHANGE

5/13/14 – 5/15/14
St. Paul, MN
www.missioninvestors.org

SVN SPRING CONFERENCE

4/24/14 – 4/27/14
San Diego, CA
www.svn.org

BALLE CONFERENCE

6/11/14 – 6/13/14
Oakland, CA
www.bealocalist.org

RSF'S WORK: A CONVERSATION WITH DON SHAFFER

4/29/14
RSF Webinar

SAFSF FORUM

6/17/14 – 6/19/14
Denver, CO
www.safsf.org

SLOW MONEY REGIONAL GATHERING

5/2/14
Portland, ME
www.slowmoneymaine.org

WHAT'S AHEAD

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