Conceptual, Terminological and Methodological Foundations for Addressing Non-Commercial Transfers

Balises conceptuelles, terminologiques et méthodologiques pour aborder les transferts non marchands

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Exploring the Archipelago of Non-commercial Circulation

1 Anthropology has long highlighted the existence of regimes for the circulation of goods and services that are not part of the market or that function according to logics other than commercial exchanges. Researchers who have studied this question have nevertheless encountered difficulties in defining and categorizing these non-commercial transfers. Marcel Mauss' *Essay on the Gift* is one of the first attempts. Based on the description of particular forms of "economic" transfers in different places and times, he proposes using the notion of the gift to encompass a very disparate set of social practices.[1] Nevertheless, Mauss himself is not completely satisfied with his terminological choices:

> Nevertheless, we can still go further than we have so far. We can dissolve, stir up, color, and define differently the main notions that we have employed. [...] The terms that we have used—present, gift (*cadeau*), *don*—are not altogether exact themselves. We simply cannot find others, that is all. These concepts of law (droit)

> and economy that it pleases us to contrast—liberty and obligation; liberality, generosity, luxury and savings, interest, and utility—it would be good to put them all back into the melting pot. We can give only pointers on this subject [...] There is a sort of hybrid that has blossomed. (Mauss 2016: 186.)

2 Since then, many works have sought to redefine the outline and properties of this field or to establish typologies of forms of transfer[2] (Sahlins 1976; Gregory 1982; Polanyi 1957; Carrier 1991; Godbout 1992; Caillé 2000; Weber 2000, 2002, 2007; Testart 2007, 2013; Graeber 2010; Athané 2011; Descola 2013; Steiner 2014). Although they have on occasion made it possible to do as Mauss suggested and go further in the analyses, the terms proposed to name and distinguish the different types of transfers have nevertheless multiplied without having been stabilized or universally adopted. An overview of the situation leads to the following list: gift and counter-gift, archaic exchange, symbolic exchange, total prestation, ceremonial exchange, generalized and restricted exchange, ritual economy, moral economy, principle of reciprocity and non-commercial transaction or transfer. These notions are often poorly defined, and when they are, everyone proposes his or her own definition, often in opposition to commercial transactions. It is difficult today to precisely define these phenomena in part because there is no common terminological ground for discussions.[3]

3 In this context, a series of questions arise: is there a socio-economic field that covers a wide variety of transfers that, although widely diverse, can be conceptually unified in their distinction from the regime of commercial circulation? How can this field be defined, what are its properties and how should it be qualified? Why is the notion of the gift—highly criticized but still widely used to qualify these transfer practices—unsatisfactory? These questions call forth two others, both of which are more epistemological: is it relevant and useful to bring together such diverse practices in the same field, under a common name? What is the heuristic interest of such an approach?

4 My position is apparent given our collective ambition to bring together case studies of very disparate transfers in a single issue. Our examples range from offerings to saints in South Asia to sales of agricultural products in non-commercial relations of production in Laos, from ceremonial gifts between villagers in Myanmar to transactions and services involved in development aid in Laos, from remittances in Vietnam to customary poems accompanied by offerings in Indonesia. There is a tenuous link between these transfers, but one significant enough to bring them together under the same category. This introduction seeks to define this common denominator and thereby contribute to characterizing and delimiting the field of transfers that remain distinct from commercial transactions. Following Alain Testart (2007), I will call this field "non-commercial circulation." This label suffers from the disadvantage of defining practices by what they are not but offers the advantage of keeping the field relatively open and including a wide range of transfers. I will use the terms "transfer" to denote the act of transferring a good, performing a service, or transmitting an "intangible"[4] from a sender to a human or non-human recipient (Hunt 2002). Stripped of their conceptual charge, this general and basic term seem the most appropriate to name the movement of "things" outside of the causal relationships, obligations, and socio-political processes that in turn define what I will call "types of transfers" (Testart 2007; Pickles 2020). The aim is not to propose a conceptual framework for analyzing all forms of transfer, but to propose descriptive categories "...that could help to combine typological distinctions with the systematic effort of historical and cultural contextualization" (Silber 2007, our translation).

5 As Florence Weber points out, “non-commercial exchange regimes constitute, with respect to the market regime, a continent, or better still an archipelago of great complexity” (Weber 2007: 37, our translation). The metaphor of the archipelago is particularly appropriate because it allows us to insist on the fact that these practices are situated in the same “sphere,” the same conceptual space, but do not constitute a homogeneous whole. This sphere encompasses a great diversity of logics and heterogeneous forms of transfer, which stem from varied social relationships. Our ambition is twofold: to define the outline of this archipelago and to give some landmarks or beacons to identify the islands that constitute it. In other words, it is not a matter of defining these transfers only in terms of being non-commercial exchanges, but also for what they are. By referring to and extending the conceptual and methodological insights of several authors, I identify the properties of this circulation regime and propose categories to qualify specific forms of transfer within it.

6 In order to retrace the path that leads to this categorization, the first section of this introduction explains how and why developing ideal-typic categories is useful to qualify and study the various forms of transfers. The second section presents the two main trends that divide French theoretical studies on this phenomenon: those concerned with the “common” and those focusing on the “particular”. The third section consists of a critical review of the criteria used by anthropologists to define the characteristic features of this circulation regime. Finally, using the above as a framework, the last section outlines the properties of non-commercial circulation and proposes a grammar for naming and distinguishing the different forms of transfers.

7 I will thus show that although most of the criteria used by anthropologists to delineate non-commercial transfers do not allow for the inclusion of all the transfers that make up this field, they testify to a common characteristic. The common denominator is the necessary presence of another social relationship than the one established during the transfer, a relationship between the parties that is not strictly economic and that goes beyond, frames and conditions the unfolding of the transfers. While such a relationship may exist in market transactions, it is not inherent in their most frequent empirical manifestations (Chantelat 2002), nor is it in all cases a condition of their unfolding (Weber 2000; Testart 2007; Athané 2011). From this premise, I will argue that when this pivotal social interaction falls within the sphere of interpersonal relations, where the idiosyncratic characteristics of persons are directly at play and determining, we are on the island of interpersonal circulation, one of the largest in the archipelago.

The Ridgeline

8 I propose exploring a path at the intersection of two positions: the usefulness of common categories and the irreducible singularity of social practices necessarily situated in a given place and time. The first stems from Hannah Arendt’s observation in *The Crisis of Culture*, which deplores the tendency in the social sciences to “ignore distinctions and proceed on the assumption that everything can eventually be called anything else, and that distinctions are meaningful only to the extent that each of us has the right to define his terms.” (Arendt 1961: 95). Paul Veyne echoes the second position:

> [...] the most cunning danger is that of words that raise false essences in our minds and people history with universals that do not exist. [...] When we utter the words

> assistance, gift, sacrifice, crime, madness, or religion, we are incited to believe [...] that there exists an entity called the gift or the potlatch, that has constant, defined properties-for example, that of raising up counter-gifts or of giving prestige and superiority to the beneficiaries. (Veyne 1984: 134.)

9 The junction of these two positions lies on a narrow ridge between two pitfalls: essentialism and radical nominalism. The first substitutes essentializing concepts for the diversity of contextualized and singular social practices. The opposing bias considers that there are only non-generalizable singularities making it impossible to use generic concepts to qualify distinct local realities. This ridgeline is an important one to explore, particularly for the study of non-commercial transfers. I will now explain why.

10 The contributors to this issue of *Moussons* were initially gathered around the theme "non-commercial transaction" knowing that the transfers we study fall within the same field. This was either because the transfers occur outside the market or because they are regulated by principles other than those of commercial transactions. The characteristics of commercial transactions generally used to distinguish them from non-commercial transfers include: commensurability allowing for equivalence (Gregory 1982; Godbout 1992) and coordinated through prices and institutional arrangements (Polanyi 1957; Steiner 2010); the relationship to things governs the relationship between people (Testart 2007) which implies the primacy of the exchange and use-value over the value of the relationship (Carrier 1991); the putting up for sale of things and thus the presence of mechanisms linking supply and demand (Testart 2007); relationships marked by impersonality, instantaneity and discontinuity (Chantelat 2002) between independent individuals, without lasting ties or obligations (Carrier 1991); the ease with which social agents can leave the exchange relationship (Hirschman 1970) and finally the alienation of the thing transferred (Gregory 1982; Weiner 1992).

11 Based on these distinctions and a comparison of our case studies, we identified at least two reasons why locating our work within the "non-commercial" category could become problematic. First, many of the transfers we observed were either market-related or shared commonalities with market transactions. Second and more fundamental, while we could define "what they are not" in relation to market circulation, we had difficulty defining the properties and outline of non-commercial circulation itself. We were not all referring to the same things but using the same terms.

12 The conceptual and terminological stumbling blocks we encountered reflect a more general confusion that hinders the study of these transfers: the absence of common terms with established definitions. The majority of researchers who have studied this field make the same view:

> Words like gift, exchange, reciprocity, sharing, redistribution, and solidarity form a set of ill-defined terms whose usage varies greatly from one author to another. Similarly, a quick examination of dictionaries specializing in anthropology, sociology and philosophy shows to what extent the entries "gift" and "exchange" are characterized by confusion and misunderstanding. (Berthoud 2004: 366, our translation.)
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> Mauss' own terminology—the "potlatch," the "total prestation," the "gift," "reciprocity"—served well enough for making broad moral points about the logic of the market, but as terms of cross-cultural comparison, they are blunt instruments: extremely imprecise. (Graeber 2001: 217.)

13 The adoption of the concept of the gift as articulated first by M. Mauss and then extended across a large portion of the literature has only amplified the confusions and difficulties. The moral connotations that this term carries (disinterested, complimentary, altruistic, liberal, unconditional, etc.) hinder the accurate analysis of the social practices it is supposed to qualify. Mauss had already pointed out that these transfers often, if not always, include elements of interest and constraint. Moreover, as David Graeber reminds us, reducing these transactions to the single conceptual category of the gift runs the risk of missing the diversity of forms, expressions, principles, and logics that are actually at work (2010:69). Correspondingly, some authors (Lécrivain 2002; Testart 2007, 2013; Athané 2011; Darmangeat 2016) have shown that the gift is but a part of a larger whole, a particular form of transfer, distinct from exchange,[5] compensation, or tribute, and thus cannot refer to the whole. Faced with these long-standing and recurrent conflations, many researchers call for clarifying the terms used to describe and analyze these particular regimes of circulation (Godbout 1992; Caillé 2000, 2007; Weber 2000, 2007; Testart 2007; Berthoud 2004; Silber 2004, 2007; Graeber 2001, 2010; Athané 2011; Pickles 2020).

14 The difficulty is that, in empirical reality, the transfers we observe are hardly subsumable under fixed and exclusive categories applicable in each and every case. As the articles that make up this special issue of *Moussons* illustrate, it is often hybrid forms, mixtures and overlapping of logics that we observe. Three scenarios presented themselves across the different instances.

15 In the first scenario, forms of transfer intertwine. It is common to find non-commercial elements within a market exchange and vice versa (Carrier 1991; Godbout 1992). In the article published in this issue, Pierre Alary shows that a market exchange can take place in an environment where the relations of production are non-commercial. It is also not uncommon to observe that the properties of exchange and gift intermingle to constitute hybrid or compound forms of transfer (Darmangeat 2016). For example, I have shown (Pannier 2015) that ceremonial transfers in Vietnam are gifts, but include many formal properties of exchange as defined by Testart (1998, 2007, 2013): reciprocity of transfers, transfers coupled in pairs (two-way transfers), reciprocity of obligations, reciprocity of causes (gifts and counter-gifts are cause and effect of each other), and presence of financial debt until return is made.

16 The second scenario documented here requires us to nuance the classification of transfers in exclusive categories and to pay attention to the chains of transactions by following the path of items in circulation. These are cases where the same good changes status in the course of its journey, moving, for example, from gift to commodity and vice versa (Appadurai 1986). The remittances sent by Vietnamese abroad to their families in Vietnam, whose path is traced by Christophe Vigne in this issue, is exemplary: a socially and morally obliged gift of solidarity becomes a commercial investment, after passing through the state or private banking channels that ensure the transit of foreign currency to Vietnam. In her article published here, Delphine Ortis also describes how fabrics dedicated to Muslim saints honored in Indo-Pakistani shrines are first purchased in markets and then become offerings ultimately redistributed as gifts or resold to shopkeepers. By analyzing the pattern of exchanges between the Saint (and shrine) and the worshipper, she ultimately identifies a form of "compound transfer," in which elements of the gift are mixed with elements of non-

commercial exchange, bringing us back to the first scenario on entanglement of transfers.

17 Finally, in the third scenario, people often juggle normative registers from different regimes of circulation and value during an interaction (Weber 2007; Zelizer 2005). Stéphen Huard shows in his article in this issue how a woman caught in a scene involving transfers during a Buddhist initiation ceremony in Myanmar interprets a gift of food according to different registers, between a disinterested religious donation and a transfer denoting a hierarchical relation, creating ambiguities and even tensions.

18 Thus, as theories of "connected lives" (Zelizer 2005; Dufy & Weber 2007) illustrate, in social reality, "worlds that are both ritually separate and socially connected" (Weber 2007: 39, our translation) coexist, overlap, and sometimes merge. However, in order to show the constituting features of these hybrids, the movement of goods between distinct value regimes, as well as the intersecting registers from which individuals make sense of their actions, it is necessary, at least at one point in the analysis, to define the ingredients of the mixture, their respective level of presence, the spheres through which the goods circulate, and the registers individuals use to interpret their transactions. To do this, we need common terms and categories to make empirical reality intelligible without substituting abstract categories for social practices (Pickles 2020). For Alain Testart, "the great weakness of the social sciences in general is that they have so far paid too little attention to the definition and study of forms themselves to focus on intentions, strategies and functions." He adds that "before knowing what humans do with a social form (i.e., what ends they propose to achieve by using it), it is necessary to know what this form consists of" (2007: 156, our translation).

19 The identification of ideal-typic social forms endowed with precise and common definitions makes it possible to highlight empirically proven distinctions between regimes of value, social logics, and modes of circulation, and then to describe how these transfers are intertwined or kept distinct in the practices of the social agents. Beyond empirical investigation, categorization offers common terms for analyzing similar phenomena in different socio-historical realities. It makes it possible to view something from various but comprehensible perspectives, to establish a dialogue and even to compare case studies anchored in local contexts that are always particular. To use H. Arendt's metaphor (1961), the challenge is to have a common table for discussion, which would at once relate and separate us.

20 While the terminological confusion described inflates as each author uses his/her own terms and definitions, a few useful terminological and conceptual clarifications have emerged. Unfortunately, those are poorly recognized and rarely used by others. Yet, these clarifications would allow us, with a few extensions, to better map the outline of the archipelago of non-commercial transfers, as well as identify some of its islands. Before presenting them, it should be remembered that distinguishing typologies is not an end in itself; it is only one step in the analytical process of ordering, describing, and understanding a reality that often reveals hybridizations. Once these conceptual distinctions have been made, they should not lock social practices into fixed categories. Instead, the typologies constitute reference points or gradients within the continuum of all commercial and non-commercial transfers. As noted by C. Darmangeat: "the study of forms of transfer can therefore only be a prerequisite to the study of their sociological meaning, but it is an indispensable one." (2016: 41, our translation). This

introduction aims to provide some guidelines for carrying out this preliminary study of forms.

The Common and the Particular

21 In order to identify the distinctive features of the archipelago that constitutes non-commercial circulation, it is useful to review what has been written by authors who have studied this issue. Since the inaugural work of M. Mauss, two major trends have emerged in France among the anthropologists and sociologists who have attempted to theorize and define these forms of transfer. These include, in turn, those who focus on the "common" and who tend to use the concept of "gift" to identify this disparate set of transfers; and those who wish to examine the "particular" and who prefer to use the notion of "non-commercial transfers."

22 The first pole of this continuum concerns the researchers who focus on the essence of the "gift" and its generic properties (Mauss 2016; Godbout 1992; Bourdieu 1994; Godelier 1999; Caillé 2000; Berthoud 2004; Lordon 2011). While emphasizing the existence of a plurality of forms of giving and the historicity of their manifestations, they seek above all to uncover the common principles, even the universal logic, of this form of circulation distinct from market and state flows. As Gérald Berthoud (2004: 366-367) points out, "[...] isn't the ideal to think of the gift both in its anthropological unity and in the plurality of its forms instituted in history and in cultures?" Thus, for example:

> The choice of Mauss and MAUSS[6] is to establish a certain universality of the phenomena of giving beyond their infinite and obvious empirical variations, to acknowledge the diversity of cultures and their arbitrary conventions, but without giving up the idea of finding, beyond or within this diversity, a common thread, what Mauss calls "the rock," a common thread that is both empirical and ethical. (Caillé 2007: 399, our translation.)

23 For them, as for M. Mauss, the gift retains "the same fundamental nature across historical periods and diverse cultures" (Silber 2004: 191). This is why the diversity of forms of transfer is subsumed under the common name of "gift" or "gift exchange."

24 At the other pole of the continuum are researchers who criticize the use of the word "gift" as an all-encompassing generic term and who wish to respond to the terminological confusion that infuses the anthropological tradition on the issue. In her preface to the latest French edition of the *Essay on the Gift*, F. Weber (2007) titled her last paragraph, rather provocatively: "Read the Essay... to have done with the gift" (our translation). A. Testart is also quite virulent in his criticism of M. Mauss:

> [...] the *Essay on the Gift* constantly confused exchange and gift [...] Mauss used the expression "gift-exchange" quite often, which should be considered a logical aberration of the same nature as a circle-square. (Testart 2007: 154, our translation.)

25 By deconstructing the object "gift," those at this pole incite us to make a distinction, within the broad field of what they call "non-commercial circulation," between what falls within the register of the gift and what falls within other forms of transfer. They propose methodological avenues to qualify, describe, and analyze non-commercial transfers based on empirical heterogeneity. One of the central goals, before studying in detail the sociological or anthropological issues to which transfers give evidence, is to rigorously define, and thus distinguish, the different existing types of transfers: are

they gifts, exchanges, debts, spoils, compensation, redistribution, taxes, offerings, or yet another social form to be defined?

26 Today, most authors agree with the analysis of A. Testart (1998, 2007, 2013), for whom the "enforceability" ("*exigibilité*" in French[7]) of obligations, understood as the possible recourse to legitimate coercion to enforce them, is a useful and relevant criterion for distinguishing types of transfers. An "exchange" entails the right to claim a counterpart, "a right which can be put into effect by resorting to constraint" (Testart 1998: 101), whereas the donor has no right to require a return for a "gift," even one which socially and morally compels a counter-gift. A. Testart thus shows that the potlatch is a gift whereas the *kula* is an exchange. He identifies a third type of transfer, such as taxes, fines, tribute, *corvée* and compensation, which concerns services or transfers that are due or required without any return. From this first effort at clarification, some authors have mobilized the same methodological approach to go further. They have thus uncovered a diversity of forms of transfers, ranging from "parental obligations" to "societal obligations" (Lécrivain 2002), "simple forms" to "hybrid forms" (Darmengeat 2016), "legitimate transfers" to "illegitimate transfers" (Athané 2011), and "obligatory exchanges" to "consented exchanges" (Darmangeat 2016). Gambling and betting (Pickles 2019, 2020), where the first transfer is not claimable, but the return may be for the winner, can also be considered a specific type of transfer.

27 Another effort at terminological clarification has been made by F. Weber, who also mobilizes the principle of enforceability. She proposes to use the term "transfer" when there is no required return, and "reserves the term transactions when the counter-part is claimable, whether they are market or monetary, non-monetary market or ceremonial transactions" (Weber, 2007: 26, our translation).

28 Finally, a recent terminological refinement that breaks with an "exchange-centered anthropology" can be found in the Anglo-Saxon literature. Anthony J. Pickles (2020) proposes to distinguish "ethnographic empirical units" from analytical categories. He sees "transfers" as conceptual sub-categories that denote the movements of things independently from the causal and binding relationships at work, while "transactions" are the forms that arise from the configuration of transfers and the socio-political processes that shape them. His terminology is thus based on diagnosing the agency connecting or severing transfers:

> If a "transfer" gets balanced with a return, it becomes an "exchange" of two (or more) transfers (e.g., barter, purchase, or like-for-like exchange). If the return happens later, this would be a "delayed exchange" of two transfers (i.e., tit for tat). A "transfer" that is not accompanied by a return and has no prospect of generating one in the future is a "one-way transfer." (Pickles 2020: 14.)

29 What can we draw from these different proposals to outline an archipelago made of the non-commercial circulation of goods, services, and symbols? Based on the reflections of the authors interested in the "common" and those who privilege the "particular", I have identified four criteria usually mobilized to define and characterize these non-commercial transfers: the criterion of interest, of the social bond, of inalienability and of the personal relationship. After presenting them, I will question their relevance in order to characterize the archipelago that interests me here.

On Some Existing Distinctions

The Interest Criterion

30 Many authors believe that utilitarian considerations do not take precedence in non-commercial transfers. The maximization of individual interest and profit through a cost-benefit calculation may intervene but necessarily remains secondary. This posture, sometimes called anti-utilitarian, does not consist in denying the presence of interest: "It is in no way, and this point is essential, an anti-utilitarianism" (Caillé, Lazzeri & Cléro 2002: 82, our translation). In order to understand the logic at work, we need to interrogate their conception of interest.

31 First, the interests at stake are not inherent to *Homo œconomicus* alone. There is a diversity of forms of interest that are irreducible to economic interest in general, and to market interest in particular.[8] Alain Caillé invites us, for example, to distinguish the "interest in having" from the "interest in being." The latter concerns an "interest in self-presentation" (Caillé 2000: 63, our translation), "prestige interests" (also called "reputational interests" or "interests of face") or "interest for the other" (ibid.: 69). In this perspective, the interests involved in a non-commercial transfer are therefore of different kinds, and, according to some authors, they are of a more symbolic and social nature (prestige, honor, reputation, rivalry, recognition, social cohesion, etc.) than material, instrumental and functional.

32 Second, in this perspective, utilitarian interests are not the main and only driver of non-commercial transfers: they remain secondary to the expression of social ties or recognition. Caillé thus argues that "a gift is only that which exceeds by its symbolic dimension the utilitarian and functional dimension of goods and services" (2000: 34, our translation).

33 The first criterion raises a twofold problem: first, in the field, it is often difficult to specify the relative significance of calculations of self-interest among the motivations of individuals. How can one define whether or not interest-based calculations take precedence in the causal relationships at work, especially since, for the same type of transfer, it can vary depending upon the time and the person involved? This is the case, for example, with the poems and offerings given to the earth spirits during the *tutu marin* ritual in Indonesia presented by Dana Rappoport in this issue. She shows that in exchange for these words and offerings, humans hope to obtain a good harvest and, more generally, the protection of the spirits. There are thus explicit utilitarian considerations. However, offerings are also driven by less utilitarian stakes, such as maintaining sovereignty over territory, negotiating rivalries between clans, and, more broadly, redressing a disturbed symbolic and political order. Among these various motivations, it remains difficult to define, at the level of concrete acts of transfer, what takes precedence between the symbolic, the politic and the utilitarian, or, in this case, between negotiating the social order, asserting one's authority and obtaining individual and collective benefits.

34 The second problem with this criterion is that it does not include all the transfers populating the category of non-commercial circulation. There are many examples wherein some non-commercial transfers are driven primarily by instrumental strategies, and obtaining a good or a benefit is central to what motivates the transfer. This is the case for contributions from members of the informal rotating credit and

savings groups in rural northern Vietnam: they are explicitly self-interested in the utilitarian sense but remain non-commercial (Pannier & Pulliat 2016). In some types of transfers like gifts or payments to obtain favors or thank an official for services, the maximization of individual benefits also prevails. It is also the case, more broadly, for many transfers within clientelist relationships, where "the relationship [...] is maintained only for the material benefits that each person expects from it" (Testart 2007: 164, our translation). As these are part of the archipelago I am trying to outline, the secondary character of the interest calculation cannot be considered a generic property of non-commercial circulation. It may, however, be the mark of some specific forms of transfer within this ensemble.

The Social Bond Criterion

35 The effect of the transfer on relationships is another criterion used to distinguish commercial and non-commercial transfers. In the tradition of M. Mauss, many authors consider that the purpose of these transfers is to create, actualize, maintain, or mediate social relations. In this perspective, while this may take place in commercial transactions, it is inevitable in the case of non-commercial transfers.

36 For instance, J. Godbout proposes that a gift is "any provision of goods or services made, without any guarantee of return, *with a view to creating, nourishing or recreating the social bond between individuals*" (1992: 32, emphasis added, our translation). Similarly, for A. Caillé, "the gift *is the driving force and the executant par excellence of alliances*. It is what seals them, symbolizes them, guarantees them and makes them come alive" (2000: 19, emphasis added, our translation). G. Berthoud considers that "the ultimate purpose of the generic gift, through the circulation of things and words as symbols, is to *create, maintain and renew the human relationship*" (2004: 368, emphasis added, our translation). Thus, beyond the use or the exchange value, "things take on different values according to their capacity to express, to convey, to nourish social ties" (Godbout 1992: 187). From this perspective, the value of the bond, or the esteem as the recognition of the value of others, characterizes the value regime specific to the gift-giving practices. As a result, these forms of transfer generate recognition:

> The gift is fundamentally a movement of mutual recognition [...] every relationship involved with the gift, even the most entangled in economic and political relations, lays the foundations for mutual recognition between the self and others. It *establishes and maintains a link between persons so recognized.* (Berthoud 2008, emphasis added, our translation.)

37 If the members of MAUSS defend this criterion as distinctive and characteristic of the gift (considered as the general category designating the non-commercial regime), they are not the only ones to share this conception. Maurice Godelier, for example, considers that these transfers are carried out "[...] to produce new social relations, of power, kinship, initiation, and so forth, between individuals and between groups, or more simply to reproduce old ones, to prolong, or to preserve them" (1999: 73). He argues that "gift-giving as a real practice is an essential component of the production-reproduction of objective social relations and of subjective and interpersonal relations. In this context, gift-giving and the gifts given both *re-present, signify* and *totalize* the social relations of which they are at once the instrument and the symbol" (Godelier 1999: 104).

38 The specific characteristic of these transfers would therefore be that they produce but also reflect and mediate social relations. And more broadly, they would constitute a pivotal element within the political sphere in that they hold the members of a society or a group together. These forms of transfer then raise "[...] the primary question that humans face, the political question, which is simply the other aspect of the question of the gift, that of knowing who our friends are and who our enemies. In other words, [...] with whom do we make an alliance (and against whom)?" (Caillé 2000: 84, our translation).

39 By means of a very different style of argumentation based on Spinoza and *cōnātus* (conatus),[9] Frédéric Lordon comes to a similar conclusion. For him, what he calls "symbolic exchange" or "gift" is "governed by the primacy of pacification and alliance" (Lordon 2011: 101, our translation). He shows how the peacekeeping device of reciprocal giving differs from the market and the state in its ability to redirect the "antisocial movement of unilateral *pronation*" (taking for oneself) towards symbolic interests of honor, prestige, recognition, or munificence (giving and providing proof of generosity) (2011: 7). This process would promote "the continuity of relationships and the social bond" (2011: 101, our translation), without denying competition and rivalry.

40 While many authors share the conviction that these forms of non-commercial circulation carry within them a potential for alliance (both horizontal and vertical) and political agency, it is worth asking whether this is the case for all the transfers included in the regime of non-commercial circulation. Do all empirically observed non-commercial transfers have the effect of creating, reproducing, or reinforcing a social relationship? And more broadly, do they all constitute a means of holding together members of the same society or does this dimension only concern certain forms of non-commercial transfer in certain particular societies? Finally, if this criterion is validated empirically, it is then necessary to analyze, according to each case, which bonds are created, renewed, or strengthened in practice and by which process. In other words, how, in concrete terms, the transfer affects the relationships or generates recognition. These are the questions directly addressed in this special issue.

The Criterion of Inalienability

41 Another criterion sometimes mobilized to distinguish gifts and non-commercial transfers is the idea that "the thing that circulates retains in itself the trace of the persons between whom it circulated" (Weber 2007: 33, our translation). M. Mauss' remarks on the fusion between people and things in what he called gift economies, as well as his controversial interpretations of the *hau*—the force that motivates individuals to give in return because a gift embodies the "substance" of the donor and must return to its origin—inspired reflection on the issue of inalienability.[10] Given the quantity of work and the complexity of the debate, it is impossible to fully review this issue here.[11] I will simply note that for some authors, this criterion makes it possible to distinguish commercial exchanges, in which the things that circulate become objects independent of people and are alienable (Carrier 1991), from other forms of transfer, in which "the thing has been *given without really being "alienated"* by the giver" (Godelier 1999: 42) because it contains a piece of the donor's identity. One of the characteristics of these second forms of transfer would therefore be to "keep while giving" (Weiner 1992) and to engage the identities involved (Carrier 1991; Godbout 1992). In this issue,

Delphine Ortis describes how certain cloths (ceremonial covers) given by visitors to the saints of Muslim sanctuaries in South Asia are infused with the power of the deity when they are placed on his tomb. Then, redistributed in various groups, they retain and channel the power of the saint. Testifying to his power, the saint's name is often represented on the cover, which is decorated with motifs marking the attributes of the saint or the architecture of his shrine.

42 Although often mobilized in theories of giving, the criterion of identity mediation and inalienability is difficult to generalize to the set of transfers I seek to define here. In some of the cases presented in this issue, whether it is the remittances sent by overseas Vietnamese to their families back home, the monetary gifts from guests at a Buddhist initiation ritual in Myanmar, or cloths given by visitors to a saint in South India (some are kept by the shrine and others resold or redistributed), the thing transferred does not become an extension of the persons, and it is not only the right of use that is transferred, but a bundle of property rights including ownership. This criterion is nonetheless useful for qualifying a subset of transfers within non-commercial circulation and presage the next criterion I will discuss, since it reminds us that these transfers cannot be separated from the relations between the parties involved in the transaction.

The Criterion of the Interpersonal Relationship

43 While authors are not unanimous on the three criteria mentioned above, the majority agree that the presence of a personal relationship prior to the transaction or which continues after is a requirement for these transfers as a social form distinct from the regime of commercial circulation. I believe that this criterion allows us to delimit a sub-category within the non-commercial circulation regime, which I call *interpersonal circulation*.

44 In *L'ethnographie économique*, Caroline Dufy and Florence Weber explain that "non-commercial transactions cannot be separated from the personal relationships they bring about or through which they occur" (Dufy & Weber 2007: 27, our translation). In her preface to the new edition of the *Essay on the Gift*, F. Weber characterizes these transfers:

> The set of possible prestations where the *personal relationship* carried by the given thing counts, as opposed to prestations where interchangeable goods circulate between interchangeable individuals, thus allowing personal relationships to be parenthesized [...]. (Weber 2007: 27-28, emphasis added, our translation.)

45 While commercial transactions may also involve personal relationships, which is common in Southeast Asia and beyond, this is neither a condition for the transfer to take place nor a constitutive and distinctive property of market exchange as an ideal type. This criterion makes it possible to exclude the presence of money as a distinctive element since:

> Some non-monetary transactions (e.g., barter) are market exchanges and, conversely, some monetary transactions [...] are non-commercial transfers, because they take place in a context of personal relations (for example, but not limited to, kinship) from which they are analytically inseparable. (Weber 2000: 88, our translation.)

46 A. Caillé (2000) and J. T. Godbout (1992) also attribute key significance to interpersonal relationships in defining non-commercial circulation since "the gift constitutes the

mode of relation par excellence between people, inasmuch as they consider and *establish themselves as persons*" (Godbout 1992: 151, emphasis added, our translation). They do not confine the interpersonal to relationships between humans, nor to face-to-face interactions, but extend it to direct or virtual relationships with non-humans such as spirits, deities, or animals (Godbout 1992).

47 For A. Testart, the implementation of non-commercial transfers depends on a social relationship other than the one that is established at the time of the transaction, whether it be a matrimonial relationship, an affinity between families, kinship, friendship, dependency, etc. (Testart 2007: 45, 135). He thus speaks of "relationships that are at once durable, personal, and imply certain obligations; relationships that both reinforce and condition the actual relationships of the exchange themselves" (ibid.: 135, our translation). Unlike commercial exchange, where "it is the relations between things that command the exchange relationship" (ibid.: 145, our translation), in non-commercial transfers "[...] the personal relationship between people [...] takes precedence over the relations between things" (ibid.: 147, our translation).

48 The problem with this criterion is working out what is meant by "personal relationship." According to Claire Bidart, Alain Degenne and Michel Grosseti (2011), a personal relationship "denotes the existence of an association that goes beyond mere interaction, is sustained over time and has developed beyond one-off exchanges" (Bidart et al. 2020: 4). A. Testart speaks of personal relations "in the sense of *intuitu personae*, that is to say, with regard to the particularities and qualities of a given person in his or her singularity" (Testart 2007: 135, note 9, our translation). In other words, it is not a question of social relations in the broad sense, nor only of face-to-face relations or acquaintanceship. Personal relationships refer to existing relationships between two persons that cannot be transposed to other persons. In these relationships, the personal attributes, individual biographies, and singular qualities of the subjects are directly implicated (Carrier 1991) and take precedence over the formal functions, professional positions, or official roles they may otherwise assume.[12]

49 This criterion is relevant to all the cases of transfer presented in this issue.[13] Furthermore, I believe, based on the authors cited above, that this criterion makes it possible to characterize a large part of the non-commercial transfers that I am trying to define here, especially if we do not limit the notion of inter-personal to direct or affective interactions between intimates. By broadening it to include all the relationships in which the idiosyncratic characteristics of the protagonists are involved and are decisive in the course of the transfer, it is possible to include in what I propose to call "interpersonal circulation" certain transactions with spirits (offerings to ancestors), between strangers (participatory financing, charity or hospitality), linked to relations of dependence or embedded in forms of higher authority (the services of a vassal or serf due to a lord[14]).

50 The case of the Laos of France involved in local development projects in their native country to help their "little brothers" presented by Isabelle Wilhelm in this special issue is significant in this respect. These emigrants feel a duty towards those who have remained in a country that they themselves left in the late 1970s. In doing so, they form interpersonal relationships with the inhabitants of the villages where they carry out their development projects. However, although these interpersonal relationships partly motivate their act of support, what takes precedence is the need to affirm and concretize a bond of belonging with their native country. This form of transfers is

therefore, fundamentally, sustained and conditioned by a personal and symbolic relationship with the native country and its inhabitants.

51 The criterion of the necessary presence of a personal relationship that commands and allows transfers excludes, however, in its strict sense, certain forms of transactions that are explicitly non-commercial but still impersonal. I am thinking in particular of those that are embedded in anonymous collectivities (donations to an NGO or to the Church), in formal institutions (membership fees for an association, payments due to the State), some of those that are carried out between strangers often through organizations (organ donation, charity, evergetism, volunteering, patronage, philanthropy, charitable donation, organizational gift-giving, see Steiner 2014, 2015) and finally those that fall under the register of predation, illegality and illegitimate transfers (theft, racketeering, extortion, looting, razzia, etc.[15]). While these forms of transfer do not concern the cases studied in this issue, they exist in empirical reality (Godbout 1992; Silber 2004; Darmangeat 2016), they are non-commercial and are therefore part of the archipelago that I am trying to define. I propose to call them impersonal, organizational or institutional non-commercial transfer.

Outline of a Grammar for Transfers

An Archipelago and Some Islands

52 Of the four criteria identified here (interest, social bond, inalienability, and personal relationship), no criterion can be used to define all of the transfers that make up non-commercial circulation.[16] While they are relevant for distinguishing certain islands—particular forms of non-commercial transfers—they do not constitute the common denominator of this field. Nevertheless, they all express, in part, a general principle that could constitute the criterion for characterizing the regime of non-commercial circulation as an ideal-typic social form and, therefore, for differentiating it from the regime of commercial circulation. In the transfers that I am characterizing, relationships have priority over goods: they are *necessarily* subordinated to the existence, *between the parties*, of another social relationship that is *not strictly economic*, and which transcends and conditions the punctual interaction in the course of which the transfer takes place.[17] The point is not just that social relations shape transfers, since this also applies to commercial transactions as economic sociology shows by highlighting the social relations and institutional arrangements that make commercial exchanges possible. The latter are just as "social" as non-commercial transfers (Weber 2000; Chantelat 2002; Zelizer 2005; Steiner 2010), however, the social conditions and social relations that govern their realization are not the same.[18]

53 In the case of commercial transactions, when a good or service is offered for sale and put on the market, the transaction can take place without any other relationship between the protagonists (Gregory 1982; Weber 2000; Testart 2007; Athané 2011). Moreover, exiting the exchange relationship and thus the social relation that goes with it, is always possible in the case of market circulation (Hirschman 1970). Finally, as Philippe Steiner (2010) shows with the support of heterodox economists (Orléan 2005), in situations of uncertainty, particularly with regard to the nature of things (the nomenclature hypothesis) and the future (the perfect predictability hypothesis), it happens that:

> Other relations [are] necessary to make market exchange possible [...] These relationships are not necessarily personal relationships (of friendship, family, dependency), or even relationships with other human beings, as impersonal social arrangements can make possible market exchanges hindered by uncertainties. (Steiner 2010: 150, our translation.)

54 However, these external elements (name, rules of adhesion, regulation procedures, contracts, institutional or communicational mechanisms, prescribers, coordinators, intermediaries, networks, etc.) are, in their capacity as "mediation resources" (Grossetti 2006), generally or potentially independent of the particular relationship *between the parties* of the transaction. This point in particular makes non-commercial transfers distinguishable.[19] Moreover, in commercial exchanges, these external elements are exclusively at the service of the economic relationship: they aim above all "to *evaluate* or make *judgments* about things and situations in such a way that they can enter the register of market exchange [...]" (Steiner 2010:151, our translation). This is not the case for non-commercial transfers. Hence the importance of the *extra-economic dimension* in what defines the social relationship that determines these forms of transaction. Finally, the intervention of these external social relations is not always necessary for the realization of the commercial exchange, contrary to non-commercial transfers where the relationship between people *necessarily determines* the relation between things (Testart 2007): the primacy of the value of the bond, or even esteem as a value that one attributes (or must attribute) to a person or entity, would be affirmed as a property of non-commercial transfers.

55 I thus propose to define non-commercial circulation as the set of transfers for which an *extra-economic* social relationship *between the parties*, prior to the immediate transaction or which endures it, is a *necessary condition* for them to take place.[20] The nature of this other social relationship—whether it is interpersonal or anonymous, between peers or hierarchical, whether it is subject to an institution or a superior authority such as a collective, an association, a ruler or a religious body, whether it is about dependency, kinship, domination or alliance—remains to be defined according to each case, as it allows us to identify sub-categories, or islands within this archipelago. This is how the transfers presented in this special issue can be inscribed in a sub-field of non-commercial circulation, the one that I consider to be the most encompassing. I call it "interpersonal circulation" because it assumes that the other relationship that frames and carries the transfers is a matter of "personal relations," understood in its broadest sense.

A Three-Dimensional Framework for Qualifying Transfers

56 In order to make this categorization more operational, it must be combined with a coherent terminology and a framework for qualifying transfers. These form a common grammar with which to interpret individual cases of transfer. Still at the draft stage, it should be considered a useful primer for ordering data and contrasting analyses from varied fieldworks. It has already been tested in the case of non-commercial circulation in Vietnam (Pannier 2015). Far from being an analytical framework through which to "grind" one's data, it offers guidelines for describing, naming, and distinguishing the transfers encountered empirically. It is divided into three levels.

57 At the field level, to designate the great empirical diversity of singular transfers existing in each society, the term "transfer" is the most neutral and appropriate (Hunt

2002; Testart 2007). At the second level, I propose to use the terms "form of transfer" or "type of transfer" when considering obligations (Testart 2007) and the socio-political processes at work (Pickles 2020) to identify with which social form or analytical category (a gift, exchange, loan, compensation, tax, bet, theft, etc.) a specific situation of circulation of goods, services or symbols corresponds (see green strata in the diagram 1). Finally, at the broadest level (see blue strata in the diagram 1), I propose to speak of a "circulation regime" to define the sphere in which the transfers fall when one wonders, for example, whether it is a matter of the market or of another regime (the non-commercial, predation). The subsets within each regime (interpersonal circulation, transfers between users and institutions, between a member and his or her collective, illegitimate or illegal transfers) are called "modes of circulation." This terminology opens up a method of categorization and analysis in three dimensions.

(1) Observation of Practices: Describing the "Transfers"

58 It is a matter of identifying, listing, and describing the transfers we observe during fieldwork by placing them in their specific context. Using indigenous categories may be one means, but not the only one, to identify and distinguish them at this level. The ethnographic description of the effective modalities of circulation and manifestation (protocol, nature of what circulates, direction of circulation, use and meaning of what circulates, persons and entities implicated, temporality of transfers, motivations, and strategies of the protagonists) is key on this level.

(2) Typology of Social Forms: The "Types of Transfer"

59 The aim here is to see to which social form or analytical category each of the empirically identified transfers belongs: gift, non-commercial exchange, obligatory exchange, transfer of the third type (taxes, corvée, compensation, tribute, etc.), transfer of the fourth type (extortion, theft, racketeering, looting, illegal transfers), gambling, organizational gift-giving etc. Methodologically, classifying transfers according to their deontic structure (right, obligation, duty) is useful at this level (Testart 1998, 2007, 2013; Lécrivain 2002; Weber 2007; Athané 2011; Darmangeat 2016). From this perspective, it is helpful to base distinctions on the enforceability of transfers (if the transfer or the counter-transfer are claimable and legally required or not) and thus to conduct a study of the penalties for breach of obligations in order to define the nature of the obligations (social, legal, moral) that govern transfers.

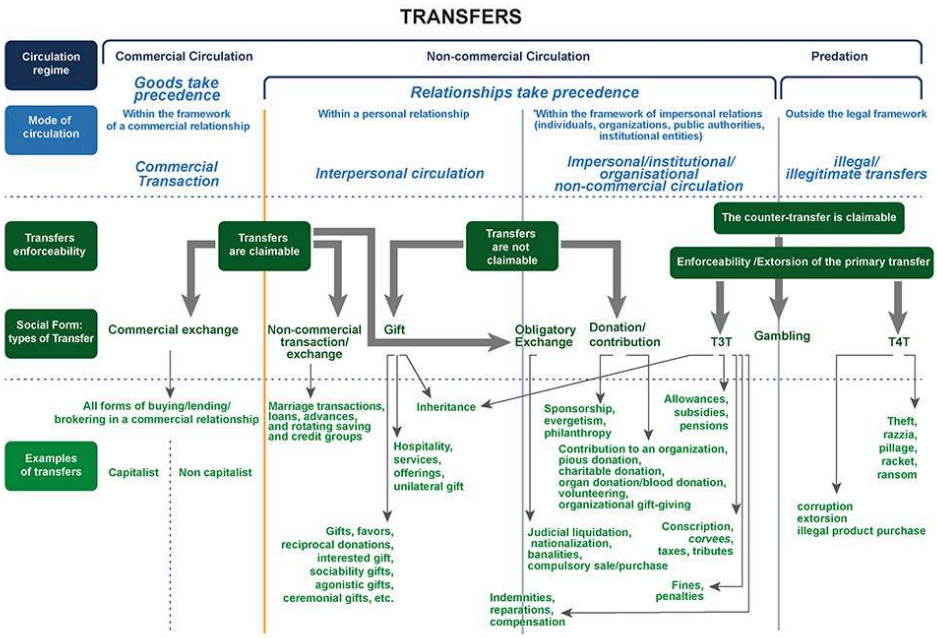
(3) Define the "Circulation Regime" and "Modes of Transfer"

60 The goal here is to identify the channels through which goods and services transit, the spheres (administration, personal relationship networks, the official market, the black market, etc.) through which they move, and the value regimes (use-value, exchange value, value of the bond, etc.) according to which they are evaluated. The broadest level of distinction is between the commercial, the non-commercial and predation. Then, within each of these regimes, distinctions can be made between what I have designated as "modes of circulation" (interpersonal circulation, illegal or illegitimate transfers, religious transactions, impersonal, institutional or organizational non-commercial transfers, etc.). In each case, it is crucial to determine whether it is the good or the relation that determines the transfer: what is the nature and role of social relations in

the transfer process? Do these relationships govern the transfer? Is it a social relationship that goes beyond the interaction established during the transfer at play? Is it a condition of the transfer or not? Are there obligations between the parties that precede, outlast or project from the transfer? The analysis of the social relationships involved, of the functions, roles, and effects of the transfers as well as of their temporal evolution and their place in society is important at this level. Finally, it may be useful to situate the transfers in their broader context (social, political, economic, and religious): in which social relations, modes of production or cosmological framework do the transfers fit?

61 The following diagram summarizes the terminology and the three-dimensional categorization proposed here[21]. The thick arrows indicate which types of transfers are regulated by which mode of enforcement. The thin arrows indicate which examples of empirical transfers may correspond to which social forms.

Fig. 1. Typology of Transfers



Conclusion

62 Given the terminological confusion that plagues the study of non-commercial circulation and the ambition of this special issue of *Moussons* to not simply juxtapose case studies but link them, it seemed to me crucial to establish a conceptual, typological, and terminological grammar. This grammar is intended as a common basis for defining the properties of non-commercial circulation in and of itself, and not only in opposition to commercial exchanges. It aims to qualify and identify different types of transfers, and ultimately to allow comparison from different socio-historical contexts. However, this approach is not a plea for analyzing non-commercial circulation only based on the classification of empirical transfers within fixed, pre-established, and impervious boxes. The typological effort is a step in the analysis that I consider

necessary as it enables us to make distinctions and to study what makes up the complexity and mixtures often seen in transfer practices. However, this effort is only a first step. The study of the relationships that are played out, how regimes of circulation and value are intertwined, the various registers and interpretative frameworks mobilized by the protagonists during concrete interactions, the plural motives that drive individuals and their transfers, as well as the way in which practices of exchange evolve, remain key inquiries. If this attempt to establish a typology and a common terminology seemed useful to me in order to contemplate these disparate case studies collectively, the essential objective is to see what the field and the practices of the social actors tell us.

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ENDNOTES

1. M. Mauss proposes a general theory on the gift, but he concentrates above all on a specific type of transfer, "total prestations of the agonistic type," in which the principle of rivalry is predominant.

2. Examples of typology are too numerous to mention here. Ilana F. Silber (2007) provides an overview.

3. F. Weber (2000, 2002, 2007), Hunt (2002); A. Testart (2007), P. Steiner (2014) and A. J. Pickles (2020) have begun to address this challenge.

4. While I focus primarily on goods and services, I also include some intangibles such as words, poems, songs, prayers, spells, tokens of recognition, aesthetic forms, skill, knowledge, and so on. Although some of them are in the domain of communication, I will use the generic term transfer for the reasons given in the text.

5. "[...] Mauss confused gift and exchange while claiming to differentiate them; whereas C. Lévi-Strauss confuses them without even pretending to differentiate them." (Testart 2007:223, our translation)

6. The "Mouvement Anti-utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales" was founded in 1981 by a collective formed around Alain Caillé.

7. About the English translation of "*exigibilité*", see note 9 in the preface of this issue. The A. Testart's concept of "*exigibilité*" refers to *legally* regulated obligation. "Legal"

does not refer exclusively to State law, but to the nature of the obligation (juridical vs. moral, social). A legal or juridical obligation can be enforced "by all legitimate means that exist in a society, including by violence, from the moment it is conducted in forms recognized as legitimate" (Testart 2013: 257).

8. In the *Essay on the Gift*, M. Mauss is explicit on this point: "In these civilizations, they have interests, although in a different fashion than in our own time (Mauss 2016: 189).

9. This force of effectuation of individual power that strives to "persevere in its being" (Lordon 2011).

10. I am not referring here to inalienable property understood as that which does not circulate.

11. On this issue, see Gregory (1982), Carrier (1991), Weiner (1992), Godelier (1999).

12. According to Valérie Lécrivain (2002), some kinship relationships are not interpersonal relationships because only status links individuals, without any personal ties. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between statutory relationships and personal relationships: although they tend to overlap, this is not always the case.

13. Apart from the article by P. Alary in this special issue, which looks at market transactions carried out in non-commercial production relationships.

14. While transfers that take place in official state channels do not fall into this category, I include those that take place unofficially with agents of the State.

15. These transfers, which have the particularity of being demanded and obtained without being legally claimable ["*exigible*" in French] at the time they are made are conceptualized as such by François Athané (2011), who calls them war transfers, predations, or transfer of the fourth kind.

16. It is maybe not the goal nor the interest of all the authors I have mobilized above. Some of them may seek to qualify only a specific form of non-commercial transfer, while my interest is to find criteria relevant to encompass the whole regime of non-commercial circulation. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, it appears that since M. Mauss, C. Lévi-Strauss and K. Polanyi, many authors still tend to qualify the various non-commercial transfers with a single conceptual category (the gift, the reciprocity and redistribution, the symbolic exchange, etc.). In doing so, they extend their criteria for distinction to all the non-commercial transfers.

17. This criterion has the advantage of defining and distinguishing the different circulation regimes neither according to the types of goods, which cannot be a criterion because they change status as they move from one circulation regime to another (Appadurai 1986), nor according to the motivations or intentions of the actors, which may be identical in each of the circulation regimes in question or different for the same type of transfer (Testart 2007).

18. For a more detailed analysis of the social relations and ritual frameworks characteristic of commercial interaction, see Appadurai (1986), Weber (2000), Chantelat (2002), and Zelizer (2005).

19. If, in the context of the social division of labor, a *de facto* dependence—and thus another social relationship—links the actors involved in commodity exchanges, it does not concern and does not directly bind the people involved in a specific commodity transaction: "the parties to commodity transactions are defined and linked by their complementary positions in the system of production and distribution, which is to say the class and the division of labor. Thus, they are linked to each other only in an

abstract and general sense" (Carrier 1991: 129). The buyer is not dependent on a particular seller, he can decide to obtain the good or service elsewhere (Athané 2011) and once he has fulfilled his obligations, he can "exit" from the exchange relationship (Hirschman 1970).

20. This definition excludes predatory transfers (Athané 2011).

21. This diagram does not claim to be comprehensive, particularly with respect to the various transfers cited as examples, but also in terms of the modes of circulation and types of transfers. With regard to the latter, t3t refers to "transfers of the third type" that "result from an irrevocable obligation and without counterpart" (Testart 2013: 259); t4t refers to "transfers of the fourth type", related to predation, which are claimed without being legally required at the time they are made (Athané 2011). In gambling and betting, only the transfer to the winner is required and claimable. Moreover, although this type of transfer appears in the category of impersonal transfers, which remains the most common mode, they can be carried out within the framework of interpersonal relationships. I would like to thank Laurence Billault, graphic designer at PALOC (IRD), for having contributed to the creation of this diagram.

ABSTRACTS

Anthropology has long identified the existence of non-commercial flow of goods and services. However, because of their heterogeneity, these social practices are difficult to conceptualize and categorize. While for a long time the concept of Gift dominated the literature on these forms of transfers, it is now widely criticized. But then, how can we precisely designate and define these specific forms of transfers and the field they belong to? Is there a conceptual frame able to bring together the great diversity of non-commecial transfers? If yes, what are its properties? This introduction shows that it remains useful and necessary to have common concepts to describe transfers observed in different realities, although in empirical reality transfers are difficult to classify in a fixed and exclusive category. Building on and extending the conceptual and methodological advances in this field of research, this article seeks to characterize and delimit the field of non-commercial circulation and to identify certain specific forms of transfer within this field. It argues that the common feature of these non-commercial transfers is the necessary presence of another social relationship between the protagonists than the one established during the transactional interaction. When this social relationship that shapes and conditions the course of the transfers falls within the sphere of interpersonal relations, a sub-field appears: the sphere of interpersonal transfers. On this basis, the author proposes a common grammar to name, distinguish and analyze the different forms of transfers that constitute non-commercial circulation.

L'anthropologie a mis au jour depuis longtemps l'existence de régimes de circulation de biens et de services qui ne relèvent pas de la sphère marchande. Les auteurs préoccupés par ces phénomènes rencontrent néanmoins des difficultés persistentes pour les conceptualiser et les catégoriser. Si pendant longtemps le concept de Don a dominé la littérature, il est aujourd'hui largement critiqué. Mais alors, comment désigner et définir précisément les transferts de ce type et le champ qui les rassemble ? Existe-t-il un ensemble conceptuel capable de réunir la grande diversité de prestations qui s'effectuent en dehors des logiques marchandes ? Si oui, quelles sont ses propriétés ? Cette introduction montre que si dans la réalité empirique les transferts sont difficilement classables dans une catégorie fixe et exclusive, il reste utile et nécessaire de se doter de concepts communs pour décrire les transferts observés dans des réalités différentes. En appui

sur les avancées conceptuelles et méthodologiques dans ce domaine de recherche et en les prolongeant, cet article s'attache à caractériser et délimiter le champ de la circulation non marchande et à identifier certaines formes de transfert spécifiques au sein de cet ensemble. Il en ressort que la propriété commune de ces transferts est la présence nécessaire d'une autre relation sociale entre les protagonistes que celle qui s'établit lors de l'interaction transactionnelle. Lorsque ce rapport social qui dépasse, encadre et conditionne le déroulement des transferts relève de la sphère des relations interpersonnelles, un sous-ensemble apparaît : la circulation interpersonnelle. Sur cette base, l'auteur propose une grammaire commune pour nommer, distinguer et appréhender les différentes formes de transferts constitutifs de la circulation non marchande.

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Mots-clés: circulation non marchande, transfert, échange, don, relation interpersonnelle, Mauss (Marcel), Testart (Alain)
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