

Your Money *or* Your Life:



Time for Both

MARTIN SIMON

We all know that the planet needs protecting, but we are perhaps not all yet quite as aware as we should be that the same toxic forces that are threatening our natural resources, like individualism and consumerism, are placing enormous strains on the quality of our lives as social beings.

If we are to protect our social environment, action needs to be taken now before the damage to the social fabric of our society is irreversible.

This groundbreaking book is but a small part of a counter-movement, a new compassion and a growing understanding that local communities can choose a more caring and co-operative way forward together. Blaming others is pointless and previous Governments have focused on welfare systems that were driven by economic priorities that actually devalued community, ignored mutuality and persistently underrated

individuals. Only by people acting together can we protect the essential human qualities, like generosity, care and hospitality on which the social environment depends.

This book is also the first to feature a new social innovation called Timebanking. Local communities across the country are putting into circulation their own 'social money', which is every bit as real as the cash in people's pockets. This time based currency offers everyone real incentives and a safe framework to strengthen the social environment. Timebanking also uses the power of new social media to connect people once again to the places where they live and to share their time and their skills.

This easy-to-read collection of real life stories will show you how to find the time to become a valued member of a thriving local social network full of new contacts, opportunities and possibilities.

Foreword

by Jonathon



Porritt

If there was one word that dominated the 2010 General Election it was ‘change’. All three major parties just keep banging on and on about how they alone could transform our busted economic and social systems.

I only wish they actually meant it. I suspect we know, deep in our bones, that the next five years won’t be very different from the last thirty years. Our dominant economic models will remain dominant. The pursuit of economic growth will remain the principal driver of public policy. We’ll continue to bemoan worsening social ills, and to put a brave face on all those problems that we know could be sorted out if we really started to do things differently.

And that’s what this little book will bring home to you in no uncertain terms. Martin Simon is not just an outstanding social entrepreneur, but a pioneering interpreter of new ways of thinking and acting. What he’s done here is to bring together an up-to-the-moment account of the phenomenon of Timebanking (with one new Bank setting up every week here in the UK) with the latest thinking on delivering public services and rebuilding communities in radically different ways.

The essence of this convergence is a simple one. We really have two economies operating in the UK. The first is the monetized, growth-based, profit and tax generating economy that politicians spend 99.9% of their time obsessing about. The second is the core economy, largely

unmonetised and based on stocks of social and human capital rather than financial capital. As Edgar Cahn, the founder of Timebanking, puts it: *‘this economy constitutes the real work of society, which is caring, loving, being a citizen, a neighbour, and a human being.’*

This is supported by scientific evidence that human beings are ‘hard-wired’ to cooperate, and will enjoy more fulfilling and happy lives when they find a better balance between a life as a consumer and life as a caring neighbour or active citizen. We now have a social imperative to revalue people’s time, everyday skills, caring and hospitality as natural resources to be used for our common good.

The two economies are not necessarily mutually exclusive, although the truth of it is that we’re going to have to transform our growth-based economy in very short order if we’re to avoid horrendous environmental and social breakdown. The two economies could even be mutually reinforcing – if only our political leaders recognised the true value of the core economy and created the kind of enabling framework which would permit it to prosper at a much greater scale – and with much greater recognition – than is currently the case.

In 2009, Julia Neuberger’s Commission on the Future of Volunteering brought out an excellent report focusing in on the very powerful idea of *‘putting mutuality back into the DNA of society’*.

Jonathon Porritt



It is of course perfectly possible to put a money value on volunteering (her Commission's Report estimated a net annual value at £36 billion and the Public Accounts Committee estimate that a further £23 billion is provided by informal carers), but in some respects that misses the point. Timebanking activists describe time committed to voluntary activities as 'social money' – money that is omni-present, recession-proof and limited only by the amount of time that any individual is able to commit. It offers people incentives and a safe framework to give and take, to exchange wisdom and skills, to lend their practical support and energy to strengthening the social environment. It cleverly uses new applications of IT to connect people once again to the places where they live. It is a genuinely sustainable, free local currency, utilising the human resources that are in plentiful supply, and that will actually grow the more they are carefully and responsibly nurtured.

So it doesn't necessarily make sense to try and 'bridge' these two economies via some kind of financial equivalence. But it does make sense to build that bridge around some of today's most important policy objectives: reinforcing social cohesion; improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of public services (particularly health, education and social services); empowering people to become more engaged citizens, and so on.

There's a whole new language around this in terms of 'co-production', 'personalisation', 'public goods', and so on. The language can sound clumsy, but the sentiments are spot on. Martin Simon argues that Timebanking is '*the ideal tool to deliver co-production in public services*' – with the Government, professionals, relatives and volunteers all combining forces to deliver a totally different quality of public service. As Charlie Leadbeater says, '*relationships are at the core of effective public services*'.

And Timebanking is all about relationships. About the capacity for empathy. About nurturing and investing in our social environment. About a re-discovered compassion and everyday acts of kindness.

I guarantee that the personal stories and case-studies will grab your attention. Timebanking is an inspired idea that is poised to inspire the lives of huge numbers of people as we set about the task of genuinely changing society.

Letter of support from the inventor of timebanking...

Edgar Cahn



Your Money or Your Life: Time for Both

reflects over ten years of dedicated and visionary work by Martin Simon forming the Timebanking movement in the United Kingdom and around the world. The book builds on his career as community organiser, change agent and public servant seeking to advance the public good. This book is an extraordinary gift because Martin always has one foot in the realm of specific deeds and acts – and another foot in the realm of ideas, of vision, of possibility. No matter where one opens this book, one finds Martin has captured the two types of energy that drive Timebanking.

The first kind of energy he celebrates is ‘connectedness’. Much of the book emphasises ways in which Timebanking reduces the social isolation that one old timer conveyed when he observed: *‘We used to have community and then we got air conditioning!’*

Martin reveals how Timebanking undertakes to reclaim habitat for our species. And in doing so, he subtly reminds us that we cannot reclaim habitat for our species without reclaiming and sustaining habitat for all species. We are all linked. Our hunger for community celebrates that interdependence.

Lurking just below this surface of these examples is a second kind of energy that has driven Martin’s life work and that drives Timebanking. He calls to us with a kind of urgency. He juxtaposes different sets of values

to arouse us to disparities that he finds intolerable. His quotes, citations and illustrations are designed to ignite a kind of energy that my father called ‘a sense of injustice.’ We mobilize to redress unfairness when it offends our basic sense of decency. That lies behind Martin’s stories of how Timebanking has been utilized by government, philanthropy, the independent sector and communities to remedy seemingly intractable social problems.

Martin provides chapter and verse demonstrating that every human being has something of value to contribute. He illustrates how Timebanking enlists every part of us, not just the part that goes on our resumes or CV. Page after page make a compelling case for valuing the ways that we can contribute that the market does not reward: caring labour, civic labour, cultural labour and environmental labour. Martin explains why Timebanking is uniquely able to do this: because it regards every hour as the most precious thing we can offer, our slice of eternity. By doing so, Martin makes clear that Timebanking does not just value what is scarce. It honours and values capacities that are abundant because universal.

Above all, this book conveys how and why Timebanking addresses a fundamental human need: the need to feel that we matter, that we can make a difference in the lives of others – and in doing so, that our acts can set in motion a process that can change the world. Martin Simon is both pioneer and prophet.

This meditation, 'Timebanking Math' tries to capture the spirit of this book:

We take halting steps one by one by one
Our math is simple: one equals one equals one
One is tiny, the smallest absolute
But absolute is absolute

To be human is what we do and what we are
To care, to love, to reach out, to come to each other's rescue
To grieve, to celebrate, to reach consensus,
To stand up for what's right, to stand against what we know is wrong

These are not acquired though they may be honed
They are in our DNA - They are our being and our doing
Our shaping and creating and weaving
That's what one hour of our being means

We stand for what it means to be human
And human beings are not chattel;
There are domains which are above market, beyond price
Family, loved ones, justice, democracy, our planet,
all that is holy
Not for sale at market price, at any price

One hour, our piece of eternity.
Fleeting but nonetheless, precious, sacred, eternal
That is what Time Banking means, declares, affirms and reaffirms
We are - and We will not be diminished. Let it be.



In *Your Money or Your Life: Time for Both*, Martin has laid down a choice and a challenge. We all are programmed to think we must wait for money. But Moses did not wait on a travel grant; Einstein did not wait on a research grant; Mandela did not wait on campaign financing. So what are we waiting for?

That is what Martin Simon has asked all of us in this book.

Dr Edgar S. Cahn

Creator of Time Dollars and founder of TimeBanks USA

See: www.timebank.org/founder.htm

'We are changing from a society into an audience.' **Kurt Vonnegut**

A CASUAL REVIEW of any of the daily newspapers would reveal a steady drip feed of reprimands and horror stories from politicians and opinion-formers about a broken Britain full of selfish people in moral decline. A picture would emerge of a society of feckless consumers demanding more and more without any regard for the consequences for others or for the planet.

Is this a true picture of life in Britain today? Everyday experience tells me otherwise. Most of the people I come across are kind and tolerant, most of the time. We all have much to contribute to society: we have valuable skills, are capable of love, loyalty and commitment, and can take some degree of responsibility for our actions. Most people would respond positively if asked to do something specific, in some small way, which would make the world a safer and friendlier place for their family, friends and neighbours. Most people believe deep down that having solid relationships and contributing and belonging to a strong community are far better predictors of happiness and wellbeing than the brand of shoes they wear or the cost of the car they drive.

However, some powerful messages are being promoted in the media and by public services and corporations, which emphasise people's frailties and needs, rather than their strengths and capabilities.

'Our way can often be blocked by great corporate, governmental, professional and academic institutions. They often say to us, "You are inadequate, incompetent, problematic, or broken. We will fix you."' **John McKnight**, Community Development Expert^{iv}

'In my area there are numerous examples of informal gives his time to a personal fitness coach who likewise a life coach gives free sessions in return for

Can we build on this emerging 'new order' and spread the use of this new kind of 'social' money, which is recession proof and offers people real incentives to come together, to protect and value each other and to connect again with the places where they live? For a few hours a month, can we each find the time to make use of a local currency that rewards people for co-operating, caring and sharing as automatically as conventional money rewards the competitive and the greedy?

If we do:

- **We can make sure everyone is protected and safe**
- **We can save money and share our knowledge and skills locally**
- **We can provide care and mutual support without exploiting anyone**
- **We can tap into local know-how and connect with like-minded people**
- **We can have more time for family and make new friends**
- **We can earn a local reputation for our generosity and kindness**

Can we? We can and we have.

Timebanking taking place - a massage therapist returns the time with personal training; help with business planning. **Jamie**, London

Timebanking is a new type of ‘social’ money that uses time as a medium of exchange. It is a new, safe and dynamic system that acts just like community ‘loyalty points’:

You give an hour of help and earn one time credit. The person receiving your help owes one time credit. They pay back by helping someone else. The circle of care and mutual support expands; more people means more skills to share. That makes it more likely that the help you may need in the future will be there for you. You want to pay back so you help someone else ...

How a time bank works

- Local people list all the skills and activities that they are happy to share with others
- Time credits are used as a medium of exchange; an hour’s activity earns each person one time credit
- Everyone agrees to ‘give and take’, to both earn and spend time credits in their community
- The time credits that people earn are deposited in their individual time bank ‘accounts’, at the time bank
- People can spend their time credits on the skills and activities on offer from the community, or donate them to a ‘community pot’
- Details of everyone’s skills and of the exchanges that take place are recorded on the time bank computer and used by the ‘time-broker’ to match people up with the tasks that need to be done.
- Everyone is an equal and valued member of the time bank

*'When a man is wrapped up in himself
he makes a pretty small package.'* John Ruskin

PATRICIA HAD A GOOD CAREER as a civil servant but, in her late fifties, she had to give up work when a hip replacement left her with muscle and nerve damage. *'I found myself housebound, which nearly drove me round the bend,'* she said. Luckily, she soon found her local time bank and it changed everything.

'It was a lifeline to the community,' said Patricia, *'and a situation where one can give and take. I no longer feel isolated and useless.'*

Patricia trains mature people in basic IT skills – in many cases people who are on courses, but can't keep up with the other students.

'I give extra support, one-to-one, for an hour at a time,' she said. She has also taken up writing and performing poetry with other members of the time bank poetry group.

'My daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren live in Perth, Australia, and although we are in contact by email, etc., I only see them once every five years or so,' noted Patricia.

When they heard about this situation, the time bank made her an adopted granny to the Mother & Baby group.

She said, *'I now sit in on the group from time to time and find the experience enchanting. I have had my garden fence painted by a stalwart member, lampshades installed on my high Victorian ceilings in my flat by another, and there are plans to remove a monster shrub from my garden.'*

Every month, Patricia goes to a drop-in morning at a café nearby. *'The time bank means so much to me; it has added a richness to my life, friends, a community, a feeling of being of use and of all the kindness out there. If I need assistance with anything I have only to ask.'*

The social environment is changing fast. More and more people live alongside their neighbours without knowing them. Those who can afford it are retreating into suburbia, detached houses and gated communities. People are finding it necessary to declare themselves a social-exclusion zone – to choose to exist in an 'I-cocoon'.^{xvii}

Life hasn't always been like this and it doesn't need to be so in the future.

This chapter examines some of these forces of change that are steering people towards an existence in an ‘I-cocoon’. It looks at scientific evidence that supports the need for human beings to live in communities and to connect with each other.

Patricia could have survived by switching on the TV and relying on basic care and support services from paid strangers; however, she would have had feelings of helplessness and she would have been far more at risk. People can get through most things in life if they have a circle of friends. Patricia made exactly the right choices by believing that her skills would still be of use to others. She was also prepared to accept the help she needed from others, and the practical and emotional returns have been immense.

Many older people today remember growing up in communities where the help Patricia needed would have been provided automatically by neighbours who cared, who acknowledged each other as they passed by in the street; they did favours, looked out for each other’s children and left their doors unlocked. People had time for each other and people trusted each other. They each had a social identity and a local reputation. They felt relatively safe, respected and they belonged – and so did their neighbours. Children were safer playing in the streets than they would be today with a surveillance camera on every lamppost.

People have not changed that radically; they still lean towards honesty and empathy. It is the importance they place in investing in any sense of common ownership of their local neighbourhood that is slipping away. A daytime existence centred on securing an income by promoting oneself among strangers, (customers), sometimes at the expense of competitors (colleagues), is tiring. It is revealing that doctors use the term ‘spent’ to describe the new condition of sleeplessness and malaise that people suffer as a result of their experience of modern life. There is a very real pain associated with social exclusion and the lack of a positive social identity can lead to depression and can even trigger violence. Look around the world and you will note that unequal societies experience higher crime rates, more addictive behaviour and worse mental health problems.

Rather than use one of the commercial publishers who have expressed their keen interest in handling this book, (and who will take 90% of the profits), we have decided to use ‘crowd-funding’ to pay for the production and marketing. In this way we will be able to use all the income from book sales to help make the changes in society that we all want to see happen.

This is how it will work:

Buzzbank is an online marketplace connecting social ventures with backers, supporters, and cheerleaders. It is a bank of energy, of people, and of good will – aggregating the power of crowds to give life to charitable and ethical initiatives, from small-community initiatives to world-changing big ideas.

Buzzbank backers provide social ventures with support, funding and feedback alongside like-minded individuals who are equally passionate about social change. Every Buzzbank-featured venture gives something back, (we call it the Give Back), providing its backers with a sense of ownership and involvement in the process. The Give Back can be access to events, goods and services, or interest payments on sums loaned.

Go to: www.buzzbank.org/timebanking
and make a pledge.

positive people backing bright ideas



**Your Money
Or Your Life:
Time for both**

*Edited by best-selling
author Karen Sullivan
Designed by award-winning
book designer Dave Thorp*

Martin Simon
Founding Advisor
Timebanking UK
The Exchange
Brick Row
Stroud GL5 1DF

Telephone: 01453 750952
Mobile: 07968 752083

www.timebanking.org
twitter
**http://twitter.com/
TBUKMartin**

Registered Charity: 1101204

TIME TO GIVE AND TAKE