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– On the organization of matchmaking services

David Sköld

Royal Institute of Technology, KTH
Dept. of Industrial Management, INDEK
Stockholm, Sweden
david.skold@indek.kth.se

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Is there a formula that can predict which two people will experience a romantic spark? There's always some luck and mystery involved, but when we look closely at what draws two people together, some predictable patterns emerge. If we know what two people find physically and emotionally appealing and also know the features and attributes each bring, then we can predict with some confidence whether the two will click or clash. The weAttract system is designed to help map out these factors. Our tests can identify what turns you on (and off) physically and uncover the personality style that best fits your own habits and quirks. The sum of these preferences and your attributes make up your unique Attraction Formula.

www.weattract.com/ASIntro.htm

Introduction

Jane Austen's Emma was a keen, but terrible matchmaker. She simply did not possess the skills and sensibilities required for the job. It seems as if she lacked the ability to sense the feelings, moods and preferences of those she had taken on to be her clients, instead concentrating too heavily on formal aspects and outcomes of her intended matches, such as economic standing and social mobility. For instance, Emma all too stubbornly attempted to get her protégé Harriet to marry upwards in the social strata. This was in 1815, and never did she succeed.

Some three years into the twentieth century, in a time when web based applications and services assist people in carrying out the most diverse everyday tasks, in the most diverse spheres of peoples' lives, a fast growing billion dollar industry has emerged around that particular branch of matchmaking which is carried out online (see e.g. Takeuchi Cullen 2004, Pennington 2004). Web-based matchmaking services have been deemed the most lucrative, legitimate content that people are willing to pay for online, and have been predicted to maintain this position for some years to come.

An estimated 40 million Americans visited online dating sites in June [2003], according to comScore Networks, which ranks online dating the most lucrative industry on the Web in terms of consumer spending (with the possible exception of pornography, a business in which revenue figures are difficult to track).

Spencer, 2003

Online matchmaking, or "online dating" as the phenomenon is often called, was undoubtedly a hot topic in 2003/2004. Recalling Emma's inability to succeed as a matchmaker (due to her lack of social and emotional skills and sensibility), the question of how commercial actors, to a great extent relying on web-based applications and computer algorithms approach the issue of making matches, springs to mind. How is the commercial construction of a perfect date actually carried out in the early 21:st century? This is the topic I will be exploring in the following.



Before doing so, however, I will give a very broad and somewhat random picture of what has been going on in the online matchmaking industry in the last couple of years. In December 2002 InterActiveCorp¹, running the matchmaking service Match.com (from now on labelled only Match), announced that the company was to acquire the British online dating service uDate.com for more than 140 million US Dollars in stock. In the nine months preceding the acquisition uDate.com had increased its sales by 136 percent compared to the year before, having generated almost \$30 million in revenue. Once the deal was closed in April 2003, InterActiveCorp by far became the largest online matchmaker worldwide, and the company reported a gross income for the Match division of more than \$30 million only in the third quarter that same year. The operating profit is said to have been close to \$4 million, and at the time Match boasted nearly 800,000 subscribers to the dating service (Hu 2003).

Spring Street Networks, a New York-based company that has developed a technology platform which provides media companies with online personals sections, was appointed runner-up in *Fortune Magazines* “Cool Company of the Year 2002” contest. Although “cool almost never makes its way to the bottom line”, as the *Fortune Magazine* reporter Julie Schlosser (2002) has put it, Spring Street Networks secured \$6 million in first-round funding from Battery Ventures at the end of July 2003.

Only in North America estimated consumer spending on online matchmaking services exceeded \$300 million in 2002—a rise of almost 400 percent compared to 2001 (Yahoo! Finance Commentary 2003). Reading the business magazine *Business2.0* in the summer of 2003 gives a clue as to how Match at the time hoped to better the company’s chances of succeeding in this rapidly growing and, according to reporter Susan Orenstein (2003), “fiercely competitive” industry. A “Love Algorithm”—or as Match and partnering company weAttract puts it: “a personality test” based on “advanced mathematics” and “science and technology” thought to “enhance human relationships” (weAttract.com)—was at the time presented as the latest and the hottest application on the Match website, planned to be incorporated in the actual matchmaking service shortly.

DALLAS, TX-December 18, 2003- Match.com, a global leader in online dating, today announced the launch of a revolutionary new way to find your matches using advanced mathematics to predict compatibility based on results from the Match.com Personality Test. Developed in partnership with weAttract.com and based on a 15-year research initiative by weAttract scientists and inventors ... Match.com Personality Matching allows the site’s members to use advanced searching algorithms to find potential dates based on mutual personality compatibility...

corp.match.com/index/newscenter_release_detail.asp?auto_index=33

Another seven months later, by the summer of 2004, consumer spending on online matchmaking services in America and Europe taken together had exceeded \$500 million. Doubtlessly, the online matchmaking industry is both money-intensive and highly dynamic, with a great number of fairly new actors going about their business in a number of ways. As already hinted at, I will in the following be exploring how a number of these actors, some of which are mentioned above, approach the issue of providing attractive matchmaking services, and

¹ InterActiveCorp was at the time known as USA Interactive.



singling out potential matches for their members. Some of these actors are active in Sweden and the Nordic countries, others only within North America, while still others are of multinational character, offering dating services in many different countries. Rather than looking at differences between markets, I explore a range of different business models, with regards to the technology deployed (on a conceptual level) and the functionality that is offered to anyone making use of the service. Furthermore, technicalities such as membership issues—who can join and what does different kinds of memberships entail—and pricing strategies—which of course are tightly linked to one another—are addressed. Again, the basic question I try to shed some light on is how the commercial construction of a perfect date is carried out. That is, what means do different actors in the matchmaking industry take in order to attain results: attract a lot of (paying) members, make them satisfied with the service and tell stories of successful matching so as to attract new (paying) members—all this by either seeing to it that the people making use of the service are successful in their search, or at least have a good time searching. Tying the matchmaking project of the early 21:st century to yet another, very pronounced, 19:th century idea, this essay will be rounded off by a discussion regarding the utopian character of the (post-) modern matchmaking project—to some extent staking its bets on automated love matching. What can be learnt, and just why might automated, large scale matchmaking projects be anything else than utopian today? The discussion raises a number of issues that could to be elaborated on in more detail in future essays on the topic.

Constructing a Marketplace

A typical way of providing a service that might deliver the sought-after results is to establish a marketplace in which potential users (members/customers/clients) can put themselves on display, wander about and check out who else is on display, and in which different kinds of exchange between participating parties can take place. The matchmaker's task is to facilitate this exchange—perhaps even to maximize it. Of course, such an undertaking requires some kind of matchmaking resource. Accounts of how this marketplace is constructed, what these resources might comprise, how they might function on a conceptual level, and what means the matchmaker uses to enhance the matchmaking process once some kind of matching has been performed, is the emphasis of this essay.

If the on-line dating industry is all about commercially constructing and delivering “perfect dates”, or at least creating favourable conditions out of which “perfect dates” will emerge, then what exactly makes a “perfect date”? To begin with, a date could of course refer both to a happening and a person: “He was on a date last Friday” or “She found a perfect date for the high school prom”. A “date” will in the following be used in the first sense of the word, it will refer to the event. Furthermore, it will refer to a real, planned, inter-personal meeting taking place offline. Should I happen to talk about dates taking place online, such a date will be labelled an online date. The person who looks for a date, and goes on a date will only occasionally be referred to as a dater, but most often I will be speaking about users, members or clients, and sometimes consumers and customers. What regards “perfect”, matchmakers are themselves talking about “perfect dates”, which also is the main reason that I am applying the same terminology. As we shall see, the level of ambition for different actors varies however. What is a successful date (and thereby perhaps “perfect” ditto) for one actor, might not qualify as a successful (and “perfect”) date for another. Ambition ranges from matchmakers aim-



ing at providing a forum where people get a chance to meet other people and perhaps send each-other love-mails, to those acting as downright marriage brokers, explicitly set on finding the client “the one” to marry.

Whatever the ambition, in order to be able to construct, enable or facilitate a perfect date, an online matchmaker has to provide their customers with some sort of marketplace. The marketplace could typically be an Internet site dedicated to matchmaking alone; a site which people go to specifically for utilizing a matchmaking service in one way or another, such as Match. Alternatively, the marketplace could be a personals section provided by any online media site, a so-called distributed service. A common feature of such matchmaking services is that the user of the service, usually a member, is able to visit the site, and wander around in the online marketplace to check out what is offered, to alter one’s own profile, to take part in discussions et cetera.

Within the matchmaking industry, there are also those actors which do have a web presence, but that do not offer any services online. Though the matchmakers in a sense are online, the business they are into could hardly be labelled “online matchmaking”—there is no online marketplace, and the matchmaking resources do not consist of mathematical algorithms and automated computer programs. One such actor, which will be presented in more detail further on, is Selective Search. In a similar manner to that of the stockbroker acting on a stock market, Selective Search acts as a broker or an agent on the “love market”. Although Selective Search hardly could be termed an online matchmaker (since it actually operates offline), it will be mentioned in the passing, partly because it demonstrates the scope of business models in or closely associated with the industry, and partly because it demonstrates the range of matchmaking resources that are deployed by actors within the industry, demonstrating an interesting counter-example to automated matchmaking resources.

The example provided by Selective Search also illustrates that the industry could be said to be organized in the dialectic between total “on-lineness” and total “off-lineness”, the actors being hybrids occupying (and perhaps moving between) different positions in this dialectic—my focus of course being towards the pole of “online-ness”. To what degree the services provided by actors in this realm really are online—to what degree the exchange, and the activities preceding the exchange are carried out online—differs for different actors. But there is of course no clear-cut boundary between matchmaking taking place online and that which has an offline side to it.

To the extent that the marketplace is located online, in the form of a destination site or a personals section at any online media site, it is quite easily demarcated. What might be harder to distinguish are the goods that are exchanged, the services that are offered, and the actors that are involved in the trade. There are service providers, and there are people interested in the services. The latter of these might be labelled users or potential or already existent members. Furthermore there are the profiles of the users/members, and there is some technology or human resource that carries out the matchmaking. Usually, there is also some kind of billing system. Let me start with the users/members and their profiles, serving as the basis for the matchmaking, and how the users/members pay for the services they make use of, before moving on to the matchmaking resources that are deployed by different actors.



Members, Profiles and Payment

Television viewers in Scandinavia might recall Lovesearch, and the service that the company offers, from TV commercials broadcasted in Sweden, Norway and Denmark during 2002. As broadcasting a TV commercial suggests, there are no restrictions to who can become a member of Lovesearch. A basic service is open to anyone who is interested, accepts the legal terms, and is willing to leave some personal details—and who lives in any of the Scandinavian countries mentioned above. Becoming a member involves creating a personal Lovesearch profile, a procedure common to the majority of online matchmaking services. The profile is split into three parts: “personal details”, “personal qualities” and “sought-after qualities”. The personal details are hidden to other members. The “personal qualities” form the criteria on which matching is based when other members search Lovesearch for possible “soul-mates”. The “sought-after qualities” are matched against all other member profiles once the member performs a search through the service. In the personal qualities section, members leave information regarding the color of their hair, their preferred music genres, how romantic they are, et cetera. All in all some forty questions are to be answered in order to make the basis for matching as good as possible. The sought-after section is composed of the same questions, but giving the member the chance to rate the importance of the different qualities.

The basic service that Lovesearch offers, lets anyone become a member, add a profile, specify what they are looking for in a future partner, lover, friend, or whatever it might be. It also allows for an automated matching to be performed, on the basis of one’s personal profile, and serves the member with a list of potential matches. However, only very scarce information about the matches is revealed to the “basic member”. For instance, for the majority of the matching parties, user-names and contact information are concealed, and thereby also the possibility of establishing contact. To get this information, one has to become a “Gold member”. There are five different “Gold Member packages”. A one-month membership is 149 SEK, and one spanning over two months is 258 SEK. The longest, running for an entire year, is 690 SEK. The Gold membership allows access to all the functionality in the Lovesearch platform. Besides enabling a member to send “hearts”, five trial “love-mails”, read “love-mails”, add a photo, get access to some articles in the Lovesearch Magazine, and get invitations to a limited number of the “real life” events that Lovesearch arranges, Gold membership allows for members to upload a film clip of themselves, partake in chats—privately as well as in chat rooms –, send an unlimited number of “love mails”, read the Lovesearch Magazine, and get counselling from Lovesearch’s “Love Master”. As Gold member you will also get invitations to events arranged by Lovesearch, you stand a chance of being singled out as the “single of the week”, and get your own “Secret Garden”—i.e., a private space within the matchmaker’s realm, where one can upload more personal pictures or film clips, keep an online diary et cetera, and which only certain people have the “key” to. Searching for potential matches, the Gold member of course gets full access to usernames and e-mail addresses to other members, unless they should have shut this certain user out.

Only in the last year (2003/2004) Lovesearch has moved away from a service directed only towards subscribing members. Although the functionality offered with the basic membership is highly restricted, it might well serve as a trial version of the matchmaking service for non-subscribing members. Also, subscription fees have diminished by 30 SEK a month between 2003 and 2004.



One reason Spring Street Networks was granted runner up in the Fortune Magazines “Cool Company of the Year” competition was the anonymity of the on-line matchmaking software platform that the company has developed, along with a polygamist approach to making business. Unlike the majority of on-line dating services, Spring Street Networks does not operate as a destination site. Instead the company provides “invisible” technology that supports personals for other websites, and allows a member of the service access to a vast database more than a million people strong. In this way members visiting websites such as TheOnion.com just as easily comes in contact with people entering the service through TimeOutNY.com, Nerve.com, Salon.com or Boston.com—to name but a few of the sites served by Spring Street Networks “personals” platform. The larger the database and the more refined the technology, the better are the odds for constructing perfect dates and delivering good results—that is the idea and the assumption that Spring Street Networks seems to be working from.

Hence, should you have visited one personals section powered by Spring Street Networks, you have visited them all. They are all exactly the same, only placed within different contexts—i.e., embedded in different online media sites. Just like Lovesearch, personals sections powered by Spring Street Networks welcome all members. However the membership conditions are somewhat different. Spring Street Networks allows for members to join freely, and bills them in accordance with the functionality that is utilized.

Credits are the currency of the personals. You can use them to initiate notes, send a voice message and start a session in live chat. If you don't have any credits and you try to send a note, a voice message or a chat request, you will be asked to purchase credits. Instead of paying for a subscription that gives you access to all services for a limited time (regardless of whether you're interested in all services or whether you use the services at a cost-effective rate), a credits system allows you to buy a package of credits and spend them whenever you like on only the services that most interest you.

personals.nerve.com

With the recent changes in Lovesearch’s member conditions, Spring Street Network-powered matchmaking services are in a sense quite similar: a member can join for free without any hesitation. Should you however have more serious intents in mind, the terms for “subscription” go apart. While the Gold members of Lovesearch are paying a subscription fee, the members of Spring Street Networks are only registered users, some paying for service, others not paying a dime unless someone interesting pops up that they just have to contact. Arguably, the two models have different implications on what type of users the sites attract. Joining Spring Street Networks could be done without the least hesitation, while a Gold membership at Lovesearch—which really is the only way to really make use of the service—is rather costly. While Spring Street Networks probably will attract more users (also in relative numbers—North America is of course immense compared to the all the Nordic countries taken together), possibly of broader spectra due to the distributed nature of the technological platform, one could speculate that the members of Lovesearch are more dedicated to their search.

Juxtaposing the service offered by Spring Street Networks and the one offered by Lovesearch (on a conceptual level, appreciating that the two service providers are targeting



different markets), one might argue that a strength of Spring Street Networks is the sheer size of the database, and the presumably wide ranging interests of the members—having ended up in the same database by chance, so to speak, after having found their way to a common forum through a wide range of media sites. Diversity and size might thus be competitive advantages of such a service. Being a destination site—with a name that communicates a high level of ambition—and requiring members to subscribe to the service in order to partake in any serious manner, Lovesearch, on the other hand, might well be housing a more dedicated clientele of members, with higher expectations on the service to actually “pay off”. Arguably, this puts more pressure on the matchmaking service to actually satisfy a customer by delivering successful results—i.e., a successful match, or at least a perfect date.

Allowing oneself to speculate a bit further on this matter, a greater will to succeed in the search for a date, might however well be a contributing factor to some kind of result actually being reached. So, whereas a service like Lovesearch’s might well be under a greater pressure to deliver results, the “cause” of this pressure—i.e., dedicated and demanding members—might also well be a valuable asset in helping the success of the service along. Lovesearch surely appears to be positioning its service as a more dedicated dating service than the one offered by Spring Street Networks—which, on the other hand, is able to boast a broader range of members in regards to general interests and perhaps also in regards to the level of desperation for finding a partner. Although not competing directly against one-another, Lovesearch appears to be competing on ambition and dedication, while Spring Street Networks appears to be competing on a melange of size, price and possibly image: low-key, cool, worth its price (pay only for the good stuff).

The member profiles of Spring Street Networks are similar to the ones at Lovesearch. A member fills out a form by answering questions regarding length and weight, hair and eye color, education, ethnicity, religion, star sign and whether one has any kids or not. Furthermore, the questions treat more behavioral aspects of ones personal disposition, such as cigarette and alcohol habits—do you at all smoke, and what is your attitude towards drinking? Spring Street Networks gives their members a chance to answer quite a lot of questions, on various topics—such as “Last great book I read”, “Favorite on-screen sex scene” or “Song or album that puts me in the mood”—in writing. Lovesearch only supports predetermined “characteristics” to be stated by marking a number of check boxes. While the number of predetermined characteristics is more plentiful at Lovesearch, personals sections powered by Spring Street Network offers a chance for members to express one-self more freely. But then again, should one decide to become a Gold member of Lovesearch, one can extend the profile quite considerably by creating a “Secret Garden” and there add more content, which might be of a more private character. By and large, Lovesearch offers its members a bit more functionality than do Spring Street Network-powered personal sections.

The major differences between the two matchmakers of approaching the issue of making matches, lies not, of course, in very different ways of filling out one’s personal profile. Rather the major differences between these two actors are to be found in the way they charge their members for the services provided, and in the technological platforms deployed by the two actors.

If the task is to provide matches, and if results do matter for the future success of a matchmaker in the online matchmaking business, both with regards to attracting customers and external financing/capital, a key issue is holding a database with a high number of compatible members. Match brags about the meticulous quality of its members.



Match.com is a diverse, global community of quality single adults who share common goals—intelligent individuals who want to find great dates, make new friends, form romantic relationships or meet life partners. Members tend to be college-educated, professional and residents of a large city or its suburbs.

corp.match.com

Despite the boasted “quality” of the singles at Match there are no regulations to who can and who cannot become a member. The business model is very similar to that of Lovesearch: membership is free—anyone can become a registered user and create a profile on the site that is searchable for all the other users. Subscribing to the service, by paying \$24.95 a month (or \$16.65 a month when signing up for three months at a time, and \$12.45 a month when signing up for six months), is an extended service, which lets members utilize all sorts of functionality to come in contact with, and to flirt with other members. However, Match also offers a third kind of membership, namely one in which the member pays \$18.32 a month for at least a three month period, and which enables other, non subscribing members, to communicate with this premium member at no cost at all. Whatever the level of membership, for integrity reasons the actual e-mail addresses are still hidden, though.

When creating a profile one typically also specifies what qualities one prefers in another party. This information is included in ones own profile, and serves as a key component in the matching. Usually the questionnaire is made out of the same questions that one has specified for one-self. In the case of Lovesearch, the questions one answers are graded on a scale, enabling a member to emphasize a certain quality or interest that is important in another party. I will however look closer at how this is done in a later section of the essay.

Now, forty or so questions (and as many preferred qualities) create quite a limited amount of data that can be used for matching. In a database containing millions of profiles, chances are that the entries will not be so very diversified. The number of matches that would suit you—yes, you and your unique personality as it has been described by answering forty questions—might just end up being counted by the thousands... Which of course is somewhat intangible. This is old news in the matchmaking industry and some actors have taken measures in order to cope with the problem, or found ways around the problem. To become a member of eHarmony a “Relationship Questionnaire” with as many as 500 questions has to be filled out. Although this means spending quite a lot of effort on the membership procedure, one can never be sure of actually being accepted after having struggled through the questionnaire. As TwinCities.com reported on August 4, 2003:

Nik Bosyk considers himself a decent catch. The 6-foot-4, blue-eyed voice-actor makes great calamari, likes sappy movies and never forgets birthdays. But after a recent dating dry spell, the 25-year-old swallowed his pride and turned to the refuge of the semi-desperate: online dating.

- It seemed like you were guaranteed to meet someone, he says.

He was wrong. After completing a mandatory 40-minute personality test on the matchmaking site eHarmony.com, Bosyk experienced the latest—and arguably most extreme—form of courtship humiliation: He was rejected by an online dating service.



- I was stunned, says Bosyk, who apparently failed the personality test. - Is that even possible?

As if dating weren't painful enough, some online matchmakers are flirting with a new marketing tactic: snubbing you. The site Bosyk tried, eHarmony.com, outright rejects people who are deemed unmatchable by its testing software, without ever telling you why.

Spencer, 2003

eHarmony would have made \$49.95 a month off of Nik Bosyk had he found it worthwhile to start communicating with other members over the site. But the company chose to exclude him rather than potentially profit from him. Apparently Nik Bosyk wasn't soul-mate material. According to the article quoted above, eHarmony has (in the summer of 2003) rejected 77,759 people since its launch in 1998. Quality before quantity, results before large lists of members. But then "eHarmony isn't a visual pick-em-as-you-see-them buffet like most other dating sites", according to the online dating magazine OnlineDatingMagazine.com. The "Relationship Questionnaire" is a key to eHarmony's business; the rich profiles are the foundation to eHarmony's "scientific matchmaking", which is based on "twenty-nine key dimensions that predict great relationships". There will be reason to return to eHarmony and its alleged "scientific" approach to matchmaking in a short while.

Back to the faith that befell Nik Bosyk: exclusivity, shutting unmatchable or undesirable members out, is not a unique feature of eHarmony's service. TheSquare.com only accepts people with a university degree from the top universities in the United States. There is nothing peculiar about that, TheSquare.com started out as an alumni network. Personals sections appear almost everywhere one looks online, and of course there will be those that are off limits for the general public.

In Barbie Adler's dating service Selective Search, the exclusivity has really gone hardcore. Adler is a former professional headhunter who has crossed over, and started to cash in on love. She has taken the concept of headhunting from the world of business and brought it into the love domain. She is ambitious; Selective Search tripled its business in 2002. But with charges of \$10,000 to \$30,000 a year for the service, Selective Search is for people who "simply want a more productive, results oriented approach to finding their mate", and who at the same time has the ability to pay up.

Selective Search is not for everyone. We are an up-scale matchmaking source who works exclusively with the elite of the business world. Our clients have high expectations and require us to provide only superior introductions. They expect to meet the kind of women they wouldn't find with other matchmaking resources. Women of considerable substance and style, who like some of our male clients, wouldn't normally consider a dating service unless they were assured of the extraordinary quality of the individuals. This means we are judicious about the women we include in our network because it assures our clients that they will only be matched with spectacular, high quality referrals.

...

The women of Selective Search are attractive, fit, educated, emotionally healthy, fun and always interesting. To ensure membership grows daily, we



invest heavily in nationwide recruiting efforts that include: extensive marketing in national publications and on the web; advertising at salons, spas and health clubs and monthly Recruiting Parties held nationally at upscale establishments.

www.selectivesearch-inc.com

Both men and women can become Selective Search clients. The service does however seem to be directed towards wealthy men. The major role women play at Selective Search, is being affiliate members—i.e., making out a set of women which Barbie and her team can scan once a wealthy man seems to be on the look-out for a suitable wife or the like. While clients pay, affiliates join for free. They have either been headhunted by Barbie Adler and her team or they have found their way to Selective Search on their own, in some other way, perhaps through the website. The website offers the possibility of signing up as an affiliate member by filling out a questionnaire similar to those of Lovesearch, Match or personals sections powered by Spring Street Networks. Becoming a Selective Search client, on the other hand, does of course not follow an equally simple fill-in-your-personal-details-and-desired-qualities-online-and-join-immediately-procedure. People that are interested in the service are to specify a few personal details and contact information online. Within twenty-four hours Selective Search will get back to the potential client. Only a small part of Selective Search's activities are "online", and it would be to stretch the concept of online matchmaking quite considerably, should one label Selective Search an online matchmaker.

Never mind this issue for a second, though. Selective Search appears to be walking a tightrope. One easily gets the impression that dating services, in the eyes of Barbie Adler and her team, have been somewhat of a taboo, not a very sophisticated way of finding the beloved one. Still, Selective Search is providing just that, a dating service. What differentiates this particular service, and what makes it legitimate is "the extraordinary quality of the referrals", the up-scale clients and their alleged reluctance towards the cheap services one can join immediately online. Such a differentiation motivates high charges—remember we are talking quality before quantity; Selective Search is everything but cheap a cheap dating service.

Charges of tens of thousands of dollars a year call for good results. Apart from the appeared conviction that good results grow out of a member gallery only containing "quality referrals", Selective Search relies on refined matching techniques and professional matching skills to deliver results. But in their case, it is hardly a matter of software- and hardware-based matchmaking. The matchmaking resources are made out of human labour.

Matchmaking Resources

An online matchmaking service lacking some sort of matchmaking resource with the ability to weigh member profiles against one another and single out certain potential matches, would be terribly inefficient and utterly worthless. One could easily imagine what it would be like to browse through, say, a thousand profiles, of which only ten percent fulfils a desired criterion such as age. It would take up substantial amounts of time, and probably be highly infuriating. Essential functionality of an online matchmaking service is thus the possibility for members to search for other members' profiles in accordance with one's personal preferences. However, as databases containing member profiles are growing, and the profiles sometimes are counted by the millions, also simple search functions that filter out non-smokers with blue



eyes and red hair, being between 155 and 175 centimeters tall and weighing more than 50 kilograms but less than 65, and living within a range of 50 kilometers, have become very blunt instruments for finding good matches. They simply single out too many people, and perhaps not even focusing on the things that really matters when it comes to love and “chemistry”. Search functions that single out individuals based only on “hard characteristics”—such as length and hair color—and a few interests—often as specified by the matchmaker—one can mark, don’t seem to be efficient enough. Performing a search for potential matches at a large player like Match, easily overflows a user with a horde of potential matches. Just browsing through them all soon gets very time consuming. According to an article titled “The Love Algorithm”, published in the August 2003 issue of *Business2.0*, customer experience is described as “spotty”, and the dating scene “like a flea market” (Orenstein 2003). Competing on size entails a downside, which calls either for refined technology or some other reinforced matchmaking skill. Vast databases, together with increased demands from customers, seem to have created a need for something along the lines of custom tailored matching.

In the pursuit of resources that both deliver results and appeal to people being on the lookout for an erotic encounter, a romantic date, a long-lasting relationship or a happy marriage, some actors in the dating business are staking their bets on the power of science. Could there be anything more appealing to someone on the lookout for love, than a “scientific matchmaking” procedure? eHarmony took an early lead. Headed by Dr. Neil Clark Warren the company boasts about its “scientifically proven compatibility matching”:

Surprisingly, a good match is more science than art. But for most singles, finding the right partner is more luck than planning. Research done by Dr. Neil Clark Warren (founder of eHarmony) has shown that the compatibility of romantic partners can be measured. In fact, there are 29 dimensions of compatibility that align in the most successful relationships. eHarmony uses these dimensions to identify the right matches for you.

www.eharmony.com

Dr. Warren is presented as the big star of eHarmony. It is his competence and his extensive experience of singles’ issues that are the founding element for the company’s “scientific” approach to matchmaking. With a Ph.D. degree in psychology from The University of Chicago, Dr. Warren is claimed to be “one of America’s best-known experts on singles’ issues, mate selection, and developing healthy relationships” and as having a “mission to help millions of people find their Soul Mate and fall in love for all the right reasons”.

In over 30 years of practice, Dr. Warren has seen literally hundreds of failed marriages and the damage they cause to children, family, and friends. He began inquiring into each failed marriage, dissecting it to understand what went wrong and when. Twenty years of study and research led to one overwhelming conclusion: “In almost every case, these were two persons who should never have married each other! They really didn’t belong together. They thought they did, but they just didn’t.” ...

At the same time, Dr. Warren was also able to uncover a set of principles that consistently appear in successful marriages. Testing these principles with



a scientific model and over 5,000 married persons, Dr. Warren was able to develop a predictive model of compatibility. Using the 29 dimensions that he found correlate to marriage success, Dr. Warren began to help singles nationwide make the right choices and build successful relationships.

ibid.

In the matchmaking process the profile, as we have seen based on the five hundred questions of the “Relationship Questionnaire”, is matched against all other eHarmony members according to Dr. Warren’s twenty-nine dimensions, and the member is provided with a list of possible matches. 99.7 per cent of the people that do not meet the requested requirements are filtered out through this matching technique, according to the company.

The image eHarmony attempts to mediate is utterly serious. Although love is still a big mystery, also to scientists in all possible disciplines, the mere fact that Dr. Warren holds a doctor degree in psychology is enough for boasting his matchmaking program to be scientific. One can of course object to this actually being the case, and one might not have a very hard time winning the argument. That does not do away with the fact that the confidence in “scientific” matchmaking seems to be on the rise. In the spring of 2003 Match, size-wise playing in a higher league than eHarmony, implemented a “personal attraction test”. The test was presented as “scientific, accurate, fully customized”. In the feature article “The Love Algorithm” mentioned above, Match’s new competitive weapon is presented as “a scientific method for helping customers find true love”, enabling “exploratory or confirmatory non-parametric statistics branching”. According to some, the test put Match in the forefront of automated, but at the same time scientific, matchmaking:

Neither Yahoo nor Spring Street offers a personality test. Others have considered it but have not gone beyond the talking stage. Joe Shapira, co-founder of AmericanSingles.com, has hired a Harvard Professor to cook up something at once informal and sophisticated.

Orenstein, 2003

The test was a first step in the development of Match’s “Total Attraction Matching” procedure, which at the end of 2004 is put forth by the company as the foundation for the successful matching that Match claims to provide. It produces a personal profile report, which is divided into sections named “Who You Are”, “Who You’re Looking For”, “Sex”, “Evaluate Report” and “Attraction Science”. The person taking the test is encouraged to give feedback on the results, and is also free to use the report in any number of ways. Regarding “Who You Are”, presumably the basis for conducting what Match terms “mutual matching”, a profile report might read:

Falling in love is a spiritual experience for you. A truly loving relationship helps bring meaning to your life. You try hard to make your date feel comfortable and have a good time. You're good at anticipating what other people need and giving it to them. But inside, you're usually on an emotional roller coaster. You don't want to reject nice women, but also take it very personally



if you're the one rejected. You're constantly trying to find the 'rules' for successful dating but often find they don't work.

attraction.match.com/ViewReport.aspx?reportid=e1551ad6-0892-46e8-aa88-a57a7e4172cc

Promoting the new application, Match plays on the notion of the “scientific” to boast the acclaimed qualities of the test; it has been developed by scientists at weAttract.com:

The test you just took is the most scientifically grounded and customized personality assessment on the Internet. It's a 'smart' test because it can tailor specific questions to you based on your earlier choices so no one gets exactly the same questions. The content of the tests and the game-like way the choices were presented are the result of over 15 years of research by the scientists at weAttract.com, Inc.

ibid.

Moreover, the personal attraction test has been accompanied by a “physical attraction test”, which allows clients to specify personal preferences when it comes to looks. Who turns you off and who turns you on, and who turns you on more than the other? Taken together, the basic questionnaire, the personal attraction test and the physical attraction test of course make out an actual thing containing a whole range of different measures, which is taken into the matchmaking process. Whether or not these extensions actually provide the matchmaking process with “better” input—with regards to people’s inclination to fall in love with one another—than would a personal astrology profile, is far from certain. But it might not even be the main point. By the use of scales presenting personality traits, sought-for personality traits, and the like, a major function that the tests provides, is contributing to singling out fewer potential matches, than would otherwise be the case. It prevents members from being flooded by potential matches, making it less time consuming to look through the long lists of people. Since providing members with an efficient dating process seems to be one of the cornerstones in the alleged success of an online dating business, time saving aspects are highly valued. One has to keep in mind that this means both enabling instant contact with other people willing to go on a date, and providing a large enough stock of potential dates to flirt with. Not too few, but not too many, either. Refining the matchmaking resource, and thus the matchmaking process, arriving at a more accurate selection processes is thus of course a major issue, and a difficult problem that lies before many matchmakers. Finding the Love Algorithm that really works, one can imagine, is the greatest desire of many CEOs and CTOs in the business.

Scientific or not, the love algorithm of Match is of course a software program. That a piece of technology would be able to construct a perfect date is nonsense to Barbie Adler and her team at Selective Search.

Selective Search exclusively applies traditional 'executive recruitment' techniques to the search process. In-depth interviews, personality profiles and needs analysis are integral tools that help our clients in a number of ways: ...
– We 'pre-date' our Affiliate Members for our clients. Executive recruiter techniques allow us to dig deeper than any other matchmaking resource. We



know everything and then some about our Affiliate Members. When we introduce a client to someone, that individual will perfectly match the criteria the client is seeking. Physically, emotionally, mentally—our clients set the requirements. The only individuals we introduce them to will exactly meet their standards.

- We don't feed criteria into some technology driven database-matching application. Once a client, we hand pick the best, most appropriate match. We use what clients have told us, and what we've determined through personality profiles and needs analysis.

www.selectivesearch-inc.com

Among Barbie Adler and her colleagues at Selective Search there seems to be a strong conviction that professional recruitment also has something to offer the more private domains of life; that the field of professional recruitment has developed the best methods and the best competence for finding the right people, whatever position they are to fill. At least, they seem to think that potential clients believe in the powers of professional recruitment. Since clients generally are among the elite of the business strata, they might have substantial experience of professional headhunting. Supposedly only those with positive experiences from such activity will consider Selective Search...

For those who do engage Selective Search, there is never any need for entering the actual marketplace themselves. This is taken care of by their broker, or agent, a matchmaking resource with human qualities. The only contact with the assortment up for trade in the marketplace, is the meeting or meetings that the agent sets up with handpicked affiliate members. Hopefully, the number of meetings administered by the agent is as few as possible. With human matchmaking resources the matter is hopefully settled most swiftly. For as is stated on the website of Selective Search, the idea is of course to make the process as effective as possible.

Preparing and Setting up Dates

For Selective Search most of the work is done once the date is set up. If it turns out to be successful the work is done, at least for the time being. If the date fails the procedure might start over, this time probably with feedback from the client. But as I have stated before, Selective Search is not really an online matchmaker.

For actors in this line of business a date is not brought to a conclusion, nor initiated just because a list of potential matches has been presented. For a successful date to actually be set up, the daters—i.e., the member actively searching for a date and a member keeping a personal profile in an online dating database—must of course be able to contact one another. The possibility of sending so called love-mails, which are quite ordinary e-mails sent using the matchmaking platform, is of course a basic service that is offered by most providers, so long as members are paying for the service in one way or another. Private chats are another means of communication, which often follow the same principles to those of love-mails, with regards to which members can make use of them. Of course the private chat demands that the potential match is actually online. A third “pre-dating” feature, or perhaps it is better described as a first feature since it probably precedes both love-mails and chats, is the possibility of winking at- or flirting with other members, just to show that one is interested. Winking—or sending a



“virtual kiss” using Match terminology, or sending a “Heart” as Lovesearch would term it—is often a free service. Also non-subscribing members can send virtual kisses at Match, or hearts at Lovesearch. But at Match, a non-subscribing member who receives one of these kisses cannot respond to it with yet another virtual kiss. Should someone flirt with you, you better get a subscription. Lovesearch is not quite as teasing. There, you can flirt as many times as you like with the same person. It does not however give you access to initiate verbal communication.

Another “pre-dating” feature offered by most matchmakers is the possibility for clients to upload short video clips in which they can pull of some performance they find appropriately reflects their personality. Spring Street Networks offer members that already have established contact by privately chatting away, a chance of set up a free telephone service by just clicking a button. The idea is of course to make the transition from an online relationship, to an offline, as smooth as possible—although a telephone conversation could be argued to be taking place offline... In constructing a perfect date the dating service provider has to carefully consider these issues. Technological development and technological innovations in computer software will soon be reflected in new functionality, and new “smoothing” applications. It ought only be a matter of time before video chats will be introduced. Or, the entire services will be taken on to the mobile networks, with matchmakers teaming up with third generation mobile network operators—functioning merely as service providers. Already Match provides a mobile dating service in cooperation with mobile telecommunications providers in the U.S., in the United Kingdom and in Australia. Lovesearch has teamed up with the Swedish third generation telecommunications provider Tre. So far, these services seem to be little more than mobile versions of the online platforms.

Other possible scenarios are matchmakers teaming up with mobile operators so as to offer clients cheaper mobile telephone subscriptions. This is a service that the Swedish dating service/online community Lunarstorm, typically used by younger people, has offered their members. Regarding how hot online dating has been for some time, one can assume that application developers are thinking hard about how matchmaking services might utilize the infrastructure and the functionality “3G” entails.

For if there is one thing one can be sure of, it is that matchmakers will try to find even more refined ways to improve their matchmaking capabilities. Some will involve technology, but also Match has moved offline, under the name MatchLive, in order to attract new customers and possibly even succeed in live and instant matchmaking. MatchLive arranges special singles’ events, such as wine testing, 80’s parties and speed matching at fancy New York restaurants. Lovesearch arranges “love-lounges” where singles can come to mingle, eat, dance and drink. Human matchmaking resources thus seem to function as a complement to refined technological solutions.



Discussion

What we have seen so far is thus how a number of matchmakers, most of which operating online, approach the issue of constructing (or at least enabling the construction of) perfect dates, successful matches. My aim has been to describe in detail the process in which a marketplace is created and filled with content which is to be put on show, viewed and exchanged therein—mainly looking at the parties and at the components involved in this process. Furthermore, I have been trying to illuminate some principles used for charging the parties involved in the exchange, before homing in on the matchmaking resources—in a sense intended to function as a sort of personal shopping guide—and wrapping it all up by talking about how all sorts of functionality provided by online matchmakers enables users to contact one-another and initiate a dating process.

What these descriptions have shown, is thus a kind of service which builds on the notion of a virtual community of people presumably having one thing in common: they all want to meet someone. The ambition of the users engaging in a matchmaking service may well vary from those seriously looking for the one to marry, over to people using the site to find brief encounters (it has been said that relations initiated through online matchmaking services often result in brief sexual relations), to people lingering about a site just for the fun of reading through corny personal descriptions and looking at cheesy photographs (supposedly being a more frivolous way of utilizing a service). Appreciating this fact, it is yet notable that this kind of virtual community attracts users who presumably—and now I might just be forcing the argument a little—are actually aiming at doing away with using the service within the shortest time possible. Supposedly, one is not using a matchmaking service *just* for fun. Hence, what is peculiar about this kind of virtual community is that those involved are constantly seeking to leave the service and the community. Therefore, the more successful the matchmaker and the users are, the more attractive the matchmaker has to be in order to keep up the business. Now, one could suspect that customer satisfaction and the power to attract new users might well go hand in hand—at least if the matchmaker is able to come across to potential users in a reassuring manner. Whether or not this principle at all is valid, or even comes close to being so, it points out the importance of matchmakers being able to tell success stories. Apart from being a recurring topic in the discussions surrounding the online matchmaking industry (and often made out as being a determinate element in the fierce competition), boasting the “results” generated by a matchmaking service in one way or another, is an activity actors within the industry seem to be very keen on partaking in.

Moreover, promoting their respective services, matchmakers around 2003/2004 seem to have learnt from less successful predecessors such as Jane Austen’s Emma in the sense that they appear to be taking measures to move away from matchmaking only based on “hard” criteria, instead emphasizing for instance common interests of the parties involved. In the case of eHarmony, for example, emphasis is even being placed on psychological aspects influencing and affecting a matchmaking process and the social relation this process might precede.

Lacking the right skills and sensibilities, Emma’s nevertheless human efforts into the art of matchmaking have in online matchmaking, to quite great extents however, been replaced by allegedly scientific matching methods and advanced computer algorithms. If not



designed to carry out the actual matching, these methods and algorithms are at least designed to provide a user with some guidance as to which directions might be worth proceeding in. In certain services, human resources might still be utilized in the actual matchmaking processes (as they are in the case of Selective Search—which again, is not really an online service), but the ruling principle for online matchmakers is to automate the process by introducing different forms of technology.

On such a conceptual level, the matchmakers still seem to be caught in 19:th century ideas. Large scale matchmaking projects, relying on “29 dimensions of compatibility” that can be aligned so as to create successful relationships and on love algorithms aimed at automated matchmaking, are ideas reminiscent of those elaborated by the famous French social philosopher, utopian and early socialist thinker, Charles Fourier. Fourier was in the first quarter of the 19:th century (being a contemporary with Jane Austen’s *Emma*) devoted to serious work on the principles of the phalanstery: a future/utopian society, hypothesized to be organized around (what Fourier identified as) the twelve human passions, and aimed at reaching a state of Harmony (see e.g. Fourier 1983). Central to the composition and the maintenance of the phalanstery, Fourier imagined specific councils, which would carry out complicated mathematical calculations for attaining collectives of individuals who would not only possess an appropriate range of passions and skills in regards to the “harmonized” work that was to be carried out in the phalansteries. The councils would also care for bringing together individuals with compatible passions—individuals who ought to suit one another, in regards to intimate, and passionate, relationships. For claiming to have found “the laws of passionate attraction” and “the passionate series”, Fourier suggested that it might actually be feasible to carry out such calculations.

Taking into account that the phalansteries would comprise some 1500 individuals, each possessing his or her own disposition of the twelve passions, there does not seem to be an end to the calculations that would have been required to create and maintain Fourier’s utopian society. But apart from shedding some utopian light on the endeavors taken on by online matchmakers of today (although the actual administrative task today might be carried out in a flash by super computers), the exercise of recalling Fourier’s utopian phalanstery highlights an important issue. Namely that a major conceptual difference between the matchmaking project and the love algorithms imagined by Fourier, and those offered today by online matchmakers, is the location of the initiative for change—i.e., from which sphere in society the initiative for social change originates.

The attitude towards matchmaking communicated by Match or eHarmony, where great faith seems to be placed in automated processes and computer algorithms, might well appear utopian. Not in the sense that the services on offer, and the technology relied upon, come anywhere near being the result of a political initiative taken by the state so as to decrease the number of single households or to increase the number of births. But they come from the commercial sphere of society, and they are offered by commercial actors searching for sharper matchmaking tools, which will enhance business by better satisfying the desires nurtured by the clients. However, the services and the feature applications (such as Match’s “personal attraction-” and “physical attraction tests”) are not forced upon anyone, but initiated by commercial actors, assumedly quite skilled at sensing and exploiting the desires of clients and potential customers. It seems reasonable to believe that people who make use of the services in general, and the feature applications in particular, do so because they somehow find it worthwhile. And since it demands of the user to put both time and effort into the us-



age of the service/application (e.g., by filling out questionnaires) the initiative could be seen as coming from the “right” direction, namely from the users. For, as Anders Ehnmark points out in *Tre essäer om befrielse och frihet* (Eng. *Three essays on liberation and liberty*; 1984), where the utopians often go wrong is in placing the initiative to social change in the state—not in the society and in the desires and virtues circulating herein, among the people.

Now, as with any commercial service online matchmaking services are of course dependent on the consumers to survive and to expand and/or generate profit. And whether online matchmaking projects will be deemed a utopia or not, will ultimately be decided by the consumers/customers and their will to utilize the services offered to them. (And perhaps this is precisely where the modern matchmaking project differs from the post-modern—in placing the initiative and the determinate factors [but also, as we shall see, the value production] at least partly in the hands of the consumer) What is notable, however, is that inherent in the customer utilization (i.e., in the consumption of a matchmaking service), lies a co-creation of much of (not to say most of) the value that the online services have to offer. For, as has been described in the above, by creating, adding and maintaining personal profiles, by growing your Secret Garden, and by participating in chat rooms or private chats (of course demanding that the user is online and logged in), the end users make a substantial contribution to the value of the service, as it is experienced by other members. Assumedly, the customer value lies to a great extent in the quantity and in the quality of other members’ profiles, and in the possibility of initiating and establishing some kind of contact with other people. Thus, customer utilization is also a highly important aspect with regards to the attractiveness of the matchmaking services; to maintaining or expanding the customer value they are offering. A matchmaking service is literally worthless unless there are other members engaged in the service, and with whom one can get in contact; other members who have spent time and effort on their personal profiles, and who are more or less active users of the service, i.e., spending time on the site.

That the (sometimes paying) member is actually heavily involved in the value creating process of the service he or she is consuming, is an interesting issue in that it goes against the Marxist notion of a producing party creating the value of a commodity through some abstract labour, and might well be—and it probably even ought to be—elaborated on elsewhere. Although only commented on most briefly in this essay, this observation, along with the notion of matchmakers being highly reliant on paying subscribers should they wish to turn the utopian visions of theirs into reality, raises the issue of what pricing strategies the matchmakers are deploying. What regards matchmakers actually operating online, this is in many cases the customer segment that contributes the most to the value creation that pays the most for the service (either by paying a subscription fee, or by paying for “credits”). The ones actively taking part in the service, and making it a service worthwhile using for others, are the ones paying the most for the service. Possibly this is neither a very attractive pricing scheme or such a great incentive for users to utilize the service.

While “access” (in terms of pricing theory, reminiscent of the “flat rate”) is the determining factor for how much users are paying to join Lovesearch or Match, actual usage (equivalent to a “usage-based rate”) is the determining factor for the service provided by Spring Street Networks. Since there is only a faint connection between the usage of a matchmaking service and the cost for running it (being a digital service for which the marginal cost for providing service to yet another customer is nearly zero, and diminishing with the number of users attached to the service), the possibilities to think up new, innovative



ways of charging customers should lie open to online matchmakers. Of course, there could be other criteria than access and usage for determining how customers are charged; “matchability” being one that might suit eHarmony’s service. And without making any claims on actually providing very thoughtful alternatives, I will allow myself to elaborate a bit on the topic. A person appearing hard to match might have to pay a higher fee, while a user who appears easy to match is charged less—a venture which might work in the direction of enhancing the quality of the “stock”. Nik Bosyk would obviously have to pay a rather high fee than average—but he would at least get a chance to make use of the service.

Recalling one of the problems matchmakers seem to be coping with, one could also imagine pricing strategies working towards solving some of these issues. A matchmaker struggling with low success rates but longing to increase them so as to attract new members to the service, might charge users in accordance with ambition and loyalty—a user both looking for and capable of establishing brief but successful encounters (it is often said that encounters initiated online, have a tendency to lead to brief, non-lasting, sexual relations), and who returns to the service time after time, is of course highly valuable to the matchmaker since s/he is both active on the site and contributes to increased success rates. One could imagine such a customer paying a reduced price. It has been found that online encounters tend to lead to short, sexual relationships. Retroactive pricing schemes based on ambition and loyalty could thus be two criteria (not to be said that they are without problems) to make use of when charging customers.

Rather than coming up with suggestions as to how matchmaking services could or should be priced, my aim here is merely to point out that it might well be possible to come up with innovative and favorable ways of pricing such a service. The schemes deployed by the actors mentioned in this essay are by no means the only ways to pursue better results. For although the results referred to here are of a slightly different kind than what is usual when speaking about economic matters, one has to keep in mind that also online matchmaking is a results-oriented industry, and that much of the future success and attractiveness of a matchmaker presumably lies in being able to tell convincing, confidence-inspiring and appealing success stories.

This essay has thus been an attempt to describe and illuminate how a number of commercial actors approach the issue of providing a matchmaking service, some of the issues involved in this pursuit (issues that actors involved in this pursuit are struggling with), and only most briefly relate this, in a sense, very modernist matchmaking project to one or two historical—and utopian—predecessors. In so doing, it has raised several questions regarding, for instance, the nature of the kind of virtual community that a matchmaking service entails, where (in the abstract sense) one of the common denominators is that everyone wants out—or has lingering about at different matchmaking sites and personals sections turned into a form of entertainment for itself? It has brought into question how, by whom, and what kind of value is created in such a service—is this issue one that makes the matchmaking project(s) of the 21:st century, as compared to that of the 19:th century, utterly post-modern? –, and it has briefly taken to discussing and raising issues of pricing matchmaking services. Every-one of the issues brought up in the above may well deserve to be treated in much great detail in future work.



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- <http://www.lovesearch.com>
- <http://www.selectivesearch-inc.com>
- <http://www.springstreetnetworks.com>
- <http://www.weattract.com>

Pink Machine is the name of a research project currently carried out at the Department of Industrial Economics and Management at the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. It aims to study the often forgotten non-serious driving forces of technical and economical development. We live indeed in the reality of the artificial, one in which technology has created, constructed and reshaped almost everything that surrounds us. If we look around us in the modern world, we see that it consists of things, of artefacts. Even the immaterial is formed and created by technology - driven by the imperative of the economic rationale.

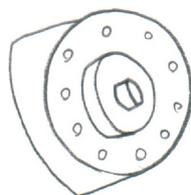
As Lev Vygotsky and Susanne Langer have pointed out, all things around us, all these technological wonders, have their first origin in someone's fantasies, dreams, hallucinations and visions. These things, which through their demand govern local and global economical processes, have little to do with what we usually regard as "basic human needs". It is rather so, it could be argued, that the economy at large is governed by human's unbounded thirst for jewellery, toys and entertainment. For some reason - the inherent urge of science for being taken seriously, maybe - these aspects have been recognised only in a very limited way within technological and economical research.

The seriousness of science is grey, Goethe said, whereas the colour of life glows green. We want to bring forward yet another colour, that of frivolity, and it is pink.

The Pink Machine Papers is our attempt to widen the perspective a bit, to give science a streak of pink. We would like to create a forum for half-finished scientific reports, of philosophical guesses and drafts. We want thus to conduct a dialogue which is based on current research and which gives us the opportunity to present our scientific ideas before we develop them into concluding and rigid - grey - reports and theses.

Finally: the name "Pink Machine" comes from an interview carried out in connection with heavy industrial constructions, where the buyer of a diesel power plant worth several hundred million dollars confessed that he would have preferred his machines to be pink.

Claes Gustafsson



also available at

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indek kth / 10044 sthlm / sweden