

# The Basics of ReUnion

## Project concept

Besides the emotional and cultural layer, marriage and nuclear family are also legal-institutional forms that allocate resources and social benefits, and presuppose the ways we organize our lives and how we take care of each other. But in the face of mass burnout, the gig economy and the aging society, they may not be realistic frameworks anymore. The fact that fewer people get married and more couples get divorced, doesn't necessarily mean people are less interested in romantic and familial commitments. It is more likely to imply the way we experience relationships are changing, and the rigid, imposed legal-institutional framework is no longer fitting our reality. Therefore, people choose to commit through other means.

On the other hand, in our aging society, how do we deal with the exponentially increasing demand for care has become a pressing issue for most of the governments in the world. However, the shrinking social welfare system had led to the privatization of care labor, which is shouldered by the nuclear family. Evidently, it adds even more burden onto the deflating nuclear family. More family struggles and individual burn out emerge from here.

An alternative way to organize our lives and care for each other has to be sought. And ReUnion proposes to unionize people through a network of long-term interpersonal relationships. Instead of atomizing the precarious society into further fragments and isolated units, we propose to bring people together through the redistribution of care labour. We would use decentralised blockchain technology to build an infrastructure that unionises people by building a solid ground for their relationships.

### **1.1 A New type of social networks.**

In previous application, we have made the argument that both marriage and blockchain are contractual platforms. On the other hand, marriage and social networks nowadays also have a commonality: they are both spaces where immaterial labor often gets exploited. As ReUnion started from a critique towards the marriage institution and proposed an interpersonal contract platform (which is one kind of social networks), we feel obligated to reflect on immaterial labor,

and more specifically care work, in relations to family-oriented welfare system and platform economy.

Firstly, we try to move away from the design conventions that Silicon Valley had made us adapt to, and we want to challenge the idea that time is a linear material that can be measured by a flat unit. Because immaterial labor, especially the emotional ones, time is never spent in ways that are accounted for. Similarly, emotions can never be reduced to a few buttons.

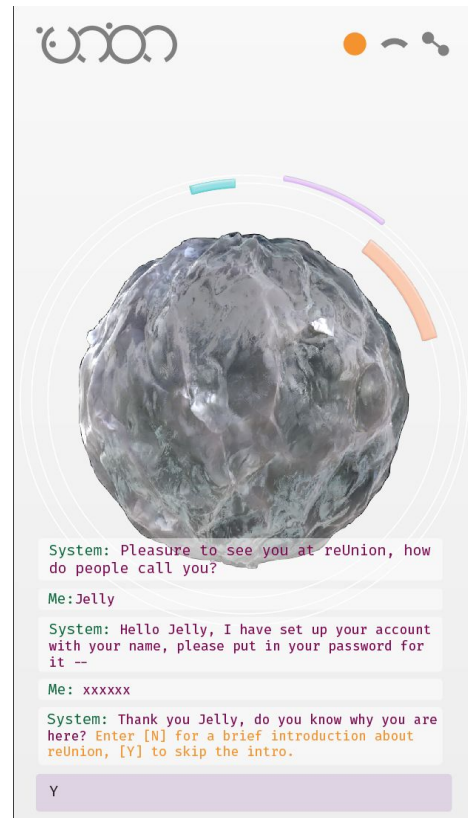
In our proof-concept, we do not simply ask people to make linear connections to each other, nor do we ask for a flat grading. Instead, we created an interface that consists of a colorful and fluctuating emotional sphere, and three layers of timelines where each relationship segment is orbiting around the sphere. The emotional sphere represents the user's general emotional state. The 'ocean waves' mark the degree of the rewarding or exploiting feeling of each relationship. The three types of time includes: time for concentrated action, time for fragmented tasks, and time spent in the back of the mind. If a user finds their time and emotions are overloaded and would like to redistribute their tasks and labor with others. They can click each relationship segment to change their evaluations, and can invite their partners to co-design their relationship -- a contract is then made.

On the other hand, as the quantification (and incidentally capitalization) of human relationships is our key concern in designing the algorithmic system behind ReUnion. By designing the interface of the social network/ contract environment, we attempt to design a different point of abstraction, i.e. asking for subjective and temporal data that only communicates within the present relationship (such as subjective color code and self-estimated time measurement), as opposed to collecting universal behavioral data from the users.

We attempt to challenge the simplified and linear view of the current social media platforms, regarding our friendships and relationships. And we want to create a space that views interpersonal relationships as fluid, multifaceted and subjective. This is our first design iteration for the ReUnion network, but we need more development time to learn whether it's the less wrong way, and what could be a better way.

## 1.2 A New type of economy

The different kind of data will provide new paradigm in designing the crypto-tokens (computational rewards based contract definition and data performance) and financial planning,



which we plan to further develop in 2019. In general, there are a few guidelines we set for ourselves.

Firstly, as ReUnion is a platform for long-term commitment and has a strong focus on the emotional value in interpersonal relationship. We decided the crypto-tokens that generate from the contracts should work like a mixture between insurance and allowance, which can pay for activities that relates to the corresponding relationship, such as consultation, care work, community support, legal help, and so on. In another words, the tokens in the system can only be circulated in a parallel economy of narrow purposes. This way, we prevent the people stay in a relationship for ill purposes, and make sure the economy focuses on facilitating and supporting solidarity.

Secondly, since ReUnion is essential about fostering solidarity against alienation, we also care about the kind of economic partnerships we want to build. At this point, we are researching the possibility to make ReUnion a service hub for cooperatives, in order to further the relationship-based network for a more equal and user-/worker-owned economy.

## Smart Contract

BlockchainTechnologies.com



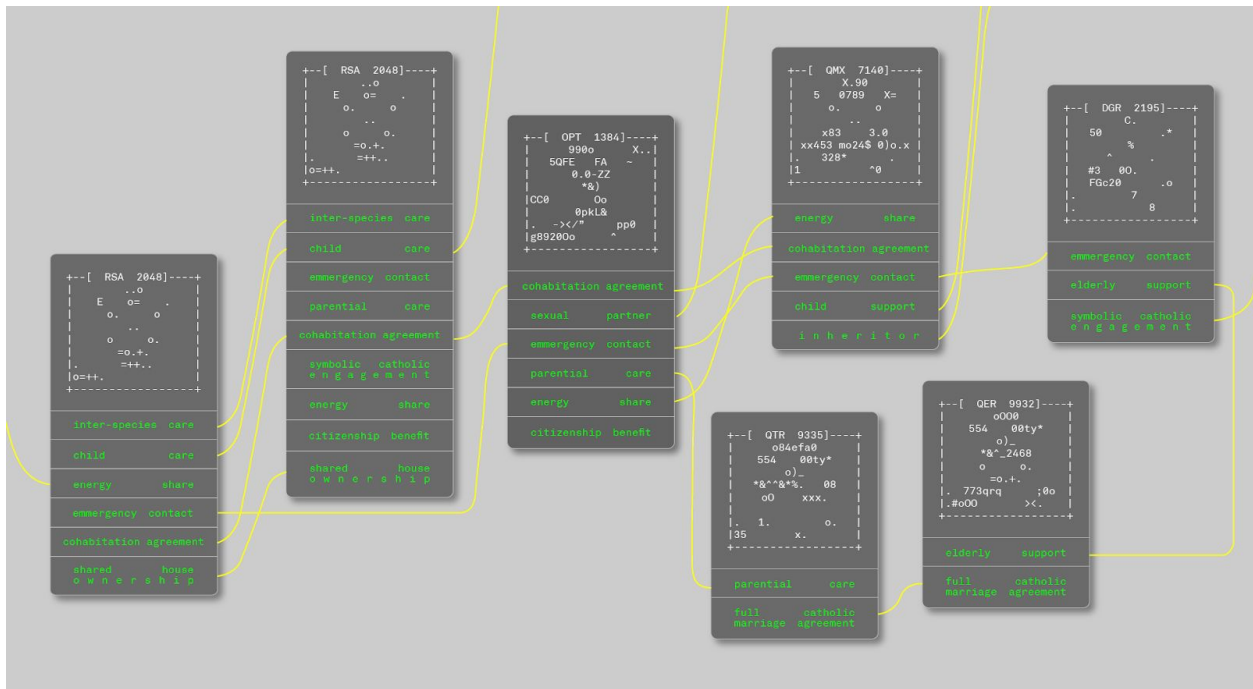
Concept image of how smart contract works

Even though the platform is still largely speculative, we have thought about the business model and financial sustainability. Because that is the most fundamental components that guides design decisions and structure the nature of the platform. At this moment, we are interested in the direction that the platform will sustain itself by contract fee (between users) and commission fee (between contract and cooperatives). Such business model and speculated economy would not rely on user attention, so that there will be no motivation in addictive design and tracking user data. We believe digital technology should position in facilitating human relationship,s and a meaningful human relationship often requires exclusive time and privacy. Therefore avoiding addictive design and tracking user data is essential to such objective.

### 1.3 A new type of legal systems around family and marriage.

In the current legal system, law is created with the view of mass governance. As such, it has to be thought through governance practicality, financial feasibility and social impact. However, that is also where institutional discrimination and social oppression take shape.

We opens a new legal system where governments are able to be more adaptive towards people's needs. The token economy would enable a bottom-up automated bureaucratic system where social benefits are allocated based on people's own design of their commitment. And the allows relationship-based customized law would allow without losing too much of efficiency. Meanwhile, many problems that are created by a rigid view of these concept, such as the legal and emotional dispute of a surrogate mother, will be naturally dissolved as the concepts of family and marriage are extended by such system.



Concept image for a decentralized family

It also embraces the changing nature of every relationship, by giving the opportunity to set up checkpoints of a relationship. The checkpoints allow people to set up a timeframe for their relational contracts, where people are given the space to reflect on their relationship status, and decide to extend, revise or expire the contracts. The checkpoint system confronts with the pitfall of a presumed permanent commitment, which often makes people forget to pay attention to their long-term relationship, and lead to an emotionally-empty yet commitment-chained relationship. To quote the bot in our system: *"The checkpoint is not the end goal of your conversations, but a starting point of them"*.

The current marriage that we know of is a full-spectrum social contract that is predefined by central authorities. Authorized by the church or by the government, it only allow certain types of relationships to subscribe such contract, which presuppose the ways we organizing our lives and care about each other. This contract, although represents how we imagine the ideal of our love life, it doesn't necessarily facilitate and nurture the health and longevity of our relationship. In many case, our relationship get hurt when we has to bend our relationship to fit into that model. With ReUnion, we try to argue that marriage and family bond is an interpersonal matter, and people should be given the right to define what works for them and what does not, whilst still able to enjoy social protection.

Having said that, we apparently need more research and prototype to know exactly how to code such legal system, and how to connect it with real world legal enforcement.

#### **1.4 Blockchain employment**

During our starting phase of research, we realized why marriage and family are such persistent institutions. Besides their long-standing symbolic value on the emotional and cultural layers, they are also persistently subsidized and protected by the states. Therefore, even though people are less interested in marriage as a statement of romance/ unionization/ adulthood, there are still large incentives to subscribe such contract for social benefits and state protection. This tells us that any impactful reimagination and substantial re-engineering has to be thought through the financial and legal aspects. That's why our project became the way it is now.

The current development of blockchain technology can provide resolution to both in with one body. Blockchain is (so far) unredactable databases that is maintained by a mesh network of computers that would helps the authentication of an agreement, it thus provide the possibility of legal recognition (many state-sponsored programs have been working on legalizing blockchain-based documents).

Newer generations of blockchain can implement smart contracts, which are programmes that execute on top of the blockchain infrastructure. The users can use this decentralised structure to avoid a single, imposed contract that defines what marriage is. It enables them to define their own contracts. These self defined contracts can be modular, made up of smaller agreements, and selectable elements that can be customized according to the users needs. Such features are perfect for what ReUnion is envisioned to do. At the same time, the creation and execution of each contract generates crypto-tokens that may link to market value, which make it possible to establish an economy of the mesh network of care and long-term commitments.

All in all, blockchain has all the features that we need for ReUnion, let alone it was initially the inspiration of the project.<sup>1</sup> But we should note that we are not completely attached to blockchain technology per se, as our mission is largely social. If another technology is proven to be more

---

<sup>1</sup> It started with the question "If blockchain became the core infrastructure of the society and decentralization became the core ideology, what would the social layer looks like?". Marriage and family both as a contractual platform and an organizational structure became the subject of reimagination.

effective and secure, we may considered to move our project to it. We believe technology is a tool, and its social and cultural meaning need to be shaped by how it's being placed.

## 1.5 Envisioned cooperative relations

ReUnion Network is a platform for interpersonal relationships, as well as a platform for (local) careworker cooperatives. The tokens that are generated from the relational contracts should have limited circulations in the general market, in order to prevent capital-driven investments.

ReUnion Network aim to work with the welfare system local municipality and/or low-cost insurance company to financially back the ReUnion token value. To a certain extend, the crypto-tokens in the ReUnion Network would work less like a cryptocurrency than a micro unit of welfare payment.

At this point, ReUnion Network has no plan to offer arbitration and contract enforcement, rather, it aim to connect to legal law enforcements, in the case of contract violations, abuses and unforeseen consequences.

## 1.6 Application scenario

To explain the bare minimum, ReUnion Network works in such way: when two people decide to make an agreement of long-term care for each other, a child care agreement between two neighbours for instance, they can make a contract on ReUnion Network and create a crypto-token as the unique signature of the contract. When both parties needs extra help for daycare, they can use the token to pay the extra service that is provided by local carework cooperatives. The direct relations with the careworker and the relationship partners through a trusted crypto-token can lead to a further extended support system. With more relationships like this extended and multiplied, it will naturally form an economic alliance that are focused on the interpersonal relationships and worker-owned economy.

To make the abstract more tangible we take a few possible application scenario:

*Case A: LGBTQ single elderlies can use ReUnion to make care and support contracts with each other to form a non-binary family that take care of each other, and their afterlife. When they need professional helps or financial support, they can use the tokens in their contracts to pay for related services, such as professional care, funeral arrangement, grief consultations.*

*Case B: Adults whose parents that live in different cities can make a network of care swapping contracts. Such as Alison live in Amsterdam and her parents live in Barcelona, she can make a contract with Bob who lives in Barcelona and have his parents live in*

*Amsterdam. The tokens of their contract can pay for additional help when some of them are occasionally absent.*

*Case C: A neighborhood decided to raise their children collectively can make a network of contracts to make child care arrangements and share custody, so that all adults may have a time window for themselves.*

*Case D: A surrogate mother's relationship with the baby and the genetic parents do not need to constrain in a commercial contract and separate from the legal perspective of what constitute a familial relationship.*

These scenarios can happen to different people or to the same people, which will allow a hybrid network that consists of diverse types of long-term relationships. With government support, these relationships can enjoy similar social welfare and familial rights that usually can only be enjoyed by a married couple or a nuclear family.

## 1.7 (Interim) User Flow Rundown

1. UserA register on ReUnion Network and receive their private key.
2. UserA login their account and they automatically receive a relationship contract with themselves
3. UserA setup how they feel about this relationship with self-defined color, intensity, and estimation on the three timelines.
4. UserA put in other relationships that they are currently involved
5. UserA get a full render of their current state of mind and time occupations
6. (If applicable) UserA's relationship with themselves reach to a stressful state (i.e. too little time, or too intense), the system send out an notification that they should consider to redistribute their work through collaboration with the partners.
7. UserA pick one relationship to start, and invite UserB (the other side of the relationship) to co-design the relationship segment and create a new contract.
8. The new contract consist of contract content, checkpoint (until when the contract is valid), and a token (UserA and UserB both need to put in a small deposit as insurance/welfare investment)
9. When extra caring expense related to the relationship accoured, UserA and UserB can decide to use the token to pay for extra services. The services should be provided by local cooperatives.
10. The checkpoint is used as a mechanism to maintain the vitality of a relationship. When a checkpoint hits, User A and User B should discuss whether they would like to revise/add/reduce their contract items, or to extend the original contract, or simply let it expires.
11. When a contract ends, the token of the contract will split into two equal parts and transfer to each user's contract with themselves.

12. If User A or User B have been reported for contract violation, abuses and unforeseen consequences by each other, the contract will be temporary suspended and law enforcement or independent arbitration will step in. The contract may resume active when disputes are resolved, or permanently expires after certain amount of time (depending on the nature of the contract, or the prior setting by the users)