

if this thrills you you're
a trashure hunter

Playa di Lido, Catania, Sizilien
37°27'45.2"N 15°05'07.7"E

leon held
social relevant design: trashure hunters

mea culpa Throughout my relatively short lifetime I already approximately produced a mere 10 tons of ‚trash‘.¹ As an average citizen of an industrialized country that’s normal, of course you can do something about it but the ‚system‘ is indolent.

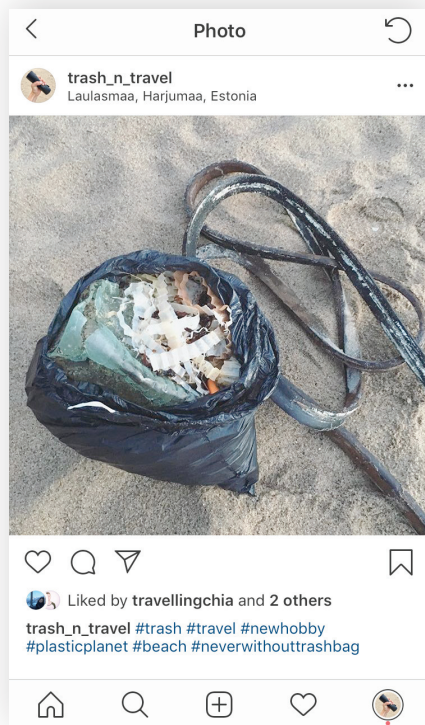
By studying product design, I’m not an average citizen anymore, but suddenly I’m the one who designs and invents what is soon-to-be ‚trash‘ (besides vegetable skins).

A turning point in my life was last summer after my studies abroad in Estonia. I was camping at lonely lakes, marvelous beaches and peaceful glades, but soon I discovered that „signs of hu-

man existence“ were enduring fellows on my journey: bottles, cans, cutlery, toys, plates, bags, clothing, canister, boxes, containers ...

Looking back I can do nothing but wonder how it took me 23 years to stop considering walking-past-trash as normal. It’s an approach to products I haven’t had before, which is presumably not taught at any design faculty:

understand, what’s left at the end.



¹ Statistisches Bundesamt, Aufkommen von Haushaltsabfällen je Einwohner in Deutschland in den Jahren 2004 bis 2017 (in Kilogramm), Statista, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/161228/umfrage/haushaltsabfaelle-je-einwohner-seit-dem-jahr-2003/> (letzter Besuch 26. Februar 2019).

It turned into a passion, an obsession. No matter if it's a hike or a walk, from now on I take a trash bag where ever I go. It's sad to see plastic bottles in a nature reserve, but a fortiori it's satisfying to collect them. To pass that passion on to others, I started to publish the story and the results on Instagram.

With the project ~~trashure~~ **hunters** I want to pick that up and take it further, I want to motivate people to become active themselves, to convey knowledge about recycling and to connote the perception of trash in a new way.





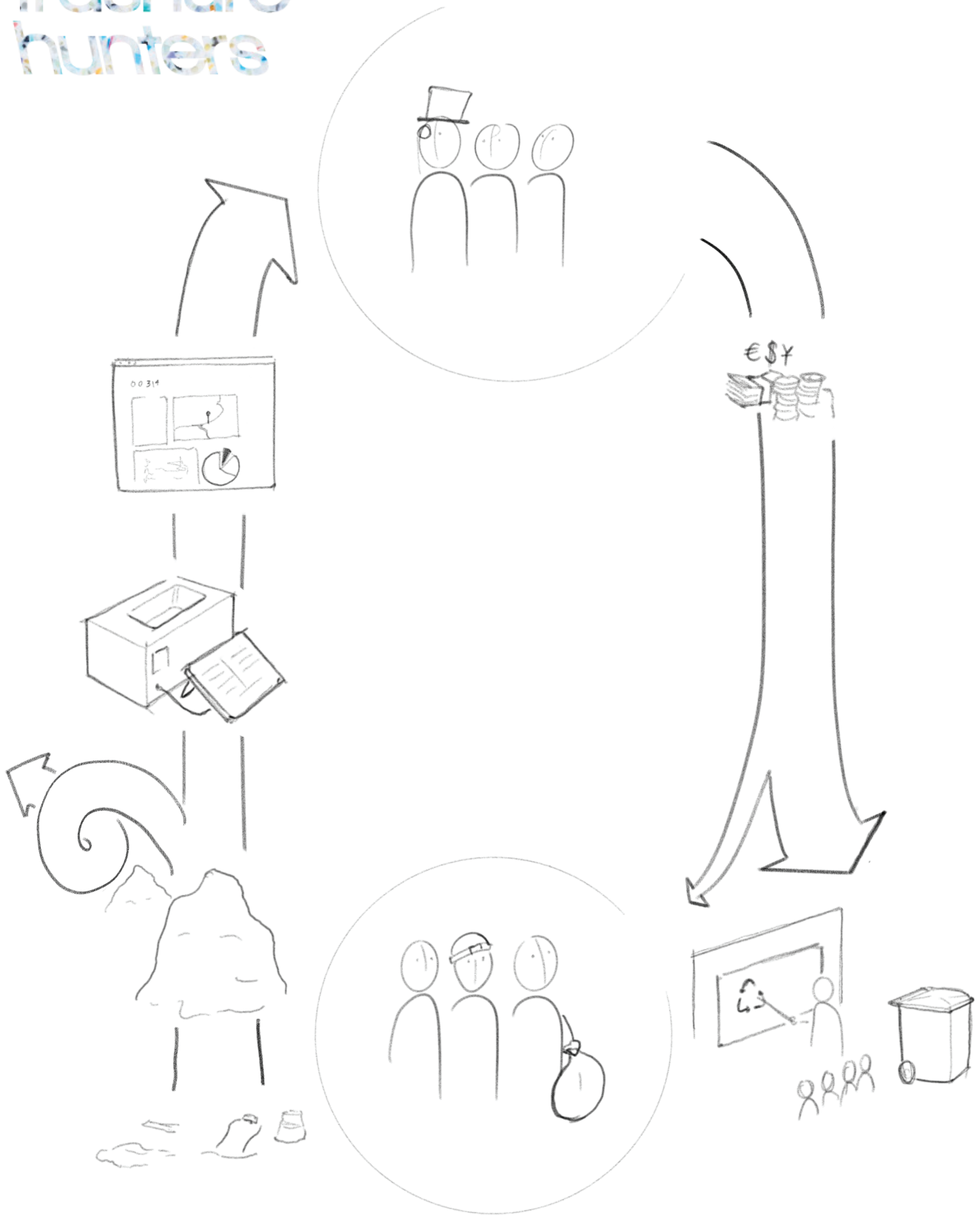
~~trash goes treasure~~ trashure hunters is a holistic concept with the aim, to propagate a more conscious approach to plastic. It starts at the end-of-the-pipe, where people carelessly discard plastic in the landscape.

This material is being collected by volunteers (labour contributors) and then sorted, cleaned, shredded and melted down. During this process, a lot of knowledge about the material is being conveyed and the extend of the pollution affects you directly.

The shape of the archetypical treasure, the goldbar, is loaded with symbolic meaning. The plastic itself becomes a collector's item, through the embossment on the top consistently traceable. As varied and colorful as the trash in our landscapes, the unique the bars will be.

By putting a price tag on the material, a financial value is put up and the buyers (money contributors) shall be sensitized. A small part of the revenue helps to extend the organization i.e. supply more labour contributors with the necessary equipment. The better part however is supposed to be deployed at the begin-of-the-pipe, e.g. in infrastructure projects, awareness campaigns and educational programs.

trashure hunters



harvest



4

document



sort



get your hands dirty That you can't defeat litter with money is obvious. And that fighting marine micro plastics is almost impossible is true, too. But this is no excuse to walk past macro plastics. Current assumptions estimate that between 4.8 and 12.7 million tons of plastic annually end up the oceans.² It seems inconceivably much, but it's a mere 0.6-1.5 kg per capita. So statistically speaking, we can halt the plastic flood by picking up what we find on a 10 minutes walk, with a little more commitment we could even invert the development.

This example shows, which massive potential lies in a mass movement. There's no need to wait for high-tech solutions to clean beaches, forests and meadows, we just need to get up and take our fate in our own hands.

² WWF, Plastikmüll im Meer – die wichtigsten Antworten, <https://www.wwf.de/themen-projekte/meere-kuesten/plastik/unsere-ozeane-versinken-im-plastikmuell/plastikmuell-im-meer-die-wichtigsten-antworten/> (letzter Besuch 28. Februar 2019).

clean



shred



melt



just do it! The process begins with what we call 'the harvest'. The term has a double meaning, as the material is not just picked like vegetables, but (at the moment) it unfortunately re-grows. The harvest goes along with a photographic documentation and some basic statistics about the emergence of debris.

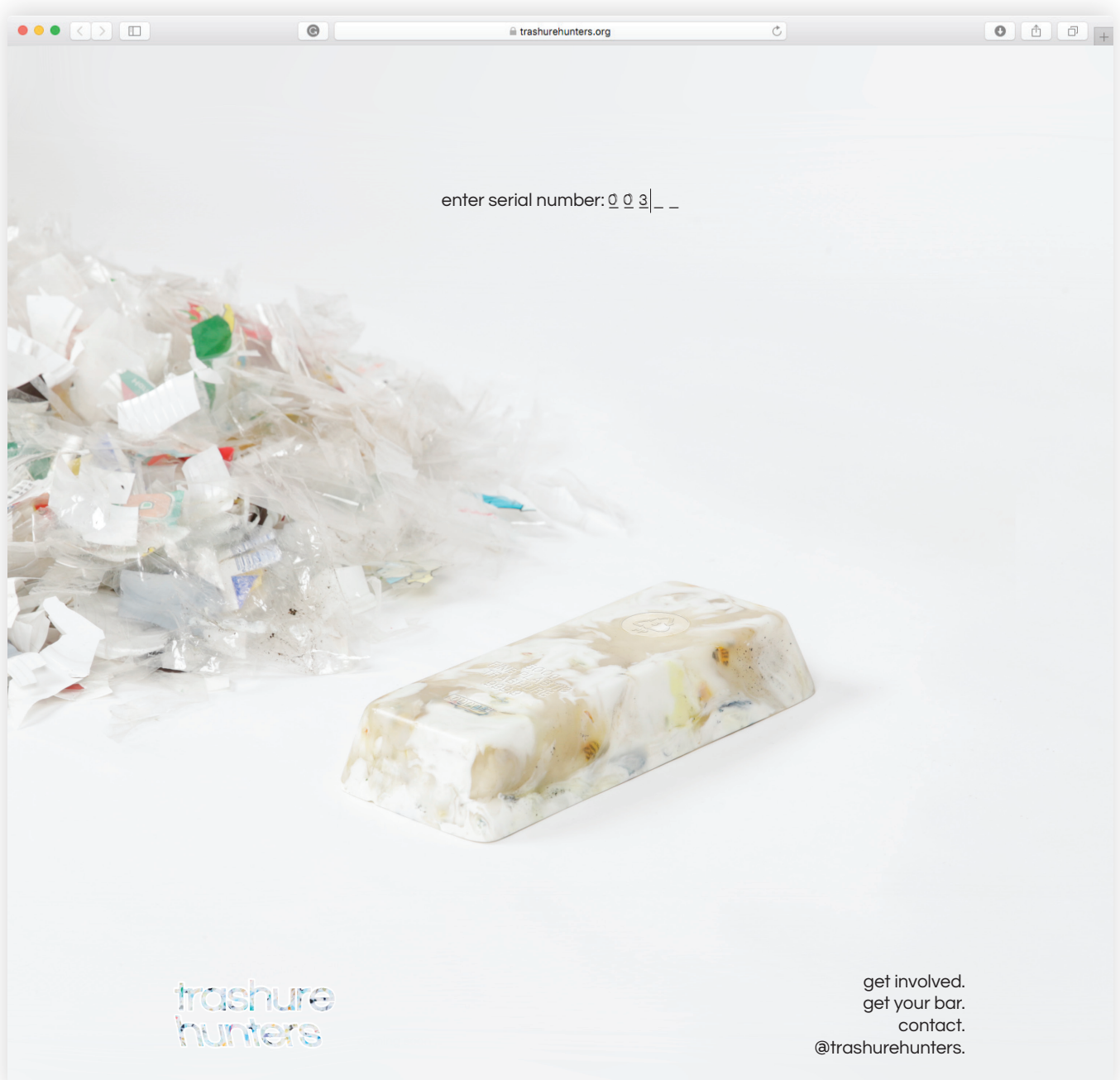
It turned out to be quite handy to directly separate between plastics and non-recyclable waste while collecting, so that the mono-material sorting is more effective later. That's of an essential importance as on one hand toxic materials like PVC are being sorted out. On the other hand, we don't want to end up with a chunk of mixed materials, but rather—by analogy to the goldbar—save the material in a pure form for later usage. Besides that, every plastic has its own melting point and hence, separations is crucial for a homogenous structure.

In the next step, the needed amount of material is being determined and cleaned thoroughly to ensure a high purity. In preparation for the melting, it needs to be cut down or shredded to a size that easily fits the mold. The final step is melting and pressing the material in the new shape.

~~spend your money wisely~~ The trashure bars have not function. As an object they are useless and therefore stand substitutional for what they're made from.

They are a symbol. A symbol for the value of the resource, a symbol of the own commitment and a collector's item with added value.

The revenue can be whether used in the region where they were generated or on a global scale where they're needed the most. No matter where they go, on trashurehunters.org a meticulous account will be rendered.



liability As with every kind of donation, the question about liability pops up. With a trashure bar you're holding a good part of change in your hands. But as it's not about taking plastics from a working circular economy or to consume more plastic just to process it later, it's crucial that the process is being documented transparently. By entering the bar's serial number on trashurehunters.org you can retrieve lots of photos taken during the hunt and information about the spot—and thereby elaborates a personal connection.

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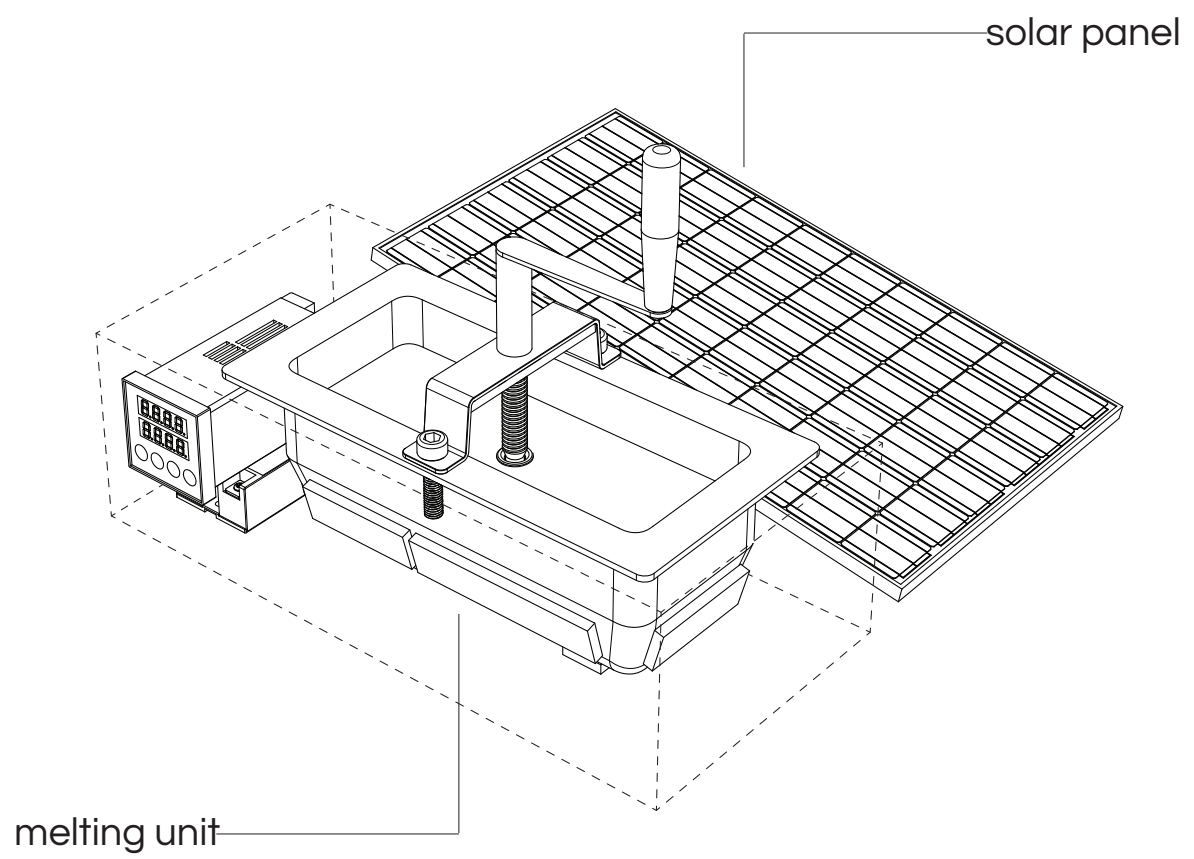
Crateri Silvestri,
Sicily, Italy

your bar

plastic glass other

trashure
hunters

12,3 kg



vision A large community of trashure hunters is spread about the globe. Equipped with the gratuitous starter kit of melting unit, shredding unit, collection bags, gloves and merchandise (shirts, jackets, caps or hats depending on the climate zone) they're pacing back and forth through the landscape and along coastlines and river beds. Especially families with children adopted the thrilling trashure hunt with educational value with pleasure.

The bars themselves happen to be a status symbol for a sustainable lifestyle and became a beloved souvenir from travels. Through the countries embossment people started to gather a global collection. The serial number makes every bar traceable and a fraud difficult.

A smaller core of the community commits themselves to the organization: some melt down gathered aluminum cans to new molds, others do accounting, marketing and distribution.

In a transparent procedure, relevant projects (workshops, train-the-trainer, infrastructure projects, trash reduction and reuse) are selected and supported with know-how and money.

The aim is clear: collect plastic waste together before it ends up in the oceans and to advocate to prevent future pollution.

future Even though the first tests and prototypes were promising and the personal feedback was mainly affirmative, the vision is far reaching. Even more I'm happy, that Upcyclingbörse Hannover stated interest in continuing the project together with me in the context of education.

In the first step we want to establish the necessary infrastructure for melting plastic, as well with regard to future projects. At the moment, there are already workshops being offered to people who are interested in sustainable techniques. The collective gathering, sorting, and melting of plastics to the bar shape hence extends the portfolio of Upcyclingbörse. I expect to learn a lot myself in this context about working with groups and education in general, which found a place in the vision of trashure hunters anyways. Based on the experiences there I can plan the next steps of trashure hunters and determine in which direction it may develop besides Upcyclingbörse.





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trashurehunters.org