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EDITORIAL: REFLECTIONS ON SCALING UP

Georgina M. Gómez (*)

Chief Editor

International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, gomez@iss.nl

1. INTRODUCTION

The International Journal of Community Currency Research is the main academic publication of the Research Network on Monetary Innovation and Complementary and Community Currencies (Ramics.org), founded in Brazil in 2015 by a few dozen researchers from all over the world. IJCCR aims to provide a platform for researchers to disseminate their work among academic circles. It welcomes articles of scientific quality that present a well-argued proposition, an explicit dialogue with theories and the work of other scholars in the field, and reliable data. The journal is committed to achieving a wide possible coverage of topics and disciplines pertinent to monetary innovation, local community exchange methods with or without means of payment, and complementary currencies. IJCCR guarantees a double blind peer review process to help authors improve their papers to standards that would constitute an addition to our present state of knowledge.

In its 21 years of life, IJCCR has become the backbone of research on community currency, with over 150 articles openly accessible to other researchers, policy-makers and the general public. For students and government officials, it is the place to start a search on knowledge that is sufficiently reliable, independent and can reasonably sustain the criticism of others. We proudly invite researchers to contribute to the common pool of knowledge offered in www.ijccr.net. Please read our guidelines for authors on how to submit your papers and become part of our collective learning. We also welcome colleagues who would like to support formatting, proof-reading, peer reviewing and other tasks of the publishing process.

IJCCR is striving to improve its position as a research outlet where everyone would like to publish. In 2016 we have added Digital Object Identifiers (DOI) to every article published in its 20 volumes, hence allocating papers unique metadata identifiers in databases to facilitate their dissemination. The DOI codes were a necessary condition to enter individual articles in academic hubs such as Researchgate, Academia.edu and Google Scholar. Published articles are now easier for readers to find and for authors to track their own citation statistics. At the time of writing this Editorial (30 January 2017), Google Scholar citation indices showed that IJCCR has a record of 1524 citations in its history, of which 960 have taken place since 2012. The next step will be to propose the inclusion of IJCCR in indexed academic databases, such as Web of Science and Scopus. The number of articles and the regularity of the issues are two key criteria to achieve this goal.

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2. THE CHALLENGES OF SCALING UP

The concern that complementary and community currency systems should grow or scale up to increase their economic impact and efficiency has become a central issue of consultation to the Editorial team of the IJCCR in the last years. As a result, it has become the main focus of this editorial and a common thread in the three papers in this issue of the IJCCR. Research on the various paths of upscaling is less abundant than would be desirable, especially for an audience of policy makers looking for results and hard evidence of impact that may curve their decision to support a CCS scheme or not.

The principles of locality, solidarity and small scale are considered as almost inevitable principles of Complementary Currency Systems and according to some authors, these are essential principles of all the schemes of the social and solidarity economy (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005, North, 2005). These three principles seem almost inseparable: solidarity works best at the small scale of face to face interactions and these are facilitated by close proximity, although the social media has eased that restriction, to some extent. Many practitioners and scholars would probably not object to the small scale at which CCS seem to work best and would underline, instead, the community ties and local business that CCS support or the reclaim of monetary citizenship that they entail. The discussion on a human-scale economy would suggest that this is the right option for CCS, to remain local, small and centred on solidarity.

Capitalist discourse, however, presents local, small and non-profiteconomic schemes as essentially inferior in terms of efficiency, rationality, universality and productivity and that position needs to be addressed (Gibson-Graham, 2008). When complementary currency initiatives are characterized as too small, too local, too ephemeral and too dependent on the limited resources of members, there is a certain implication that they need to grow in order to be relevant to its members. When CCS are successful, it is quite inevitable that members will have to reflect about the ways in which growth is or should be happening and whether that outcome is consistent with their aims and aspirations. Moreover, many CCS nowadays start with seed public funding, which is often given in the expectation that the recipient schemes would scale up their visibility and increase their economic, social or environmental impacts (Blanc and Fare, 2013). The UN system has been paying attention at Social and Solidarity Economic schemes, and among them, CCS look like a promising modality in sight of the new Sustainable Development Goals. The need for these initiatives to become more visible and larger would go hand in hand with abandoning the fringes of regular economic practices (Utting, 2015). Peter North (2005) proposes that scale is a social construction and as such, a matter that can be discussed and produced within a "localised structuration" process. In other words, as initiatives become institutionalised they acquire certain stability or regularity coupled with normative notions of what is acceptable among its members.

From that point of view, growth would seem desirable for CCS because of the power of numbers and also to increase its impact and relevance as alternative economies. At the same time, scaling-up raises a number of issues. The understanding of the processes and implications of scaling up is still modest, especially in relation to losing inclusiveness, local embeddedness and meaning for the SSE members. Some authors (Utting, 2015, Reed, 2015) suggest that the growth in membership supposes challenges and that mission-drift is relatively inevitable. For instance, there are operational issues such as financial sustainability, the clarification of the requirements and techniques to recruit new members, and the technical means to process the entry of these new members. Other authors focus on more substantial issues that would weaken the values and principles that CCS stand for and their internal social cohesion (Sánchez de la Blanca, 2015). There may be a loss of personal face-to-face relations and the disembeddedness of community currencies from the social setting and values that give them meaning (Evans, 2009). That would mean drifting away from their alternative, politicized and emancipatory potential, whatever the form this potential adopts in terms of environmental concerns, securing livelihoods or democratising the monetary system. The suspicion that upscaling implies loss of conviction and commitment with certain core values has been influenced by the experience of other initiatives that depend on solidarity such as cooperatives that implement capitalist practices such as waged labour when they grow beyond the boundaries of their core member workers (Russell et al., 2011). Within the social movements' literature, Jasper (2004) discusses the issue under the label of the extension dilemma: While growth in number of participants implies an increase of influence in the public arena, it brings more diversity in the identities of the movement, more coordination and communication problems, and lengthier processes of decision making.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SCALING UP

As CCS initiatives become institutionalised they acquire certain stability or regularity coupled with normative notions of what is acceptable among its members. Peter North (2005) argues that scale is a social construction and as such, a matter that can be discussed and produced. North uses the term "localised structuration" to address how the moral values of the local communities are gradually matched with economic scale in stable and mutually recognised practices or institutions.

The UN Research Institute for Social Development hosted a conference of the dilemmas of scaling up in 2013 and Peter Utting published a collection of papers on the topic. Utting uses the term integrative upscaling to discuss in what such social innovations can be "scaled up and sustained while retaining its core values and objectives"(2015: 3). The author argues that expansion can work in three directions. It can be *horizontal* if it involves the multiplication or replication of small scale schemes which are deeply rooted and relevant to specific groups, segments or localities. It would have a *vertical dimension* if they grow in membership but also in terms of the activities they cover and probably establishing associations and partnerships with other organisations in other sectors and engaging different populations and social segments. Reed (2015) refers to a third *transversal* dimension, which combines both replication in number and diversity of activities, publics and partnerships.

The three dimensions have different implications for CCS. In the long run, horizontal expansion could lead us to a world where every region, city and village would have at least one complementary currency system. Each one would serve a different social segment and purpose and would nest its contextual specificity, so there may be more than one per locality where each scheme focuses on different political goals or population segments. Such multiplication of schemes would boost monetary plurality with a myriad of currencies for different uses, locations and ethical values. Each CCS would be small in membership and manageable in terms of the logistical practicalities described above, but in such a landscape complementary currencies would be certainly visible to most people at the local level. Altogether they would represent a significant amount of individuals motivated by the vision of a different economy or community life, which need not be alternative or anti-capitalist but would minimally focus on giving preference to social networks and community ties over monetary accumulation and financialisation.

In regards to the second type of expansion, the long run of sustained vertical growth presents a panorama in which organisations that started with complementary currencies at the local level would articulate their actions by an umbrella organisation at the regional or national level. This would imply the integration of diverse social segments, activities and arenas, various segments of the population with diverse ideologies, from various social strata, interests and walks of life. Some groups of members would be more interested in exchanging time and favours and others would prefer to reward environmental behaviour in close relationship to the local government authorities or other donors, while some communities may prefer to launch transition towns or eco-villages that partially delink from the rest of the capitalist system. An umbrella organisation would have to navigate such diversity, giving space to all its nuances to coordinates at least some activities and represent some common banners. Altogether they could form a network of networks that would provide the participatory space to exchange knowledge and discuss challenges and futures. Such umbrella organisation may also provide the foundations for the social regulation of complementary currencies or establish dialogues with the authorities to formalise legal rules. Altogether they may add up to a significant amount of individuals and communities and give a voice to the reclaim of monetary citizenship, but at the same time such an organisation would have to navigate the myriad of different worldviews and priorities that characterise CCS schemes. It is conceivable that if such differences cannot be accommodated in one organisation, there would be several umbrellas that could be subsequently articulated.

The final type of growth, the transversal type, implies the multiplication of schemes in terms of their number, location, and types, as well as their presence in various complementary sectors and levels of socioeconomic activity. In the long run it would mean, for example, that an organisation would include members which run complementary currency schemes, credit services, cooperatives, farming unions, social markets, and other initiatives within a coordinated sector of social and solidarity economy. In organisational terms the trajectory would imply weaving networks with other organisations and at the same time building the internal capacity and funding backbone to coordinate these efforts while not losing the clarity of goals, identity and democratic values that distinguish these schemes from the regular capitalist economy. While presence at different levels may contribute synergies and hence strengthen the various organisations, it may also lead to loss of coherence if there are not enough interdependencies to keep the different parts within a relatively organic system. Solidarity then becomes the critical issue to keep a coordinating organisation alive and the risk of centralisation and homogenisation would most likely meet the resistance of some groups.

More research into the upscaling processes of complementary currency systems is needed to better understand the Janus face of growth. In what ways does the power of numbers benefit complementary currency systems, if at all? Does it facilitate social transformation, access to dialogue with the authorities, and more secure livelihoods for the vulnerable segments of the population, for instance? What challenges does it imply, and does meeting these challenges strengthen or weaken the core values and identities of the initiatives? Is diversity assimilated as a source of risk or as a platform for social innovation? Can different types of upscaling strategies be combined or would one type arise to better anticipate challenges? Who decides how and when to upscale? Such research would allow CCS practitioners and scholars to reflect on what activities can be coupled with upscaling in order to preserve values and solidarity

4. UPSCALING IN THIS ISSUE

Although the treatment of the topic varies substantially, the three papers published in the IJCCR Winter Issue of Volume 21 refer to the processes of scaling up and the concurrent protection of values and principles. One paper discusses the steps by which numerical growth happened, the second one refers to the challenges of weaving networks and the third one refers to specific efforts to protect values.

The first paper looks into the success of Sardex and its scaling up to currently cover the entire territory of the island of Sardinia after 6 years of existence. Littera, Sartori, Dini and Antoniadis are motivated by the question of why this particular B2B local currency has succeeded in scaling up. They discuss the starting assumptions, design and operational principles, and the socio-economic context of the island. The article offers reflections on why it worked without proposing the trajectory of Sardex as a “best practice” to follow because, as it states in page 16, the prescription of such best practices seems relatively futile in the world of CCS. The case of Sardex seems to have achieved growth in the number of members, geographic coverage, and turnover, while at the same time is has kept reasonable levels of satisfaction, community identity and solidarity among its members. The article lists a set of activities that were undertaken in parallel to the growth in scale and which responded to the search by trial and error of a delicate balance between economic and social benefits. These tasks have allowed Sardex to become central in a network of economic exchanges in which transactions construct new bonds but also generate income.

The second article focuses on Do it Together! (DiT), a complementary currency project in the Dutch municipalities of Tholen and Bergen op Zoom. The article describes the collaboration of the local government, housing associations and care providers, non-profit organisations, local retailers and citizens in the design of the scheme. Batterink, Kampers and van der Veer argue that the initiative took into account both economic and social goals since the beginning of the project because it involved profit and non-profit actors with different interests. The article emphasises that this was one of the goals of the project, to explore how these different actors would interact together and what learning process would emerge from this collaboration. During the growth process there were a number of drawbacks and difficulties that had to be adjusted in a nonlinear manner, especially to achieve the requirement to become sustainable without external support. The main interest of the case study lies in the number and variety of actors that participated in the initiative.

The third article focuses on values and the normative principles that guide actors in the creation of timebanks. Clement, Holbrook, Forster, Macneil, Smith, Lyons and McDonald first aimed at collecting as much information as possible across the world on timebanking experiences, in view of launching a new one in New South Wales in Australia. The article is motivated by the puzzle of how a balance between moral commitment and economic impact is pursued in different timebanks. It traces the discursive principles that fundament the practices of co-production and reciprocity in timebanking and acknowledges the complexity of moving from the normative to the practical world. The authors assert that the transition from philosophy to reality is further complicated by contingencies associated with the funding of service providers, whose aims are not necessarily the generation of co-production. While there is a remarkable variation among timebanks, it appears that the wedge between principles and practices does not get completely solved. The article poses the question on what instruments are useful to detect these differences between principles and practices and how non-profit values can be translated into practice in a world that does not promote or follow these principles.

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