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EDITORIAL - Volume 2

Welcome to the second issue of the IJCCR. This issue reflects the growing (geographic and academic) nature of community currencies, containing articles from Norway, the USA and Australia. In the last four-five years the community-based concept of LETS has crossed the English Channel and burst through Europe's "language curtains" to proliferate across that continent. Keeping tabs on the "LETS' frontier" is no easy task.

Such developments are very exciting for those on the frontier. However the aim of the IJCCR is somewhat less glamorous than those involved at the point where new ideas are being introduced and practiced. In contrast, the IJCCR prefers to provide a space of considered reflection of what has been, (and of what can be). The three authors published with this issue broaden our scope considerably and strongly contribute to our endeavours to be a truly international, inter-disciplinary bridge between research and practice in the multi-faceted world of community currencies. Significantly, we chose the term 'community currency' to reflect the diverse nature of 'cashless' trading arrangements which exist, from local trading arrangements (such as LETS and Hours), to the more profit-oriented corporate communities which are catered for by the Business Trade Exchanges (or Business Barter).

Jim Stodder, a lecturer in business and international economics in Connecticut, offers us a first in this latter area. The world of Business Trade Exchanges (BTEs) is a classic case of entrepreneurs forging new trading (and profit-making) opportunities with very little public reflection undertaken (or perhaps permitted) on the consequences or trajectories being followed. The governing imperatives of demand and profit have driven the phenomenal growth of this sector. Stodder provides one of the first pauses for reflection on whether business barter does in fact achieve what its sales teams loudly proclaim: that countertrade 'counters' the detrimental effects of the macroeconomic cycles of boom and bust. The work provides an important contribution to the case advocating community currencies as 'lifeboats' in the turbulent fluctuations of the global economy. Stodder's highly quantitative economic focus opens a new direction for the IJCCR, broadening our scope beyond the more sociological papers so far published, 'proving the case' for community currencies in the language of the mainstream economic agenda.

Julie Ingleby clearly comes from an utterly different position, in terms of method and of discipline. Where Stodder relies upon data derived from remote sources (IRTA and the US Government), Ingleby bounces off her own involvement and observations of decision-making within LETS. She formalises these observations through case studies of eight LETS systems in Victoria, Australia. Ingleby's primary interest is in assessing the claims of LETS as a tool for social empowerment. These claims are examined through each system's decision-making abilities which in turn enable their communities to 'make their own meanings', a key correlate of social empowerment. This very human side of LETS reflects their vulnerability to conflict between differing interests within groups. Thus within Ingleby's deeply theoretical reflections we can observe the all too familiar tales of the difficulties of reaching consensus within community organisations such as LETS. Clearly a fundamental conflict exists within this community-based form of currency between its economic systems on one hand, and its social functions on the other. Ironically enough, it is the fight for supremacy between these two points of potential conflict which can lead to their demise. Can new 'communities of meaning' be wrought from such a fundamentally economic tool as a currency? This tension is amply reflected when articles such as those by Ingleby and Stodder are published side-by-side.

Our third article for this issue, by Masters student Even Gran of Norway, goes to the very source of this potential conflict, examining as he does the ideological roots of Norwegian LETS members. Where Ingleby emphasises LETS as an opportunity for social learning, Gran appears to advocate its economic potential for transformation. Although similar to many LETS advocates in that he does not specify where that transformative potential lies, Gran's paper is important in affirming LETS international position as a preferred economic strategy for those of a green persuasion.

With this issue we also introduce a new section, Research Reports, commencing with a brief outline of research about to be conducted in the UK. Such promising research (and the success of the research grant application) gives substance to the ongoing interest of government and of academia into the burgeoning and dynamic community currency field.

As always we encourage researchers and authors to submit articles for publication in the IJCCR. Articles, book reviews, and research summaries can be submitted to either editor. Feel free to approach us before submission and please, refer to our [Notes to Contributors](#) for formatting and submission guidelines.

[Mark Jackson](#)