



www.ijccr.org · ISSN: 1325-9547

Seyfang, G. & Longhurst, N. (2010). Research Briefing: Grassroots Innovations and Complementary Currencies. *International Journal of Community Currency Research* 14(B), 1-2.
<https://doi.org/10.15133/j.ijccr.2010.005>

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMMUNITY CURRENCY RESEARCH
Vol 14 (2010) B1-2

RESEARCH BRIEFING
GRASSROOTS INNOVATIONS: COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCIES

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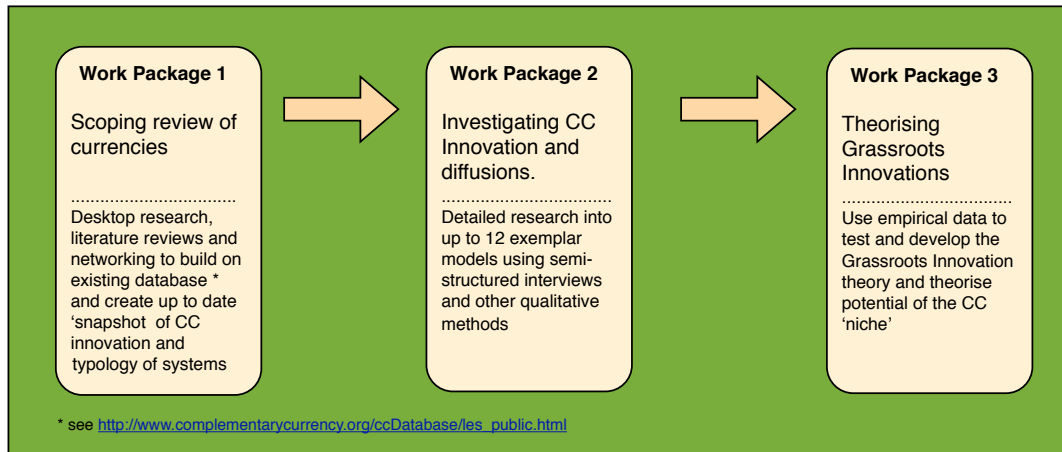
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ISSN 1325-9547

This two year project aims to investigate community-based innovation for sustainability, with a specific focus on complementary currencies (CCs). This is a neglected area of research and policy, and the subject of a newly-emerging research agenda around the concept of 'grassroots innovations'. The research will gather empirical data on complementary currencies to test the applicability of existing theory of niche sustainable innovations in this new setting, and develop new theory where necessary. The overall objectives of the project are:

1. To examine the diversity and characteristics of 'complementary currencies' in contemporary practice.
2. To conceptualise these 'grassroots innovations' as 'niches' where new social infrastructure may be tested, and investigate the range of contextual factors which contribute to the emergence, success or failure of these innovations, and their diffusion into wider society
3. To relate these findings to wider debates on sustainable innovations and transition management, sustainable development and the social economy, so as to:
 - a. Operationalise and empirically test the theory of 'grassroots innovations' for sustainability;
 - b. Develop this theory to improve understanding of the distinctiveness of community-led innovation for sustainability, its role and potential;
 - c. Identify the contextual factors determining grassroots innovative capacity and processes, and suggest ways of increasing the rate of innovation and its diffusion into wider society

The research is organised into three work packages (WPs), corresponding to the objectives identified above and detailed below.



The project will seek to answer the following questions:

- What is the range of CCs in existence?
- How have CCs tried to grow and diffuse into wider society?
- What factors help or hinder CC emergence and diffusion?
- What can the sustainability transitions management theory say about grassroots innovations?
- Conversely, what is distinctive about grassroots innovations, and how can theory adapt?
- What policies are needed to nurture and grow grassroots innovations for sustainability?

For further information, please see the project website:

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/~e175/Seyfang/GICC.html>

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