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EDITORIAL I-III

CONFERENCE REPORT OF THE 6TH BIENNIAL RAMICS INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN BULGARIA: COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCY SYSTEMS BRIDGING COMMUNITIES

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After the obstacles about the many turbulent events that shaped the landscape of the world stage for the time since the end of 2019, the 6th RAMICS congress gathered the researchers of Complementary Currencies from 20 countries, this time in Sofia, Bulgaria.

The focus of the conference was the bridging in and between communities. Beyond the authentic needs and problems of the individuals arising from different cultural conditions, there are basic links, which keep communities together. Money in general and complementary currencies in particular are such tools for bridging.

By means of the presented dozens of worldwide examples of working systems, many current problems were revealed, including general ones coming from the field of value and money, and specific ones as for example the form and the regulations. It became clear that CCS are generally organised according to the principles of trust and solidarity, but on the basis of money. The organisation of CCSs at this stage is primarily limited to local payment instruments, as shown in many contributions.

Thanks to digital technologies, the bridge between the five continents of Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, and South America could be successfully built. A strong presence was demonstrated by the participants from Brazil, Japan, Germany, France, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the USA, and Canada. There were also representatives from Argentina, Netherlands, Italy, Austria, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Zambia, Philippines, Mexico, Poland, and Bulgaria.

The pre-set thematic framework ([final call for papers](#)) was outlined in 4 key papers. The scientific part of the congress was opened by Prof. Nikolay Nenovsky (UNWE, Sofia, Bulgaria). He presented a theoretical reconstruction of the long-term monetary history of different Balkan countries, which illustrated the hypothesis of a structural dependence of the monetary order of Balkan countries, passing through different political and ideological regimes. Later the doyen of the movement Thomas Greco (USA) recalled the essential nature of money, currency, and credit, and the sound principles of their creation and management. Another key speech was held by Prof. Bruno Théret (France) who proposed a theoretical bridge between past and future by means of Proudhon's theory of constituted value. He presented how Proudhon appears as a landmark for the present in monetary innovations. Proudhon already made the proposals for the three main ideas on which present monetary alternatives are based, that is free

credit, mutualism, and time money. A more practitioners-oriented view was presented by the independent researcher Susana Belmonte (Spain) who introduced the issues of the Post-growth Economy into the field of discussion and the role of CCS. Another 50 studies were presented at the conference, but they went far beyond the preliminary framework and outlined the field of future CCS research, which will cover a much broader sociotechnological perspective. There were also some novel practical problems shared of CCS from Canada, Brazil, US, UK, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Switzerland, Japan etc.

All in all, an impressively large number of collective works from more than 90 universities, institutes, schools, and organizations were presented.

The great variety of topics presented and discussed during the forum ([link to Programme](#)) can be grouped into the following several areas:

Theory

A considerable number of contributions were devoted to conceptual issues that have been insufficiently addressed in the entire field of monetary research. These purely theoretically oriented contributions left a strong echo in the halls: Integration and integrity were their common denominators, but in detail there was also a room for questions of monetary theory and a retrospective analysis of previously published research.

Institutionalization

Institutional and regulatory issues were discussed as a general foundation, but also as specific organizations. CCS are formed as local structures, which are based on corresponding national law. So, the local and national authorities have dominant roles. But there are also links between CCS with central banking and of course regulation authorities that were covered by certain authors.

Overcoming crisis

It is already obvious that we have not just created a crisis that will quickly subside. We are also simultaneously participants and observers of the collective image of all the crises in which capitalism has been writhing for a long time, perhaps more than a century. In the crisis response, CCS could bring some benefits as follows: money is able not only to create but also to tackle poverty; CCS can be used for long-term policies for solving problems of the poor; through econometric analysis, the impact of private money on business and the real estate sector could be altered; etc.

Various social benefits didn't stay out of reach of the searchlights and were inferred in almost dozens logical and empirical analyses (37 papers). Some arguments, as the universal base income were given as a task for future logical and historical confirmation. Social credit also found a place in the discussions, from the frame of the Balkan history.

Humanitarianism

The new arrival presence of neuroscience in the context of CCS is evidence of the distinctly psychological nature of money. Their relationship of novel concepts, incl. and built on neuroscience. In the context of the time as an economic measure, agency models, trust issues, ethical aspects of finance, manageability and predictability can be successfully used to build economic policies faced to commons.

Digitalization

Predominant were the studies on the issues that analyse the processes of digitalization of the existing or newly created monetary forms together with the problems of cryptocurrencies.

Best Paper Award

Quite naturally on the background described above, the prize for the best paper was given after to the research which integrated many of these issues prevailing during the discussions with. After a rigorous selection process, a shortlist of four articles resulted. The winning paper of Luiz Arthur Faria, Henrique Cukierman, Eduardo Diniz and

Bruno Ribeiro with the title “Centralizing or sharing the digital community currencies governances? Proposing ways of thinking DCCs from the Mumbuca case” is presented in this issue of IJCCR. Congratulations again to the authors for this inspiring and integrative piece. Also, a second very noteworthy paper from the shortlist is published here: “The Emergence of Digital Socio-Municipal Currencies: An institutional change perspective of the Arariboia coin’s case” from Leonardo Martins de Oliveira and Bruno Henrique Sanches.

Keep in touch!

Invaluable were the warm meetings that affirmed many long-standing friendships and opened space for new creative endeavors. The cultural specificity of the host country, Bulgaria has generously offered its traditions to connect communities by its history, music, food, and people.

Despite the tremendous impact of Covid on our lives, a limited number of researchers have devoted their work to this problem. Perhaps the measures that have led to the hybrid format of the event will have a long-term impact in the future. It became clear that the great benefit of the changed conditions around the world opened the opportunity to gather, albeit virtually, representatives of all 5 continents without leaving their homes and workplaces.

The message

The virtual is already tangible, and the digital is only shaping its contours. The scientific paradigm is already different. The world changes and we have to be flexible to adapt to new situations by disrupting associative biases and continue building bridges in and between communities riding our cultural diversity.

Finally, we would like to thank the participants of the congress for their valuable contributions, the many helpers, and supporters and especially the reviewers for their cooperation; without any of them, the study of community/complementary currencies could not continue and grow, as it is necessary for a more sustainable and peaceful world.