Articles

Shaping the Future of Europe – Second part

edited by Sandra Hummelbrunner, Lando Kirchmair, Benedikt Pirker, Anne-Carlijn Prickartz *and* Isabel Staudinger

Reshaping the Future of Europe with Complementary Currencies

Christian Gelleri*

Abstract: For several decades, the phenomenon of complementary currencies has been emerging without the law having taken much notice. Only with the emergence of the first virtual currencies have there been serious discussions on this topic. The motives of the initiators and groups are very different. Is it about maximising profits or about ecological, social and cultural goals? The author advocates the integration of complementary currencies that have actively contributed to societal problems into the legal framework of the European Union.

Keywords: complementary currencies – money – eurozone – Chiemgauer – Sardex – virtual currencies.

I. The phenomenon of complementary currencies

People starting complementary currencies think of money as a tool[1] and are concerned with issues such as unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, discrimination and so on. There are many theories about money and experts who campaign for the concept of complementary monetary institutions.

Before inventing the Chiemgauer, there was a year-long analysis of many different ideas, not only on local levels but also on proposals for changing money and finance on the national level. Back in the 1990s, there was only scant economic literature on complementary currencies, but some literature about barter systems describe a "special purpose

* Research assistant, University of Würzburg, christian.gelleri@uni-wuerzburg.de.

[1] M Kennedy, B Lietaer and J Rogers, *People Money: The Promise of Regional Currencies* (Axminster Triarchy Press 2012).

www.europeanpapers.eu
ISSN 2499-8249
doi: 10.15166/2499-8249/511

money".[2] However, the arguments remain purely economic, neglecting the social dimension, *e.g*., enhancing trade between businesses and being subject to high transaction costs within an unstable economic system, as was the case in Russia and Ukraine in 1997.[3]

A broader perspective on complementary currencies came with the turn of the millennium writings about "complementary currencies".[4] One of the leading researchers on complementary currencies, Bernard Lietaer, defines complementary currencies as an agreement within a community to use an additional currency as a means of exchange,[5] but it is only complementary because it is not meant to replace the national currency system.

There is a wide range of different types of complementary currencies in Europe.[6] With the help of complementary currencies and their counter-cyclical effect on the relevant regions,[7] inequalities between regions within the eurozone could be harmonized.[8] A significant example can be found in Sardinia with the Sardex initiative. More than 4.000 businesses built a network to assist each other with a mutual-credit currency.[9] The companies pay one another with interest-free credits, which are only valid within the network, and the limits are also set by the network provider representing the companies as an institution. As a result, the more credits in euros are constrained, the more Sardex loans are used for expenses, resulting in every business having an additional turnover of about 10.000 euros on average.

In times of recessions and crisis, the complementary currencies could help to make up extra income by using the existing, not fully utilized infrastructure. Even though the counter-cyclical effects are not the only potential of these kind of monetary tools, there are also convincing arguments to establish complementary currencies in stable times to enhance the economy and transform it into one with greater sustainability, social justice and resilience.[10]

Another example is the Chiemgauer, a currency located between Munich, Germany and Salzburg, Austria. Its aim is to promote local business cycles based on sustainable

[2] K Polanyi, 'The Economy as Instituted Process' in K Polanyi, CM Arensberg and HW Pearson (eds), *Trade and Market in the Early Empires. Economies in History and Theory* (Free Press 1957) 243 ff.; C Schneider, *Barter-Clubs – Chancen und Probleme: Eine Theoretische und Empirische Analyse* (Berlin Duncker and Humblot 1995).

[3] D Marin and M Schnitzer, 'The Economic Institution of International Barter' (2003) The Economic Journal 293.

[4] M Kennedy and BA Lietaer, *Regionalwährungen: Neue Wege zu Nachhaltigem Wohlstand* (Riemann 2004); BA Lietaer, *Das Geld der Zukunft: Über die Destruktive Wirkung des Existierenden Geldsystems und die Entwicklung von Komplementärwährungen* (Riemann 1999).

[5] BA Lietaer, *Regionalwährungen* cit. 282.

[6] C Gelleri, 'The Phenomenon of Complementary Currencies' (1 July 2020) Just Money justmoney.org.

[7] J Stodder and BA Lietaer, 'The Macro-Stability of Swiss WIR-Bank Credits: Balance, Velocity, and Leverage' (2016) Comparative Economic Studies 570 ff.

[8] C Gelleri, 'Regionalwährungen Parallel zum Euro?' (2019) Fairconomy 12 ff.

[9] L Sartori and P Dini, 'From Complementary Currency to Institution: A Micro-Macro Study of the Sardex Mutual Credit System' (2016) Stato e Mercato 273 ff.

[10] BA Lietaer, C Arnsperger, S Goerner and S Brunnhuber, *Money and Sustainability: The Missing Link* (Triarchy Press 2012).

supply chains. A large share of the exchange costs for businesses is given to non-profit-organizations to invest in education, environment protection and culture. A similar project has also been established in Bayonne, France, where the local authority supports a complementary currency called the Eusko to promote local businesses, resulting in more than 900 businesses accepting the Eusko.

All three currencies work with electronic payment systems and two of them issue paper currencies.

Because of the rise of hundreds of complementary currencies all over Europe, we need to take a closer look at the question if complementary currencies that are useful for society as a whole and their relationship to laws and legal science.

II. The bigger picture: the eurozone

Complementary currencies are embedded in the legal structure of the European Union. The beginning of the euro started in the confirmation of the aim of an Economic and Monetary Union in 1988 and in the following order for the European Council to plan the steps for a European Monetary Union.[11] The euro started as an electronic currency in 1999, and the European Monetary Institute (EMI) was renamed as the European Central Bank. Eleven countries fulfilled the conditions of the Maastricht Treaty and the related legal documents. A design series of the "euro" was presented in 1996 and officially launched in 2002.

Only one year before the introduction of the euro, Greece was given the green light to take part as well. The decision process for establishing the euro was tested before the courts many times,[12] but the European Court of Justice rejected the objections. National courts followed the decisions in the main.

Art. 128(1) TFEU defines the euro banknote as legal tender. But not all countries of the European Union delegated the sovereignty of money issuance to the European Central Bank. Sweden and Denmark for example, provide their own national currency, while they are not allowed to issue euro notes. That alone is a reference to the pluralism that our official monetary system in Europe is all about. In addition, there is an enormous variety of payment institutions and means of payment. Countries taking part in the eurozone had to accept additional rules for their country.[13] Germany has accepted the rules and has changed its basic law ("Grundgesetz") in art. 88 to allow the transfer of their money policy to the European System of Central Banks. The German central bank is part of the system that issues the euro for Germany.[14]

[11] PR Krugman and M Obstfeld, *Internationale Wirtschaft. Theorie und Politik der Aussenwirtschaft* (Pearson 2004) 773.

[12] HJ Hahn and U Häde*, Währungsrecht* (Beck 2010).

[13] *Ibid.* 116 ff.

[14] Para. 14 of the Bundesbank Act.

At first sight, we do not see much room for alternative currencies, but we must remember the fundamental principle of the European Union of striking a balance between harmonisation and subsidiarity. "The potential for more variation is inherent in the current set-up of the euro. It is, as it were, the 'flip side' of the Member States' own responsibility for fiscal discipline and structural reform. Variation in this sense requires different, co-existing arrangements".[15] After the collapse of Lehman Bank in 2008 and the ensuing financial crisis, there was a committed discussion about whether states particularly affected by strong economic downturns could help themselves with national parallel currencies in the sense of subsidiarity.[16] In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the debate has rekindled.

Some legal scholars go so far as to classify monetary instruments such as the minibots discussed in Italy as a possible form of coexistence: "In this perspective, the mini-BOTs could be conceived as a fiscal policy device to implement article 4 of the Directive 2011/7/EU on late payment in commercial transactions".[17]

Before experiments with dual monetary approaches are tested at the national level, would regional institutional experiments perhaps be a preferred option for money researchers and money practitioners to make friends with?

III. Legal status of complementary currencies in Germany

Every country created its own laws to regulate the conditions of issuing legal tender and for the financial institutions that issue deposit money and e-money in euro as units of account or deal with money in general. But what about currencies with another unit of account? Some laws are an expression of the fights among the national, state and local initiatives that tried to issue local barter systems or local currencies.[18] The relationship between these old laws and modern local and current virtual currencies remains unsettled.[19] Para. 35 of the Bundesbank Act forbids issuing money aside from legal tender:

> "Unauthorised uttering and use of monetary tokens
> (1) A term of imprisonment not exceeding five years or a fine will be imposed on anybody who
> 1. utters without authority monetary tokens (stamps, coins, notes or other instruments capable of being used in payments in place of the coins or banknotes authorised by law)

[15] E Hirsch Ballin, E Ćerimović, H Dijstelbloem and M Segers, *European Variations as a Key to Cooperation* (Springer 2010) 110.

[16] C Gelleri and T Mayer, 'Express Money – Avoiding the Eurozone Breakup' (1 February 2012) www.eurorettung.org.

[17] AJ Menéndez and M Goldoni, 'Mini-BOTs, Complementary Currencies and the European Monetary Malaise' (21 June 2019) Verfassungsblog verfassungsblog.de.

[18] K Hardraht and H Godschalk, 'Komplementärwährungsgutachten: Erstellt im Auftrag der Sparkasse Delitsch-Eilenburg' (30 March 2004) monneta.org.

[19] M Sademach, *Regionalwährungen in Deutschland: Strategie, Hintergrund und Rechtliche Bewertung* (Nomos Verlag 2012).

or non-interest-bearing bearer debt securities, even if they are not denominated in Deutsche Mark;
2. uses for payments objects of the type specified in number 1 above that have been uttered without authority".

The roots of the ban go back to the 1930s. But in some cases, barter systems as well as local currencies are tolerated.[20] In one case, a local paper currency – the "Dreyecker" – was examined by a prosecutor. The office of the public prosecutor asked the German Central Bank for valuation of the currency. It answered with a reference to a study of the *Bundesbank* that said that local currencies in Germany are limited in terms of time and geographical extent. As a conclusion, the study assumed that local currencies in Germany are too small to cause inflation and no threat to the euro.[21]

Moreover, the *Bundesbank* gave a guideline for issuing vouchers and did not demand the collection of the issued local currency. The prosecutor argued the issuers of the Dreyecker have not violated law because the local voucher system is not able to replace the euro. It cannot be qualified as "monetary token". This shows that it depends strongly on the interpretation of the law by authorities and courts, which are embedded in a certain history and social context. In the 1930s, central banks in Germany, Austria and other countries actively pursued attempts to issue local currencies and barter systems. At the same time the central banks were given a monopoly on the issuance of state banknotes. With the beginning of the new millennium, in the euro zone are apparently unwilling to apply the national laws to current projects.

The European Union responded with their directives on the development and emergence of local currencies. It defined exceptions from supervisory law in art. 3 such as paper vouchers.[22] The *Bundesbank* tends to see local currencies as "vouchers". There are court decisions defining only money as legal tender and clearly distinguishing it from private forms of exchange such as bitcoin, local currencies and others.[23] Conversely, this means that local currencies are currently not under the supervision of banking authorities.

When currencies are dealt with in euros, then laws of money market trading, money laundering and others must be taken into consideration. Recently, the emergence of cryptocurrencies has widened the discussion. The adoption of the laws on virtual currencies proves to be difficult, and there are many discussions about more regulations on

[20] German Federal Court (BGH) judgment of 5 November 1998 III ZR 95/97; M Casper and M Terlau (eds), *Zahlungsdiensteaufsichtsgesetz (ZAG): Das Aufsichtsrecht des Zahlungsverkehrs und des E-Geldes* (Beck 2018).

[21] G Rösl, *Regionalwährungen in Deutschland: Lokale Konkurrenz für den Euro?* (Deutsche Bundesbank 2006).

[22] Directive 2015/2366 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on payment services in the internal market.

[23] Chamber Court Berlin decision of 25 September 2018 *BaFin v Bart van Kersavond*.

alternative currencies.[24] There is an ongoing discussion process to regulate stable coins in the European Union and Germany.[25] It is unclear if and how reserve-backed local currencies such as the Chiemgauer will be affected.

IV. Societal challenges

Big challenges such as climate change and the deepening social and regional inequalities lead to some openness towards a new culture of communication between the state and civil society to meet the key challenges of the century. The variety of proposals and the practical implementation of complementary currencies suggest that national currencies cannot provide a *one-size-fits-all solution*. This impression has intensified with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The European Union fosters competition in payment innovations[26] and even promotes complementary currencies in some regions of the eurozone.

In Sardinia, the Sardex increases the liquidity of companies and thus initiates independent regional cycles. In Catalonia as well as in Bayonne, regional currencies link purchasing power to the region. In Chiemgau, the economy is well utilised and more attention is paid to channelling the money into more sustainable cycles and generating gift money for communities. In Ghent, Belgium, ecological problems are tackled with a complementary currency. Money in the eurozone serves as an individual solution in many thousands of places, without compromising official monetary policy. All examples are embedded in the local cultural environment. It is not the economic motives that dominate, but community goals. Through their close links to societal challenges, these types of currencies can be identified as "social innovation", characterised by an active contribution to society and by a non-profit-orientation.[27]

V. Collective design of money

Time after time, individuals have been inspired by ideals like equality, liberty and fraternity and tried to implement them into a monetary design. In former times, monetary design was seldom a democratic process but a decision by one or some powerful persons, such as a queen or king, or more often a local ruler who organized a local market and a suitable money system. The decisions helped secure the interests of the ruling class. The focus was on securing power. David Graeber describes the issuance of coins as the result

[24] O Read and K Gräslund, 'EU-Regulierung von Bitcoin und Anderen Virtuellen Währungen: Erste Schritte' (2018) Wirtschaftsdienst 504 ff.

[25] German Federal Parliament, Drucksache 19/20839 of 6 July 2020, Schaffung eines EU-Rechtsrahmens für Kryptoassets und Stablecoins.

[26] Directive 2015/2366 cit.

[27] C Gelleri, 'Komplementärwährungen und Monetäre Werkzeuge als Soziale Innovation' in HW Franz, G Beck, D Compagna, P Dürr, W Gehra and M Wegner (eds), *Nachhaltig Leben und Wirtschaften* (Springer 2020) 157 ff.

of paying soldiers for their services who had no possibility of spending the money at home. With their wages, the soldiers could always shop where they were stationed. Markets emerged at the occupation sites where the soldiers spent their coins. The recipients used the money for the supra-regional exchange and paid their taxes in the currency of the occupying power.[28] The process of creating money was often linked with religious or military motives in medieval and early modern times.[29] Totally different from this tale of the origin of money are local exchange systems that emerged in many local communities all over the world. A common example is the tally-stick that was broken into two pieces, one for the debtor and one for the creditor. When the debtor paid his duty to the creditor, he got back the other part of the tally-stick. It was sufficient for a village to use this accounting system for the exchange of goods and services. It was not possible for one person not to pay the debt without attracting attention. Until the 18th century, money was not a separate good but closely linked to the culture of the communities and often the non-commercial motives of the issuers.[30]

At the turn of the first millennium, Chiemgau money was issued by the archbishop of Salzburg[31] and its domination ended only in 1803. The issuance was mostly of divisional coins which represented more than the bullion value and expressed the power of the ruler and the trust of the public in the stability of the coinage system.

With the beginning of the so called "modern time", banking systems evolved more and more. The money creation by banks is strongly intertwined with the state. It is like a "franchise system" where the state defines the basic rules and the conditions but delegates the issuing of bank money, which is accepted as official currency.[32] This system dominates today with a "market share" of nearly 100 per cent. Christine Desan shows in her studies how this form of collective design of money evolved in a hard-fought political process.[33] This monetary system has been associated with profound crises over the centuries and, above all, in recent decades. This is attributed to the pro-cyclical behaviour of money creation by the banks. Therefore, many people have scrutinized the right of banks to create money out of nothing. It is a question of democratic legitimacy and not just about a value-stable money and the efficient operation of the financial system.[34] It is about the objectives of a society and the contribution of the money system to their fulfilment.

The advantage of small alternative currencies is their limited risk in experimenting with the best design to fulfil the goals. The first step in the process of designing each currency is to activate and engage people in defining common goals. A small currency

[28] D Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 years* (Melville House 2011).

[29] BA Lietaer, *Mysterium Geld: Emotionale Bedeutung und Wirkungsweise Eines* (Riemann 2000).

[30] K Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon Press 2001).

[31] Archbishop Hartwig obtained the right from the German emperor Otto III in 996.

[32] RC Hockett and ST Omarova, 'The Finance Franchise' (2017) Cornell Law Review 1144 ff.

[33] C Desan, *Making Money: Coin, Currency, and the Coming of Capitalism* (Oxford University Press 2014).

[34] K Armingeon, K Guthmann and D Weisstanner, 'How the Euro Divides the Union: The Effect of Economic Adjustment on Support for Democracy in Europe' (2015) Socio-Economic Review 506 ff.

can make this process more visible. The assembly of Chiemgauer organization discussed the goals and designs of "their" currency a lot. Members form a public discourse space and decide on the reciprocal rules that ensure their implementation. Dewey already identifies this formation of associative communities and relates them to the ideals of the society ("Great Society"). The joint activities of the group transform the society into a community ("Great Community"). "A community thus presents an order of energies transmuted into one of meanings which are appreciated and mutually referred by each to every other on the part of those engaged in combined action".[35]

Blanc distinguishes between three types of money: "public", "business" and "associative" and assigns the Chiemgauer to the last type: "The type 'associative money' relates to the construction of schemes by groups of people who voluntarily associate for the purpose of collective utility. The focus is put on the particular way these moneys are designed and implemented: the association is considered here as a general way of assembling people around common projects, distinct from resource-seeking motives of business money or instituted political control of public money".[36] The democratic quality depends on constitutional aspects; in fact, societies engineer money rather than discover it.[37] It is an unusual perspective to look at money as a common good that has to be democratic. For complementary currencies, the democratic decision process is a key to understanding. This comes before the application of a monetary theory. Of course, it might not always be a conscious process of development, and sometimes only a few people may be involved in the development of the core design; but everybody has the potential to take part in the process if she or he desires. At this point, the types "public" and "associative" are similar. Both come about through democratic procedures but differ in the fact that the official monetary system is created through representative democracy procedures and is decoupled from the democratic rules in a one-off act as an institution.[38] Associative monetary institutions, on the other hand, have a direct relationship with their members. They can experience financial citizenship in small and decentralized networks, which are usually characterized by physical proximity and locality. "The local is the ultimate universal, and as near an absolute as exists. It is easy to point to many signs which indicate that unconscious agencies as well as deliberate planning are making for such an enrichment of the experience of local communities as will conduce to render them genuine centers of the attention, interest and devotion for their constituent members".[39]

[35] J Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Ohio University Press 2016) 179.

[36] J Blanc, 'Making Sense of the Plurality of Money: A Polanyian Attempt' in G Gómez (ed.), *Monetary Plurality in Local, Regional and Global Economies* (Taylor and Francis 2019) 55.

[37] C Desan, 'Constitutional Approach to Money' in N Bandelj, FF Wherry and VAR Zelizer (eds), *Money Talks: Explaining How Money Really Works* (Princeton University Press 2017) 112.

[38] P Tucker, *Unelected Power. The Quest for Legitimacy in Central Banking and the Regulatory State* (Princeton University Press 2018).

[39] J Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* cit. 230.

A second common basis for complementary currencies is the equal consideration of common needs and challenges of the involved people. This is the foundation for the formulation of the objectives. The people want to provide themselves with goods and services and avoid a dependence on external financial services and loans.

In history, there was a similar movement initiated by Robert Owen. He understood economics as a part of society and tried to reconcile democracy and the economy by establishing cooperatives. By working for the community without the intention of maximizing profits, the vision of a humane world of work was to become a reality. At that time, a separate working currency was also used, which was based on time.[40] Money should not bear interest and should serve fair exchange. Companies should be owned by both workers and entrepreneurs. It was a mass movement that believed that society could be creative from bottom-up.[41] Many institutions such as cooperative banks and trade unions as well as complementary currencies were inspired by the practical and theoretical work of Owen.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was no depression scenario in the Chiemgau, but there were still perceptions of problems and challenges. At the micro level, a school felt the lack of a sports hall. The students suffered under these circumstances and were delighted to create a system for contributions (solution). They asked businesses and parents to take part in the complementary currency scheme, and so it all started. The students recognized the interdependent play of actors and used their social relationships to institutionalize them in the form of a complementary currency through collaboration and trust. The students faced some issues with businesses and non-profit organizations like their own school. One example was the fear of "printing money" and the potential consequences of maybe getting into greater trouble. It took a long time to turn curiosity into trust. Annelise Riles describes the process as the development of a legitimacy narrative that is not only a task for a central bank[42] but also for the issuer of a complementary currency.

The combination of a problem and a problem-solving democratic process leads to a money design that brings people into a connected network with rules and institutions. The rules, institutions and effects can and should be subject to research.[43] Economists

[40] MS Cato, *Green Economics: An Introduction to Theory, Policy and Practice* (Earthscan 2009) 72.

[41] K Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* cit. 133.

[42] A Riles, *Financial Citizenship: Experts, Publics, and the Politics of Central Banking* (Cornell University Press 2018) 48.

[43] C Thiel, *Das "Bessere" Geld: Eine Ethnographische Studie über Regionalwährungen* (Springer 2011); F Ziegler, *Konzept, Umsetzung und Akzeptanz einer Regionalwährung am Beispiel des "Chiemgauer": Eine Untersuchung aus Unternehmer- und Verbrauchersicht* (Master thesis, Universität Passau 2009); S Bode, *Potentiale Regionaler Komplementärwährungen zur Förderung einer Endogenen Regionalentwicklung* (Master thesis, Universität Osnabrück 2004).

concentrate on the effects and say that what works for the people is good for democracy.[44] I would add to this: the journey is the reward. When people using community currencies can experience basic democratic principles, not only by using money but also by designing money, it enriches a democracy as a whole.[45] On the contrary, concentrating the money creation processes in oligarchical systems impoverishes a democracy.

VI. Oligarchical and democratic ways of creating money

The history of money creation can be seen as an interplay between oligarchical and democratic processes. When we look at the proposals of Facebook and the Libra Association, we find a globalized renewal of an oligarchical type of money.

The idea of the Libra goes back to Hayek's idea of a private currency that is covered by a stable currency basket.[46] It is comparable to the special drawing rights of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that represents a currency basket of five national currencies (US dollar, euro, yen, Chinese yuan, British pound and Swiss franc). The Libra currency could have a similar basket, but the Libra Association intends to buy government bonds so they can earn additional interest. In that case, the disadvantage would be that a sell-off of the Libra currency could cause a shortage of liquidity at the Libra Foundation, and owners of Libra may risk losing value.[47]

Another issue that arises is that the interest is not given to the owners of the Libra currency but to the shareholders of the Libra Association. However, you can only become a shareholder in the Libra Association when you invest at least 10 million dollars. This hurdle is quite high and excludes more than 99 per cent of humanity from being shareholders. Bofinger calls the idea an "enrichment program".[48] We must see clearly that this has nothing to do with "democracy", "sustainability" or "fairness" and in the long run also with "freedom" and "stability". Democracy is not the power of an oligarchical elite but the power of all people in a community. Even the interim change of mechanisms and the project name of Libra in Diem does not change this.

VII. Conclusion

The main issue is that the existing financial system in Europe, and also in Germany, is being confronted with a deepening inequality in wealth.[49] According to legal experts, the

[44] F Jung and U Sunde, 'Income, Inequality, and the Stability of Democracy: Another Look at the Lipset Hypothesis' (2014) European Journal of Political Economy 52 ff.

[45] A Riles, *Financial Citizenship* cit. 52.

[46] FA von Hayek, *Denationalisation of Money: The Argument Refined; An Analysis of the Theory and Practice of Concurrent Currencies* (The Institute of Economic Affairs 1990).

[47] P Bofinger, 'Damit Macht Facebook Sich Keine Freunde' (23 July 2019) IPG www.ipg-journal.de.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] J Beckert, 'Wie viel Erbschaftssteuern?' (MPIfG Working Paper 04-2007) 5.

state is obliged to harmonize inequality,[50] but the micro-practices of capitalism are very often contradictory to the principles as stated, for example, in the basic law of Germany.[51] A complementary currency that is democratically constituted is based on the basic political principles of the society. In this context, complementary currency initiatives can be seen as experiments to find pathways for more congruence among societal, economic and ecological spheres.

In light of the recent judgment on the European Central Bank's bond-buying programme,[52] it is appropriate to widen up the perspective on monetary policy. Different perspectives are needed to harmonise imbalances in the eurozone. In the spirit of Robert Owen, institutional experiments would be possible as public citizenship partnerships, *i.e.*, forms of cooperation whereby citizens work with the state through cooperatives and non-profit associations to overcome social challenges. "The resulting cooperative relationships between central banks and complementary currency experiments would have the potential of opening up space and opportunities, not only for government politics, but for ever more institutional experiments to democratize society".[53]

France was the first country in the eurozone to create a legal framework for social enterprises. Local currencies have been expressly authorised when issued by institutions of the social and solidarity economy (SSE).[54]

The OECD writes about the law: "Indeed, several studies have demonstrated the resilience of social enterprises in the wake of the economic and social crisis of the early 21st century, thanks to their emphasis on social values, as well as their local roots and capacity to seed different fields of activity".[55]

When we think of shaping the future of Europe, we should not only fight against problems such as the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few, but we also have to imagine and implement alternatives. Complementary currencies could contribute as one piece in a diverse and pluralistic network of solutions.

[50] D Suhr, 'Gleiche Freiheit: Allgemeine Grundlagen und Reziprozitätsdefizite in der Geldwirtschaft' (1988) Fragen der Freiheit 5.

[51] *Ibid.* 8.

[52] German Federal Constitutional Court judgment of 5 May 2020 2 BvR 859/15; 2 BvR 1651/15; 2 BvR 2006/15; BvR 980/16.

[53] I Feichtner, 'The German Constitutional Court's PSPP Judgment: Impediment or Impetus for the Democratization of Europe' (2020) German Law Journal 1090.

[54] République Francaise, *Loi no. 2014-856 du 31 juillet relative à l'économie sociale et solidaire* in Journal Officiel Lois et Décrets, 2014/176, 1 August 2014 42.

[55] OECD, 'The Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)' (2017) 102.