

Renaissance LETS and the Big Picture

Background

I once had an Engineering background and career but the job went away which prompted Causal Factor Analysis and Social Trend prediction. This meant my night time Project Researcher work in a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Community Initiative Forum (CIF) creates campaigns around Social Trends which seeks to influence individuals and Policy Makers, since 1995.

We have five Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and out of the audited 72 Issues and 49 Projects our Ethics SIG hosts the Local Exchange Timebank Scheme (LETS), a currency independent social pseudo currency barter system commitments pool.

About LETS

Firstly in this paper, I want to put our Renaissance LETS into the Big Picture, whilst my colleague Mary describes the LETSLINKUK various LETS Currency Models, Management and E-Admin issues.

Ten years ago our CIF investigated LETS and gave it a High Risk Assessment, due to lack of transparency and support. However, it's time that Liz Shepherd's outstanding achievements supported by Portsmouth City Council be recognised and developed further within Interactive Internet Web Space.

Modifiers

This new technology meant that we were able to move the Risk Assessment down to "Medium" with the outstanding "Punter" engagement issue keeping it off the "Low" rating. However, I am still mandated to continue investigating this issue which depresses Voluntary Sector Activity (as differentiated from Care Sector Activity) over time.

The effect of this issue is easily evidenced by people "just not having the time anymore" for altruistic activities (including LETS). We believe the main culprit to be the 24hour shift/presenteeism Corporate Consumerist Client Culture.

This culture increases the Rich v Poor Gap, reducing time for LETS as follows:

- * Rising numbers of 12 hour-shift minimum wage migrant workers attempting UK roomshare.
- * Declining traditional Middle Class WI Church Goers (can increase in trendy areas)
- * Rising Managerial Class without Social Responsibility, Visibility and Accountability.

All the above setting an aspirational goal of continually increasing personal wealth irrespective of the economic, environmental and social costs, destabilising our civilised society and eroding traditional democracy.

UK Trends & Influencers

- * 4 Million Managers and 3 Million Workers in the SouthEast
- * 1.1 Million Chavs (Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) Nationally
- * 70,000 Millionaires
- * Neo-Liberal policies delivered by both blue and red governments depressing voter turnout
- * No more indigenous UK based Manufacturing or Services
- * Global Corporate Point Of Presence in Local Markets staffed by foreign employees
- * Local Delivery in-country activities financed by debt not natural resources
- * Currency/Share Speculation making money out of money (debases currency)

Opportunities

I like LETS as it enables me to interact with real people for local goods and services. LETS enables the poor and isolated to be included. LETS widens our choices beyond the narrowed product range remit of the Marxist Production Led and Keynesian Demand Managed ubiquitous homogenised supermarket profit focussed "offerings" that ousted the traditional High Street owner managed shops.

Neo-liberals criticised LETS for being only attractive to Greenies, the research shows a much wider appeal across the political spectrum, most new members (who are not Greens) approach because of their needs. They then become Green by doing the LETS thing of gifting, borrowing, sharing, exchanging, hiring, re-using, recycling, growing your own, selling surplus produce, helping in the garden and around the farm. These Green activities are part of Local Agenda 21 (LAG21), which I also like.

Local Agenda 21

Positive Social Change in:

- * Community Collective Assets Management
- * Promote and manage the following issues and projects

Environmental Impact Assessment
Air Quality
Water Quality
Global Warming Climate Change
Sustainable Transport
Integrated Transport
Litter/Refuse
Packaging
Recover Repair Reuse Recycle
Renewable Energy
Permaculture
Vegan Organic & GMO Free
Allotments
Community Gardens
Community Woodlands
Wildlife Corridor
Green Avenue Trees
Greensward Leisure
Greenway Walking
Cycleways
Carbon Calculator
Individual Lifestyle Management
Carbon Sink Tree Planting for ALL Development

In particular, it is estimated that we will run out of "holes in the ground" for our rubbish at the end of 2007, meaning more air miles as our rubbish is flown overseas! Look out for a new campaign to persuade us to unwrap/unbox in the store, leave the packaging behind and take only the products home!

LAG21 has been consistently refused by most Local Authorities as it is not ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE. Again a Neo-Liberal influence pitting Local Authorities against Bratislava, Bangalore and Beijing in the race to retain and provide jobs when anywhere in the world is cheaper than a continually de-regulating UK!

Now Central Government has initiated a rewrite of ALL the Local Authority Planning Documents to reduce Climate Change by including mandatory carbon related targets!

With the Neo-Liberals' growing influence, we all must do more LAG21 (all those years after Rio92) bottom up approach (see our 25 Years Of Business As Usual postcard) and underline all this with inserting a Green Economic Agenda (GEA) including LETS, into ALL levels of society:

Green Economic Agenda

Positive Social Change in:

- * Community Collective Assets Management
- * Promote and manage the following issues and projects

End Duality: Smart Money Social and Environmental Consequences
Grow Holism: Long term cross curricular consequences
Human Scale Education: Small is Beautiful
Citizens Income: Simplified Tax/Benefits
Carbon Credit: Carbon Tax Allowance Trading
Carbon Tax: Airfuel & Newbuild
Contraction & Convergence: Carbon Reduction & Carbon Tax Trading
Land Ownership Reform: Commons Land Release
Capitalist Money Reform: 0 Growth, Interest & Debt
LETS: Socially include those without money or contacts
End EU CAP: Targetted In-Country Farm Subsidies only
End WTO MAI: Restore National/Sovereign Authority & Consumer Choice
End SCI: Reverse decline of Local Manufacturing, Vendors & Services
True Consensus Democracy: Not Token or Capitalist/Neo-Liberal

In particular, increasing Supply Chain Integration (SCI), described by my colleague Dr Rose Bridger at our previous conference, identifies yet another source of increasing air miles. The pre-prepared foods on non-bio-degradable plastic trays that you purchase in supermarkets are increasingly assembled in weaker regulations cheaper wage Europe and flown into UK.

Embracing both the above LAG21 and GEA agenda will help to overcome the waiting end-game of either; the oil running out &/or Climate Change &/or the economy fails.

Debt

When the economy fails, the debt will be called in with possible consequences:
The soft option could be that legislation is passed to convert all vehicles to LH drive and we all drive on the RH side of the road in State #52!

Or

The hard option could be that the UK could become another Iraq, but without any oil!

Conclusion

With LETS, a closed system, there are no worries about financing debt or interest ownership. One-way transactions are socially managed to perpetuate interaction and community involvement.

Secondly in this paper, our Renaissance LETS is Politically Correct, legally tighter, and with Mary's help, e-enabled on the internet:

LETS Documentation Set Slides

These documents were generated in Phase 1 (last ¼ 2005), now the Admin is being developed in Phase 2 (current), with the launch in Phase 3 (TBA).

Workshop

Finally in this paper, many thanks for listening and I look forward to exploring the following with you in our workshop:

How your LETS are surviving?

How you would set up a new LETS?

How are these socioeconomic influencers modifying your LETS engagement?

References

Based on BAAG MediaWatch Social Change Reference Library ongoing Research.

In particular the LETS focus as follows:

Funny Money, David Boyle, Flamingo, 1999, ISBN 0 00653067 2

Lets Act Locally Jonathan Croall, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1997, ISBN 0 903319 81 0

Citizenship, Sustainability & Environmental Research, John Barry & John Proops, Edward Elgar, ISBN 1 84064253 X

Disclaimer

The information has been provided above in good faith and represents the only the views of the author drawing on the above References.

This research is ongoing and that every effort has been taken to minimise errors and omissions which may occur.

This paper has been released only to LETSLINKUK and the Green Economics Institute UK.

Copyright: Malcolm MacInnes OBO BAAG/LETS

Revision 1 06-Jan-2006

Basingstoke Alternative Action Group Community Initiatives Forum non-political NGO
Special Interest Groups;
Health, Food, Animals, Environment & Ethics
(Meeting the Objective Of Positive Social Change)