Developing Community Currency Software

Points, problems, possiblities

Introduction :

-       Based on two attempts at cclite
-       Based on conversations with Mary Fee, Michael Linton et al.
-       Reading on the web and books
-       Not the last word

Don't do this in isolation, read and communicate!

Design and Scope

What kind of currency system? (LETS, Gisellian variants, Timebanks, E-cash, Paper monies, Hybrids)

What kind and size of populations (size, technical skill of users, access to computers, locality, user bond (geographic, interests, demographic), multilingual or monolingual)

What kind of interfaces (manual, web, card and smart card, email, SMS, physical token=cash, electronic token)

What kind of architectures and exchanges (Isolated, federated using XML, monolithic, OFX, HBCI, handcrafted)

What kind of surrounding process:

-       Run by small groups
-       Run by hosting and/or 'banking' organisations
-       Run by mixtures
-       Run by central accountants

What kind of governance?:
-       Highly governed (members must be sponsored, for example)
-       Hardly governed (cash, people 'mustn't' forge cash but anyone can hold it)

Discovery process, are there specific top level domains or subdomains for currencies?

Dealing with Well-Known Controversies

- Demurraged currencies
- Timebank and 'soft-fiat' versus LETS types
- Small scale currencies that are inter-traded
- Wholly or partially convertible currencies
- Cash-like currencies
- Positive interest (as opposed to demurrage)
- Software scope: accounting, accounting/advertising or accounting/advertising/reputation

My Current Approaches

- Multiple interface (mail, web, sms and probably smart card)
- Look for common and generalisable areas
- Look for multiple uses for the same software structure
- Keep complexity acceptable
- Do exchanges using already developed standards '(SOAP at present)
- Use software as a laboratory for exploring 'hard' problems (federated trading and multicurrency are hard, for example)
- Use well known libraries and mature languages
- Keep in mind that others will want to modify and maintain
- Multicurrency, federated, multilingual ready, even if not used (hard to add later)
- Often easy to design in than retro-fit as long as complexity is OK
- Specific 'easy' place for cautious modifiers

Future Developments

- Get at least one group going first
- Use feedback rather than money 'theory', listen to the people!
- Jabber based exchanges?
- Ruby based software?
- Adoption of a standard financial exchange format?
- Smart card experiments

Conclusions

Developing cc software is not a 'neutral' act. You're usually buying in to a 'view' when developing.

This is not the last word, there's a number of (fairly) random resources at the end of this handout which is also on the web at http://hughbarnard.org/wsfii

Software that I'm currently developing:
http://hughbarnard.org/index.cgi?name=cclite.html

Random Resource List

This list is small, partial and not in any particular order. I'd also currently recommend,

Healthy Money, Healthy Planet Developing Sustainability through New Money Systems by Deirdre Kent. This is a little New Zealand centric but is a good round up of many of the problems with conventional money and reasons for doing other kinds of money:

http://www.craigpotton.co.nz/products/published/books/booksocial/healthymoneyhealthyplanet

If you want to comment about this list, write to me:

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http://www.newciv.org/ncn/moneyteam.html
http://www.openmoney.org/
http://thetransitioner.org/wen/tiki-index.php?page=Open+Money
http://www.letslinkuk.org/
http://ccit.wji.com/tiki-directory_browse.php?parent=36
http://www.transaction.net/
http://www.reinventingmoney.com/riegel.php
http://twenteenthcentury.com/uo/index.php/FacultyEconometrics
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LETS
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Money
http://www.gdrc.org/icm/lets-faq.html
http://www.reinventingmoney.com/worglCurrDemurr.php
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Mailing Lists

http://copsewood.net/mailman/listinfo/mrsdev (Richard Kay's!)

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ijccr/ (Yahoo cc group)

CC Software List

I've been trying to keep a list, see it at:

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http://twenteenthcentury.com/uo/index.php/FacultyEconometrics
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